

Geoff Berner combines politics with dry humour

Written by Richard Amery

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A good crowd came out to hear Vancouver based punk accordionist Geoff Berner at the Slice, Wednesday, Dec. 3. Unfortunately Rae Spoon had the flu so wasn't able to play as scheduled.



Burt Berner is a bit of enigma. You never know whether to laugh or take to the streets protesting and breaking things after one of his shows which tackle everything from religion to police brutality and urban gentrification. While I missed the first set, I caught a solid set which began with “Praying to The Volcano God” which immediately drew cheers from the approximately 50 people present. He captivated most of them with just himself and his accordion.

Hits lyrics have deadly serious undertones but his deadpan delivery of them, not to mention his between song patter, just makes you want to smile at the very least.

“Settling of Accounts” was definitely one of these straddling the line between the serious and the satirical about trying to get money from shifty bar managers.

{youtube}k2bmi8GhNno{/youtube}

“Unlistenable Song” about “a song so good you don't ever want to hear it again” was a highlight though he said Rae Spoon usually sings it better than he does. He sounded pretty darn good and hilarious.

He tapped into his Jewish roots for a song by a Yiddish poet called “It's Burning ” for which he alternated the Yiddish lines with the English translations.

“I feel like I've been hitting you with a lot of heavy stuff, so I'll play something a little lighter,” he said, launching into “When Didi Gets Her Donkey.” He followed that up with a pair of songs about the gentrification of his hometown of Vancouver including a song about tearing down landmarks and low income neighbourhoods where artists live to build expensive condos.

He ended his show around 11:30 p.m. by getting the crowd to sing along with “Dalloy Polizei.”

— by Richard Amery, L.A. Beat Editor