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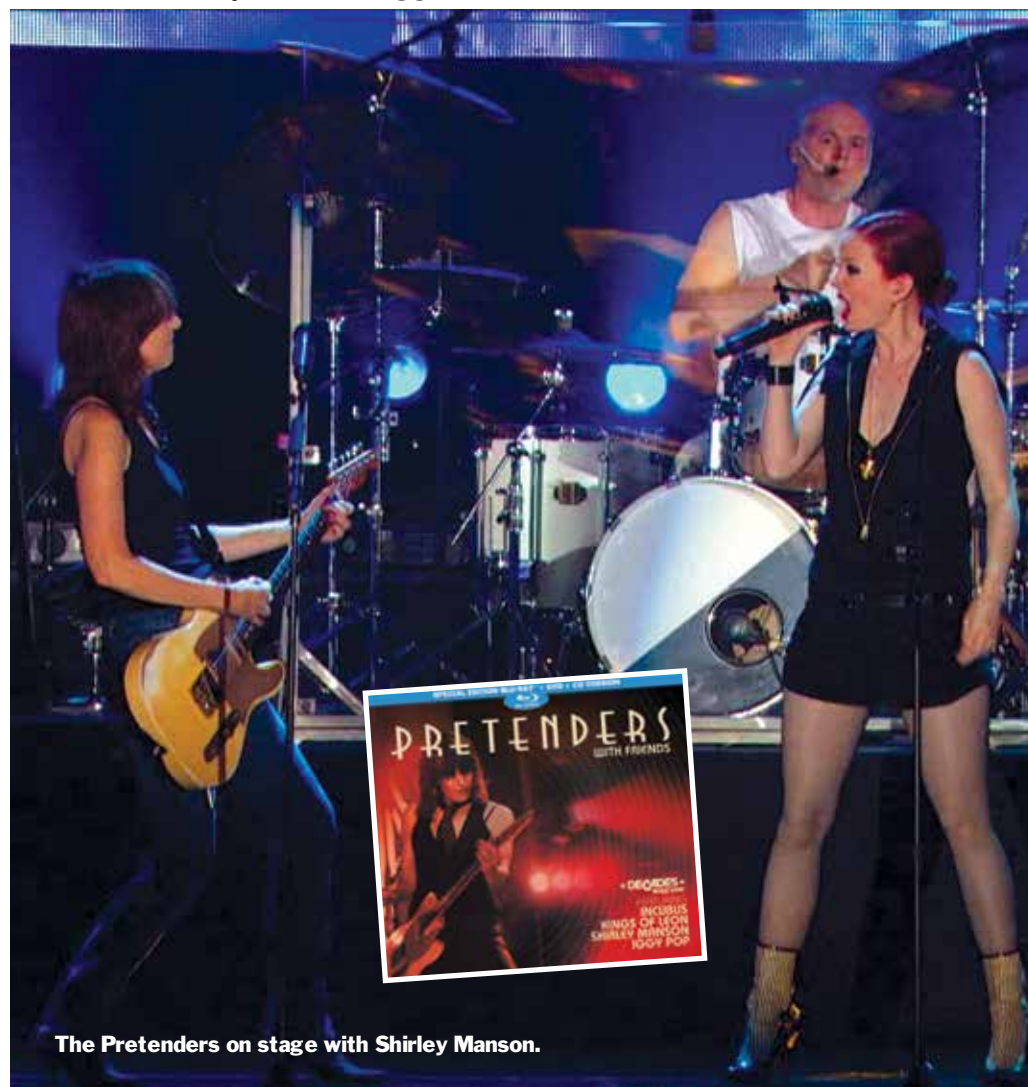
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Chrissie Hynde Is The Great Pretender

by Chris Narloch

Of all the great female rockers from the 20th Century still out on the road – including Bonnie Raitt, Pat Benatar, Joan Jett, and the Wilson sisters of Heart – Chrissie Hynde of The Pretenders may be the biggest bad-ass of them all.



The Pretenders on stage with Shirley Manson.

Hynde is the vocalist and a guitarist for one of the finest indie rock bands of the rock era, and she has a career-capping concert film now available on DVD and Blu-ray that combines her classic hits with a few songs by newer artists she admires, such as Incubus, Shirley Manson (from Garbage) and Kings of Leon.

The concert disc, entitled “Pretenders With Friends,” also features Chrissie trading vocals with the one and only Iggy Pop – the legendary punk rocker is now 72 but as spry as ever – who gives the 67-year-old Hynde a run for her money on “Candy.”

Hynde is beloved by rock music fans around the world and also by queer fans, who appreciate her ballsy, no-bullshit attitude and her band’s classic songs, which run the gamut from political (“Middle of the Road”) to sexual (“Brass in Pocket”).

The outspoken, no-holds-barred rocker is twice divorced from men but decidedly gay-friendly, and it wasn’t hard for me to find a 2006 Billboard interview online in which she said, “Gays saved America.”

Hynde went on to explain: “All across America, with gentrification, it was the gay community that had the vision, means, taste, fortitude and determination to carve something out and save what was left of

these cities. No one else got it. They were all out in their condos, out in the suburbs, getting far away from the blacks.”

The Pretenders, a post-punk rock band that formed in 1978 at the height of the disco period, lost two original members to drugs along the way but retain their lead singer and main songwriter in Hynde.

I had the good fortune to see Hynde live again, for the first time in many years, at Sacramento’s Golden 1 Center, when The Pretenders opened for Stevie Nicks on her solo tour a few years back.

Nicks was terrific too, but Hynde stole the show with a fierce set that took me back to The Pretenders’ peak period in the ‘80s. The rocker is also on fire in “Pretenders With Friends,” showing much younger performers like Ms. Manson and the guys from Kings of Leon how it’s done.

Even in her late 60s, Hynde is tough and sexy, wearing tight jeans and a little vest in the new concert film, with her dark hair still in her eyes.

“Pretenders With Friends” contains live versions of “Back on the Chain Gang,” “Talk of the Town,” “Up the Neck,” “Message of Love,” “Precious,” “Mystery Achievement,” “Brass in Pocket,” “Middle of the Road,” and more. The Blu-ray/DVD/CD is out now.

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