

ENTERTAINMENT

...music...films...exhibitions...theatre...arts...

"And then there was Neil..."



DREW GILBERT PHOTO

"LIKE A HURRICANE": Legendary rocker Neil Young and longtime band Crazy Horse ripped through a two-and-a-half hour set in Saint John this past Monday, powering through endless guitar solos and unleashing some of his greatest work ever recorded.

PETER J. CULLEN
THE BRUNSWICKAN

Who says rock n' roll is dead? Neil Young's rock-god status will remain fixed in the minds of those in attendance at Harbour Station in Saint John last Monday. Digging deep into his career catalogue, Neil Young and long-time band Crazy Horse demonstrated beyond a doubt what defines a rock n' roll legend.

While the forty dollar ticket price also included Moist and Pete Droge, no one really cared. Mere preludes to the hallowed headlines, the countdown to Neil Young commenced long before Moist left the stage. Young's area was soon equipped, and eventually the house music petered out, the house lights dimmed, and the house itself went wild.

And then there was Neil. At first it was difficult to discern who was actually onstage. Then the light shone down and illuminated the Man from Omamee, the Godfather of Grunge, the self-proclaimed "resident of the world," Neil Young. Following custom, Neil said nothing but simply strapped on his guitar and glanced at the band. As he struck the opening chords to "Hey Hey, My My," the crowd emitted a tremendous cheer, almost as if that single moment alone was worth their admission fee. The audience's reaction was exactly what Neil could have expected, and in return he did what the fans could have expected: He transformed the first three opening songs — "Hey Hey, My My," "Pocohontas," and "Scattered" — into a 20 minute circus of sound, distortion and exhilarating energy.

Crazy Horse, despite their wonderful accompaniment, just fade into the darkness with Young out front. The plaid-clad rocker captures the gaze and just won't let go, his silver-gray hair flapping about his head while his weathered fingers attack the guitar strings, reproducing the solos that have propelled Young into a rock stratosphere that few can ever hope to attain.

But for all his character and highly-touted greatness, there was no

immediate answer to explain the fame behind the name. The man had written many memorable tunes, he had cultivated legions of fans that could rival any cult following and he had circumvented the globe, plying that notoriously distinctive voice to the masses numerous times. However, as song after song unfolded, the defining moment ultimately arrived in the form of the ominous chords of "Rockin' in the Free World." Neil flashed a rare smile as he bobbed his body and swung his guitar, destroying any notion that this being was "just another musician." The reason for Neil's fame and popularity suddenly became evident: He's Neil Young. Everyone has heard his songs dozens of times in dozens of places performed by dozens of different people, but they can always evoke emotion. And onstage at that particular moment in time, just metres away, was Neil Young — the man himself. He wrote these songs, and now he's singing them himself. And that's it, it's that simple.

There is no true beginning or veritable end to a Neil Young show. The music blends into one epic masterpiece, each individual creation providing a various perspective on the two hour-plus performance. Classic tracks such as "The Needle and the Damage Done," "Cortez the Killer," "Like a Hurricane" and "Cinnamon Girl" filter through the senses and deeply lodge themselves, but the order of the set list jumbles in the mind, creating a sensation that something spectacular has just happened but there's no certainty as to what truly occurred.

After the initial set, Young appeared for two encores, never saying anything more to the crowd than "Crazy Horse!" while gesturing to the band that have helped him construct his most monumental albums to date. Encore renditions of "This Town" and "Tonight's the Night" stoked the audience even more, capping an evening of the perfect example of a quintessential rock musician.

As "Hey Hey, My My" states, "Rock n' roll will never die." Monday night proved that statement to be the truth. Long may you run, Neil.

SNFU return to Fredericton

CHARLES TEED
THE BRUNSWICKAN

SNFU, the acclaimed punk band from the west coast of Canada, will be in Fredericton to promote their new CD, *FYULABA*, on November 14 and 15 at The Dock and Boyce's Farmers Market. In a short interview, Brent Belke of the band discussed the current tour, their record label, lyrics and their history with UNB.

The five member group has been on the road for the past three weeks and have managed to survive fifteen shows in seventeen days.

Chuck: Why are the lyrics all about famous people, current events?

Brent: Chad writes all the lyrics about pop culture. He watches a lot of TV. I guess that is what amuses him at the moment.

Chuck: What is the story behind you being banned from the Social Club?

Brent: We came for a radio conference and we were in a really bad mood. The people didn't treat us for the rest of the bands, very nice, so we decided to express our frustrations by making a mess. We also had a food fight on stage. Last time we came to Fredericton, though, we put on a great show.

Chuck: What is your view on the Epitaph backlash?

Brent: The people call it corporate punk rock now. If they have something against it, whatever, Epitaph does not sign bands to make money, they sign bands they like. They just happen to be good businessmen who like punk rock. Everyone someone catches in there is a backlash against them.

