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Edited by Carrie Borzillo

August 24, 1999

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Aug 23, 1999, 1:00 pm PT



Lenny Kravitz

he looked out into the audience and paused, seemingly reaching for a story. Nothing was coming, so he instead looked to the audience to ask questions.

Although this broke the ice and got the dialogue going, Kravitz was clearly amazed by one or two dopey questions that were asked, such as the brilliant "Was Jimi Hendrix an influence on your work?" "Oh my God, yes," he answered without a moment's pause, "that's like asking Eddie Murphy if he'd ever listened to Richard Pryor records."

Kravitz and the band played an emotional "Thinking of You," which was followed by a sad story about the song's subject, his late mother, actress Roxie Roker of *The Jeffersons*. Fittingly, the tribute to his mom segued into a rocking "Always on the Run," which suffered not a bit without Slash, who played on the recorded original. From there, the band went into slowed-down, reggae-ish

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take on "Fly Away."

Kravitz introduced "My Precious Love," from his debut album *Let Love Rule*, with the story everyone was still talking about after the show ended. "I used to do some crazy shit as a kid," he said, "and I would hang out late at nightclubs and stuff." "And stuff" apparently extended to befriending a 13-year-old prostitute, stealing her from her pimp, and letting her live under his bed, unbeknownst to his parents, for months. Hollywood mom Roker flipped her lid when she discovered the girl under the bed, but when Kravitz explained the situation she was, amazingly, OK with it.

Seeing the effect his story was having on the audience - they were at the edge of their seats, eyes wide with concern, like they were waiting for a *Melrose Place* commercial break to end - he quickly assured the crowd, "everything worked out great, she's OK now."

After getting the crowd going with a performance of the title track from *Let Love Rule*, Kravitz moved to a separate area in the center of the audience for a solo acoustic performance. Although there wasn't a lot of interaction or storytelling, this was the most intimate part of the show by far. Kravitz really emoted for the first time as he played "Believe," and even more so on "Rosemary," another selection from *Let Love Rule*.

Kravitz was clearly comfortable in the intimate setting, but he opted to let his music tell his story, favoring a set that spanned his many albums over extensive discussion of the songs and songwriting. Judging from their reaction, the audience wouldn't have had it any other way. Kravitz's *Storytellers* is tentatively set to premiere early November on VH1.

-- Matt Sager

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