

ROCK & ROLL DAILY

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Rocklahoma Report: Four Days of '80s Hair-Metal Mania

The Rocklahoma festival was a whirlwind tour of '80s hair-metal Olympus. What a weekend — the sisters were twisted, the foxes were Britny and the

pussycats were faster. This festival united a swarm of Sunset Strip pay-to-play sleaze metal titans: Ratt, Poison, Twisted Sister, L.A. Guns, Warrant, Slaughter, Skid Row, Quiet Riot. For three days, they rose out of the cellar and into a giant field on the outskirts of Pryor, Oklahoma, where some 30,000 hardcore fans came on, felt the noize and asked each other, "Who were Firehouse again?" Whitesnake didn't make it, but White Lion did, and so did Great White. This was definitely the place where the down boys go, even if they're down men now. The fans ranged from local kids to leathery ladies still trying to fit into that vintage Winger "In the Heart of the Young" tour bustier.

Some of the bands still had it, others didn't. Poison headlined Friday night with a set that went heavy on classic-rock covers ("Suffragette City," nice; "Can't You See," gimme a break) though the inevitable highlight was "Talk Dirty to Me," the song that sums up the entire genre if anything does. Vince Neil did a solo set of mostly Mötley Crüe tunes, though unfortunately not his solo hit "You're Invited But Your Friends Can't Come." (Vince also spread the word about his upcoming ocean adventure, *The Mötley Cruise*.) Bang Tango blasted through "Untied and True," Enuff Z'Nuff did "New Thing," Faster Pussycat did "Cathouse," and Firehouse (best remembered for their feud with Firehose) probably played a bunch of Firehouse songs, though I took off for the barbecue stand so don't ask me. Queensryche added a touch of prog. Winger's "Seventeen" was greatly enhanced by Bang Tango's Joe Leste, who danced around the beer tent improvising new lyrics: "She's only seventeen / But now she's forty-three." Quiet Riot flubbed a few chords in "Cum On Feel the Noize" and "Metal Health (Bang Your Head)," yet the crowd was rooting for them, giving a strangely emotional cheer when Kevin Dubrow sang, "I'm not a loser and I ain't no weeper."

Before the show, Skid Row's guitarist said, "Nothing's changed in this band for twenty years." Dude, you mean besides the fact that *Sebastian Bach isn't in the band anymore*? Because we all noticed. Ratt has Stephen Percy back, but his voice was sadly shot. It's a shame Britny Fox doesn't have Dizzy Dean Davidson anymore, but he left in 1990, so I guess it's a little late to start complaining now. Oh well — at least Tommy Paris could hit the earsplitting high notes in "Girlschool." Warrant's new singer Jamie St. James couldn't hold a slice of cherry pie to Jani Lane. There was a strange backstage scene on Sunday, when Jani Lane unexpectedly showed up, getting into a shouting match with his old bandmates in the parking lot. Another guest was original GN'R drummer Steven Adler, who walked around, shook hands and advised anybody in earshot that it was time for Axl to cut the bullshit and get the band back together. Perhaps Skid Row's new singer Johnny Solinger said it best: "No matter how old you get ... or how old we get ... you will always be ... Youth! Gone! Wiiiiild!"

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