

touching bass

STING BRINGS HIS CRITICALLY ACCLAIMED BACK TO BASS TOUR TO ATLANTIC CITY.

BY ALEXANDRA LESHNER

Gordon Sumner has come a long way since a fellow musician caught sight of his yellow and black-striped sweater and dubbed him with the moniker Sting. Today, the “Roxanne” crooner continues to prove that his musical prowess has seldom wavered since the '70s as he embarks on the third year of his Back to Bass tour, featuring his greatest hits, with two headlining performances at the Borgata Hotel Casino & Spa on June 14 and 15.

As the soulful frontman of English rock trio The Police, Sting established himself early on as an unmistakable vocalist with his signature rasp and reggae-infused sound. “My first memory of [listening to The Police] was in San Francisco when the first or second album came out,” says 93.3 WMMR DJ Pierre Robert. “[Sting’s] voice and the way they were able to blend [the punk and ska] elements were completely attractive to me.

“When The Police started out on A&M Records and the three of them toured the country in a station wagon, their first gig in Philly was at 5th and South Streets at a place called Grendel’s Lair. Every time Sting is in this town, whether it’s at the Tower Theater, at the Spectrum, or when he played [Citizens Bank Park] outdoors with The Police at the reunion tour, he always references Grendel’s Lair. Artists never forget the first place they play in a town,” says Robert.

A nearly decadelong stint alongside Andy Summers and Stewart Copeland transitioned seamlessly into a flourishing solo career for Sting. “He was already in the forefront by virtue, and once The Police ended, Sting had an ability to keep going in the studio and see where his music would lead him,” says Robert, who interviewed the performer in 1991 following a New Orleans stop on his *Soul Cages* tour.

“What was interesting is he had had writer’s block prior to [the album’s release] and was having a difficult time coming up with stuff. He had just lost his father, so we talked about death a little bit. I asked him this question, something to the effect of, ‘What do you think happens when we die?’ because for all of us it’s the ultimate mystery. He made this wincing kind of [face], and I winced inwardly because I thought I had made him uncomfortable, but he gave this beautiful answer. He said, ‘I just had a baby girl about six months ago, and she is like my father in so many ways; it’s like maybe he came back,’” Robert recalls.

With 2011 came the celebration of 25 years of Sting’s solo career; the anniversary also marked the beginning of his Back to Bass tour. “He has a catalog big enough that he can play a number of things, so he kind of mixes it up,” says Robert. “I think anyone who goes to see him is going to have a very pleasant evening of music.” *Sting performs on June 14 and 15 at the Borgata Hotel Casino & Spa’s Event Center, 1 Borgata Way, 609-317-1000; theborgata.com PS*

Sting celebrates his 25-year-plus music career with two shows in June at the Borgata.