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## Alpha Rev Plays On The Heartstrings

By [Chelsea Schmid](#)  
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Alpha Rev's cello and violin parts contribute to the band's poignant, symphonic sound. (LIVE! photo/Chelsea Schmid)

Alpha Rev epitomizes what good music should be: deep, meaningful, and composed with reason. They are Coldplay meshed with The Fray and dusted with U2. They put out a sound almost too big for the room they played in. If you closed your eyes and just listened when they played the Steel Penny last Friday, chances are you'd find yourself amongst tens of thousands of others in an arena, swaying with lighters and cell phones held high as the band performed on a massive stage and the breeze blew through a black shade-cloth backdrop with moving lights projected on it.

You don't see a rock band very often that features a violinist—much less one that also boasts a cello player and a keyboardist—and while six is a lot of people to pile on a stage the size of the Steel Penny's, it was definitely a treat in the form of ear candy. The band had a repertoire of tracks that kept the listener engaged, and a power to convey feeling more concisely with the appropriate medium.

The music was cathartic, transformative, and those emotions were made clear in one of the first songs the band played, "Phoenix Burn." Beginning with an intro of a few bars on the keys, keyboardist Derek Morris set the mood of reflection and sentiment before lead singer Casey McPherson and the rest of Alpha Rev joined in. It was the music playing through your CD player on a long road trip. The kind of trips that are milestones; the ones that feel like you're in a movie, and this is your soundtrack.

The meaning of the song might be summed up with two lines of lyrics: "I need a love that will release me..." McPherson sang in the first line, then expounds upon the idea in the chorus. "...You will be my Phoenix burn."

A few songs later, Alpha Rev slowed and faded while Casey plucked two strings on his guitar and spoke to his audience. He told a story of heartbreak, one that fit well with the mild background of alternating notes. Then the rest of the band joined in, one-by-one. The song was "Big Blow," aptly titled for its subject matter: It seems McPherson wrote the song after being dumped by his girlfriend.

If "Phoenix Burn" was a metaphor for having found one's relationship paragon, "Big Blow" is about facing the loss of this person. The song began with Dave Wiley playing a beautiful yet almost sorrowful cello melody that perfectly captured the feeling of looking back on good times had. In the opening lines of the song McPherson sang:

You look like an angel  
No longer now  
Would you agree that there's not any  
Thing around to heal this pain

As he began the chorus with "It's such a big blow..." violinist Brian Batch joined in with a tune that was almost bittersweet.

Sad as the subject may have been, McPherson seemed to come to terms with his tragedy just through playing the song.

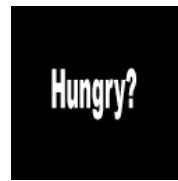
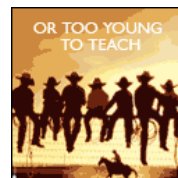
But the positivity stalled a few songs later when the band plunged into "Colder Months," for which Casey McPherson won the American Songwriter Award. The song was a well-churned blend of everyone's talents. While previous songs had accentuated certain mediums, this one was equal parts everyone, and they melded together to provide a song that was smooth and representative.

The song begins with McPherson's description:

I put on my usual  
Pack a picture from my cubicle  
All I can think about is you  
I'm still bleeding  
I'm still bleeding

But McPherson soon finds that he is not the only one who has a low point in these colder months:

Took a call from an old friend



Out of money, in jail again  
Posted bail and took him in  
I'm still bleeding  
We're both still bleeding

I don't doubt that we'll see these guys playing festivals and taking over the airwaves in the next couple of years; you'll want to check them out if you ever have the chance to, while the ticket prices are still low and the shows are small and intimate. Get yourself some bragging rights so you can say "I saw them when..."

For more information on Alpha Rev, consult [alpharev.com](http://alpharev.com) or [myspace.com/alpharev](http://myspace.com/alpharev).

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