

Elliott

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and having trouble with his voice, is back to performing and said that his voice is “getting stronger over time.”

“You have to wait it out and get yourself back up again,” Elliott said.

For Def Leppard, this recent challenge was one among many that the group has faced over the years.

“The fact that we’ve actually managed to stay together without beating the crap out of each other is miraculous,” Elliott said with a laugh. “We’ve had plenty of things put in our way. It gives you perspective. When your first guitarist is kind of sacked, or asked to leave, because he has an enormous drinking problem, your other guitarist eventually dies of [an addiction], and your drummer, in between, loses an arm ... those kinds of things that would split lesser bands, or lesser incidents that would split even better bands — we don’t really take them as seriously as most people would, because when you’ve had those obstacles, they kind of pull you together and give you perspective. We’re really fortunate that we’ve been on the same page, pretty much every day since we’ve been together. We’ve wanted to be as positive and uplifting as we can and make music that makes people smile.”

It’s that perspective, along with the group’s unique take on music, that

has helped the band endure over the years.

“With us, it’s like pop rock, and I say that for all the best reasons, because we’re a rock band and we’ve done pop hit singles,” Elliott said of the band’s style.

“At the peak of our power, we were rubbing shoulders with the likes of Janet and Michael Jackson, Prince, Madonna, Celine Dion. We were the sore thumb in the top five. I thought that was fantastic, because we were representing rock in a pop environment. That meant that our music was more accessible than most rock bands and that’s because we were embracing more than rock,” Elliott said.

“Most rock bands just listen to rock music, but we were listening to everything from the Beach Boys to Kate Bush to Tom Waits to R&B and Motown. We grew up just liking songs. I think that’s why we gravitated toward each other. We were never afraid to really like that song by Jackson 5 or by Marvin Gaye. ... That’s all part of why we are who we are.”

For Def Leppard, Elliott said that entertaining is where they shine, and is what they have come to pride themselves on over the years.

“We just want to entertain and have fun with it. It’s just where we came from. Our upbringing led us in that direction, and there’s no shame in that. There’s no harm in having a band that entertains. That’s what people want to see,” Elliott said.

Rock

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knowing her real name or caring where she’s from.

As Stacey Jaxx, Andrew Crowe is mesmerizing. His rock star is a train wreck waiting to happen, and the audience just can’t look away. Crowe grabs hold of theatergoers and doesn’t let go. He sizzles in the role, reminding the audience that talent alone does not make a star but the ability to outshine everyone else in the vicinity by sheer force of will often does. Plus, he has those Morrison moves down pat.

Supporting players who give standout performances include Ben Layman, Heather Astbury-Libby, Brianne Beck, Neil E. Graham, and Alekzander Sayers.

Band members Allison Bankston on keyboards, Gaylen Smith on bass, Tom Libby on drums, and Joshua Kovach and Jeremy Shirland on guitar rock out but never overpower the performers. They also play loud enough for rock ‘n’ roll but not so loud that city councilors will get noise complaints.

Under the leadership of producing artistic director Bari Newport, the Penobscot Theatre Company has put time and money into vastly expanding what appeared to be the technical limitations of the Opera House when the company purchased it in 1997. With all that neon on the set for “Rock of Ages,” it’s a wonder the Penobscot Theatre Company

didn’t blow every electrical fuse downtown.

Scenic designer Tricia Hobbs, lighting designer E. Tonry Lathroum, costume designer Kevin Koski, sound designer Brandie Larkin and properties designer Meredith Perry created an every-bar, familiar to and comfortable for audience members. The Friday night show was a final dress rehearsal with a sold-out house. The technical aspects of the show went so smoothly that any glitches weren’t noticed by theatergoers.

“Rock of Ages” isn’t art, but it is a great party. In the wake of Sunday’s shooting in Orlando, standing up at the end of this show and singing “Don’t Stop Believing” at the top of your lungs will, for a few moments, drown out the voices of hate.

“Rock of Ages” runs through July 2 at the Bangor Opera House, 131 Main St., Bangor. Tickets can be purchased online at penobscottheatre.org, by phone at 942-3333 or at the box office at the Bangor Opera House.



MAGNUS STARK

Charisse Shields, Grace Livingstone-Kramer, Ira Krame and Kristina Rex perform with the on-stage band Arsenal in Penobscot Theatre Company’s final show of the season, Rock of Ages.

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