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# SUN ENTERTAINMENT Music

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## Super Highway Cochrane adds fire to fine Rascal Flatts concert

By **YURI WUENSCH, SUN MEDIA**

E-MAIL TO A FRIEND PRINT PAGE WRITE US LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Life's highway hit a junction during last night's sold-out Rascal Flatts concert at Rexall Place.



Gary Levox, singer for Rascal Flatts, makes a point during the band's concert last night at Rexall Place. (JASON FRANSON, SUN)

"Tom Cochrane will be in the building tonight," a cheery and helpful Northlands representative told me as I walked in. Until last night, it seems, Cochrane and the gang behind top-selling albums like *Me and My Gang* had yet to meet, despite sharing common - nay, uncommon - success with the same tune: *Life is a Highway*.

Flatts, the country band of the moment, covered the Cochrane classic for last year's *Mouse House CG* feature, *Cars*, with the top-10 tune becoming ubiquitous on country stations across North America. It also inarguably revived interest in Cochrane's back catalogue, and a tune that's become something of a Canadian rock anthem.

### BIG GUN

Whether or not I'd get to see Rascal Flatts and Tom Cochrane performing the tune together in time for deadline was the question. As Flatts's set went on, and as *Life is a Highway* didn't materialize, it soon became obvious the duet was a big gun being reserved for the inevitable encore.

Even without that pivotal, to-be-remembered concert moment, Rascal Flatts still put on an out-of-this-world concert.

The stage itself was a good start, looking like the set of a mother ship stolen from *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*. Raining a shower of sparks on Rascal Flatts through the band's first number,



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Where You Are, the stage instantly became the coolest one Rexall Place has hosted in quite some time. Yes, even cooler than Tool or Motley Crue.

Flatts co-vocalist Jay DeMarcus made sure everybody was onboard.

"Do you y'all still have your tickets?" he asked. "Cause if you read the back it says 'Please remain standing and party your bleep off.' Come on; it's Saturday night!"

That kind of rapport with the crowd sold Rascal Flatts's performance almost more than the band's actual playing did. Never bad, really - on the contrary, it sounded terrific. But on a night where Rexall finally had clear sound, it should have carried a little more oomph befitting the world's biggest country band. Yes, that's right; there is no happy medium.

Ironically, the best moments weren't made up by RF hits like Me and My Gang, Mayberry or Bless the Broken Road, but instead more spontaneous ones like ace covers of the Eagles's Hotel California, Bryan Adams's Summer of '69 and the fiddler's manic rendition of the Canadian national anthem or the routine acknowledgment on behalf of DeMarcus, sequin-jeaned lead singer Gary Levox and lead guitarist Joe Don Rooney of just how many fine women there were in the audience.

The surprise appearance of Cochrane brought the house down, of course.

Opening for Rascal Flatts, Jason Aldean paid tributes of his own to mixed results.

A honky-tonk tenor - perhaps a too-fancy way of saying that, yes, Aldean can indeed sing and sing well - his judgment is what's suspect. When performing his own hits - the lover's country ballad Why and, celebrating rural America, Hicktown - he's fine.

But if you've got the temerity to sing and record a song with a title like Johnny Cash (the first single from Aldean's upcoming sophomore album), it should have something to do with the late Cash's sound. As it was, it smacked far too much of CISN pop country.

**MAY MISS HIM**

For those who missed Cochrane last night, unless you have tickets to his March 15 Edmonton date you may miss him again.

Seats for the Tom Cochrane and Red Rider reunion tour stop at the Winspear Centre will be tough to come by.

**Next story:** [Aldean living music dream](#)

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