

Boost for the Boss shapens Ely's edge

Hot disc, live shows taking singer beyond cult status

Peter North
Country Music

Fans of country songwriters with a left-of-Nashville perspective had a field day this past weekend at the revitalized Calgary Folk Festival. It was one of the best music festivals I've ever had the good fortune to attend.

Led by Joe Ely, I finally getting past that "cult status" albatross — the country brigade also included Guy Clark, Tom Russell, Andrew Hardin and, last but not least, Rosanne Cash, who turned the crowd and pulled out some of the country-influenced material from her early Sony recordings.

Ely's mainstage show Saturday night earned a spontaneous standing ovation and he's getting used to that kind of response on his current tour.

"The highlight of the whole year had to be Ireland," grinned Ely. "We played Dublin on St. Patrick's Day and I thought that I could die and go to heaven — or hell — now."

"Then we're in the middle of the show and I look over in the wings and there's Springsteen standing there chomping at the bit to come out and join us. Bruce came out and we ditched the acoustic guitars in favor of the electrics and rocked the night out for six songs."

Having the Boss act as a guerrilla publicist doesn't hurt one's profile. Springsteen sang two tracks from his latest MCA disc, *Letter To Laredo*. *All Just To Get To You* and *I'm A Thousand Miles From Home*.

Now a video of *All Just To Get To You* has surfaced and is getting heavy airplay.

"We were doing a live date just after the album came out in L.A. when Bruce showed up and joined us. There had been a film crew following us around and I'd like to think they had set up and were



Tom Russell: at the City Media Club on Wednesday night

shooting parts of the show, which is what makes it so cool. It's about as natural as it gets," added Ely, who's ready for a break after playing more than 200 dates worldwide since *Corvito* — arguably his best album to date — came out last September.

The album includes a fine version as has been recorded of Tom Russell's *Gallo Dal Gallo*. The epic tale, which has also been released by Ian Tyson, fit perfectly into the west Texas/Rio Grande theme of Ely's self-produced album and before the weekend was over by Russell, Ely, Hardin and Ely's Spanish guitarist Teve roared through a version of the song at a workshop.

"It was like being out on the wing of a plane with Andy and Teve playing behind us," said an enthusiastic Russell, who is at the start of a long tour.

That tour makes a stop Wednesday night at the City Media Club at 9:30 a.m.

That date is also a good excuse to see Hardin's live album, *Cosely Island Moon*. So far, it's unreleased in Canada but was sold at a brick clip at the Calgary Folk Fest merchandise tent.

Tickets for the Russell-with-Hardin show are \$12 for members

and \$14 for guests.

David Wilkie's Cowboy Celtic album has really taken off to the point where it won't be a one-off project.

The Mandolin Kid and Terry McAfee — who provided much of Wilkie's backing support with his brood of pickers and players — head off to Ireland in the not too distant future to nail down the particulars for a follow-up to *Cowboy Celtic*.

"We're going to County Cork to look at studios, check out which traditional players we'd like to get involved, and the like," Wilkie said shortly after a well-received set at the Calgary festival.

"It looks as though it could even evolve into a documentary film if all goes well."

He's also been busy recently contributing some fine solos to the forthcoming debut disc by Steve Pines.

And Wilkie's next appearance in Edmonton is right around the corner. Thursday night, he and partner Stewart MacDougall — better known jointly as The Great Western Orchestra — take over the Hawrelak Park Amphitheatre.

Show time is at 7 p.m. and the gate admission is a gift at \$5.

Solar Temple deaths inspire TV mini-series

The Canadian Press Toronto

Minds Eye Pictures of Regina and Zurich-based Condon Films are co-producing a four-hour international TV mini-series inspired by the Order of the Solar Temple cult deaths.

American actor Richard Chamberlain is starring in *The Lost Daughter*. He'll play a man searching for his daughter Claire Sims, who disappears into a deadly Swiss-Canadian religious sect.

Fifty-three Solar Temple sect members were involved in a mass murder-suicide in Switzerland and Quebec in October 1984. Last Dec. 16, more people were found dead in southeastern France under similar

circumstances.

A publicist for the film-makers stressed, however, that the script is fictional, with the sect members in the story referred to as Solar Knights.

"The surrounding story is based on fictional characters," says Lanis Anthony of Regina-based Creative Consortium Inc. "The central story is inspired by an actual incident."

