

Sincere rockers enjoyable duo

Two is better than one.

Batman has his Robin, Seinfeld has his Costanza and last night at Scotiabank Place, two of rock's fading superpowers John Mellencamp and Tom Cochrane teamed up to save Ottawa from another boring Saturday night.

The 58-year old Mellencamp had been touring the U.S. with Los Lobos, promoting his latest batch of super-patriotic songs from his new CD Freedom's Road.

As good as the album is, it's as stars and stripes as you'd find.

Cochrane joined the Canadian tour Friday in Montreal to give the tour more international flavour. It's an inspired choice putting two middleweights, one an American patriot, the other a good Canadian boy, together.

A decade or two ago, either of the two hard-living poets could have easily carried the concert on their own and while they never attained nearly the success of their role model Bruce Springsteen, each found a loyal, loud and not insubstantial fanbase.

These days, trying to impress 8,200 sophisticated rock fans isn't easy, but together, they form a pretty rockin' tag-team.



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After rocking the concert bowl for an hour, Cochrane handed the microphone over to Mellencamp. He is, as they say, Ford tough. Even after 30 years, Mellencamp is still writing socially-conscious songs about America the mostly good. He's become a lot more critical of his country over the years. Not quite as subversive as Steve Earle, but letting the cracks show.

A passionate performer, in the end Mellencamp's gig was a surprisingly enjoyable experience. There's something likeably sincere about Mellencamp even if many songs sound the same. Pairing Cochrane with Mellencamp was a good fit, and Cochrane didn't steal Johnny's thunder.