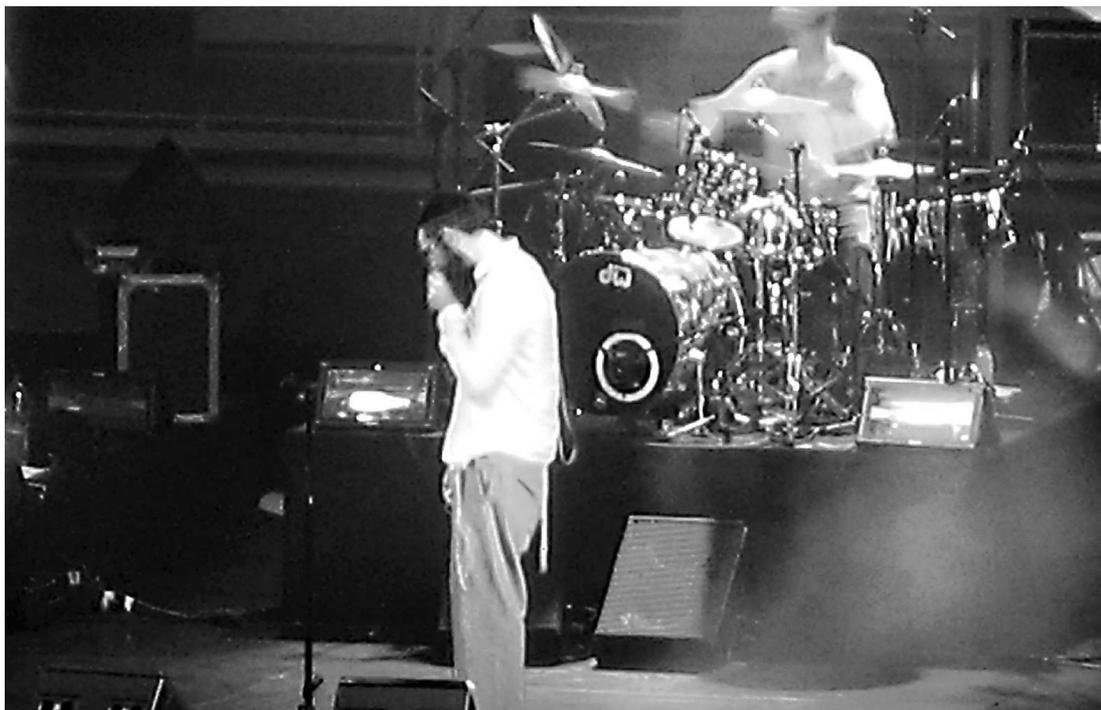


||| MATISYAHU. Hard core religion meets languorous melody in a unique, yet exclusive performance

Preaching to the converted

||| Matisyahu and his crew were in Caracas for a one-night-only show at the Hebraica in Los Chorros. ||| The DJ managed to secure press passes to the concert, luckily enough as tickets were being sold at a whopping Bs.150,000.



With tight restrictions prohibiting photography, Matisyahu is just about discernible in this surreptitiously snapped picture of last week's gig.

Leah van Deventer | DJ Staff
Yomar Monsalve | DJ Photo

Last week famed religious rhymers Matisyahu and his crew came to Caracas, for a one-night-only show at the Anfiteatro Jacobo y Sofia Mishkin in Los Chorros.

The location here at the Hebraica was amazing - a huge, high-ceilinged hall overlooking the city along with bandstands, food stalls and roomy, clean bathrooms. And of course one had to pass through the immense grounds to get there, through lush gardens and past the Olympic-sized swimming pool all nestled comfortably on the side of the Avila in its own private paradise.

Where is this place, you must be wondering? Well, the reason for its anonymity is the same reason the amphitheatre was selected to host this special event: Hebraica is a private sports and cultural club used exclusively by the Jewish community, and Matisyahu is a reggae artist with deep religious affiliations of that same faith.

