Bonamassa an electric presence in concert

CONCERT REVIEW

By Paul Hyde
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If homes in Travelers Rest, Simpsonville and Anderson seemed to shake a little Monday night, it wasn't an earthquake.

It was merely the tremors emanating from Joe Bonamassa's explosive concert at downtown Greenville's Peace Center.

The terrific blues-rock guitarist was in top form at this return visit, playing before a rapturous near-capacity crowd.

It was a show that invited the question: Is Bonamassa the world's best blues-rock guitarist performing today?

Put it another way: Who's better?

Bonamassa, 35, produces a blazing inferno of ear-shattering sound, wielding the plectrum like a man possessed by some fiery demon of rock. Or maybe by the combined spirits of Eric Clapton, Jimmy Page and Rod "The Bottle" Price.

Bonamassa, dressed as usual in a blazer and sporting dark shades, breezed through a two-hour set of his own music and blues covers, his voice toggling between a raspy wail and a smokey croon.

Bonamassa hails from Upstate New York, but his singing reminds you of a long line of British blues-rockers like Clapton or Paul Rodgers.

Bonamassa opened with five acoustic numbers, including the yearning title track of his most recent album "Driving Towards the Daylight."

Then he cranked up the Marshall amps for the hard-charging electric set that began with the throbbing "Slow Train" and included Gary Moore's tasty "Midnight Blues" and Bonamassa's cranium-rattling "Ballad of John Henry."

Every number featured dazzling and extended guitar solos by Bonamassa, backed by his fantastic three-member band.

Like a true virtuoso, Bonamassa delivered his searing and frenzied riffs effortlessly.

For encores, Bonamassa offered his 2007 "Sloe Gin" and then his great rockin' cover of ZZ Top's "Just Got Paid," which included some clever references to Led Zeppelin's "Dazed and Confused."

Bottom line? For fans of blues rock, it just doesn't get much better than Joe Bonamassa.

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Blues-rock guitarist Joe Bonamassa performed dazzled a packed house at the Peace Center in Greenville with extended solos in every number. PATRICK COLLARD/STAFF