


Music legend Roy Ayers has Pittsburghers on their feet

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by J.L. Martello

Legendary jazz/R&B musician Roy Ayers had Pittsburgh on its feet when he performed at Carnegie Music Hall in Oakland, Sept. 17. Other acts were '70s jazz giant Tom Brown, local comedian Mr. David "FROG" Bey, and the singing group, Artistry.

As emcee, FROG kept the crowd laughing, cracking jokes as he introduced each act. Opening up the music was a local all-male singing group Artistry, who captivated the crowd with songs from the '50s through today. Then came legendary jazz trumpeter Tom Brown, who mesmerized the audience with several electrifying sounds from his horn. Carnegie Music Hall was filled with enthusiasm as Roy took the stage.

Roy plays the vibraphone and a jazz/R&B vocalist who in his long career has composed and molded American funk, soul, jazz, disco and R&B into a totally unique sound all his own. People were in the aisles dancing and singing to their songs. People of all ages but mainly the older crowd, were yelling and cheering Roy on during his performance.



ROY AYERS
(Photos by J.L.
Martello)



TOM BROWN

He did not disappoint the crowd, opening with one of his classics. After the first song he started talking to the crowd as some came to the front of the stage with his records for him to sign. He told the crowd how much he loved Pittsburgh, the people in Pittsburgh and the football team (the Pittsburgh Steelers). He pulled out a terrible towel and swung it around the stage, holding it up as he danced. This got the entire crowd on their feet cheering him on even more. Roy then flowed right into another one of his legendary songs. People were yelling "Go Roy," "Dat's my Dude" and "Yeah, Roy" when he started to sing "I want to kiss you, baby."

The stage presence of all the performers was thrilling, however, Roy was exhilarating. Jennifer Cash Wade, a local Beltzshoover woman and a long time fan, said, "I was very pleased with the venue, it's a lovely, lovely place."

Talking about the show Wade said, "I am impressed by the guys who were not from my generation singing songs from my generation (Artistry), it was much appreciated that they did that." With excitement, Wade shared her feelings about Tom and Roy, saying, "Tom Brown was fabulous and I enjoyed the way he played the trumpet. He did an excellent job."

As for Roy, she said, "Roy was vintage Roy Ayers. He was wild, and it was good to see him really animated, how he interacted with his band members and his facial expressions and his antics on stage that he is known for. He didn't have to do anything dramatic for the crowd. All Roy had to do was walk onto the stage and the whole place was full of excitement," she said.

During an interview with Ayers and Brown before the show, they talked about Pittsburgh. Roy said, "I always feel good about coming to Pittsburgh because the people have a lot of energy, a lot of good vibrations and the people are strong because of the Pittsburgh Steelers. I love the football team." Tom's comment on Pittsburgh was, "I always appreciate the fact that the people here support the music and kept our music alive and I like to thank them for their support."

Roy has a new single coming out called, "Movin' 'n Groovin,'" from the "Everyone's Movin' 'n Groovin'" album. The single is in the process of being released now and the album will be released the first of the year. Brown just released his new album called "Sup" two weeks ago on the Pony Canon record label that can be found on Amazon.com.

"I have been traveling. I've been all over the world and I just came back from overseas and Europe," Roy said. He talked about his birthday, saying, "I just made my 70th birthday and I feel good, if I could make it to 70 I think I can go on and kick 80 in there." When asked about what he did on his birthday, Roy said, "I partied. I was at the Harris Casino in New Orleans. I played there on my birthday. I won, too ,but I sold it out."

Tom shared what he has been up to in the past year saying, "I'm just trying to keep busy doing some road work with Roy and with Wayne Henderson and just trying to stay busy and do a lot of road work and keep the music alive on my end." The two said they should be coming back to Pittsburgh in a few months for another show.

"Playing with Tom is a good time, we have a good rapport musically, both of us have good stage presence. We always get down and have a good vibrant show and the people get entertained and we get entertained." Roy said. "We have a good relationship and its going to be that way and stay that way." Tom about Ayers, "All the stage Roy I have, whatever I have developed over the last couple years, I owe to this man (Ayers)," he said. "As an educator who does clinics and lectures at schools, his message to the youth and jazz hopefuls is, "Be true to the music. Take a look at the heritage of the music. See where the music comes from. Jazz is the only true American art form and we need to keep this music alive."

The two are staying busy releasing records and touring. With his energy you would never believe Roy is a 70-year-old man who has performed for 50 years.

(To find out where and when Roy Ayers and Tom Brown will be performing next, go to www.royayers.com.)

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