Subject: Rick Springfield and Men at Work
Posted by Wayne Parham on Fri, 12 Aug 2022 00:46:48 GMT
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Rick Springfield and Men at Work came to concert at the Hard Rock in Tulsa, August 10, 2022. It was truly a memorable evening.

My wife Kelly has been a huge fan of Rick Springfield since further back than either of us would want to admit. So when Rick Springfield set a concert date in Tulsa, I knew we had to go.

Funny story - back when Kelly and I were teenagers, Kelly went to a Rick Springfield concert in Joplin with a bunch of girlfriends. I wrote in my little calendar back then - which served both as planning scheduler and diary - that she was going to see Bruce Springsteen.

No offense to either Springfield or Springsteen, and apologies to both. I just hadn't ever heard of Rick Springfield back then.

And what else I didn't know was what sets apart these teenage girl heart-throb singers. Just what is it that draws the girls' attention? What is it like at one of their shows?

I could see at all the store checkouts that certain guys were on a bunch of magazines that only girls would buy - In the early 1970s, the list would include guys like Davy Jones, Shaun Cassidy, Leif Garrett and Donny Osmond.

I liked the Monkees show when I was really young, and I liked the Donny and Marie shows too. But I'm not sure I ever heard any of the music from the other guys in that "Tiger Beat" list, which I expect is true for most guys. Dudes just wouldn't go to teen heart-throb concerts, except maybe to take their girlfriends', perhaps. I mean, no offense - heart-throb guys - it's super cool that you could attract all the girls' attention. Definite kudos for that. But it just wasn't music that guys really got into.

Rick Springfield was a late-1970s version of that. He was a teenage girl idol, which made him super-popular with adolescent girls but completely invisible to dudes of the late 70s and early 1980s. Again, apologies. And kudos.

Set the clock forward 40 years. Damn, that's hard to say. But it is what it is.

Rick Springfield came to the Hard Rock in Tulsa on August 10, 2022.

What made it more interesting for guys of that era was that "Men at Work" came too. Remember "Who Can It Be Now?" How 'bout "Down Under?" Those were two killer songs from the early 1980s. I have both albums, "Business as Usual" and "Cargo" on vinyl, the same records I purchased back when they came out. Great music, and I listened to both albums a lot.

Men at Work opened. The band's founder Colin Hay was there, and he was the only original member. But really, Men at Work was Colin Hay. The other band members were talented, but it was pretty obvious then (and still now) that Colin Hay was the driving force.

Man, did he and his troupe put on a great show. I was thoroughly and immediately impressed. Not only did their songs sound exactly the same as they did on the original studio recordings - which is pretty hard on a band with as many varied instruments and complex passages as are in Men at Work songs - but they were performed with the energy and style they had when they first performed. Colin was fantastic. And his stage presence - his articulation, his stories and jokes - showed his intelligence and depth. I was very impressed.

I must give a nod to the band members Colin brought with him too:

Jimmy Branly - drums
San Miguel Perez - guitar, backing vocals
Yosmel Montejo - bass, backing vocals
Scheila Gonzalez - saxophone, flute, keyboards, backing vocals
Cecilia Noel - backing vocals

Absolutely fantastic.

Scheila Gonzalez was flawless on saxophone and flute, both of which are heavily used in Men at Work songs. On more than one song, the sax carries the lead. Keyboards and flute are important in Men at Work songs too and she was perfect with each.

Jimmy Branly was powerful and precise. He's a completely under-rated drummer, simply due to the fact that the public doesn't know his name. You can bet other drummers do though.

San Miguel Perez and Yosmel Montejo were sort of a team, often playing together alongside one another. They played with the rest of the band too, of course, and often synchronized with Colin Hay to provide alternating guitar leads. The three of them blended very well, with Colin and San Miguel taking turns acting as lead and then switching more to a rhythm backup. Very good cooperation. Yosmel was always thumpin', very much in control of his bass.

And Cecilia Noel was absolutely wonderful. She appeared to be around the same age as Colin Hay, and their oft-made glances and smirks made me wonder if they weren't "an item" off set. None of my business, the two might just work very well together and enjoy each others' company. Whatever the case, she was an absolute joy to watch. Loved her energy!

So I guess you can tell I was impressed by Men at Work. I was really sad the see them leave the stage. Hard to let go of that excitement and just sit in the seat during the intermission.

But then the lights went dim again, and Rick Springfield entered the stage. I was about to see the "other side" - what happens at a concert where a "Tiger Beat" heart-throb was the performer.

