

Imagine Dragons slay Lake Tahoe audience



Imagine Dragons' lead singer Dan Reynolds at Harveys on July 18. Photos/Kathryn Reed

By Susan Wood

STATELINE – Kids imagine slaying dragons. So why not have them join the fun with the band that slays the demons of the dull and mundane?

High energy was what Saturday night's Imagine Dragons show at Harveys was all about. It was almost sold-out, with a twist on the attendance – more kids than usual.

One of them, Ashlyn Collins of Reno, was grinning from ear to ear before the show started. The 9-year-old had planned attending this concert six months ago. Her favorite is "The River," one of the band's sparse slow melodies.

"The minute she heard they were playing, she said: 'Mommy,

mommy, mommy, we have to go’,” her mother Kristi Collins said. “She heard them in the elevator today and almost lost it.”

Then, the keyboards’ slow buildup magnified the stage, and the mother said: “Oh, my God. Here we go.”

The indie, alternative rock band kicked off the night with its hit “It’s Time,” another fave of Ashlyn’s.



Ben McKee, left, of South Lake Tahoe is the bassist for the Las Vegas-based band led by vocalist Dan Reynolds.

The kid attraction may have to do with the contemporary hit band’s latest popularity on the Billboard charts. Or, it could be its high-energy play on stage. During the blockbuster hit

“Radioactive,” the core four members of the rock band – three of them named Dan – were all simultaneously playing various drums. Drummer Daniel Platzman looked as though he would need a massage after every banging performance, especially for “Radioactive.”

The performance might have the attendance believe they were radioactive. This was the last song of the night. The audience waited in anticipation, but oddly the band never returned for an encore.

It turns out lead singer Dan Reynolds was getting over a cold and knew he couldn’t hit the high notes for his two planned encores.

In between, the men cranked out number after number of high energy tunes that prompted many in attendance to fist pump, dance and jump around – basically mimicking front-man Reynolds’ style.

The music was so electrifying with hot lights, Daniel Wayne Sermon’s hot guitar, Platzman’s throbbing drums and pulsating bass from South Lake Tahoe’s own Ben McKee that the sounds made the air vibrate.

The Las Vegas-based group – named the “biggest breakthrough band of 2013” by Billboard magazine is known for its up and down tempos. This performance with many songs off its “Smoke and Mirrors” album proved to keep that tradition.

“Shots,” “Gold,” “I’m so sorry” and “Friction” kept people standing – though the latter number felt like a song that screams at you if you’re not paying attention.



It was nearly a full house at the July 19 concert.

There weren't many slow moments in the dozen-song set, with the exception of Reynolds opening up to the audience about his struggle with depression. The song "Release" depicts that challenge, with lyrics: "I've let me down" and "heaven talks but not to me."

"For many years, I've struggled with depression. Many people do. I'm here today to stop you from not doing the things you love and are passionate about," he told the captive audience. "Pursue your dreams. This isn't the end all."

From that, "Release" started with a sweet, sentimental-sounding guitar, a testament to how Sermon can mix up the night with hard-driving electric strings and sometimes a mandolin as with "It's Time."

Reynolds and Sermon worked off each other's energy, with both Mormons throwing in occasional religious overtones. Take their mega hit "Demons," which launched the audience off the chairs and singing.

This was ideal for Reynolds, who fought off a cold during the performance and even told bassist McKee with his signature deep voice that he should sing lead for the evening.

“I’ll be using you a lot,” Reynolds quipped to the audience early on in the show.

Reynolds engaged the concert-goers on occasion, with Tahoe-specific banter about the American Century Championship staged here for the week. He admitted to pulling for San Francisco 49er quarterback Steve Young, a fellow Mormon.

But it was Justin Timberlake, aka J.T. – a new attendee of the celebrity golf event, who occupied much of the banter.

Reynolds dedicated lyrics like “I keep coming up short” to celebrity participants who are not doing well.

“That song is for you J.T.,” he said, but later recanted that Timberlake may be doing fairly well. “And who doesn’t like J.T.?” (Timberlake finished the tournament tied for 34)

The unpredictability of Reynolds was present on stage, leading the audience in a yoga stretch at one point and in another a toast to embracing who you are – a common theme in Imagine Dragons lyrics.

“Can you drink to that Tahoe?” Reynolds bellowed.

Imagine Dragons has won an American Music Award for favorite alternative artist, a Grammy for best rock performance, five Billboard Music Awards and a World Music Award.

The Harveys Summer Outdoor Concert Series continues with Americana band Train on Tuesday, followed by country great Kenny Chesney on the following night.