

# The concert scene: then and now

**"D**o you feel as out of place as I do?" I asked wifey as I looked at the pimple-faced teenagers who surrounded us. "Yes," she replied. "Let's leave." And we did.

That was about 15 years ago at the Concert Hall in Toronto during a Bryan Adams show when wifey and I (then in our mid-20s) felt extremely old amid a sea of pre-pubescent. We have not been to a rock concert since, that is, until two weeks ago.

Now, technically I suppose Burton Cummings (former lead singer of The Guess Who) and Gowan (Lawrence Gowan for those of you not familiar with hits like A Criminal Mind and You're a Strange Animal) doesn't really qualify as a "rock" concert. After all, Cummings is pushing 51 and Gowan is now a 40-something performer and both would now definitely fall into the musical genre known as soft rock.

Since wifey managed to score tickets to the show, which was held on a high school football field 10 minutes from our house, I figured there were worse ways to spend a balmy September Saturday night than sitting under the stars and tapping my foot to some familiar tunes.

Perhaps it was because I had just recently turned 40 and was feeling my age, but I couldn't help but be amused at how different this concert was from ones I attended as a young man sowing his wild oats. Obviously, Cummings and Gowan had attracted a different audience than what a current hot band like the Smashing Pumpkins would, but I noticed that some concert rituals remained the same, albeit in a different fashion.

### THE PRE-CONCERT WORKOUT

Then: In the good old days we would throw beachballs and frisbees throughout the concert hall and wave lit matches and lighters above our heads. Now: I watched a man and his

THIS  
'N  
THAT



John McGhie

young son play catch with a baseball.

### THE CLOTHES

Then: T-shirts, jeans and halter tops used to be the uniform of my generation. Now: Golf shirts and Dockers khaki pants were the fashion du jour.

### THE SMELL

Then: Concerts were dominated by the sweet smell of a illegal herb that left a thin blue veil of smoke in the air. Now: The enticing scent of a double cheese pepperoni pizza caught my attention.

### THE CROWD

Then: Head-banging and air guitars abounded. We moved as one to the beat of the music and constantly pounded our fists in the air. Now: We applauded politely after each tune and a few heads nodded to the beat of the music. Oh yeah, wifey told a trio of teens behind us to "Please, shut up" as they yammered away (on a cell phone no less) during Cummings' performance.

### BEVERAGES:

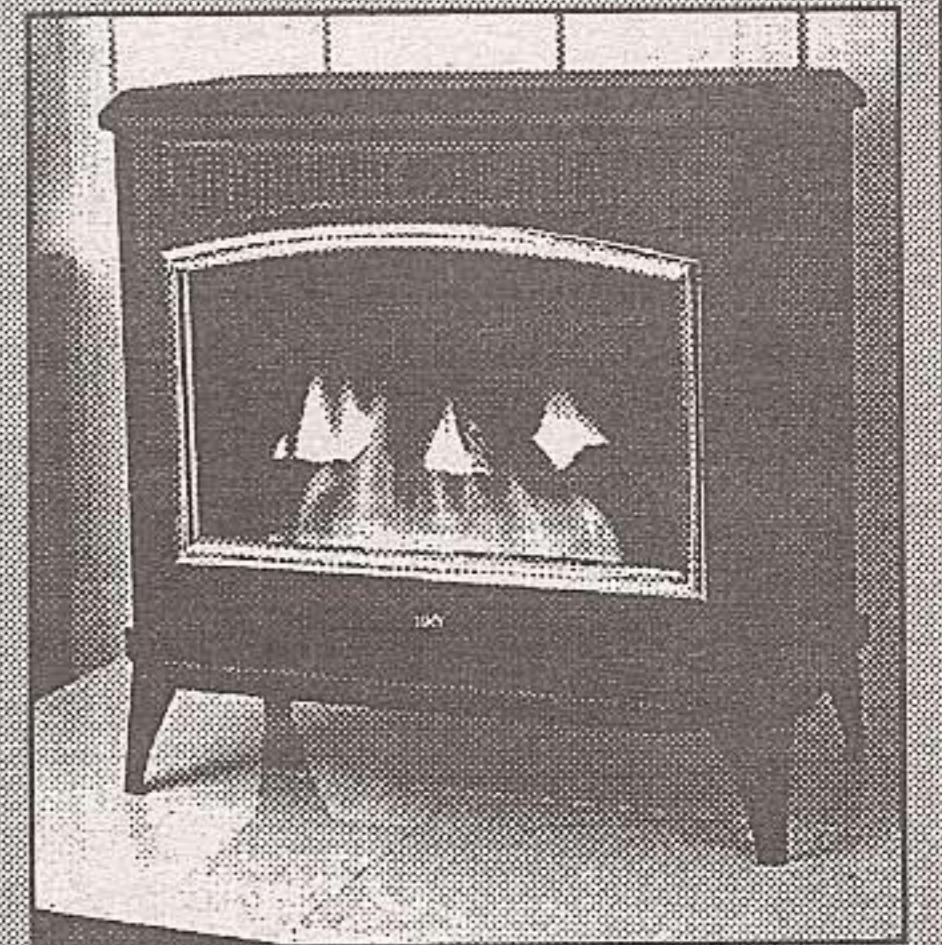
Then: Smuggled in beer and liquor. Now: Crystal Springs spring water and coffee.

