

Review

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MCR serves mix of music, theater

By MARIE P. GRADY

HARTFORD – It's not often that a rock star gets wheeled onto stage in a hospital gurney – although, let's face it, we all expect Keith Richards to end up that way.

But then Gerard Way isn't any ordinary rock star, and My Chemical Romance isn't any ordinary rock band.

The five-man, New Jersey based band sent its addictive alternative rock riffs through the New England Dodge Center Saturday night, opening with Way as a patient literally rising from the dead as the band played a song called "Dead" from its October 2006 Platinum release "The Black Parade."

Four songs into the set Way and company, dressed in black and white marching band outfits, rolled into "Welcome to the Black Parade," the title cut from the dark concept album that is really a musical reflection on mortality. As the song came to an end, confetti rained down over the standing room only mosh pit in front of the stage.

The song gained an even wider following after the music video featuring a bleach-blond Way was aired on MTV, but these days Way is sporting the raven hair that the band's earlier fans remember.

My Chemical Romance, or MCR, established a following with its distinctive mixture of dark, often angry lyrics, set against raging guitars and a brooding, semi-Goth stage persona. Sometimes dubbed "emo rock," the band's songs explore the emotional depths of the disaffected outsider, the loser at love and the explosive energy of teen angst.

In the near capacity, 6,212-seat Dodge Center the band had an appreciative audience of mostly young teens, many accompanied by their parents. But while their parents might have held cigarette lighters aloft to express appreciation for a

song that moved them, the sea of lights that accompanied Way on the song "Cancer" came from the electronic glow of the cell phones the crowd held in the air.

As if to say that wasn't enough, the band launched into a pyrotechnic display on the next song – "Mama" – which was punctuated by huge balls of fire leaping up from the stage.

Way told the crowd it was the first time the band "had all this stuff," but the band is no stranger to theatrics.

About 50 minutes and a dozen songs into the show the band disappeared after performing "Famous Last Words," also from "The Black Parade." But they roared back minutes later – sans the marching band outfits – to sing "I'm Not Okay," from their 2004 release "Three Cheers for Sweet Revenge." Way, now clad in a black leather jacket, sang against the backdrop of a huge banner with the word "Revenge" encircled by revolvers.

The second half of the 87-minute, encoreless show – which was opened by the hard driving Chicago band "Rise Against" – featured songs from the band's earlier releases, ending with "Helena."

With a name inspired by author Irvine Welsh, whose book "Trainspotting" was made into a film that chronicled the lives of young Scottish heroin addicts, MCR is part punk, part glam-rock and part theater. Along with Way, the band includes his brother Mikey Way on bass, lead guitarist Ray Toro, rhythm guitarist Frank Iero and Bob Bryar, who replaced original drummer Matt Pelissier.

The band burst onto the music scene with the album "I Brought You My Bullets, You Brought Me Your Love" in 2002. Rolling Stone called its latest album "the best mid-Seventies record of 2006, a rabid, ingenious paraphrasing of echoes and kitsch from rock's golden age of bombast."

The band has performed with "The Used" and been influenced by "Morrissey," among others, but "The Black Parade" also conjures up images of Freddy Mercury and Queen. The album is a rock opera of sorts but with a reluctant actor in the leading role.

"I'm just a man. I'm not a hero," Way sings at one point during the song.

Thousands of fans at the Dodge Center begged to differ, however. After all, Way and MCR were playing their anthem.

Ryan Kelleher contributed to this report