Festival of Sound "good," but surprising to audience

STACEY BROWN
THE BRUNSWICKAN

Last Saturday, Onstage presented the Festival of Sound performance at The Playhouse. The troupe provided an evening of live music, both jazz and classical, in addition to the modern dance and narration by Gordon Pinsent. The appearance of Gordon Pinsent, perhaps best recognized as the host of CBC's *Land and Sea*, was the first of many surprises.

The Festival of Sound Ensemble was sensational. The members were not only musically talented but also fun and interesting. They explained the background to the pieces they performed and pointed out the similarities and influences of Stravinsky's original "L'Histoire du Soldat." For the first half of the performance, the stage was theirs alone. They performed Poulenc's "Overture to the Gendarme Incompris," Baker's "Homage to l'Histoire" and finished strongly with Trudel's "Variations of Sweet Georgia Brown." Violinist Moshe Hammer staged, yet humorous interjection only added to the charm of their relaxed and easy style.

The Ensemble reappeared after the intermission with a wardrobe change which had its intended effect. Why would they appear in formal attire while they played "Variations of Sweet Georgia Brown" and reappear in jeans and sneakers for the performance of Stravinsky? The wardrobe change allowed the musicians to become involved in the performance. The actors/dancers mock the musicians and the musicians mock the actors—this involves a lot of movement and a little bit of dirt. Black formal attire is not conducive to either of these.

The performers set up the stage, a wooden platform that became an integral part of the performance and was gradually transformed time and time again to become several different settings. The most impressive aspect of the modern dance performance was the use of oversized masks by the dancers; unfortunately the artist remains unnamed in the show programme. Oddly enough, the dancers are also left out; reads only "Felix Mirbt Productions." It is sad that they go unrecognized because they did such a wonderful job. The movements, while not as complex as

those of ballet or tap dancing, were definitely clean and precise. They told the story through a series of large masks as appropriately beautiful or ugly as the character called for. They used their bodies and a series of props, from blankets to farm tools, to create a body for the masks.

Gordon Pinsent was especially a pleasant surprise. An excellent storyteller, Pinsent's voice ranged from the conniving devil to the beautiful princess without so much as a stutter or unwarranted pause.

The story itself is described by Felix Mirbt in the programme for the show. "The Soldier trades his violin to the Devil for all the riches in the world, still he gets to marry the Princess. But even though he believes to be free through this marriage, a contract with the Devil never ends. And in my tale, in the end, even the Devil falls prey to the unpredictable games of the Four Horsemen." The story line was very captivating, even if it was a little predictable and common.

While the music was striking, the actors/dancers were outstanding and the narration was wonderful, the audience's reception was nothing more than lukewarm. Felix Mirbt's comments in the programme capture it exactly: "The images I create on stage do not necessarily follow the story or the music. They have a life of their own..." It is this life that kills the crowd's initial enthusiasm. The phrase heard over and over as the crowd emptied out into the lobby was "I didn't understand it." The abstract symbolism was a little too abstract in comparison with the common plot and classical music. The actors/dancers become too much of a counterpoint to the music and the story. I even found myself concentrating so hard on figuring out the dance that I was missing the narration.

It may simply have been just too overwhelming. The music and the narration, or the narration and the actors, may have worked but the three-ring circus was not what the typical Fredericton theatre-goer expects from a "good" performance. They expect a well-oiled production which allows them to escape reality for a few precious hours. I tend to prefer the "typical" theatre myself, so while I enjoyed this refreshing change of pace, myself I can certainly understand why many others might not.

Newfoundland band impresses their fans



"FAST AS I CAN": Great Big Sea's main singer Alan Doyle strummed away on his guitar and sang the delectable melodies that has made the band so popular as of late.

SHELLEY MORELL
THE BRUNSWICKAN

They came, they conquered. And all the while Fredericton went wild as the four members of Great Big Sea — Darrell Power, Alan Doyle, Sean McCann and Bob Hallett — strutted their stuff for nearly two hours. There's no doubt that these four young guys love what they're doing. They possessed an amazing amount of energy that continuously fed the crowd. I don't think anyone sat still for more than three songs. From the first chord of Alan's guitar we were on our feet and dancing wherever we had room to do it.

The use of various musical instruments certainly added to the show. They had a bass and bodhran, a tin whistle, a fiddle, a mandolin and "Bobby on the squeeze box." Forgive me if I've forgotten anything; if you're into music and instruments then you'd have been impressed. I certainly was.

The band played selections from both their albums; *Up* which was released in 1995, and their self-titled debut that was released in 1993. The Playhouse rocked with screaming fans to the ever-popular "Mari-Mac," "The Old Black Rum," and "It's the B'y," to name but a few. Their ballad "Fast as I Can" was beautifully done. They also played four selections from their new CD which will be coming in early spring of 1997. By the sounds of the preview, it should be a great album.

This concert was undoubtedly one of the best I've ever seen. I think I'd even put it up against Garth Brooks' concert and I wouldn't put any group up against him if they hadn't impressed me to such a great extent. If you ever get a chance to see Great Big Sea in concert, don't miss it for the world. They put on a high energy show and I can virtually guarantee you'll be as impressed as I was.

