

FEAST FOR THE SENSES

TIMOTHY FINN



TFINN@KCSTAR.COM

Performance of “The Wall” isn’t just music, it’s an epic and extravagant piece of theater.

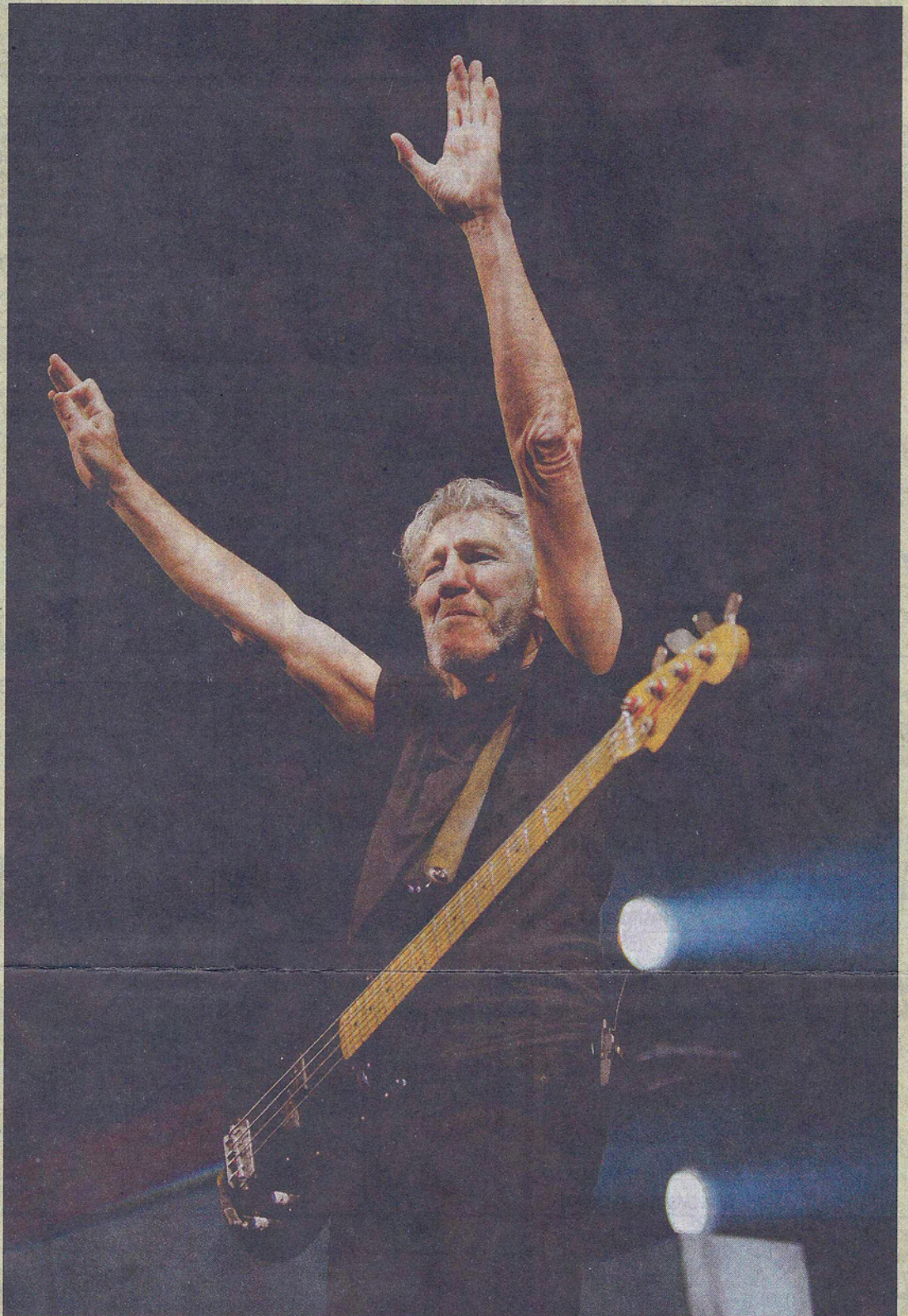
As a live music event, the 2010 version of “The Wall” is based on a shaky premise: that fans will pay as much as \$200 a seat to hear Roger Waters and a cast of supporting musicians — none of whom has anything to do with Pink Floyd — perform from start to finish one of the most commercially successful, beloved and ambitious art-rock albums in history.

The music alone would not justify such a price tag, so Waters accordingly turned the performance into a epic, gaudy and extravagant piece of theater — an onslaught of sights, sounds and socio-political themes. Some of it was poignant, some of it was bombastic, some of it was viscerally thrilling, like a great rock show ought to be. But all of it was entertaining.

The history of “The Wall” — the album, the Alan Parker movie, the 1980 tour — is its own libretto. So most of the more than 13,000 fans who saw Saturday’s performance at the Sprint Center were no doubt schooled in the show’s background. The album is Waters’ magnum opus on his life from childhood to adulthood and all the demons and disappointments that forced him to isolate himself from the outside world.

So as the show begins, the famous and enormous white wall is erected on stage, brick by brick, until it obscures the band and becomes a screen upon which a dazzling array of videos and visuals are projected. Technically, this was a nearly flawless show. The sound was clean and true. As clean as the sound was, however, except for a few songs when the crowd indulged in a group-sing, the music played second fiddle to the visual orgy that kept erupting on stage.

Some of those visual elements were garish spectacles, like the gargantuan inflated puppets (the schoolteacher, the mother). Others were more humane in their



CHRIS OBERHOLTZ | THE KANSAS CITY STAR

Pink Floyd co-founder Roger Waters performed the entire rock opera “The Wall” on Saturday at the Sprint Center. For a photo gallery, go to KansasCity.com/entertainment.

display and their message, such as the photos and bios of war victims, including the Iraq war.

Sensory overload, in a good way.

For me, there were several moments of anticipation, including “Another Brick in the Wall Part 2,” but especially “Hey You,” “Bring the Boys Back

Home,” “Comfortably Numb” and “Run Like Hell.”

Waters brought with him an 11-piece band that included guitarist G.E. Smith (sideman to many, including Bob Dylan, and former “Saturday Night Live” band leader) and Waters’ son Harry, who played keyboards. The show ended with Waters

and the band lined up along the rubble of the fallen wall, singing the languid and lovely “Outside the Wall,” with Waters on trumpet. It was a rare feeling of warmth and human connection in an entertaining show filled with grand visions of loss, nightmarish fantasies, stern warnings and dark omens.