Those who were fortunate enough to be in the building for this one-of-a-kind and once-in-a-lifetime event honoring Aretha Franklin, got more than their money's worth. Artist after artist took the stage to speak reverently about Franklin and then offer their best rendition of a Franklin classic.

By KEVIN 'CHILL' HEARD

Managing Editor

In addition to culminating a week long celebration of Aretha Franklin in Cleveland for the Rock Hall's 16th Annual Music Masters Series, what took place at the Playhouse Square State Theater served as the culmination of a dream.

Those who were fortunate enough to be in the building for this one-of-a-kind and once-in-a-lifetime event got more than their money's worth. The week's headlining event for the 16th Annual Music Masters Series, this time honoring the Queen of Soul and her numerous contributions to American music, was supposed to be a showcase of musical stalwarts performing for the Queen, who was just supposed to sit and enjoy the show. But, as it turned out, the Queen thought otherwise.

Rock Hall CEO Terry Stewart, the tribute concert emcee, took the audience through a three hour journey into world of Aretha Franklin, who was presented with an honorary doctorate from Case Western University
.

Artist after artist took the stage to speak reverently about Franklin and then offer their best rendition of a Franklin classic.

Jerry Butler, known as the "Ice Man," himself a Rock and Roll Hall of Fame inductee as an original member of the Impressions, sang "A Brand New Me" from her 1972 "Young, Gifted, and Black" LP with all the soulfulness that he as become known for since the early '60s.

Cissy Houston, a well-known soul and gospel singer long before being known as the mother of Whitney Houston, sang backup vocals on several Aretha Franklin songs in the '60s. She took the Cleveland audience back to church with "What a Friend We Have in Jesus," a song from Fr anklin
's 1972 enormous gospel LP "Amazing Grace."

Dennis Edwards, a Rock Hall inductee (as a member of the Temptations), broke down super-soul stylized version of Franklin classics "Baby I Love You" and "Chain of Fools."

Perhaps the most outstanding "scheduled" performance of the evening was Chaka Khan. The former front-woman for the funk band Rufus, and a multi-Grammy award winner in her own right, almost tore the house down with a fiery version of Franklin's iconic "Natural Woman."

With a brief intro by Stewart of a black and white film clip showed a fiercely sensual and playfully suggestive Franklin tearing into an offering of “Dr. Feelgood” with killer piano licks drew wild applause and an ovation from all in attendance.

At the conclusion of the clip, Stewart admitted that the reaction was something he had never seen before in presenting a film clip.

Many other vocal artists and musicians took to the stage to share their talents for the Queen, most notably Ron Isley, Lauryn Hill, Twinkie Clark and former “American Idol” finalists Melinda. But, the house came to its feet when Dr. Aretha Franklin decided to make an unscheduled appearance onstage and at the piano.

In all of her glory, Franklin in a duet with Dennis Edwards and accented by Ron Isley, churned out a version of the Leon Russell written hit “A Song For You” known in soul music circles as a signature piece from the late Donny Hathaway.

All-in-all, it was a night never to be forgotten and those who were there left with a either a neo soul, an old soul, or at the very least – a super dynamite soul!