

Sunday night Papa Roach took a night off from the mega Nickelback Dark Horse tour to an intimate gig at The Chance in Poughkeepsie. I made the deer-filled drive up the Taconic and checked them out.

Opening the show was local NYC band Static Summer. Longtime Roach fans will recognize members of the lineup from Fight of Your Life and Reach 454, both bands who have opened for Papa Roach over the years. Usually a venue is barely filled when the first band plays, especially if they're not nationally known. But not in this case. The house was practically full before they even started. I guess the Hudson Valley knows what's up since they made sure to get there early enough to see them perform. The band played a solid set full of radio-friendly rock. The highlight was "Phoenix and the Fall", their single that recently made it to Sirius Satellite's airwaves and features vocals by Papa Roach's lead singer Jacoby Shaddix. Unfortunately Jacoby didn't make it to the stage to perform the song with them, but Static Summer's lead singer Rene Mata did a good job of carrying the song on his own.

Since the full lineup for the night was announced at the last minute, I thought Static Summer was the only opening act. You can imagine my surprise when I found out that Pennsylvania alternative rockers Drama Club were actually up next. Though visually they look nothing like them, soundwise they really remind me of Alien Ant Farm, especially singer Nick Coyle's voice. His vocal style is very similar to AAF's Dryden Mitchell, which is definitely not a bad thing. They played an energetic set, which the crowd responded well to.

Next up was the band everyone was suffering through sauna-like conditions to see. As soon as the lights went down and the military march-like "Days of War" lead into opening song "Change or Die", the energy in the room noticeably went from "laid back rock crowd" to "Papa Roach Army." The crowd's enthusiasm never faltered and kept building up the entire set. By the end, the crowd roars reached deafening levels.

Papa Roach is a band that, even if you walk into the show hating them, you'll leave as a fan. There is no way even the most jaded of music fans can't respect their live set. Jacoby Shaddix sings every word that he's probably sang a million times already with the passion and credibility of someone who just experienced those emotions that morning. While bassist Tobin Esperance keeps the groove going, guitarist Jerry Horton rocks out on guitar, making sure he connects with everyone within his sightline. In the back, drummer Tony Palermo is impossible to ignore as he bashes away on the drums. In fact, he's downright fascinating to watch in their latest video "I Almost Told You That I Loved You." That is, if you can tear your eyes away from all the scantily clad women dancing around him.

The setlist ranged from 2000's "Infest" to the current CD "Metamorphosis." Unfortunately, 2002's Lovehatetragedy was ignored, much to my chagrin, as that is one of my favorite CDs of all time. But *sigh* I survived the omission. All their singles were played (except "She Loves Me Not"), including TRL favorite "Last Resort", "Between Angels and Insects", "Getting Away With Murder", "Forever", "Scars", "Lifeline" and "Hollywood Whore."

For me the highlight of the set was "Into The Light", off this year's "Metamorphosis." When Jacoby cries out "This is a warning! My final warning!" look out. Because you are about to get your fanny kicked by a fantastically heavy rock song. Mick Mars actually performed the nasty guitar solo on the CD recording, but Horton did a great job recreating it live. Another memorable moment was when Jacoby asked the pit to part, create two walls of people, and collide as soon as "Alive (N' Out of Control)" (the theme song to the Shaddix hosted MTV show "Scarred") began. This is otherwise known to moshers as "The Braveheart." It was at that moment I patted myself on the back for choosing to stand on the first level above the pit rather than the barricade that night.

Though the band has changed musically over the years, it's clear that they have plenty of fans who have continued to keep track of them. The crowd knew all the tunes, even the non-singles, and matched Shaddix's enthusiasm with every song. By the end of the show, everyone was sweaty and gross, but it didn't matter because a great time was had by all. Besides, if you come out of a summertime rock show cool and calm, then ask for your money back, because you were ripped off. With this band, you will always walk out a satisfied customer.