

More than just a 'little bit country'

Chalk it up to intolerance brought on by the aging process. Or perhaps I'm just wising up to big city seams and the excesses of our times.

But for whatever reason, I returned from downtown TO the other night vowing that I would never again be knowingly subjected to such abuse.

What was supposed to be an enjoyable evening of dinner followed by a live concert, turned out to be instead a wretched eating experience followed by a cattle-like herding into a stone cold ex-warehouse to wait for hours for the privilege of having our ears pounded to a pulp by some half-crazed sound control man.

Now I've always appreciated the idea of going to see my favourite performers live, be they comedian, theatre actors, or singers. And I'll willingly admit that while I enjoy the symphony, or a good acappella group such as the Nylons, the best live show I ever



FROM WHERE I LIVE

Bruce Stapley

attended was put on by Bob Seger and the Silver Bullet Band.

So when a few friends suggested we go to a downtown Toronto night spot to watch a well known local band, Zappa Costa, perform, I was expecting a decibel count of a somewhat lofty magnitude. Alfie Zappa Costa believes in the thorough projection of those heart-felt lyrics of his, and the boys in the band like to be heard too.

We were told that those patrons who chose to eat in the adjoining restaurant would get preferential seating for the show, as it was a

table and chairs seating arrangement, with no advance reservations.

The service was so bad that I asked for the bill when a waiter finally showed up a half hour or so after we sat down. "The Greens" it's not, that was made clear. I told the staff that we didn't want to be late for the show, and that we'd appreciate his staying in touch, or at least to send us the occasional telegram.

As it turned out, we would have been further ahead in every way to have headed up the street to McDonald's. The food was crum-

my as well as being overpriced. Something to do with having a captive audience, I suppose. And there were no good seats in this converted warehouse and not a moment's thought given to providing heat on a miserably cold February night. So much for the "edge" we were supposed to have gained from eating at their chintzy restaurant.

And the coup do grace, the part that really rattled my cage, was the hour and a half wait before the show began. Which, when accompanied by the further delay of equal length between the warm up band and the eventual coming of Alfie and the boys, became the target of several verbal salvos fired from our little group.

An obvious ploy to sell drinks. I refused to buy a drop, although I somehow managed to get hoodwinked into shelling out the princely sum of \$1.75 for a Club Soda for a friend (I never touch the stuff.)

When the act we'd all been waiting...and waiting...and waiting for finally graced us with its presence, the night's frustration became complete. The column-happy sound control 'engineer', who had obviously suffered the effects of having attended a few too many of this type of audio-overkill, cranked the speakers up to the point where they were starting to leak oil.

I wondered if it was just me. A quick scan of the premises showed a few others, who, like me, had taken to sticking their fingers in their ears for protection. But they were, like me, pushing 40, or already beyond.

We did leave early, as soon as the band had played the songs we'd come to hear.

And as I walked out, I decided that I had definitely become a little dated, a little more discerning, and more than a whole lot country.

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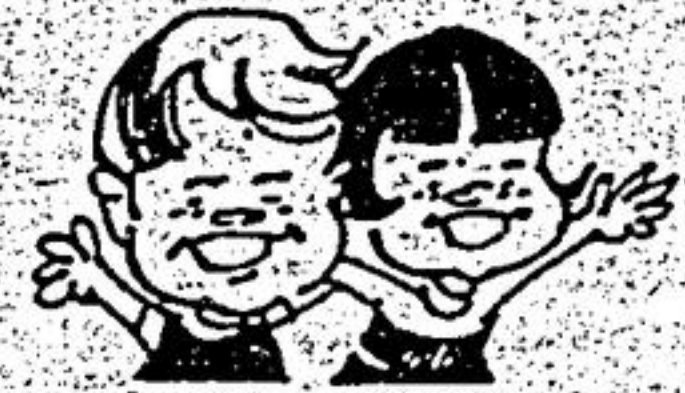
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