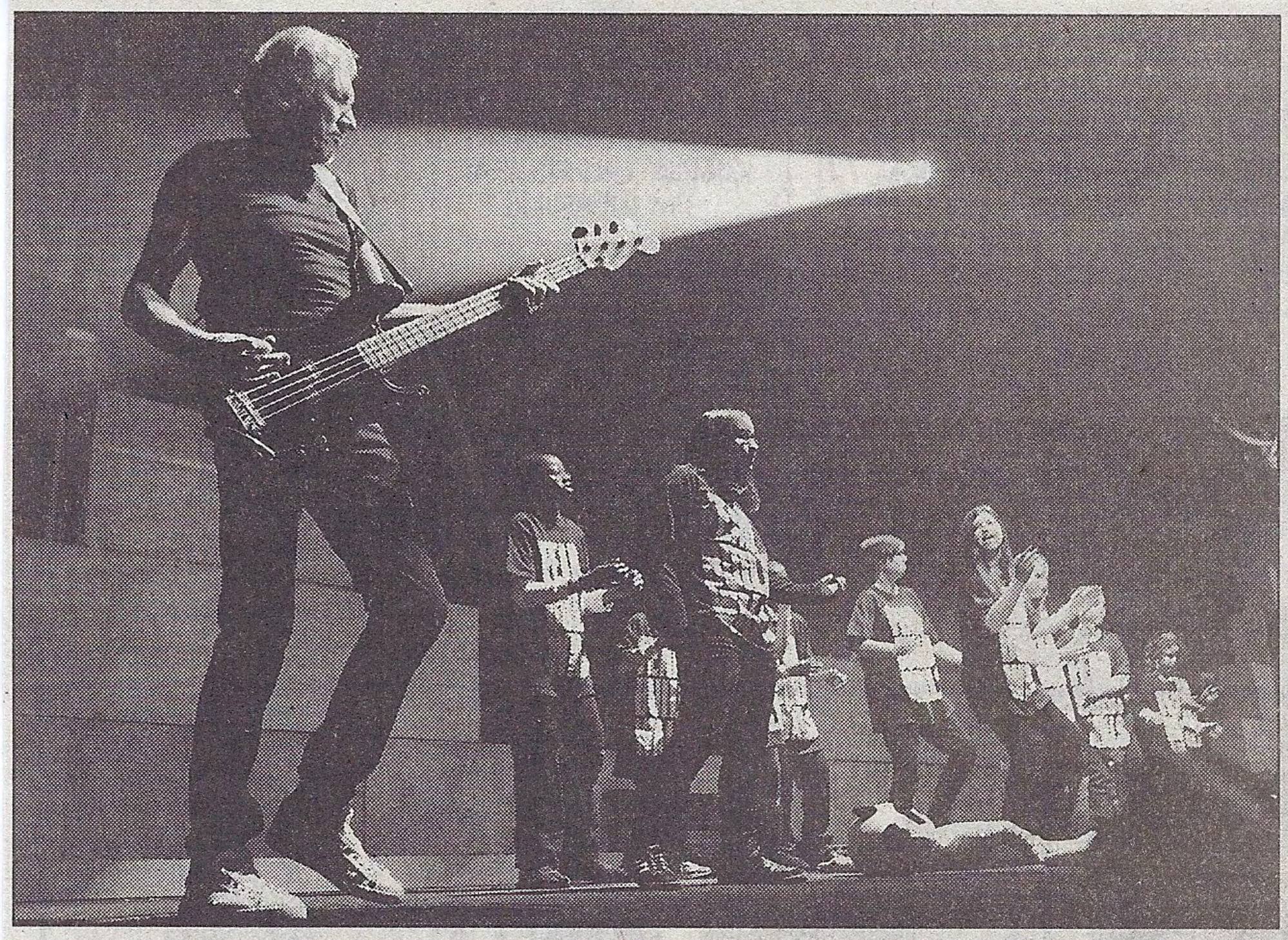

Roger Waters, Pink Floyd cofounder and songwriter, performing "Another Brick in the Wall" at the Wells Fargo Monday.

MICHAEL BRYANT / Staff Photographer

Review *Music*

'The Wall' is mighty mighty

By Jonathan Valania
FOR THE INQUIRER

Thirty years after its release, *The Wall* still looms large on the cultural horizon, a forbidding totem marking the zenith of rock's commercial and artistic ascendancy.

Never before (and probably never again) had a double album of such dark and potent ideas — the brutal profiteering of war, the magnetic allure of suicide, the emotional fascism of celebrity — become a mega-selling pop-music blockbuster. That it happened once still beggars belief, and yet the album has gone on to sell 11.5 million copies.

Still, *The Wall* ain't what it used to be, literally and figuratively.

Though originally released as a group effort under the Pink Floyd brand, *The Wall* always was essentially a Roger Waters solo album, a private exorcism of all the demons that tormented him: the war pigs that devoured his daddy, the overbearing mother who smothered him in hugs, the sadistic teachers who poured their derision on everything he did, the women who seduced and then betrayed him, and the megalomaniacal fame that warped him. Each one another brick in the protective wall of isolation he erected around himself.

But the concept album to end all concept albums has proven malleable enough to survive the new contexts Waters would find for it, such as performing it amidst the ruins of the Berlin Wall in 1990. Today, the titular wall has come to stand for the false dividing lines of nationalism, consumerism, and sectarianism that keep us separated and scared in a turbulent world of perpetual war, religious fanaticism, and panicked buying and selling.

Such was the case Monday night at the Wells Fargo Center, where Waters staged *The Wall* as thrilling live spectacle, with eye-dazzling pyrotechnics, three-story-high puppets, high-def projections, mesmerizing audio, and a gigantic white wall erected brick by brick during the course of the concert until it completely separated the performers from the audience, only to collapse spectacularly at the end. (Waters will perform again at the center Thursday night at 8.)

As a musical performance, *The Wall* live is a flawless recreation of the album, with Waters and his crack 12-piece backing band sounding tight as a tourniquet and delivering note-perfect fidelity, down to the smallest sonic detail. As spectacle, it is peerless in this concert season, or any in recent memory, for that matter. The sheer scale of the production — the fighter plane that crashes into the stage during "In the Flesh," the towering menace of the puppetry during "Mother" and "Another Brick in the Wall," the cinematic sweep of the animations (most notably the ominous marching hammers and the copulating flowers), and the sheer enormity of the wall itself — matches the outsized thematic scope of the piece, which is to say everything that's been going on in the world during the first bloody, awful decade of the 21st century.

Everyone should see it once before they die.

Roger Waters "The Wall" Live

8 p.m. Thursday at the Wells Fargo Center. Tickets: $78-$253 Information: ComcastTix.com, 1-800-298-4200.

See more photos from "The Wall" at www.philly.com/wallphotos.