



Chad Batka for The New York Tin From left, Page McConnell, Trey Anastasio and Mike Gordon of the group Phish, on Thursday.

Mike Gordon's bass double timed its way into counterpoint and then eased back toward riff. Page McConnell's keyboards, particularly Hammond organ, pushed forward with insistent, meaty chords, and then dissolved into support. Jon Fishman's drumming rode the rhythms as much as it defined them. And Trey Anastasio's lead guitar, the band's dominant instrument, regularly stepped out, more pointed and purposeful than in some of Phish's past phases: with wailing long blues lines or twangy little jabs, with ambling chromatic lines or quick filigrees. Yet instead

of tracing the full storytelling arc of a guitar hero's solo, they tapered away, handing off the spotlight to another member of the group.

Like every worthy jam band, Phish flaunted its variety. It opened with the meter-shifting, harmonically labyrinthine song <u>"The Sloth"</u> and the quick arpeggios of "You Enjoy Myself," demonstrating its ensemble precision; it also jammed vigorously on basic two-chord grooves.

The band breezed from nimble jigs to progressive-rock pomp in "Guyute," leaned on the funk of "The Moma Dance" and mobilized the bluegrassy lilt (with warped chord progressions) of "Run Like an Antelope."

It chose more than a few songs with lyrics steeped in self-doubt — the recent "Show of Life," "Mike's Song," "Back on the Train," "Roses Are Free" and a relative rarity at Phish shows, "Lifeboy" — but played them with thoroughgoing ease. There was one stretch of a darker mood: "Maze," conjuring the lyrics' paranoia with a modal, insistent bass line and radar-blip keyboards before making its way to its own major-key redemption.

Along with "Lifeboy," there was an unexpected twist: "Chalk Dust Torture," a Phish staple that still delights disgruntled undergraduates, somehow evolved during the jam into the recognizable melody of "I Am Hydrogen," played considerably faster than usual. It was the kind of variation that makes Phish's fans take notice, though it wasn't exactly a grand innovation.

This was just a big, happy Phish party. The musicians' fingers flew; lights splayed above the stage; glowsticks were tossed, in mass bursts, at big transitions; balloons bounced around; the year-end ritual was intact. Thursday's concert was a high-level holding action; the next one, as always, might be something else entirely.

This article has been revised to reflect the following correction:

Correction: December 30, 2011

An earlier version of this article missated the title of one of Phish's songs. The song is "I Am Hydrogen," not "This Is Hydrogen." And an earlier version of this correction erroneously stated that the song is an album.

A version of this review appeared in print on December 31, 2011, on page C1 of the New York edition with the headline: A Band Tradition, Both Carried On and Changed.



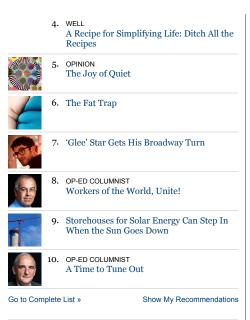
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