

## Mos Def Review

Written by Maya Beecham

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I sat in a multi-colored cushioned theater seat at Guthrie Theater, anxiously waiting for what the night had in store. I came with familiarity of Mos Def as a conscious Hip Hop artist, but more familiar with his talent as an actor. It didn't take long for me to realize I have been living in a black hole. However, prior to my long awaited introduction, the audience was treated to Hip-Hop, Indie artist Dessa of Doomtreet, the show opener who performed with a four piece band that included electronic bass upright, drums, electric guitar, keyboards, and a background singer named Becca.

Just after intermission the auditorium was abuzz with the growing numbers of audience members waiting for the big moment. Currently, a long spiral staircase leading to the Wuertle Thrust Stage at Guthrie Theater in Minneapolis is strategically placed for the set of Tennessee Williams "Streetcar Named Desire" with the décor of a residential setting based in New Orleans, on Elysian Fields Avenue. On Monday, August 23, camera phones were raised in position and zoomed in as the set was taken over by Mos Def, iconic rapper, musician, activist, and actor, who descended from the spiral staircase, landing on stage dancing, singing and rapping to his adaption of the classic New Orleans R&B song "Ain't My Fault ", recorded in collaboration with Preservation Hall Jazz Band to raise funds for The Gulf Relief Foundation.

With great anticipation, members of the audience welcomed Mos Def by standing from the minute he touched the set, and stayed in position for the whole show; roaring with applause,

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cheers, rhythmic movement, and jubilant laughter at his witty humor.

Dressed in a blazer, white button-up shirt, slacks, white loafers, and headwear, while grasping a red vintage microphone, Mos Def was accompanied by DJ Preservation, and Gold Medal Man aka Big Abdul, or Mos Def's younger brother, as he clearly noted after the show. They mastered turn tables, intertwining Mos Def classics with old school standards such as "Tired of Crying" by Holland Wolf, "One Step" by Aretha Franklin, "I've Got a Woman", by Ray Charles, and an old gospel classic, "Hear My Prayer" by the Violinaires.

Audience members swayed and sang in recognition as Mos Def performed "Super Magic", "Twilite Speedball", "Pistola", "Casa Bey" and "Priority" from the CD "Ecstatic", 2009; "Fake Bonanza" from the CD "True Magic", 2006; and "Blue Black Jack", and "Hip Hop" from the CD "New Danger", 2004, just to name a few. Needless to say the audience was mesmerized. As the show ended Mos Def retreated up the spiral staircase, and exited through the set's balcony door. Applause pulled the icon back on set as he greeted the audience with dramatic gestures of gratitude. However, it was the Twin Cities that was grateful to experience such brilliant live talent in a splendid venue off the Mississippi River.

Sue McClean and Associates took one of the Midwest regions top theatrical institutions to new heights, by introducing phenomenal talent in Mos Def, and his ardent fans and some new admirers to a venue that normally presents a mix of Shakespearian standards, other old European classics, and contemporary additions. It was a symbolic meshing of culture, tradition, genre, and genius that elevated the already high ranking of the Twin Cities arts community.