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Entertainment home

## Even without the Eagles, Joe Walsh soars in Foellinger concert

By James Grant, features@news-sentinel.com  
Wednesday, August 03, 2016 12:17 PM

Joe Walsh proved Tuesday night that with or without the Eagles, he can still soar high as a live performer and guitarist as he played before an enthusiastic and nearly sold-out crowd at Foellinger Theatre along with opening act JD & the Straight Shot.

Walsh, dressed in black leather pants with a gray and black shirt and silver shoes, electrified the ecstatic crowd with a selection of his solo hits as well as songs from his time in the James Gang and the Eagles.

Opening act JD & the Straight Shot performed a tight set filled with songs from their latest acoustic album entitled "Ballyhoo!" JD & the Straight Shot's music is a nice blend of Americana and blues with a dash of folk thrown in for good measure that was the perfect soundtrack for a hot August summer night.

A seven-piece band that included a stand-up bass player and a violinist, JD & the Straight Shot lent a distinctively country flavor to the evening with an all-acoustic set that featured wonderful playing, great harmonies and a dose of melancholy that permeated the air whenever the violin joined in.

After a 20-minute break, Walsh strolled onto stage and set a light-hearted tone that lasted throughout his performance as he greeted the crowd with a tongue and cheek "Good morning" before launching into a rocking version of the James Gang's "Walk Away."

Walsh has enjoyed a long solo career and has also been a member of several bands, most notably the James Gang and the ever popular and iconic Eagles, and his set last night reflected that.

Throughout the show Walsh lent his stinging guitar licks to such rock radio staples as the James Gang's "Funk #49" and the Eagles' classics "Take it to the Limit", "In the City" and "Life in the Fast Lane" as well as his own solo hits "Life's Been Good" and "Rocky Mountain Way." The crowd gave him resounding applause after every song, especially after every Eagles song.

In fact, the emotional highlight of the evening occurred when Walsh dedicated "Take it to the Limit" to his recently departed Eagles bandmate Glenn Frey. Images of Frey appeared on a screen behind the stage throughout the song and that clearly moved the audience who stood up and waved their cell phones like candles as the sky darkened.

Looking and sounding great, Walsh was in exceptionally fine form on guitar and vocals as he danced and sang and entertained the crowd with his enthusiastic sense of humor.

Walsh's six piece backing band and four backup singers were also in exceptional form and really added a spark and grit to the songs that elevated the performance tremendously.

The legendary guitarist Waddy Watchel who's played with such luminaries as Jackson Browne, Linda Ronstadt, Stevie Nicks and James Taylor among many others was also a part of Walsh's band last night and his interplay with Walsh on several songs was one of the highlights of the night for me.

The party atmosphere peaked when Walsh played "Funk #49" toward the end of his set, which really got the crowd on their feet where they stayed until the show ended three songs later with what I consider one of Walsh's signature songs "Rocky Mountain Way,"

Steve McGannon from Van Wert, Ohio, summed up the feeling of the audience pretty well as a long-time fan who has seen Walsh perform several times.

"Tonight was the seventh time I've seen Joe Walsh," McGannon said Tuesday. "First time was in 1972 with the James Gang. I thought I would say Joe had matured seeing backup singers and an eleven-piece band, but Joe was



By James Grant for The News-Sentinel Joe Walsh enchanted a Fort Wayne audience on Tuesday when he performed at Foellinger Theatre. The hits from the Eagles were particularly popular.

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still the same dude I saw 44 years ago.”

McGannon added, “Great show; would go see him seven more times.”

Walsh certainly did put on a stellar performance and though I'm a casual fan of his music, I came away from the show pleasantly surprised. I had seen Walsh perform with the Eagles here in Fort Wayne at the Memorial Coliseum in 2003 and was surprised to find that I enjoyed this solo show as much if not more than the Eagles concert.

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