

Reeves Gabrels and HiS iMAGgiNARY Fri3NDS

The Family Wash
Nashville, Tennessee

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By Rick Moore

It's not every night one gets to see a bona fide guitar hero playing for tips in a converted laundromat, but that's what about fans of Reeves Gabrels were treated to recently at Nashville's Family Wash.

The longtime David Bowie cohort has gone the power trio route with Reeves Gabrels and HiS iMAGgiNARY Fri3NDS, featuring bassist Kevin Hornback and drummer Jeff Brown. In Nashville, Gabrels put on a guitar clinic, showing a range that wasn't always evident with Tin Machine or in the '90s incarnations of Bowie's band, or even in his hired-gun work with such artists as Natalie Imbruglia and Robert Smith of the Cure.

Opening with the well-written "Wish You Were Her," Gabrels showed a confidence in his vocal ability that was lacking on *Rock-onica* and *Ulysses*, where much of the night's material was drawn from. The band used the gratis club date as a rehearsal session before hitting the road, and Gabrels demonstrated total mastery of his pedalboard, combining what sounded like the best of both analog and digital in "Underneath," "Bus Stop," and "Accident."

While Gabrels, now in his early fifties, admits to being influenced by older greats like Jeff Beck, but came across more like Eric Clapton this evening, showing a singer/songwriter sensibility. He combined his 21st century virtuosity in several tunes, going from simple open chord progressions to tearing off screaming rapid-fire upper register notes in the blink of an eye. He also effortlessly incorporated some two-handed tapping and even some jazzier licks that he may have picked up during his Berklee days.

Gabrels set aside his original material briefly for a nicely arranged version of "Messin' With the Kid" that featured tasty modulations, and paid homage to the traditional blues rockers of the '60s and '70s. This is the closest you'll ever see Reeves Gabrels playing classic rock or blues.

His current band lineup is more reminiscent of Mountain than Cream, though, with the rhythm section supporting the star guitarist. Gabrels' growing songwriting ability, combined with his unique talent on the guitar, make him a rare individual indeed.

