



Victoria NEWS

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FEEDBACK



Gentler rock at Royal



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Cochrane and company deliver kinder sound



Sharon Tiffin/News staff

For people who have followed the career of Tom Cochrane, his music says as much about Canadiana as Stompin' Tom Connors or Hank Snow tunes did for previous generations.

The 53-year-old Tom Cochrane still has sufficient energy to deliver a powerful live performance, as demonstrated during a recent visit to Victoria.

The veteran rocker brought his version of the Great Canadian music show, along with three original bandmates from Red Rider, to the Royal Theatre on Sunday and entertained the 1,200 or so fans with a combination of pearls from the past and new material.

The consummate showman, he won over the crowd by declaring the Canucks would win the Stanley Cup before launching into "Big League," sent out "The Untouchable One" to "all the strong women on Vancouver Island" and recalled camping trips in the Cowichan Valley as an introduction to "Good Times."

Opening with "Victory Day," the title cut from the 1988 album of the same name by Tom Cochrane and Red Rider – the second incarnation of the band – Cochrane seemed tentative with his vocals, to the point where I wondered if he still had it in him to be out on tour with a rock and roll band.

He gradually warmed up, however, and with the help of backup vocals from his opening act – a pair of "Twenty Something" gals from Ontario who call themselves Dala – had the near-capacity crowd rocking by the time he peeled off "Big League."

Vic West youngster Landon Shaw, escorted out to the stage by his dad, Kenn, got a huge cheer when he appeared hoisting a replica Stanley Cup over his head during the song.

It seemed that Cochrane, now 53 but looking like a middle-aged teenager, was saving his voice for more challenging numbers further along in his two-hour set. To the listener, the tactic worked, as his well-seasoned voice cut through well on familiar rock favourites such as "White Hot" and "No Regrets."

At some points it was like Cochrane and the band were transporting



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the audience back to the days of the arena rock shows Red Rider used to play at venues like Memorial Arena.

But some of the band's best efforts of the night came when the volume was turned down for acoustic versions of hits such as "Avenue 'A'" and "Good Times."

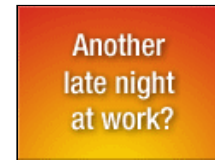
Part of that acoustic section included a rousing five-member gang-sing around a vintage-style microphone "I Wish You Well" and "Citizen Kane."

The band sprinkled a half dozen songs from Cochrane's 2006 release No Stranger into the set. Most sounded similar to the reflective material he's been putting out in recent years and seemed a good fit for where Cochrane is at right now. "Rough and Tumble" and "The Party's Not Over" gave an indication that he's not ready to pack it in anytime soon.

Watching lead guitarist and original band member Ken Greer show off his versatility was a treat. He bounced from guitar to pedal steel to piano, in some songs playing two or three of those instruments. Greer's trademark haunting slide play, which, along with Cochrane's gravelly voice gave Red Rider its unique sound, was a highlight of the performance.

After playing 18 tunes, the foursome were boisterously encouraged to return for a two-song encore. Old standards "Lunatic Fringe" and "Boy Inside the Man" sent the fans home with smiles on their faces, happy that Cochrane delivered once again.

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