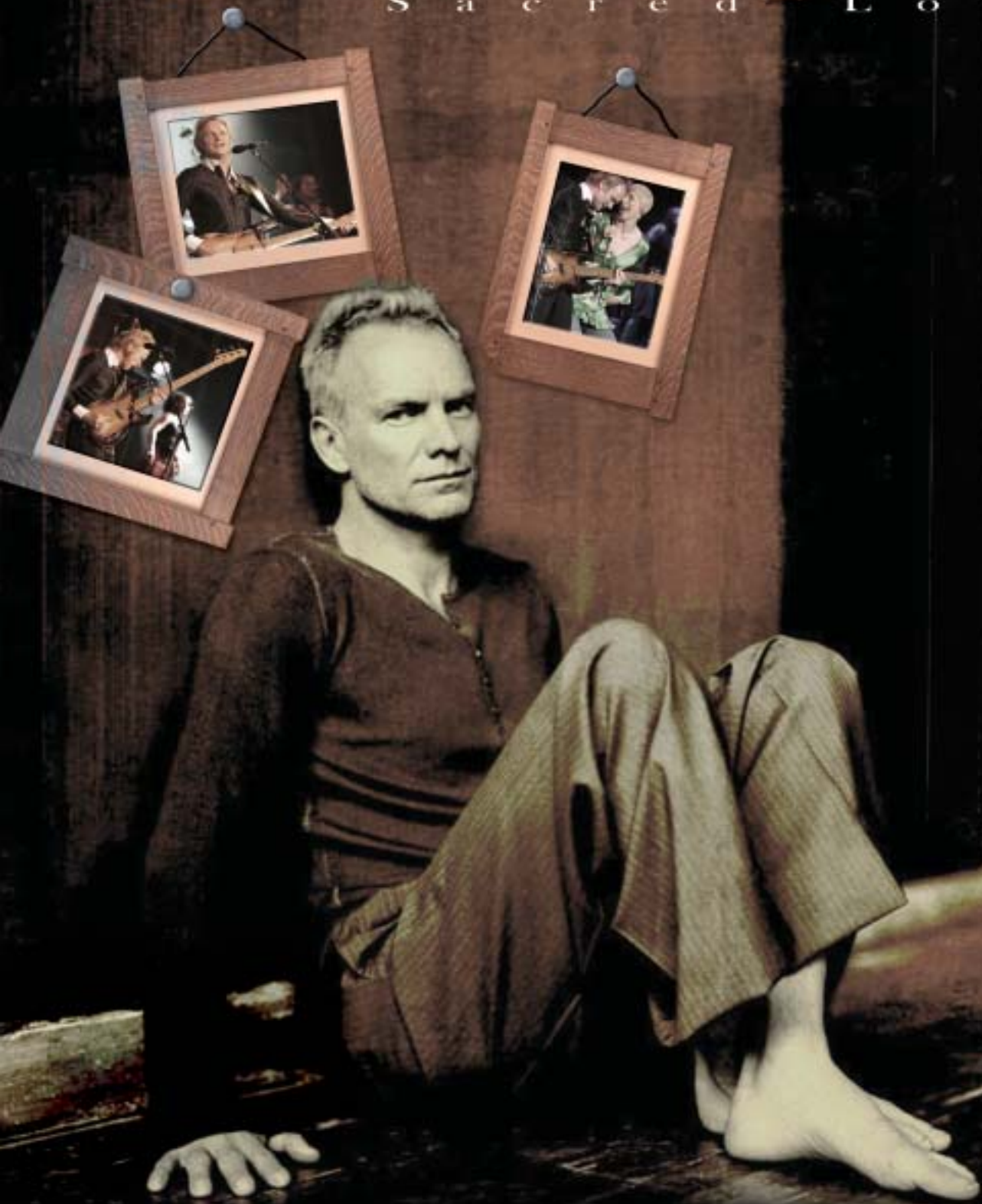




sting

S a c r e d L o v e



Concert Review by Trevor Knoblich, Photography by Jeff Muller

I felt uneasy at first. Among other things, it was because I was the youngest person I could see in a crowd of thousands. And because I was one of the few without silver hair (or a bald spot, for that matter). It was also because I barely remember **The Police**, or **Sting's** separation into the world of "solo artist." Yet I was put at ease when I recalled that I do know "Roxanne" as well as anyone else, and the music scene is my home, so I settled back to enjoy the show.

And what a show. Sting's music might have mellowed since the days of **The Police**, but his stage presence hasn't. Stage persona has become a dying art since the 90s. Gone are the days of **Freddie Mercury** and **Joe Strummer**. Even **Iggy Pop** is in his twilight. But there are remnants of a generation of musicians who carefully crafted a character to fit behind the music on their albums. Sting thrives in his persona, which has evolved to fit his current status as a rock veteran. Dressed in a button-down shirt and an easy grin, Sting commanded the attention of the audience from the start. He barely spoke a dozen words to the crowd, but he stormed across the stage from one end to the other, playing the bass, electric and acoustic guitars throughout the show.

The show itself was well-paced. Opening with several rock songs, Sting quickly moved to the slower "Dead Man's Rope." It is rare to see a rock show where the fast and slow songs are equally well-performed, yet Sting played both with finesse. The show wound down to a series of ballads, then picked up pace until the end. Sting even performed a few songs from his days in **The Police**, including "Every Little Thing She Does is Magic" and "Every Breath You Take." The crowd went wild for each. "Roxanne" became an eight-minute jam for the band, as well as a chance for the crowd to echo Sting's words.

There were other surprises packaged into the show as well. Early on, co-headliner **Annie Lennox** joined Sting on stage for a duet, where constant cheers and whistles came from the audience. Both singers seemed to get a boost from the other's presence. They are no **Elton John** and **Billy Joel**, but it was a fitting match: the former front man of **The Police** teams with former front woman of the **Eurythmics**. It must have been 80s paradise for many members of the crowd. Even the already-solid band grew tighter during that number -- an effect which lasted long after Lennox left the stage.

But of course not everything always runs perfectly. There were minor problems that occurred throughout the show. The lighting design was brilliant, but distracting. It incorporated giant video screens, in addition to the usual strobe and colored lighting effects. Sometimes the screens were used tastefully to emphasize a point -- the peace-promoting message in "This War" was enhanced by the simple effect of a stage bathed in blood-red lights and the visuals of cartoon bombs falling to earth. However, all too often the screens became an **MTV**-style assault of images with little relevance to the songs. One song featured a series of women dancing in skimpy clothes on screen, and Sting joked that nobody had watched him during the entire number. A big budget can get out of hand, overshadowing the real point of an event: the musical performance.

However, the music itself was well-structured and often impressive. Many songs had the crowd on their feet, dancing in the aisles or on the grass. Sting may not win over a younger crowd anytime soon, but he proved that the people of his generation still know how to rock.



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