

In Concert: Mutemath at Park West, Chicago

Contributed by Clare Gajkowski

Even though hipsters around the world like to classify Mutemath as "indie rock," the truth is they're with Warner Brothers Records. Perhaps the label "neo alternative" would be more fitting — but I digress. Regardless of how you tag them, Mutemath is a genuinely bold band that can put on an impressive live performance. On October 5th, they played Park West in Chicago — a venue I had never been to before. Not only was there a comfortable area to stand near the stage, half of the building had black leather booth seating available under a giant disco ball. The light show was fitting, but after awhile I had to question whether or not I was indeed epileptic. (Dear Park West: settle down with the strobe lights, please.) After a few local bands, Shiny Toy Guns came on and played an extremely decent set. With two vocalists (one male, one female) and multiple guitars and keyboards, Shiny Toy Guns' energetic performance convinced me to buy their CD. (Best Buy recently put their newest CD on sale for \$7.99, so pick it up if you can spare eight bucks.)

After about thirty minutes of Shiny Toy Guns, Mutemath came out and opened with "Collapse," which flowed right into the more popular song, "Typical." The lead singer, Paul Meany started working the crowd the second he came out and didn't stop until he left over an hour later. Paul jumped on top of pianos, let the front-row fans play his Keytar and even leaped out into the audience — hitting my shoulder with his hand on the way down. Lyrically, the band isn't anything special, but musically, Mutemath is easily respectable. I was only four feet away from the lead guitarist, Greg Hill, who not only plays guitar pedals like they were instruments themselves, but bangs on his gold telecaster with a drum mallet. Guitar abuse? Maybe. Does it work well? Why yes, yes it does. But alas, the band isn't too poetic. Unless you're impressed by the words, "If I'm feeling like its now or never/can I break the spell/of the typical?" Well, Paul, since you asked — I just don't know — but I do enjoy your Keytar. For more information on Mutemath, go to www.mutemath.com or www.myspace.com/mutemath. Photo by Ryan Zejicek: www.mwrave.com For Park West information: www.parkwestchicago.com