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[**Over the Weekend**](http://blogs.sfweekly.com/shookdown/over_the_weekend/) **Grace Potter and the Nocturnals Lead a Rock 'n' Roll Revival at the Fox, 11/3/12**

By [Sam Prestianni](http://blogs.sfweekly.com/author.php?author_id=1062) Mon., Nov. 5 2012 at 4:00 AM

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**Grace Potter and the Nocturnals
Saturday, Nov. 3, 2012
Fox Theater, Oakland**

**Better than:** Believing rock is dead.

[Grace Potter](http://www.gracepotter.com/) is an old-school rockstar. With golden locks veiling her eyes and mile-long thighs in leather short-short shorts, she calls to mind Nancy Wilson in her "Barracuda" days. But with her band the Nocturnals, the 28-year-old Potter is way more hardcore than Heart. She sings and bangs her six-string -- a Flying V, no less -- with the kind of raw power that brings grown men to abrupt gesticulation.

With so many hands in the air, last night's show was like a prayer meeting. The all-ages crowd at the sold-out [Fox](http://www.voiceplaces.com/fox-theater-oakland-san-francisco-bay-area-2913548-l/) was more than happy to bow down before Potter's sugar bowl, a cinnamon-spicy combo of mystical sexual energy (channeling early Led Zeppelin), boom-funk-bam (of the James Brown watch-me-now variety), and head-sway groove (a la Stevie Wonder). It was all there, Potter's influences writ large; and like Jack White, her music felt like it's hellbent on bringing rock 'n' fuckin' roll back to its rightful place at the top of the pop charts.

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Halfway through the set, Potter smiled wide and said, "We really love our fans... You guys put out so much energy." The feeling was mutual. Fans sang along to "Loneliest Soul": "Are you lonely like I'm lonely?... I can't leave it alooooone." When Potter did her bent-knee, wings-stretched flamingo pose, we soared in time. When she moaned the sorrowful Dolly Parton ballad "Jolene," we commiserated. When she whisked us away to "Paris" with the come-on of come-ons -- "Oooh laah laah" -- we swooned.

The audience ate up her exhibitionism because Potter's unafraid to bring it, to be that full-fleshed, sweat-drenched, unairbrushed girl from the posters on your teenage bedroom wall (circa 1975) -- which is what rock 'n' roll is supposed to be. What's remarkable is how she managed to pull this off without being vacuous. She's like those one or two cool kids on *American Idol* that you root for in the early episodes but know will never win, not because they don't have what it takes to fill a concert hall, but they're not willing to conform to the squeaky cleanliness that passes for stardom in the 21st Century. Potter's proving to everyone that the path to Valhalla in 2012 is by both honoring and pushing beyond her forebears (e.g., her "White Rabbit" trounced the Jefferson Airplane original) with dirty-sweet, full-throttle musicmaking.

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There's an intimation of anarchy in the ballsy sound of her voice, a feeling of recklessness that belies the absolute control she and her bandmates have over their material. The Nocturnals are a supertuned muscle car. If you've been missing rip-roaring electric guitar solos in your iPod mix, you need look no further than the dueling axes of Scott Tournet and Ben Yurco, who crushed on every single song, bending blue notes into fluorescent greens -- living, breathing, pulsing shred. Their intermeshed monster string-singing on Potter's often a cappella spiritual, "Nothing But the Water," was monumental.

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The same can be said for Potter's stage presence last night. She was open-hearted and full-blooded, coming across as both venerable and approachable. There may be no better front-man or woman in pop music today. Grace Potter and the Nocturnals are badass defined.

**Critic's Notebook**

**The new album:** Unfortunately, *The Lion The Beast The Beat* is way overproduced, capturing almost none of the passion of Potter's live show.

**One word:** Amazing. That's the only way one fan could describe Potter's artistry as a musician, songwriter, and performer.

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