

On Sea Monster, With **700 FUNK**

October 11th, 2025



A lot of people in this country only have one nerve ending. It's buried within layers and layers of fibrous flesh and sanguinous sinew. All its friends have long been decayed; the millions of tiny cuts inflicted by the sheer brutality of capitalist existence have forced them to abscond deeper into the body. Yet, we haven't lost the funk. That lone nerve ending, you can hit it, but you gotta hit it *really* hard. Only then will your rehabilitation begin, and there's only so many places where you can overcome the bullshit with the kind of noise that makes you take to your feet. On the corner of 45th and Bagley in Wallingford, **Sea Monster** is a place where you can really hit it.

My associate and I entered during an intermission. The house is sparsely lit, the exposed jet-black brick and distressed red wood trim visibly, lightly oscillating, the handiwork of DJ Jamal "Roc Phizzle" Robinson, his erratic and high-strung beats filling the room with a radiant red-yellow glow. The noise washes over the handful of soulful



Roc Phizzle at his DJ controller.

dancers, a noticeably older clientele who've come to this oasis to wash off whatever bullshit came before it. Roc Phizzle does an impressive job of providing the necessary dance-fuel, wispig together the air-funk mixture that explodes the long-calcified pistons in our persons. The walls are peppered with an array of light fixtures, old show posters, dark flower fabric panels, string lights, and a cardboard cutout of Elizabeth II.



Mattrey and Turner.



Roc Phizzle on keys.



700 FUNK.

Soon enough, **700 FUNK** begins to take the stage, first up being Mark Mattrey, bassist and proprietor of this establishment. On his right is guitarist Thaddeus Turner, mentally preparing with a slight thousand-yard stare. Next up is Phizzle, who now takes the mantle of keys and emcee. Drummer Derneill “Woogie D” L. Washington primes his black gloves and looms over the kit like a commanding officer silently reprimanding his soldier. A guest auxiliary percussionist sits at right of Washington with a set of bongos and a goofy smile. The band warms up with a sly rendition of *Rapper’s Delight* by The Sugarhill Gang, emcee’d by Washington. Finally, Tiffany Wilson, Seattle’s Queen of Soul & Funk, emerges. The venue patrons begin to gather onto the dance floor as the band springs into a rocking, jubilant explosion of funk and noise, a rendition of Wilson’s 2021 single “*Peace*”, as Wilson catalyzes the song’s motif, “This is the word, is the word, is the word...”

Phizzle occasionally sprinkles in a G-funk inspired synth for ear candy which eventually transitions into a cover of Dr. Dre's "*The Next Episode*". The crowd is a rumbling mass of darkness and lightness, the occasional sliver of red-hot skin shining as a dancer throws their limbs in pure exultation, eyes glazed over, with relatively little attention paid to their



Wilson and Jané.

benefactors on stage. Wilson's voice is electrifying and ties everything together, and at one point in the set, she invites on to the stage Ariyah Jané, whom Wilson refers to as "her greatest love". Her impassioned tenor compliments Wilson beautifully.

Sea Monster, in moments, feels like an anomalous, temporal rift into a place and a feeling that was both not that long ago and that feels so far removed from where we are now, wading through age and demographic with an infectious, infallible rhythm. It feels almost impervious to the outside world, like you could timelapse the surrounding buildings and watch them rise and fall, watch new materials be introduced, new construction movements, and it'll still be standing there, ever defiant.

"Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb; and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink." Exodus 17:6

The show ends. I stumbled out of the floor and camped out near the bar until I caught Mattrey corralling some dishes, and I asked him to say a few words.

You just played a set with 700 FUNK, and you were the bassist. How long have you been playing with them?

That project has been, well, that's a-that's a convoluted answer.

I see.

There used to be an establishment in Seattle in the 90's called the 700 Club, and that is where we first met Thaddeus, Boogie and I used to play there with Roc, so the keyboard player and the drummer and I used to play there weekly. Thaddeus played in another band there weekly. And that was sort of the inspiration for this night. The previous owner started the idea called The 700 Funk and we would just put random musicians together, and it started as improvisation. And so, post pandemic it sort of evolved- well, actually, 2018, 2019 it started to evolve into this lineup.

When you're playing a set, what are your thoughts prior, in the middle of, and after a set?

Today, before, I wanted to be prepared for the songs that were going to be played or potentially be played. During, I don't want to think about... I don't want to think. That's the whole thing. The trick is to not- If I start thinking, I'll either get distracted, or I'll start to worry, and I personally try to just stay in that present moment. I've found- this is like a recent discovery of my own, where if I don't overthink things and I just sort of relax and trust that my muscle memory will take me where I need to go, then I'm way better.

Nice.

And after? We just had a great fucking time. And a lot of that was improvised, so, there are nights that are a little less harmonious, we'll say, or have a little less flow. Tonight was just really, really great for me.

I really appreciate the time, I guess last thing I'll ask, um. Who's the dog?

That's my dog, Warren.

Oh, sick.

(There was a dog chilling in the window.)

- Caleb Zazueta (THEAZTC)