Pete Droge: Who's he when he's home?



DREW GILBERT PHOTO

JUST ANOTHER SINNER: Pete Droge relaxes backstage after his opening performance for Neil Young last Monday night.

PETER J. CULLEN
THE BRUNSWICKAN

Who the heck is Pete Droge?

He and his band, The Sinners, have been opening for Neil Young on the current cross-Canada trek that Young and Crazy Horse have embarked upon. However, no one really seems to have heard of him, much less know anything about him. But Droge is fine with that.

"I'm not really out on the street that much. I'm either in the hotel or on the bus or in the dressing room," the 27 year old says, explaining how he doesn't command much attention in public. "I don't get out much," he laughs.

Pete Droge and The Sinners' new album, *Find the Door*, appeared in music stores back in June. Recorded in Atlanta, Georgia, Droge and his band have toured in support of their effort on the H.O.R.D.E. tour with Lenny Kravitz, Blues Traveler and The Dave Matthews Band, while also opening for esteemed acts such as Sheryl Crow and Tom Petty & The Heartbreakers.

"I love Tom Petty," Droge comments, mentioning that he recently spent three months as Petty's opening act. "We spent three months opening for them. ... It's great to travel with him and see him play every night. If you're on a tour and you don't really care about the

among Droge's list of favourite films. "I've seen it a bunch of times. I had a little phase with that movie where I watched it every night," he says somewhat to himself. "I just became sort of preoccupied with it. I like movies, and it's... pretty ultimate."

Droge indulges in a variety of genres for his reading pleasure. "I just read *Macbeth*, and I've also been reading a book on the history of gospel music. It's huge, like basically tracing the roots of gospel music back to Africa."

Gospel and blues don't appear to influence Droge's music on *Find the Door*, but he cites plenty of other credible sources as youthful music heroes. "Bob Dylan, Tom Petty, lots of blues music... I've got a lot of Muddy Waters records. ... Oh, and the Beach Boys. Yeah, the Beach Boys are cool."

Droge further relates his musical experience: "I've been playing music most of my life. I actually started with the ukelele when I was four [laughs], and I played the piano when I was in grade school, and I started playing the guitar in junior

"I'm either in the hotel or on the bus or in the dressing room. ... Hmm, I don't get out much."

— Pete Droge

performances to enjoy Neil's show. "Yeah, we go out and watch. Which is cool 'cause he changes the setup every night, plays different tunes. It's not like the same show [every night]."

But Droge has other interests as well. "Sometimes I'll just go out to the bus and read. Actually, right now I'm reading *Heart of Darkness* by Joseph Conrad," he comments. *Apocalypse Now*, a screen adaptation of the classic novella, ranks high

high school. And then I guess I started writing songs when I was about sixteen."

Now after years of practice and several lineup changes, Droge has finally arrived at the level where he can share a bill with some of North America's most popular bands, despite seeming to be one of the least known names in the music field today. "I know who we are," he says quietly. Apparently that's all that really counts.

KNOW WHERE TO GO?

- ARTS**
- The Beaverbrook Art Gallery: Jack Humphrey: *Compartmentalized Space*. Nov - Jan 5/97
 - Saturated Fields: *Colourfield Painting in the Permanent Collection*. Nov 9 - March 16/97
 - Exotic Foreign Locations. Nov 9 - March 16/97
 - Info: 458-2024
 - *Exploitation* at Gallery Connection. Downs Nield. Until Dec 15. Info: 454-1433. Opening reception tonight, 7-9 pm.
 - UNB Centre for Musical Arts at Memorial Hall. Nov 13, 12:30 pm. Free. Info: 453-4697.
 - UNB/STU Creative Arts presents Toronto Dance Theatre at The Playhouse. Nov 16, 8 pm. \$25 adults, \$15 students.
 - The Kingfisher's Wing (*The Story of Ball*) at Centre Communautaire Ste-Anne. Tonight, 8 pm. \$8.
 - Capital Film Society presents *Love Star* at Tilley Hall 102. Nov 11, 8 pm. \$3 member, \$5 non-members.
 - Duo New Brunswick (Richard Hornsby and Robert Kortgaard) with special guest, mezzo soprano Sharon Crowther at Memorial Hall. Nov 9, 7:30 pm. \$7 adults, \$5 students/seniors.
 - Audition for Theatre UNB's *No Exit* at Memorial Hall. Tonight 6:30 - 9:30 pm, tomorrow 2 - 4 pm.
- MUSIC**
- The Cellar presents rock band Slokoms Sisters. Nov 8, 9.
 - The Dock: SNFU. Nov 14. Larry Gowan. Nov 15. Big Sugar. Nov 21.
 - 1000 Mona Lisas w/ Molly's Reach and Smoother at Rye's Deli. Nov 12, 8 pm. Info: 453-0582.