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Appleseed Cast Gives Memorable Moscow Concert

By Timothy Misir

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Appleseed Cast on stage at Teatr Club. **Tim Misir**

Last weekend must have been particularly hard for alternative music fans in Moscow, as the gig calendar in the capital was packed with the likes of American synthwave band Cold Cave, Dutch trap act 5Diez, and a low-fi pop festival at China Town Cafe.

Those who decided to skip Appleseed Cast's concert must be kicking themselves, as the band's concert at Teatr Club will certainly go down as one of the concerts of the year according to many in the crowd, some of whom had traveled from other parts of the country to catch the band's only Russian appearance.

One of the stalwarts of the indie scene, the band from Lawrence, Kansas has been around since 1997, with eight full-length albums to their name. They are often compared to Sunny Day Real Estate, Mineral, and Braid, bands who were once their contemporaries, but have long since stopped making any new music.

Lead guitarist and songwriter Chris Crisci cannot explain his band's longevity either. "I don't know the answer. I write songs and record them, then all of the sudden it is 15 years later. I have stopped trying. I think that is part of why I wanted to strip down on the production of the new record."

They have been around from the very early days of the midwest indie and emo music scene, moving to a more guitar-driven and textured sound that is closer to math-rock or post-rock, though genre classifications do not bother Crisci anymore. "We write songs and record them, that is kind of my simple view of it all. Emo? Not Emo? It doesn't matter. If someone likes our music it will not be because of that tag."

"They have grown up with us. We have a very wide range of people in the audience now. There are kids in their early 20's and old guys like me. I get a lot of comments about how our music helped them 15 years ago or that they have liked us for 10 years and this is the first time they have come to a show or what have you," he explains about the band's fanbase.

The band gained critical acclaim in 2001, when they released the now-classic ''Low Level Owl,'' a two-volume album that earned them the tag "America's closest answer to Radiohead." But they did not stick to the same template for subsequent albums, saying that it is "just an album to album thing. Maybe that is a reaction to having just done such a guitar heavy record. By the time we record this one, who knows what it will sound like? That is how it is going into each recording."

Songs from their 2013 release, "Illumination Ritual" made up the first half of the concert, before the band moved to songs from earlier albums. Their reception was immense, so much that after the concert had ended with a two-song encore and half the audience had departed, Crisci was moved to return to the stage to perform "Fight Song," in between signing autographs for fans. A bittersweet end, as Crisci announced that even though it was their first time, it was probably also their last performance in Russia.

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