

Butler plays guitar like Gretzky plays hockey

And he sings even better!

John Roberts

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Friday's audience at the Qualicum Beach Civic Centre was sure they saw Wayne Gretzky's #99 on Todd Butler's shirt as he delivered an unbelievable musical performance.

With an incredible guitar-strumming talent, a superb vocal delivery, a unique sense of timing, and an eclectic repertoire, Butler's concert was outstanding!

The two-hour celebration of music of every style began with a delightful opening act by Debbie & Jack, two notable locals who've made Oceanside residents feel superb.

Deb Ryan and Jack Stevenson delivered bright, lively vocals to get the evening off to a great start, performing Cindy Lauper's "Time After Time" and a special rendition of "Out of Our Hands," a touching melody written by Jack's son, Zachary Stevenson.

Then Todd Butler appeared, guitar in hand and voice in gear.

"I'm a 46-year-old Canadian with the body of a 65-year-old-Swede," he said, but you'd never know it.

His humorous approach to familiar tunes brought the house down, from "The Day the Market Died" featuring the line, "Bye Bye to the Pie in the Sky," to "Conrad" ("I'd rather be a poor Canadian than Conrad Black!"), to "Green Steve" where to the melody of Greensleeves he sang, "He's seen the light now that Suzuki's right!" Jack Layton, Stéphane Dion, Gilles Duceppe and Elizabeth May were equally dissed. Talk about timely!

He even touched on American politics with his version of "Hey, Good Lookin'!" where he asks Sarah Palin, "How 'bout cookin' up some moose for me?" He followed up with presidential candidate John McCain's theme "I've Got You, Babe!"

But there was much more than that. Butler is a master at strumming and is also a creative artist in writing very touching and meaningful songs. From "Farmer Dan" to "Old John Dear," Butler poured his heart into every chord and word. He sang "Dad", where he admits that as a father he's not an icon. Humorous, yet meaningful.

Butler then closed with a tribute to his blessed home, Vancouver Island. Having been born and raised in rural Alberta and then spending seven years in the rat-race of hyper-busy Vancouver, his heart brought him to Courtenay. The melody, the lyrics and the performance of "Home" brought tears of joy and happiness. Oh, what a night!

Those who bought one of Butler's four CDs no doubt realized their mistake: they should have bought all four! Those of us in Oceanside must realize how fortunate we are to have such a valued musician in our midst. Do yourself a favour and visit www.toddbutler.com. You'll enjoy every minute!

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