

Kiss lives up to reputation as it takes Pontiac stage

(Continued from page 1D)

you about the rest of the stage theatrics and their favorite Kiss album.

When the kids asked me why I was so interested in Kiss, I explained that I was going to do a story about their Silverdome appearance. "Oh wow! That's bomb. How many tickets have you got? Can I go with you?"

I APOLOGIZED to several of the youngsters and explained I couldn't get them tickets. Fortunately, they accepted my explanation like real troopers.

I had a new-found hero status among my young friends. The mere fact that I was actually going to see Kiss and then write a story garnered great respect. Ironically, despite their accurate descriptions of Kiss' live act, none of the kids had actually seen a live Kiss show. The pre-adolescent pipeline is one of the strongest public relations tools of the Kiss organization.

My hero status was short-lived. Once inside the parking lot of the Silverdome, I had to grapple with the crowds and abundant security procedures.

After securing tickets for myself and a friend, I decided I would try to get a little closer to the band. To obtain my backstage pass meant walking halfway around the outside of the Silverdome. The long walk gave me a perspective of the type of people who attend a Kiss concert.

AT THIS POINT, the music of the opening act, New England, pulsed through the dome. Several people were still streaming into the mini-dome but many of the others seemed to be without tickets. The ticketless appeared glazed and suffering in the 90-degree heat.

After several security checks, I found myself knocking on the backstage door. A security man snatched

my credentials and nearly closed the heavy door on my hand. The door opened again and the security man called out my name. I was whisked into a crowded room filled with the usual backstage characters.

I was issued a pass and hastily exited from the room. The security man let six other people in as he guided me out the door and told me I would have to make the walk back to my original point of entry.

As I looked at the pass I realized I had been scammed. The pass looked to be nothing more than a promotional sticker for Kiss' Silverdome appearance. Freelancers for suburban newspapers apparently don't rate backstage passes.

After the walk back to the north gate, my burning desire to see Gene Simmons vomit blood was waning. As we entered the mini-dome, Cheap Trick was just finishing the set. The near-capacity crowd was screaming for more.

Cheap Trick managed to receive two encores.

CHIEF TRICK's music is very popular these days and their musicianship is superior to Kiss. Unfortunately, I had missed what appeared to be a nice performance.

After a lengthy intermission Kiss took the stage in a flurry of special effects. Indeed my 9 and 10-year-old friends had their facts straight.

Kiss did everything I was told they do. Simmons threw up blood and was lifted by wires high over the stage. Peter Criss' drums were in the front of the stage, revolved, elevated and spewed fireworks.

The entire performance was an aggressive display of painted superheros overloading the circuits of the audiovisual sensibilities. The music of Kiss is at best mediocre heavy metal rock and roll.

Their act is a compilation of stage theatrics utilized by earlier glitter rockers. Most of the gimmicks have been used before but never with the intensity and velocity witnessed here.

KISS TAKEN seriously could be harmful to an adolescents' mental health; however, taken in moderation with tongue firmly in cheek, it could be fun. As for pre-adolescents, let's just hope they don't role model too closely.

As I prepared to write this article, my 10-year-old nephew paid a visit. He questioned me about the concert and wanted to know more about Kiss' new costumes.

I described the concert and gave him my coveted pass. He seemed pleased. It helped ease the pain he encountered when he recently purchased Kiss' "Dynasty" album only to find a big scratch across his favorite song, "I Was Made for Loving You."

As he left, he asked if I thought he could exchange the record. I said I thought he could.

"Good," he said, "but I guess I'll have to clean off the Coke I spilled on it."

Life can present difficult dilemmas for hardcore Kiss fans.

Duke Ellington Orchestra plays the Pontch

Duke Ellington's Orchestra, conducted since 1974 by his son, Mercer, plays the compositions and arrangements of the famous bandleader, at Chuck Mue's Pjazza at the Hotel Pontchartrain terrace, on July 23 at 6 p.m.

The Jimmy Wilkins Orchestra performs Wednesday, July 25 at 6 p.m.

Mercer also conducts less familiar tunes that haven't been played in some years. The show also includes pieces written by Duke Ellington that never were published.

Mercer formed his first band in 1939. Band members included Clark Terry and Dizzy Gillespie. He was musical director and arranger for singer Della

Reese for a number of years. For the last decade he has been totally occupied, as a member of the brass section and road manager, with the Ellington Band.

The Jimmy Wilkins band, in its 23rd year, contains some of the most experienced musicians in Detroit. Wilkins' repertoire, consisting of big band fa-

vorities is tailor-made to arouse toe-tapping among the young and old.

Wilkins himself has played lead trombone with the Count Basie Band in the early 1950s and later toured with the Lionel Hampton and Dizzy Gillespie bands.

Reservations can be made by calling the ticket office at 965-0200.

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