

Andrew W.K., strings attached

By Jed Gottlieb / Review | Thursday, October 1, 2009 | <http://www.bostonherald.com> | **Music News**

Can you imagine OzzyOsbourne leading the MilesDavis Quintet through a set of Hoagy Carmichael standards? Or Elvis, Jim Morrison and James Brown tackling "O Sole Mio?"

Neither fantasy approaches the bizarre reality of Andrew W.K. and the Calder Quartet's show at Coolidge Corner Theatre on Tuesday.

A classical chamber group known for adventurousness, the Calder Quartet doesn't shy away from odd collaborations; the foursome recently worked with Airborne Toxic Event. But linking with W.K. - a headbanger known for partying hard and songs about it ("It's Time to Party," "Party 'til You Puke") - seems a stretch.

But W.K. is also a Bach-loving piano whiz who began classical lessons at age 4. The night began with Bach's Prelude in C Major/"Ave Maria" before quickly detouring into goofy Fred Frith compositions that had the musicians jabbing at their instruments like elementary school students doing free jazz.

Then things got really weird.

The quartet's duet with a four-channel, one-bit electronic circuit came off like the "Frogger" soundtrack over avant-garde chamber music. During W.K.'s solo improvisation he pounded out rhythms on the piano top, thundered on the keys and detoured into what resembled flashes of Chopin and ragtime.

Then things got really, really weird.

(Story continues below)



The audience of mostly teens and 20-somethings were respectful of what W.K. called his "grand experiment" during the first set. But when the rocker busted out originals, anarchy trampled civility.

A few people ran onstage during "I Get Wet," opening a floodgate W.K. only encouraged.

"I want everybody who wants to get on stage with us to come up here!" he shouted.

A few dozen fans took him up. Suddenly a night that began with Bach was climaxing with a bunch of rowdies bouncing around a suit-clad string quartet.

ANDREW W.K. and the CALDER QUARTET at Coolidge Corner Theatre, Brookline, Tuesday night.

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