Principal photography on the two-part series began earlier this month and is expected to continue in Zurich until mid-August. It then continues in Regina and Montreal until early October.

No Canadian networks have expressed interest in the film yet but are expected to as production winds up, the producers say.

Jasper festival a fix for impatient folk fans

SHAWN OHLER
Journal Music Writer

Edmonton

Anxious folkies who can't wait for the Edmonton Folk Music Festival Aug. 8-11 might look westward this weekend for their folk fix.

The 7th Jasper Heritage Folk Festival runs Aug. 2-3 in the mountain resort's Centennial Park. Main stage headliners include Celtic Canadian singer Mac Moore and world-fiddler David Lindley (both from Aug. 2) and rocker Sue Medley and up-and-coming country star Jason Murr (both Aug. 3).

"We're expecting about 5,000 peo-

ple both days," said Keith Russell, a folk fest spokesperson.

"I think we're going to get some good interest from Edmonton because their folk fest is a week later than ours."

The Jasper festival, which is held every two years, boasted Gary Plachman and the Skyloggers as headliners in 1994.

Russell's Toronto group Morvyn Price and fiddling phenom Ashley MacIsaac were on organizers' lists for this year's event, but both artists were booked elsewhere.

"Everyone still thinks we have a real solid line-up this year," Russell said. "I know people who like coun-

try are really excited because we have Jason MacCoy."

The festival will also feature a beer garden, food booths and an on-site crafts pavilion. Moore, Medley and Lindley will play side-stage workshops the afternoon of Aug. 3.

Advance tickets are no longer available, but day, evening and weekend passes can be purchased at the gate throughout the festival.

Prices range from \$45 for an adult weekend pass to \$25 for evening passes both nights. Youth and seniors passes are cheaper.

For more information, call the Jasper Heritage Folk Festival office at (403) 852-6810.

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DIGEST

Rent's Canadian debut delayed

The Toronto production of the Broadway musical *Rent* will be delayed several months, at least until January and possibly later, Mirvish Productions said Monday.

Mirvish won the Canadian rights for *Rent* in April, just as it was moving to Broadway, where it has since been playing to sold-out audiences.

However a legal battle sparked by rival production company Livent has left the Mirvishes temporarily without a theatre for the play.

At the time of signing, *Rent*, the provincially owned Elgin Theatre was a likely candidate. However, Livent, Garth Drabinsky's production company, said it had a prior claim and took the theatre.

Mirvish spokesperson John Karatamatis said Monday his company hopes to know shortly after Labor Day whether *Rent* can be staged at the Elgin.

If it can, the earliest *Rent* could appear in Toronto would be January. Otherwise, it could have to wait until next summer when the Mirvish-owned Royal Alex becomes available.

—The Canadian Press

President Bill Clinton and the U.S. television industry announced an agreement Monday requiring three hours of educational shows a week for children. Gathering 30 TV executives, children's advocates, program producers and actors at the White House, Clinton said of the deal: "It says to America's parents: you are not alone."

He urged the Federal Communications Commission to adopt the accord. "To make the three-hour law the law of the land, television can build up young lives, rather than tear them down."

The election-year accord gives Clinton additional leverage in the social-values debates between Democrats and Republicans. After a February meeting with Clinton, industry executives agreed to implement a voluntary television ratings system by the end of the year to warn viewers about violence and sex in programs. He also pushed for a V-chip in new televisions, a technology that allows parents to ban violent or sexual shows from their homes.

The three-hour minimum would not include public service announcements or specials, unless special permission is given by the Federal Communications Commission.

In an important development to ensure enforcement, the FCC would oversee the new rule. The FCC, which includes Clinton appointees, must approve the rule for it to take effect.

—The Associated Press

TV drags movie distributors down

Movie-goes gave the film and video distribution industry a boost in fiscal year 1994-95, but a decline in conventional TV revenues pulled profits down.

Industry profits dropped two per cent to \$206 million last year, Statistics Canada reported Monday. Despite the decline, it was the second most profitable year in the last decade. Total sales revenue rose to \$1.5 billion, up 13 per cent.

Revenue from film distribution to theatres rose 22 per cent to a record \$229 million. Meanwhile, revenues from the showing of films and videos on what the agency calls "normal broadcast television" tumbled 19 per cent to \$365 million.

—The Associated Press

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Clinton pact boosts kids' shows

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Betsy King Michelle McGann

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Liselotte Neumann

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