

Rolling Stone MUSIC

Skrillex Takes Control In L.A.

Grammy-nominated producer and DJ returns to site of his first big L.A. show

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Late in his two-hour set at L.A.'s Avalon Friday night, Skrillex (real name Sonny Moore) held up a lighter and encouraged the crowd to do the same – not with their cell phones, or an app of a lighter, but with actual lighters, just like rock bands used to do back in the day.

The media have been portraying DJs as the new rock stars for years. It's never been closer to the truth than it is now with dance artists like David Guetta riding the top of the charts and Deadmau5 headlining stadiums and festivals. It makes perfect sense then that Skrillex is dance music's man of the moment with his surprise [Grammy nomination](#) for Best New Artist (along with four other categories). He understands the marriage of rock and dance better than anyone. Having come from a rock background, where he used to be the frontman for From First To Last, Moore brings that edge to his music, particularly on tracks like the warped techno of "Scary Monsters And Nice Sprites." And that rock frontman is still clearly imbedded in his stage persona.

Whether it was frequently picking up the microphone to egg the crowd on to "make some noise" or the confetti blast that showered the packed Avalon floor when he took the stage just after midnight, he brought on the rock showmanship.

His most effective tool for charging up the crowd was his own body. Dancing throughout the night, his herky-jerky body motions, particularly the way he waved his arms from side to side and up and down, took on the vibe of a conductor. Instead of the music simply rising or ebbing, however, a thousand fans reacted wildly.

Skrillex has been playing L.A. all week, working his way up like a great techno crescendo, from intimate venues like Exchange and the larger Echoplex to last night's show at the Avalon, and culminating at the Palladium tonight. He repeats the process in New York next week.

But this particular show was a special one for him: he has said that the Control night at Avalon, held every Friday, was the sight of his first big L.A. gig. And he treated it like a massive party, having the venue's production team clear the whole stage out so he could bring all his friends up with him. At one point, there were nearly a hundred people packed in behind him on stage, separated from his control panel largely by tins of drinks.

Musically, he brought that same atmosphere, turning the slight reggae twinges of "First Of The Year (Equinox)" into a party anthem, and using snippets of celebratory songs like Naughty By Nature's "Hip Hop Hooray" to work the crowd into a frenzy.

Skrillex is the resident mad scientist of music, using his jaw-dropping production skills to splice songs at their core the way a geneticist works with DNA. He used these skills to great effect in his live show, turning recognizable glimpses of songs into sonic fusions that feel at home with his own twisting and turning material like "Reptile" and "Kill Everybody."

The abruptness with which Skrillex can change a beat makes him unlike anyone else in music. And in the same way Aphex Twin created moments of brilliance that confounded many, Skrillex challenges the boundaries of song structure. When it all comes together

as it did so seamlessly on Friday night, it is easy to see why he is the man of the moment.