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Review: Beach House

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With the lineups for Summer Sonic and Fuji Rock still to be fully decided/announced, many names people would like to see are being banded around... Could Beach House, the dream-pop duo from Baltimore, be one of them? They were in Tokyo this week for a gig at Ebisu's Liquidroom... So how was it?



Live review by Claire Scott

Fans of Beach House have high expectations; of rolling melodies; of lathered, looping drums; of Victoria Legrand’s hair. They want to be carried by music to a land of ethereal bliss, roaming with black and white horses.

“So many foreigners!” my friend remarked, casting an eye over the crowd gathered in Ebisu’s Liquidroom. “We came from Nagano” was heard elsewhere, and I’d travelled from Shizuoka especially. Over the last few years Beach House – Legrand on keyboard, organ and vocals, Alex Scally on guitars – have steadily gained international acclaim. While the opportunity to see such a band in Japan might not be rare, the chance to see them

in a relatively small venue is. Beach House had indeed brought the gaijin out of the woodwork.

Warmed up by the endearing Dustin Wong, the atmosphere crackled as people checked their watches, counting down the minutes. At 20:01 the Baltimore duo stepped out, Legrand shimmering in a black- glittered blazer, and launched into a spine-tingling Wild, whetting the crowd's appetite for what was to come. The pressure, though, was perhaps too great.

While the songs were played out perfectly well and the crowd seemed to be enjoying itself, something was lacking. Other People felt subdued and while Lazuli was truly lovely, with its crescendo of synths and cymbals it should have been soaring. It wasn't until a holler of "What are you hiding behind?" was thrown out from the crowd that Beach House sparked – not with venom or disdain, but with emotion.

"We're not hiding behind anything" Legrand retorted. "We're giving a lot of love from up here, and we hope you can feel it."

The ice had been broken and the tension shifted, lifted from the space between band and audience and pushed into the core of the music. Beach House burned, almost as if they had something to prove. And prove it they did.

Newer tracks Myth and Wishes moved into the sublime, but it was those from Teen Dream that really shone.

Norway lifted the room into a dreamlike euphoria, Zebra

and 10 Mile Stereo kept everyone transcended, and older fans were delighted by the surprise inclusion of Master Of None from the band's self-titled debut.

Set highlights were saved for last. On announcing we were being treated to "something very special", Scally and Legrand gave a piercingly tender rendition of Tokyo Witch, met first with awe and then uproarious applause. The climax came when the band invited a beaming Dustin Wong (who looked like all of his Christmases had come at once) to join them on stage for Irene, a collaboration that left fans with a real sense of occasion.

The audience basked in the sea of white light flowing from the stage, Legrand's gauzy reverb of "it's a strange paradise" echoing around them and off into the night. By the close, all had been transported. Much like their road to commercial success, Beach House may have struggled at first but had they marched out triumphant from the start, people might not have been so impressed. In the face of an adoring but demanding crowd, tenacity won out.

Illuminating and ever-so-slightly spangly, Beach House more than delivered. And they may well have won a few more devotees.

Viewable online at: <http://www.tokyoweekender.com/2013/01/review-beach-house/>