But perhaps the biggest difference between a concert then and one now is the fact I left this most recent show with something I never took with me in the old days.

My hearing.

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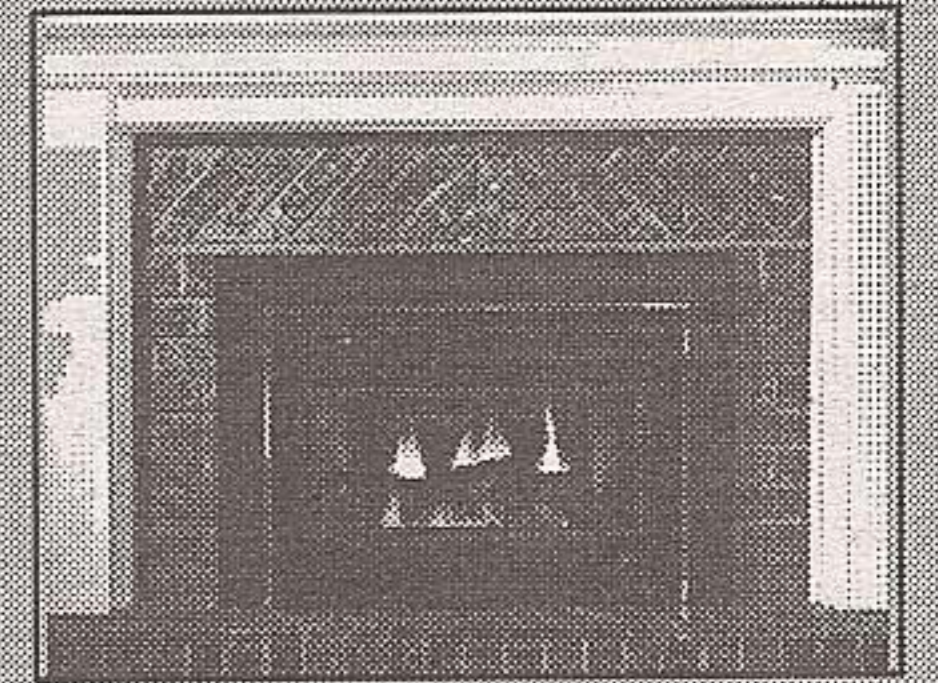
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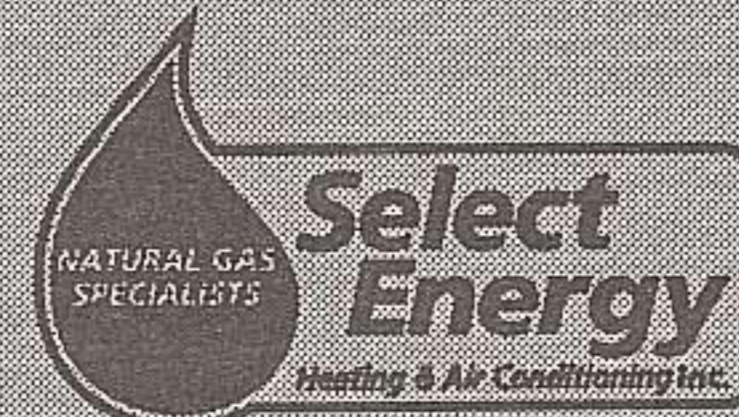


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