

Neil Young Rocks Lethbridge

Written by Richard Amery

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Neil Young proved he is the godfather of grunge, the fife of folk and quite possibly a baron of the blues because he played a little bit of everything during his April 25 show at the Enmax Centre.

Standing beneath a set of lights spelling out "Neil," Young, clad in a work shirt, t-shirt and jeans and dwarfed by a massive ancient, battered amp cabinet, took over with an electrifying Crazy Horse set which began with "Love and Only Love", which I didn't recognize right off, but then launched into "Hey Hey My My" which proved why grunge rockers idolize him.

He was scowling and tearing into his big Les Paul like it did him wrong, and had the crowd loving ever minute of it. And while he played quite a few new songs from his new CD, "Fork In the Road" including "Fuel Line" and "Get Behind the Wheel" but "Cortez the Killer", "Cinnamon Girl" and "Pocahontas" were to be heard among them.

Opening band, "Everest", a Los Angeles based band who are on Young's record label, "Vapor" began with a super set of alt-country style songs tinged with touches of April Wine, Pink Floyd and the Sam Roberts band.

One guitarist was flailing around like a madman, and the bassist was grooving throughout. I got a kick out of the keyboardist scurrying around the back of the stage to get to an organ on one side, then Neil Young's own battered piano and another keyboard on the other.

The band just released their debut CD, "Ghost Notes in 2007 and toured with him last year as well.

Young exhibited his piano prowess for a couple of ragtime style numbers, and even played a huge pipe organ set behind the drum kit for "Mother Earth." And before we knew it, it was 10 p.m. , but Neil wasn't ready to quit yet, donning an acoustic guitar for a few numbers including beautiful versions of "Four Strong Winds," "Needle and the Damage Done" and "Old Man," before we knew it , it was 11 p.m. and Young and the band returned for an electrifying "Rocking in the Free World" for the encore.

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It's hard to believe that song is 20 years old, and ever harder to believe Young is 64 and just recovered from a brain injury a couple years ago.

He looks about the same as he did in 1989 and has not lost his edge or his songwriting skills over time. His voice was pitch perfect— well as pitch perfect as Neil Young ever gets. He was phenomenal.

It's pretty inspirational seeing him tear up the Enmax, especially when his sound is crisp and clear, when at a lot of other concerts, it usually sucks major moose meat.