

Rock bands on target at civic center concert

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The Allman Brothers and the Outlaws brought their own style of music into the Roanoke Civic Center last night and when they finished at midnight they left behind 6,200 somewhat dazed, smiling people.

The show caught the Allman Brothers at their best and for the many fans of their style of music who were present, it was a joy to watch and hear.

The Outlaws opened the night with 50 minutes of sometimes hard rock, sometimes country rock and the numerous fans who came to see them as well as the Allman Brothers appeared pleased with the performance.

The group employs full use of three guitarists, one bass and a drummer. In most songs the bass, drum and guitars would provide background while individual guitarists would take turns at solo runs. Many of the runs were excellent, but too many times the background would obscure the lead improvisations creating periods of confused, ear-splitting sound.

The Outlaws' first song brought the crowd to its feet, a position most were to keep until midnight. Despite the frequent distortion problems, most seemed to agree that the Allmans would have to do a good job to equal the Outlaws.

And the Allmans must have been listening because from the first strains of "Don't Want You No More" they made it obvious they were not to be outdone. The first set began with a little politics. Being good Macon, Ga., boys, Jimmy Carter stickers adorned their equipment, a banner reading "Be Smarter, Vote Carter," hung above their heads and the opening announcement was a plug for Carter.

Through the first five songs every member of the group established his ability but it was Richard Betts on lead and slide guitar and Chuck Leavell on piano merited the most attention. Gregg Allman on vocals and keyboards, Jai Johanny Johanson and Butch Trucks on drums and Lamar Williams on bass presented solid performances throughout the night.

The first surprise came on their fifth song, "Blue Sky". According to several observers "Blue Sky" has been rarely heard in concert since the death of Duane Allman, the group's late leader and slide guitar immortal. Leavell picked up Allman's old slide guitar parts on the piano and soon had the crowd looking for another guitar player. Betts, an excellent guitar player who lived in the shadow of Duane, left the crowd screaming their approval after a long burning solo in "Can't Lose What You Never Had" from their latest album "Win, Lose or Draw".

Betts brought out the slide and red guitar in the second set, stunning the crowd in "Statesboro Blues" with the ability and style he developed. It appears the day of Betts throwing his slide across the stage in disgust is long gone. The group then slid into "Jessica", an instrumental written for the Allman's style of jamming. The song was highlighted by Betts trading runs with Leavell on the piano, Williams on bass and Gregg on the keyboard.

By the time the inevitable encore "Whipping Post" came on, much of the crowd had trickled out. But the die-hard Allman Brothers fans who stayed to the end knew they had witnessed an exceptional performance.