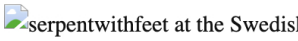
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Review + Photos: serpentwithfeet at Swedish American Hall

By Kaiya Gordon | July 18, 2018 | 1 Comment



serpentwithfeet at the Swedish American Hall, by Jon Bauer

serpentwithfeet (photo: Jon Bauer)

"I wanna get messy with y'all," serpentwithfeet said to the sold-out crowd at Swedish American Hall on Sunday. And though the show *was* messy, in the colloquial sense, it was also the breeziest I've been to in recent memory —rather than bagging down his performance, serpentwithfeet's emotionality rendered his set more intimate, warm, and easy. Throughout it — as serpentwithfeet chatted, read poems, and floated around the stage — the hall filled with genuine affection, both from the artist and the crowd. This glow was reflected, too, in the decor of the venue itself: instead of the usual chilly blues and purples that light up the stage at Swedish American, serpentwithfeet was bathed in a deep, rust-colored light. The artist came accompanied by critically-acclaimed songs from his newly-released album. That album, **Soil**, is innovative and forceful, with complicated vocal melodies and driving beats that continue to draw me in as I wonder at the intensity of the music. But no amount of *Soil* replays could have prepared me for serpentwithfeet's live set, which revealed talents beyond those recorded on tracks: serpentwithfeet's deft improvisation, banter, and understanding of performative mood proved that he is a truly multi-modal artist.

Throughout the show, serpentwithfeet moved between microphones, switching between vocalizing over recorded tracks and over his keyboards. Several times, the switch happened mid-song, transforming short songs (*Soil* is only 40 minutes long in total) into compositions with multiple movements. On "Whisper," which opened the set, serpentwithfeet took breaks between lyrics to waterfall vocal sequences, and then interrupting those sequences with free-styled lyrics. On *Soil*, serpentwithfeet's remarkable vocal range is emotive and unrelenting; in live performance, it's also an incredible improvisational tool. At times during the set, serpentwithfeet elongated what seemed like impossible notes — letting his voice rise until it shimmered.

The emotionality of serpentwithfeet's music was mirrored by the liberty with which he shared material beyond his music. Twice, he stopped to read Nikki Giovanni poems ("Resignation" and "Love in Place"), picking up the poetry book from a pile of books set atop his keyboards, a white cloth hanging across the instrument as though it was an altar. "I'm trying to get better at chronicling my love experiences," he said, explaining his admiration for Giovanni's gift for acute description. Other times, it was serpentwithfeet's own thoughts that were poetic; at one break in the set, he simply told the crowd: "I love men, I love dating men, I love dating Black men

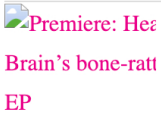
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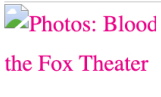
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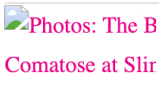
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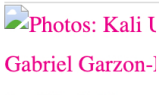
There was levity as well. After an extended personal anecdote, serpentwithfeet told the crowd: "I told you I like to talk. I think it's cool, and if you don't like it, you can go use the restroom." From my vantage point, perched on the balcony, I didn't see anybody using the restroom as a hideout. On the contrary, the enthusiastic responses from the crowd never faltered, even towards the end of the set.

serpentwithfeet, it turns out, is really funny. Describing his theory that "all things are animate," serpentwithfeet declared that "if you put on your jeans and your pocket breaks and embarrasses you, those jeans were like, 'not today boo.'" On Tinder, the artist remarked that it would be useful to have a "scratch and sniff option." And even during his musical improvisations, serpentwithfeet was able to keep some sequences light — on his rendition of "seedless," he followed up the repeated phrase "Whoa, baby, mourn," with a wink to the crowd, belting: "Stay around for the fun parts, for the cute parts."

Prior to seeing serpentwithfeet live, I felt a bit embarrassed by the force with which I've been pushing my friends to listen to *Soil*. Now, however, I'm shameless: at the end of the night, I walked out into chilly San Francisco newly invigorated by the urgency of serpentwithfeet's music, ready to share the joy I felt in his crowd. The night's performance ended with a prolonged version of "bless ur heart," serpentwithfeet leading the crowd to sing it's ending refrains. As he conducted the audience, I was struck by how many joined in — "Ooh child, bless your heart / Keep a tender heart" — filling the entirety of the venue, until it felt as though it bulged with sound. After the intended end of the song, serpentwithfeet turned again to the crowd. "Just one more time," he said, "it's beautiful." It was.

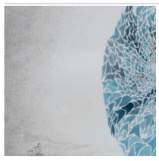
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About the Author: Kaiya Gordon



Kaiya Gordon is a writer and poet from the SF peninsula. Kaiya believes that impact is more important than intent, and is not interested in listening to your normcore noise band. Follow them on twitter @ayobaio

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sara luck July 18, 2018 at 11:28 pm

Wow, this concert is looking fantastic I hope an audience enjoyed there a lot. I also love to be a part of concerts with family and friends. Everybody knows very well that how a great concert can improve our mood. Listening to music is the best way to give the energy of our mind. https://www.reecoupons.com/categories/back-to-school also organize concerts and give tickets at a very low price they are also organizing a concert soon. Going to a concert or in a show with friends and family and hearing music in front of an audience is so much better than just listening on a phone or computer

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