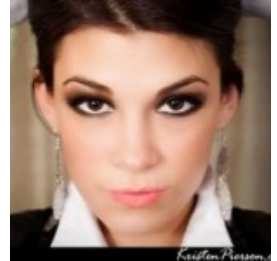


Sully Erna to Play the Zeiterion Theatre



By Jessica A. Botelho

Sully Erna, lead singer of the Boston-based rock band Godsmack, is set to kick off a tour in support of his solo debut album Avalon. The show will hit the Zeiterion Performing Arts Center on Saturday, May 21, with an eclectic ensemble of seven musicians who will help share his new blend of seductive voodoo with fans.

Erna said he is “super-stoked” for the tour, which will feature a massive drum explosion. “Wait until you see this,” he said. “There’s this piece called ‘Cast Out,’ with a long chord that just rings out about halfway through it and everybody puts down their instruments and eight people go at it drumming at the same time. It’s sick. Some people are on hand drums, some on shakers; one guy is on a drum set. It’s like a ritual.”

He also said the performance will include “amazing” cinematic visuals and scenery. In that aspect, Erna hopes to emulate some of the bands he favored when growing up. “Pink Floyd and Fleetwood Mac just took you into this zone and through this real musical journey through visuals,” he said. “We really want to pull people into the music here.”



The set list includes updated versions of Godsmack songs and will highlight Erna's new material as well, which consists of mystical world music with an alternative spin. He wrote a few tracks within the last few years but knew the style wasn't quite right for Godsmack because it was too mellow and peaceful.

"It's got a different vibe to it," said Erna. "It's very emotional. I love that I'm a part of this project that moves people on a musical level and isn't so much about all the pyro and that kind of stuff. I put my heart and soul into it and it's really meaningful to me. So far, people are embracing it the way I hoped they would and I hope they spread the word. I can't wait to get out there and just enjoy playing and traveling again."

Erna began the project with longtime friend Lisa Guyer, a blues singer with a four-octave range. She has opened for artists such as Pat Benatar and Ted Nugent, and recorded with guitarist Barry Goudreau of Ernie and the Automatics.

"I talked to (Guyer) first and said, 'I think the dynamics of our voices work well together,' and that was the nucleus of it," said Erna. "From there we met Niall Gregory, a percussionist from Ireland, and then it was us three."



Sully and Lisa Guyer performing songs from

Avalon.

Shortly thereafter, Guyer invited a few more people to join the mix and Erna asked classically trained cellist Irina Chirkova of Bulgaria to become a member. It wasn't long before the band completed their line-up, adding guitarist and vocalist Tim Theriault; keyboardist, vocalist and midi player Chris Decato; bassist and acoustic guitarist Chris Lester; and David Stefanelli on drums and percussion.

"Everything just kind of fell into place and little by little this thing became what it is," Erna said. "I'm very grateful to have everybody. They are just phenomenal musicians from all over the world."

All of the band members are multi-instrumentalists and are featured on his new album. He said they each bring their unique abilities to the group, ultimately creating a powerhouse of performers.

"They've all brought in their own influences and that's why I think this whole thing became so special," said Erna. "If we didn't have a show prepared, which we do, it's neat to see multiple people up on the stage play all these different instruments and jamming. It's pretty cool to see everybody shifting around doing different things. I'm excited and everyone involved is excited because as a musician you want to play everything."

In addition to being a vocalist, Erna is a guitarist, pianist, and drummer. He was three and half when he took his first drum lesson, and he gradually started singing and playing guitar over the years. However, he recently developed a fond relationship with the piano. He believes it has a soothing, meditative affect.



Sully Erna on stage.

“There’s just something calming about playing the piano,” Erna said. “Sometimes, it’s the first thing I do when I wake up in the morning. It grounds me and I feel very centered. I’ve definitely connected with the piano the last few years more than ever.”

He feels the piano is often under-appreciated at times, and thinks of it as one of the most important instruments ever created. “It has every note,” he said. “You don’t need a full band and you can really make it sound full with all the bass notes, lead notes, and harmonies. You can play by yourself and it can move you to tears at times if you play the right kind of melodies.”

Erna said those types of deep experiences also occur during live performances at small venues. Because stages and audiences are closer together, he is able to see just how much his music impacts his fans.

“I was doing an acoustic, *Story Tellers*-type of evening, and I looked out at the crowd and see people in tears,” he said. “When you’re writing a song, you’re not always thinking about how it’s going to affect someone. But when you bring it live and you see the emotion, when you touch people through your own experiences, it’s the most rewarding part of playing in front of a live audience.”

The Zeiterion Performing Arts Center’s box office is located at 684 Purchase Street in downtown New Bedford. Tickets for

Sully Erna's concert are priced at \$40 and \$35, and can be purchased online. Box Office Hours: M-F 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., Sat. 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., and one hour before each performance. Parking is free in an adjacent parking garage. For more information, visit www.zeiterion.org or call the box office at 508-994-2900.