The Daily Journal managed to secure press passes to the concert,

➔ "From the forest itself, comes the handle for the axe."
- Matisyahu.

luckily enough as tickets were being sold at a whopping Bs.150,000 a pop and besides that were being reserved solely for club members.

The feeling of good fortune slowly turned to disbelief, however, when faced with the immense amount of security one had to struggle through to enter the promised land.

Boys were separated from girls, bags thoroughly searched, cigarettes confiscated and we were sharply warned against taking photos of the performance, hence the grainy camera-phone shot above.

During the whole admittance process, it became clear that the majority of concert-goers were under aged, which explained liquor sales

being replaced by sodas and popcorn and the string of mums waiting out the noise in the lavatory. Not to be discouraged, and having seen some grownups sporting Polars on our way in, we decided to exit the hall in search of the desired beverage whilst waiting for the main event.

No such luck. Upon approaching the entrance we were confronted by the same charming young lady who manned the door at the Fidel Nidal concert in early February, and who had made a severely negative impression on The Daily Journal with her pompous attitude and obvious delight in her relative power. It was in or out, she said, with no 'ifs', 'ands' or 'buts' about it. Press? Who cares?

So up into the bandstands we went with our waters, the evening cruelly dampened by a run-in with what is fast becoming a thorn in the side of cultural writing. Although a bit glum the time was nevertheless passed in amusement at the naughty teens sneakily smoking spliffs and snogging in the dark.

Eventually the crowd below us surged, with the catcalls advising us that Matisyahu had finally appeared. Spirits immediately lifted and the

hassle of the last hour suddenly forgotten, we settled in to absorb the artist's uncanny, electrifying fusion of Orthodox Judaism and classic reggae. And what a voice! Matisyahu really does sing like an angel, which makes his message of love and peace all the more provocative.

And his presentation was made all the more unique by his rendition of what appeared to the untrained eye as the *Horu* whilst busting out reggae beats. Sadly, however, acoustic problems made it difficult to make out Matisyahu's lyrics, and the performance as a whole didn't match up to the glory of his recorded resonance.

The sense of disappointment after the concert was almost certainly exacerbated by the lack of atmosphere that usually epitomizes a live gig. Furthermore, Venezuela was robbed of what could have been a thrilling performance had it been held at another venue and been open to the general public. Surely a message such as that of Matisyahu should be readily available and not enjoyed only by a select minority.

Here's hoping his upcoming gigs in Israel and South Africa will be a little more inspiring. |||



UPCOMING AND ONGOING

Art. Opening tonight from 8 p.m. at Galeria 39 is *5 segundos mas de vida*, twelve photos from artist Oscar Molinari. The mixed media images depict *chuzos* or rudimentary knives, fabricated by inmates to defend themselves - or to attack others - in brutal Venezuelan prisons. Molinari will be the subject of a major retrospective at the Museo de Arte Contemporáneo early next year. Galeria 39 is located on calle Bolívar with calle Instrucción, La Casona sector, El Hatillo. Call (212) 961-0023 for more info.

Art. There is another inauguration going on at the same tonight, this time at Spazio Zero in Altamira. The show is called *05 COLECTIVA 07* and brings together twelve artists who specialize in diverse media. Ota. Belén on 6a. transversal with San Juan Bosco opposite Plaza Miranda and Clínica El Ávila. Call (212) 2635338 or email spaziozero@gmail.com for more info.

Guitar workshops. The legendary Mike Stern will be imparting some of his boundless wisdom in a series of 'guitar clinics' taking place in various locations in April. On April 14 he will be in the Maracay Opera Theater, April 16 in the World Music Shop in Maracaibo and April 17 in Caracas. The first two events are free but his third appearance, in Centro Cultural Corp Banca, will cost Bs. 35,000. He is being brought here courtesy of Yamaha Venezuela, watch this space for more info.

Contemporary dance. The VIII Edition of the Improvisation Festival will take place in Chacao this weekend, bringing together *ballerinas*, musicians, choreographers, DJs, break-dancers and circus performers for the delight of the public. The Plaza Bolívar in Chacao is the location, from 7.30 p.m. on both Saturday and Sunday.