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"Sweet Baby James" Rocks Kleinhans

sweet baby
James
The Music of James Taylor
Thursday, September 24, 8pm



You've got a friend in Bob Stillman. His "Sweet Baby James" music of James Taylor concert at Kleinhans Music Hall on Thursday showed not only can the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra rock, they draw a pretty good crowd to do it.

"Sweet Baby James" carried the nearly-full house of Taylorheads through James Taylor's breakout album in the first set, then conducted a greatest hits jam session throughout the second, culminating in that great link-arms-and-sing ballad, "You've Got a Friend." While the crowd seemed unsure of how to handle themselves in the stately music hall suddenly filled with electric guitars and a full drum kit, a few brave souls clapped along to the catchier numbers, and gradually the audience seemed to relax. Yes folks, it's okay to clap for the BPO. A cello is generally too heavy to throw anyway.

"We've been doing this for almost a year now, and this is our first time playing with a symphony orchestra," said Stillman halfway through his first set. "It's kind of cool to have the full crew behind us."

Indeed, the full orchestra added a full-bodied, almost visual layer of sound to what could otherwise have been a fairly thin band. Where Stillman needed backup on the grand piano, the string section kicked in with lilting threads of melody behind him. Stephen Benson's guitar riffs and Brian Cassier's bass stylings needed little support, but the addition of reedy woodwinds and that big-band sound underneath certainly didn't hurt. As for vocalist Connie James, her smooth, jazzy voice was practically made to pair up with a set of brass.



When people think of the BPO, one thing usually pops into their minds: classical. They expect soft, soothing tones, swelling crescendos, forte and piano, Beethoven and Handel. All that is well and good, but the BPO is breaking out of that box and proving their worth not only as classical [craftsmen](#), but musical masters in all realms of the art. While this upcoming season includes the familiar classical offerings, the BPO also brings such diverse acts as Ben Folds, Charlie Chaplin, and music from the popular Harry Potter movies. Not a fan of Beethoven or Bach? Try on some Star Wars for size.



"Sweet Baby James" demonstrated that not only can the BPO play popular music, but Buffalo audiences love it. The house was almost full, quite a feat for a Thursday night in busy early September. Despite a timid beginning, the crowd quickly warmed up to Stillman and his band, and by the end of the evening, the whole place "rockabye-d" off into the night. Not a bad beginning to what promises to be a season full of surprises. Uploaded by: schumeeal