

# Those big red doors on Shuter Street

I had a flashback early Thursday morning. It happened as I shivered in the early morning cold while driving my daughter to the bus. She was late getting home the night before as she took in a concert in Toronto with her best friend. She was a bit wiped, but I could relate. I sat up waiting for her until I fell asleep reading.

But, in spite of her exhaustion, she was still pumped. She'd seen her favorite musician, Ani DiFranco, and more importantly, she'd seen her at Toronto's Massey Hall.

"It was sooooo cool, Dad," she went on, "Ani played all by herself on stage, and played some stuff from her new CD, which I'm gonna buy, and she had three different acoustic guitars, all with separate pickups..."

And so on. Expounding on the talents of the Buffalo-born DiFranco, whom I've developed a begrudging respect for, with her aggressive guitar style and gutsy, yet sometimes angry, lyrics, I smiled as Jenn poured out all the details of the concert, the posters on sale, Ani's boots (she didn't like 'em) and last, but certainly not least, Massey Hall.

As she talked about her first Massey Hall experience, I was off in my own little world, recalling MY own first visit to that grand old concert hall down there on Shuter Street.

It was 1970, in the month of December, and it was a Thursday night. (I know that because I had to work Friday night, and book off Thursday.)

And I was 19 years-old. The artist was James Taylor and, at that time, he was an up and coming folkie, on tour promoting his new album, *Sweet Baby James*.

For a farm boy from Limehouse, this was quite an excursion, and I stood in awe of the big red doors of Massey Hall as my girlfriend at the time, along with my buddy and his girlfriend, stood in line on the chilly sidewalk of Shuter Street, waiting for the doors to open.

Like Jenn, our seats were on the first level,

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Ted Brown

only a scant few yards from the stage.

It was unbelievable!

When Taylor came out, he was joined by a female pianist with a mane of hair (wearing a long skirt, and an Indian cotton blouse sans bra— remember, this was 1970 ) along with some tall guy playing electric bass.

At the end of his set, James Taylor turned the stage over to his pianist, whom he introduced as "an established songwriter who has been recording some of her own material lately."

Her name was Carole King.

As she poured out songs made famous by the likes of Aretha Franklin, I was smitten.

She too was promoting her new album at the time— it was called *Tapestry*.

If that wasn't enough, the bass player also did a solo set. His name? Jesse Winchester.

I bought those two albums, and played them to death. I've got them on CD, and I still play them regularly, more than 30 years after my first walk through the big red doors at Massey Hall.

Since then, I've seen countless artists at Massey Hall, including Murray McLachlan, Ian and Sylvia and the Great Speckled Bird, Gordon Lightfoot on more occasions than I can count, and a lesser-known artist Adam Mitchell.

As I listened to Jenn speak, I thought how it'd gone full circle— my daughter was basking in the afterglow of a Massey Hall experience.

And you know something, it felt really nice....

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