

# Simple Plan

No Pads, No Helmets...Just Balls 15th Anniversary Tour

Saturday April 1, 2017

Pop/punk/Alternative Rock

House of Blues Chicago- \$30.50/ticket

## Simple Plan Proves They've Still Got It After 15 Years

Canadian natives Simple Plan are making their way around the United States this spring to celebrate the 15th anniversary of their debut album, *No Pads, No Helmets...Just Balls*. The quintet returned to the House of Blues Chicago for two sold out shows where they performed their debut album, in full, before surprising the audience with a seven song encore of fan favorites. The night started off with Ontario rock band, Seaway, lighting up the stage and getting the crowd pumped for the second opener of the tour, Florida based powerhouse, Set It Off. Both openers were a great fit for the tour, and fans seemed to enjoy both sets before Simple Plan came on stage and really started the party.

I had never heard of Seaway before the show, but their fast-paced pop/punk melodies coupled with emo-inspired lyrics, reminiscent of State Champs, was a great way to kick off the night. Most impressive, however, was their Fountains of Wayne cover of "Stacy's Mom" that had the whole venue on their feet and singing along.

Constantly on the road, Set It Off are seasoned live performers with a genuine connection with their fans that can be felt throughout whichever venue they're calling home for the night. Taking the stage by storm with their feel good hit "Why Worry" followed by songs off of their two most recent releases. As a long time fan of the band, I was disappointed that they didn't include a single song from any of their four previous albums or EPs. However, they have rebranded themselves considerably throughout the years, and the tracks they chose for this tour were an accurate representation of the image they're going for now. If you have never seen Set It Off live before, I highly recommend it.

The crowd waited anxiously in anticipation for Simple Plan to finally hit the stage while the House of Blues pumped nostalgia filled tunes from bands like Blink-182, Sum 41, and Yellowcard. Frontman, Pierre Bouvier, followed by guitarist Sébastien Lefebvre, lead guitarist Jeff Stinco, bassist David Desrosiers, and drummer Chuck Comeau walk

out to fans screaming, which seems to intensify as the first few notes of "I'd Do Anything" fill the air. They go on to play every song from *No Pads, No Helmets...Just Balls* track by track, a first for the band to ever do on tour.

Crowd surfing, beach balls flying, confetti raining; there wasn't a dull moment as men and women from teens to mid-thirties let go and had a blast listening to an album they grew up with. After 15 years of making music and touring, the guys of Simple Plan show no signs of aging or slowing down anytime soon. They still had the energy of the 21 year olds who debuted their first album in 2001. After twelve high energy songs, the first slow moment of the show came as no surprise when Pierre took the stage solo to perform one of their most popular songs, and the final track of *No Pads, No Helmets...Just Balls*, "Perfect". The room shone with cell phone lights swaying in the air while every person on the floor sang along. Halfway through, Pierre was joined by the rest of the band as the song picked up and finished strong. "One more song!" the audience cheered as the lights went down and the guys walked off stage.

The chants continued for a short moment until Simple Plan appeared before our eyes once again to play "Shut Up!" from their sophomore album *Still Not Getting Any*. Taking a moment to sincerely thank the audience for all of their support throughout the years, they remind us that Simple Plan consists entirely of all the original members and that they have remained the same group of friends that formed in high school. A truly humbling moment that makes any fan appreciative that they're still so successful and continuing to play shows all over the world. The encore went on for another half hour, featuring fan favorites "Jump", "Your Love Is A Lie", "This Song Saved My Life", "Crazy", and a more recent single "Boom!", before wrapping up with what has become the ultimate emo anthem, "Welcome To My Life".

Simple Plan has always been about the music and having a good time, while delivering powerful messages through sometimes emotional lyrics. The House of Blues was an ideal setting for the show because of the minimal interior decor and superb sound system. The focus was entirely on the band and the feeling of nostalgia, without flashy distractions or excessive lights. Large, but intimate, you could feel a personal connection with the band whether you were front row or all the way in the back.

The whole night ran smoothly, without a flaw in sight. I was lucky and snatched a ticket, day of show, from Stubhub for \$25 even though the original ticket price of \$30.50 was more than reasonable for the incredible experience and memory attendees will take with them. The helpful staff at the House of Blues assured everyone remained safe and

happy from the moment they walked into the door to the moment they walked out. The delicious mixed drinks the friendly bartenders were serving up weren't bad either.

Simple Plan stayed true to brand and delivered a memorable night full of incredible live music and entertainment. There's a reason they've remained a strong presence among the pop/punk community of the early 2000's, growing up with and keeping that audience while still holding onto a youthful vibe that appeals to teenagers today. A classic, Simple Plan will go down in history, and I look forward to catching them on their 30th anniversary tour as well. 5/5