

Harmer and Wiley: On Par With Fred Penner

By Brodie MacRAE



Not Harmer or Wiley, but still popular with students.

The evening of Thursday the 26 of September was a night that will remain the most exciting night in Summerside for weeks to come, not even to be topped by Fred Penner (coming October 27). This was the evening that Sarah Harmer and Nathan Wiley took to the stage in the Harbourfront Jubilee Theatre to a nearly sold-out audience.

Nathan Wiley, still riding high on the success of his debut album "Bottom Dollar Baby," was the special guest on Sarah Harmer's Atlantic tour. Hailing from Summerside, it was especially exciting for the audience to see Wiley on stage in his hometown. Wiley has had a number of notable accomplishments to date: he was the winner of both CBC Radio's Definitely Not The Opera's Big Break contest and CBC TV's Great Canadian Dream contest, not to mention the critical acclaim his debut album has received.

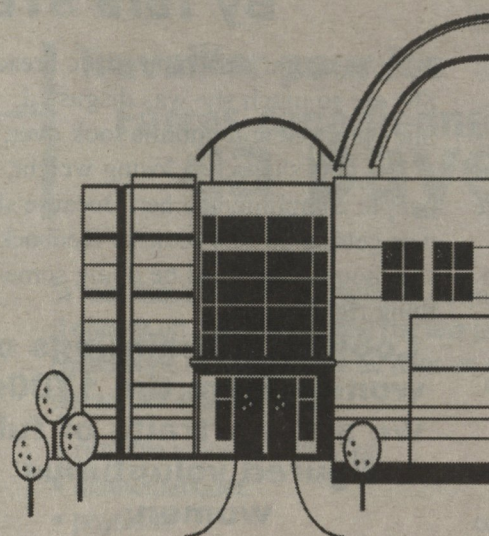
Wiley is equally as talented a songwriter as he is a performer. His songs have a maturity and careful craftsmanship usually reserved for artists much older than 24. It's all very mellow and reserved and is often compared to the likes of Tom Waites. Onstage, the band was very tight – which is to be expected when you're playing with three of the strongest musicians on the Island, namely Chas Guay on bass, Chris Corrigan on guitar and drummer Dale DesRoches. Very satisfying indeed.

The main attraction of the evening, of course, was Sarah Harmer.

This beautiful songstress grew up on a farm in Kingston, Ontario and is currently on a break as the lead singer of Weeping Tile. She has released two albums to date, the first being 1999's "Songs For Clem," an album of old country standards intended only as a Christmas present to her father, but eventually found its way into the record stores. Her latest release is titled "You Were Here," and features such recognizable tunes as "Everytime", "Around This Corner" and "Don't Get Your Back Up."

Harmer is an incredibly charming performer. She has a stage presence so charismatic, it could win over an audience expecting to hear Metallica. Her voice is as enchanting as her songs are catchy, soothing and intimate. The audience was entertained with all of the radio favourites, a cover of a Dolly Parton tune and even some songs from her yet-to-be completed third album (which will be released when she's finished of it.)

The only disappointing aspect of the evening was the audience's somewhat lacklustre enthusiasm, due entirely to the fact that the venue was a theatre in which everyone was required to be seated. This, of course, isn't really the fault of the Jubilee, they can't help it that they are a theatre, but it was a shame the audience couldn't move or dance. However, Harmer and Wiley rose admirably to the challenge, and presented an evening of great music enjoyed by all, even if we were seated.



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