



**Showbiz Kids at the Palladium Theater**  
**September 23, 2016 – St. Petersburg FL**  
**- by Phil Traynor**

September 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1977. It was on this day that Steely Dan's tour de force album *Aja* was released. Arguably the band's finest work – certainly it was their largest selling to date, reaching #3 on the US charts. The duo of Donald Fagen and Walter Becker combined with a veritable who's who of the studio and jazz musician communities to create a work that exemplified their smooth, sardonic, jazz-influenced rock sound. It was only fitting then that, on the 39<sup>th</sup> birthday of the 'Dan's artistic pinnacle, that one of the finest tribute bands to grace a stage hit the Palladium Theater in St. Petersburg.

Showbiz Kids was conceived, started, and is led by NYC native Phil Magallanes. Educated at music mecca North Texas State and seasoned in the New York music scene; Magallanes has toured, recorded, and worked with such notables as 10-time Grammy<sup>®</sup> winner and Emmy<sup>®</sup> winner Arturo Sandoval; Grammy<sup>®</sup> winners Blood, Sweat and Tears; Grammy<sup>®</sup> nominee and adult pop mainstay Englebert Humperdinck; and triple-Platinum teen pop sensation and Broadway/West End star Debbie Gibson.

The 12-piece ensemble's regular lineup includes Magallanes on keyboards; vocalists Todd Plant, Denise Moore, and Kirsten Joyer; Ric Craig on drums, Peter Mongaya and Thomas Griggs on guitars, Steve Boisen on bass, Austin Vickrey on sax (section leader), Kenny Anderson on sax, Kevin Clark on trumpet, and Chris "Crash" Clifton on trombone. The lineup is filled with industry veterans and educators, and their collective body of work reads like an encyclopedia of important musicians. This show had one substitution; the phenomenal Gisele Jackson (of Ray Charles' backup group The Rayettes!) was in place for Kirsten Joyer on backup vocals.

The show opened with a blistering version of the Don Grolnick-penned instrumental "Nothing Personal", made famous by Michael Brecker. This was to warm up both the audience and the band; and it gave every member of the instrumental section a place to stretch and showcase their considerable talents. Each solo was more athletic, innovative, and breathtaking than the last.

With the audience primed and ready, the vocalists took the stage, and the band broke into "Kid Charlemagne". It was immediately apparent that this ensemble has a thorough understanding of, and great love for, the intricacies and complexities that make up a Steely Dan song. The arrangements are meticulously crafted, utterly faithful yet vibrant with new energy, and powerfully executed.

The first half of the show featured three tunes from the iconic "Aja" album; "Black Cow", "Aja", and "Peg"; all high points for me, as this album is my personal favorite of the bunch. Like every other song, these three were finely crafted, played with passion, and meant to please.

The first half was rounded out with 'Dan tunes "Reelin' in the Years", "Hey Nineteen", "Pretzel Logic", and "Rikki Don't Lose That Number"; a fine blend from all of the 'Dan albums. There was one other surprise, and that was a tune NOT by Steely Dan. Magallanes encouraged every member of the ensemble to shine with special features – this particular moment was for substitute backup vocalist Giselle Jackson, a veteran of tours with Donna Summer and the immortal Ray Charles. Jackson got her Aretha Franklin on with a rendition of "Rock Steady" that absolutely brought the house down. Jackson's soaring vocal cemented her place in the power diva pantheon. She was a force of nature, and the crowd leapt to their feet in appreciation.

The second half got off to a fast start with "Bodhisattva" and kept hitting hard; reeling off the classic "Josie", Magallanes' personal favorite "Babylon Sisters", "Black Friday, and "Don't Take Me Alive". The nimble ensemble powered through each with faithful dedication, supreme musicianship, and focused showmanship.

Next, the other backup singer, the sultry and smoky alto Denise Moore got her feature as the group smoldered through the Blood, Sweat, and Tears arrangement of “God Bless the Child”. It was gutsy, gritty, and visceral. Moore is formidable singer and stage presence.

The final trio of “Do It Again”, “Deacon Blues”, and “Showbiz Kids” (With significant nods to several jazz institutions in the instrumental break, including a great homage to “Spain”) brought the house to its feet for long and thunderous ovation. For the inevitable encore, the band broke out an extended version of “My Old School”, complete with another guitar battle (which had two winners, like all the others in the show). The end was satisfying; the crowd had been treated to over two hours of top-shelf music; though they would have taken more had there been any left to give.

The big takeaways from this show were thus: Showbiz Kids is an organization built on prodigious talent and supreme love. Magallanes and crew brought that love to the Palladium, and love was returned to them in spades by an assertively appreciative crowd. It was less a concert and more a party; people were literally dancing in the aisles for most of the show! More important; the Palladium was nearly full! That a band could nearly sell out a venue as illustrious as the Palladium on only their third gig is something to consider. It speaks not only to their enormous talents and abilities, but it speaks to the sophistication of the Tampa Bay community’s taste; and it proves that this concept is eminently supportable in this market. This is a heartening thing; and I was very proud to be a part of the audience at this very significant concert event. Showbiz Kids is more than a tribute band; they are a versatile musical powerhouse that will hopefully grace the biggest stages in the Tampa Bay area and beyond for years to come.