Guys - it's weird. It's a totally different environment than any concert I've ever been. And I'm not saying that in a bad way - again - hat's off to these guys. They're able to command the girls' attention and that's an incredible gift.

I watched for the first five minutes to the crowd more than to the performance. The ladies were all obviously gals that had Rick Springfield posters, T-Shirts and pins, just like Kelly did. The girls all

knew every word of his songs and had watched all of his movies, which were being played in excerpt behind the band.

But I also had to admit that the performance was damn good too. These guys weren't just lip-syncing. They were performing. And they were really good. They exuded energy every second they were on stage.

It's not that I expected anyone would be lip-syncing, it's more that I was impressed by the genuine passion they had for their music. Rick Springfield is obviously a very passionate guy, and his lyrics are heart-felt expressions. Sure, the songs are romance songs. But what songs aren't? So this performance was definitely more substantive than I might have expected. Not that I really knew what to expect - I only knew "Jesse's Girl" from its radio play and I knew Kelly has always liked Rick Springfield.

One thing that was interesting to me was many ladies took bundles of roses up to the stage. Rick would accept the bunch and would make a large rotating motion to swing them onto his guitar, striking it with a force that would explode the petals from every rose. It made quite an effect. Red confetti flew everywhere each time this happened. And I'd say at least ten times, some gal would take up a dozen roses, which would then immediately get this treatment. It was really pretty damn cool. Within a half hour, the stage was absolutely covered with rose petals.

Not sure if other heart-throb performers do this too, or if it's exclusively a Rick Springfield thing. I've never been to a concert like that.

Another thing that impressed me very much was that during the song "Human Touch" - which was also a hit 'cause I remembered it from radio play - Springfield came out into the audience. That's not entirely unusual, but what impressed me was how he did it.

Kelly and I were in the fourth row, so we were right up close. Springfield jumped down off the stage onto the floor - not a "mosh pit" - but a floor with chairs that nobody was sitting in. All were on their feet. So Rick got up onto a chair, which allowed him to be above the crowd and visible to the rest of the audience, but still able to shake the hands of the attendees, or "fist-pump" or hug or whatever was comfortable.

Rick was singing the whole time, while navigating the crowd and walking across the chairs. What made this pretty damn hard was the chairs were padded - so you wouldn't get sure footing - and the seats tended to want to spring-load themselves into a storage position when not being used. Picture that: He is having to push down the seat with his foot, then stand on its mushy padded seat and traverse the whole row with gushing gals clamoring to hold him. Quite a feat to sing while giving attention to the girls and navigating those tricky seats!

So Kelly helped him move from chair to chair in our area, and that meant a great deal to her. Probably did to him too! It was wonderful!

And the band was all fired up, every bit as much as Springfield was:

George Nastos - lead guitar, backing vocals
Siggy Sjursen - bass, backing vocals

Jorge Palacios - drums, percussion
Tim Gross - keyboards, guitar, backing vocals

George Nastos did a fantastic job. He was not what I would call your "traditional guitarist," because most lead guitarists tend to be flashy and somewhat attention-seeking. This guy was laid back. But man, he was good. He didn't draw attention to himself, but instead focused on hitting every note.

Siggy Sjursen was the flashy one. Kind of reminded me of Eddie Van Halen, but playing the bass instead of lead guitar. He was all over the stage, bringing energy to whomever he played beside. And he was a damn good bass player too.

Tim Gross was sort of a "band glue." Like Nastos, he wasn't flashy but he was definitely bedrock for the band. Everything he did was spot-on.

Jorge Palacios was a powerful drummer. This was a high-energy concert, mostly driven by Rick Springfield's onstage presence. Rick was all over the stage, as was Siggy. Jorge stayed right with them, and his energy behind the drum kit showed. He loved to throw his sticks from time to time, and sometimes Nastos would try to catch them. He did catch 'em sometimes. And when he did, he'd throw them back.

By "throw," I mean toss them nearly straight up - spinning - like a baton twirler would do. They would toss them up like that in an arc that landed them near their intended receiver. Which in one case went from Palacios to Nastos, who caught it. Then Nastos tossed it back to Palacios - who couldn't have snagged it if it were out of sync with his drumming rhythm, but it just happened to be timed right where he could snatch it. Caught it and didn't miss a beat!

It was great to see those two laughing together in surprise as they had pulled that off. Most people were watching Springfield, I'm sure, so the stick-turned-baton catch would not have been noticed by many. It was sort of a private moment of excited laughter between Nastos and Palacios. But I saw it too.

All in all, it was a fantastic concert. I was very impressed.