



311 Perform At The House Of Blues May 26

by Cub Koda

American rock quintet 311 fuses reggae, hip-hop, funk, and metal in a rhythmic hybrid blend that carried them from the rap-rock boom of the '90s and into the 2000s as veteran mainstays with a fiercely devoted fan base. Following their breakthrough efforts 311 (1995) and Transistor (1997) — which yielded hit singles “Down,” “All Mixed Up,” and “Beautiful Disaster” — the quintet issued a string of Top 10 albums over the next few decades, including 2009 chart peak Uplifter, and found mainstream radio success with crossover hits “Amber” and a cover of the Cure’s “Love Song.” Into the 2010s, 311 stuck to their tried-and-true formula, serving their diehard following reliable output that included 2014’s U.S. Alternative chart-topper Stereolithic.

The band was formed in 1990 in Omaha, Nebraska, by singer/guitarist Nick Hexum, DJ/singer Doug “S.A.” Martinez, guitarist Tim Mahoney, drummer Chad Sexton, and bassist Aaron “P-Nut” Wills. Taking their name from the Omaha Police Department’s code for indecent exposure, the quintet began performing locally and soon moved to Los Angeles, signing with Capricorn Records in 1991. 311 then translated their regional success into national recognition with several key albums, including 1992’s Music, 1993’s Grassroots, and 1995’s eponymous 311 (aka The Blue Album), the latter of which reached number 12 on the Billboard 200, sold three million copies

in the U.S., and sported the hit tracks “All Mixed Up” and “Down.”

In 1996, following a year of nonstop touring in support of 311, the band released Enlarged to Show Detail, a home video of live performances taken from amphitheater shows in Kansas City and Denver. Transistor, a double album of new songs sandwiched onto one CD, arrived one year later and prompted the group’s most ambitious tour yet. The effort quickly achieved platinum status, and the resulting show dates provided ample material for Live, which was released in 1998 and captured the band’s strength on stage. A year later, 311 returned with Soundsystem before jumping to the Volcano label for the release of From Chaos, which appeared in summer 2001 and featured their hit, “Amber.” Evolver arrived two years later; unlike its predecessors, however, the album failed to go gold or platinum.

At that point, 311 had been together over ten years and the band celebrated its decade-plus existence with the Greatest Hits compilation. Released in July 2004, the album included all of 311’s hit singles, several new tracks, and the band’s reggae-tinged cover of the Cure’s “Love Song,” which had originally appeared on the soundtrack to the Adam Sandler film 50 First Dates. In August 2005, the group issued their eighth LP, Don’t Tread on Me, which peaked at number five on the Billboard 200 and was followed by an additional round of touring. Upon its completion,

the road-weary musicians took a hiatus, their first break in nearly a decade. 311 soon returned to the studio, however, this time partnering with producer Bob Rock. Heralded by frontman Nick Hexum as “the heaviest 311 has ever been,” the resulting Uplifter arrived in 2009. That album shot to number three on the Billboard charts, the band’s highest showing to date. Rock returned to the helm in 2011 for the band’s tenth studio album, Universal Pulse, which was the band’s first indie release.

On March 11, 2014, 311 self-released their 11th studio effort, the Scott “Scotch” Ralston-produced and independently released Stereolithic. A live album and four-disc Archive set filled the time until album number 12, which arrived in the summer of 2017. Produced by Ralston and John Feldmann (Goldfinger, blink-182), the 17-track Mosaic featured the singles “Too Late” and “Too Much to Think.” While on tour promoting the album with the Offspring, 311 recorded a cover of their tourmates’ “Self-Esteem” (while the Offspring took a swing at 311’s “Down”), their only output for 2018. The following year, they returned with their 13th set, Voyager. Released in the summer of 2019, the album was produced by Ralston and Feldmann, with additional contributions by British electronic producer Matan Zohar on the single “Don’t You Worry.”

of these were included on his debut album, Without Fear, which was issued in September of that year. It topped the charts in Ireland and hit number 18 on the Billboard 200. 2020 saw the release of the EP Lost in the Soft Light, a set of live, stripped-down versions of songs from Without Fear. That same year, Kennedy was the featured vocalist on “Paradise,” the chart-topping hit by Italian production trio Meduza. In 2021, he contributed a cover of Metallica’s “Nothing Else Matters” to the charity tribute album The Metallica Blacklist.

In 2022, Kennedy released his sophomore full-length, Sonder, which featured production by Scott Harris, Jonah Shy, Ryan Linvill, and others. Buoyed by heartfelt singles “Better Days,” “Something to Someone,” and “Kiss Me,” Sonder topped the Irish, Scottish, and U.K. album charts.

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