

Freekbass Live @ Canal St. Tavern 12/6/03

I had seen Freekbass a year or two ago so I was excited by the prospect of seeing them play live again. I have seen plenty of local bands play live but none of them ever seem to leave a lasting impression on me. That is until Freekbass. I remembered their name, the show, the music and talked about them actively to any who would care to hear. They play an energetic hybrid of Funk, Metal and Techno. Their music is, at once, nostalgic and contemporary. Something else I like about this band: They know how to put on a great show. They go the extra mile by dressing themselves and their stage up. It says to me they didn't just punch the clock before the gig, it says; this band prepared for the show. Which is important when you're as serious a music fan as I am. So, as a serious music fan, I was interested in seeing if lightning strikes twice. It does.

After, an already, busy day and a nap, I made my way to Canal Street Tavern to see Freekbass for the second time in my life. To help get in the proper frame of mind, I jammed to Rick James's "Standing on the top" album on the way to the show. Rick James, by the way, should not be forgotten as one of the finest purveyors of Funk this world as ever known. I arrived at Canal Street Tavern at 9:30PM, which turned out to be an hour before the band went on stage. No matter, this gave me time to soak up the atmosphere and get ready for the show. The cover charge to see the band was \$8, by the way. I noted that there were not as many people waiting for the show, as my enthusiasm would have dictated. That being said, I also knew that most bands don't start playing until later at most bar-type establishments and said fans of bands don't show up until they have to, which is, later. I knew more people would be coming to the show. Freekbass had a merchandise booth, which sold T-Shirts and two compact discs of their music. They also had free stickers. The girl who worked the stand was friendly and also sang backing vocals with the band. Wish I had got her name. Damn! I was delighted to find that Bootsy Collins is producing Freekbass. Bootsy, along with Bernie Worrel and Buckethead appear on the new Freekbass disc, which I purchased for \$12 Dollars. Funky grooved music of an unknown origin played in the background while I enjoyed a draft beer and waited for things to happen. Man, I have got to get more old funk & R&B from the 70's. The stuff they're playing is awesome. Definitely gets me ready to hear some live funk. More people show up as I wait.

Special moment: Trancy song begins and everyone in the bar hushes for a long, pregnant pause, then all is as it was. Meanwhile, a couple of band members unobtrusively check their instruments and then disappear.

At 10:30 the lights dim and fog rises from devices created to do such things. The stage lights come to life and atmospheric techno begins to play. Five guys and a gal climb the stage and start to play. There was a drummer who rapped on a couple songs, a keyboard player, a guitar player, a sax player who doubled on keyboards, a bass player who sang lead vocals and a girl playing a tambourine and singing backing vocals. In fact, they all sang backing vocals. They were also dressed pretty cool, as well. And with the first song, people started dancing. With every song came more people to dance. It would be hard to just sit back and listen to their music live and not find that your body was moving with it

even some way or another. Infectious would be a good word to describe Freekbass' groove. Yes! The show they put on was just as cool as the show I had seen a while back. The band definitely lived up to my impossible expectations. Honestly, I really didn't think I was going to be disappointed by what I saw, though. The guitar, bass and sax players played solos. Of particular interest were the sax solos, as it is rare to see a saxophone in most bands that aren't of a jazz-like nature. Les Claypool's Frog Brigade being the most notable exception to this trend. One thing I really liked was that the band seemed to be playing for themselves as much as they were playing for an audience.

I swear I hope I see this band playing places like Bogart's or Newport Memorial Hall someday. They need a bigger stage and a bigger audience. Their first set ended after forty-five minutes. It's hard to recall how many songs they played as all their songs blended together seamlessly. It's sad to see a few people leave after the first set. They're going to miss out! Or maybe they're just going out to their cars to get high? We hope! After twenty-five minutes the second set began with the dimming of lights, the flowing of fog and the playing of some Freekbass techno loop. The band returned, some having changed wardrobe, to the stage and it was on again. This time, though, everybody who was dancing earlier, returned to the dance floor immediately, as if to say they had been waiting impatiently to dance some more. Their second set was just as energetic as the first set was. In this set, they played a cover of David Bowie's "Fame," which they had played the first time I saw them live. Heavier and with some slight changes, this version easily stood up to the original. It is rare that a remake stands up to the original but this is one of those special cases.

At the end, I called it a night and went home. I highly recommend, that anyone who enjoys funk or even just high-energy music, go see Freekbass live. I doubt you'll be disappointed.