

Downie-sans-Hip and Opener Nathan Wiley Rock the Wave

by Mark Cameron

There was a different vibe when I first walked into The Wave at 10:00 for the Gord Downie concert. As opposed to the previous week at The Theory of A Deadmen concert, where there were seventeen/eighteen year olds everywhere, here, there were people ranging in ages from 25-40, but seemingly fewer college students.

Yeah, it was only 10, but the thought crossed my mind, "Man, is nobody going to show up for Downie?"

I had bought my ticket the week before, and only 220 had been sold at the time. "No problem," I thought. "They'll be gone by the end of the week."

But still they weren't selling like hot cakes, and as of the Friday before the concert, there were still many left. This was Downie's last night on tour and for it not to be sold out would suck.

But again I thought, "The hell with it, seeing Gord Downie in an intimate setting with 200 people is alright with me"—pretty damn good, actually. As the lead singer of The Tragically Hip, Downie and the boys have released great records like *Road Apples*, *Fully Completely*, *Music at Work* and *In Violet Light*, and are known for their wicked live performances. If you've ever seen Downie in concert before, he's known to go into a trance-like state on stage and spout out weird lyrics in the middle of his songs—it's great! So regardless, that the Hip weren't with him, and the fact that I didn't know



much of his solo material (I'm not sure if anybody did), this was a show not to be missed.

Opening for Downie, was 2003 ECMA winner for Alternative Artist Of The Year, P.E.I.'s own Nathan Wiley. The 25 year-old Wiley only played a short set, (maybe five-six songs) but he definitely left an impression as songs like 'Bottom Dollar Baby' got everybody up and dancing. It's too bad, there wasn't a bigger crowd during his set, because Wiley and his bandmates had a lot of energy going on stage and I wouldn't mind seeing them again.

By the time Wiley walked off the stage around 11:10, the Wave started filling up and antici-

pation started building. About 11:30, the lights went down and Gord Downie and The Country Miracles hit the stage.

Downie, in a sweater and jeans acknowledged the crowd, smiled and started into the set, doing songs off his two solo albums, *Coke Machine Glow* and *Battle of The Nudes*. It's hard to say if the crowd knew any of Downie's solo stuff, but if they didn't, no one showed it as everybody was rocking back and fourth to the music. Downie sounded great, and his band, The Country Miracles backed him up admirably. When Downie finally broke into a tune everybody knew, the catchy 'Pascal's Submarine' everyone was

singing the chorus, "Nah, Nah, Nah, Naaaaaaah," at the top of their lungs! And when Downie acknowledged Johnny Cash's death by playing a Cash tune, everyone cheered approvingly.

Downie played for an hour and a half, much longer than the last couple of bands to hit the Wave (*I'm Talkin' To You Swollen Members*) and despite a few fights in front of the stage and me getting hit on the shoulder with an empty beer pitcher, (Ya bastards!) the show was great. Sure there was no Hip tunes, but Downie proved he could still get people up on their feet without the rest of the Hip behind him. We all hope he comes back soon.