

*Rodney Crowell & Emmylou Harris in Concert
Win Entertainment Centre
Wollongong 28th June 2015*

The Band:

*Drums: John Mc Teege, Piano/Accordion: Micah
Holster, Electric Bass: Michael Renae, Pedal steel:
Steve Fishell, Guitar: Jed Hughes.*



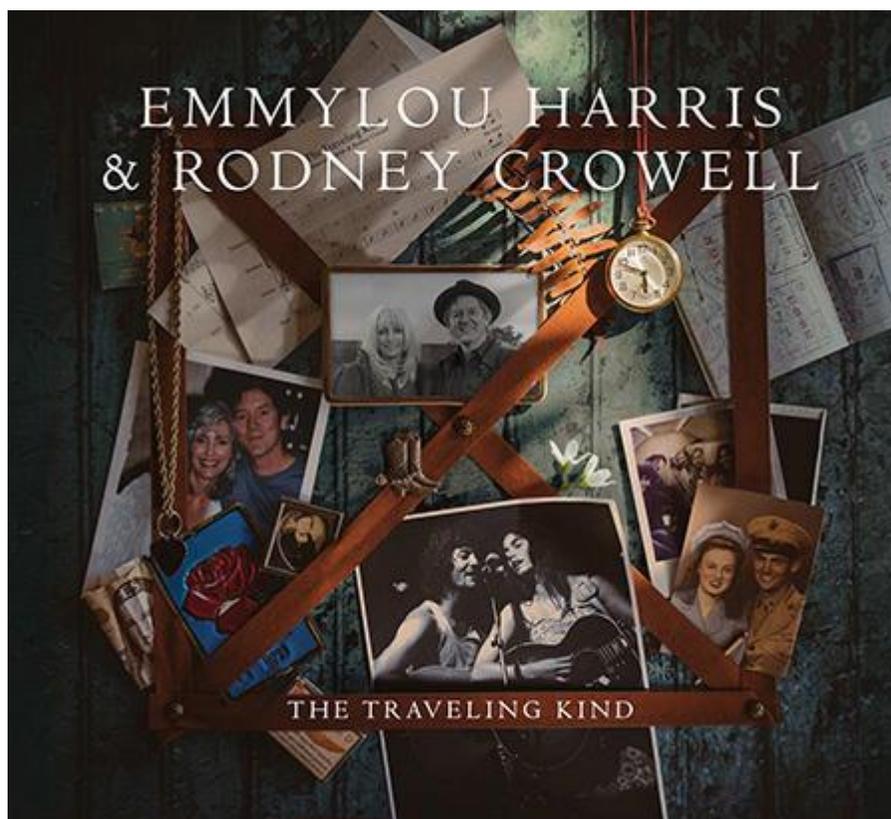
An Appreciation by Garry Victor Hill

Emmylou Harris was sixty-eight years old and Rodney Crowell sixty-four when they gave this concert, but that comes across as almost beyond belief after seeing the levels of energy, freshness and enthusiasm that went into their performances. Several tracks got a high voltage energy rock treatment that would have stunned teenage rappers. Rodney Crowell's compositions and co-compositions 'Aint Livin' Long Like This,' 'Leavin' Louisiana in the Broad Daylight' and Town Van Zant's 'Pancho and Lefty' were performed so well that they rate as standouts in the genre. Many of these songs and others they performed are either forty years old, close to it or older, but younger audience members would never know that from this performance or that Crowell and Harris have been musical collaborators for over forty years. The band and Harris and Crowell did not play them with a sometimes weary, sentimental reverence the way some performers play their old favourites, but rejuvenated them with their energy, enthusiasm and liking for the songs.



They also gave us many more acoustic sounding moments, even though the instruments were amplified. 'Red Dirt Girl' 'Love Hurts' 'Moving Work of Art'

‘New Orleans’ and their finale by Harris, ‘Boulder to Birmingham’ were among them, as were the title track from their 2013 album *Old Yellow Moon* and another from that album, ‘Back When We Were Beautiful.’ The frequent alternating of acoustic sounding and electrified rock made for a pacing that gave variety without a clashing of styles. Tracks from their most recent album ‘*The Travelling Kind*’ included the title track and the slow paced, electric and bluesy ‘The Weight of the World.’ Emmylou Harris introduced this sombre last-mentioned track as being dedicated to Pope Francis because of his recent statement against climate change. When this statement got only a few cheers, she quite rightly stated that it does not matter what you believe, the world is still your home. The implication that a home should be cared for by its occupants was obvious and so undeveloped – except in the song.



Harris, Crowell and the band worked exceptionally well together and without the egotism that others elsewhere sometimes show. Guitarist Jed Hughes and Harmony James (who was the supporting act) were encouraged to sing. Harris and Crowell

would frequently sing chorus or backup while each of them took turns being the main singer. At times they would be only instrumental support for each other. The evening's surprise was the quality of their voices. Harris's voice sounds as strong, distinctive, and remarkable as it was at the start of her career in 1969. Her delivery, as always, flows perfectly for the lyrics.



Rodney Crowell was the big surprise. Hearing him on record nobody could dispute that he has a fine, durable, expressive and pleasing voice, but in concert his voice was actually more powerful, resonant, pleasing and amazing in its clarity. This reverses a frequent development in music where studio technological aids enhance and improve a voice that disappoints live. Attending live concerts by professional musicians (many of them world famous) since the 1960s, I have never heard a better male singer. This is not the same as saying he has the most powerful, resonant or the loudest voice ever, even if he could and did belt out lyrics above the massive sound produced by the band. The strength in his voice was that he could do that with the rockier songs and yet convey the emotions appropriate to

and behind the lyrics so well. With the more acoustic songs his clarity, warmth, expressiveness and subtlety were at perfect levels. As with Harris, there was also just the intangible way his voice flowed and pleased.

Harris could make jokes at her own expense i.e “This song is so old we were both brunettes when we first recorded it.” The way the singers and the band put everything into a concert for an audience of only a few hundred speaks of high professional standards, come again.

That audience gave a long, unanimous standing ovation that was well deserved.

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