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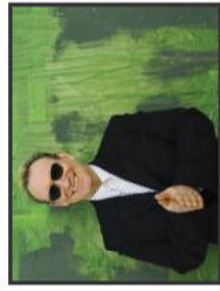
Colin Hay parks the fried-out combie at Edmonds Center for the Arts on Aug. 22

The former Man At Work proves there's life after helming history's luckiest bar band

By Sheri Quirt

August 19, 2008

NWsource staff



COLIN HAY

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Men At Work got into my brain space through a protracted period of casual indoctrination. My childhood best friend thought they were the stuff. They stared out at me from the poster on her bedroom wall, and she'd pass me notes in class advising me that they "rule[d]." They certainly did the business, and they made clever videos, but as they were kind of ancient (early 30s!) and none of them wore eyeliner, they really weren't my bag.

Though I would never have admitted it then (acknowledging a band besides one's declared favorite was tantamount to treason), it was apparent that front man [Colin Hay](#) had potential, and lo and behold, he's emerged as one of the survivors of those heady days of Reaganomics, Aqua Net and coke. He brings his solid catalog of solo material -- and a few old hits for good measure -- to the Edmonds Center for the Arts on Friday, Aug. 22.

The rest of the Men may well have ended up flogging Fanta and Vegemite wraps on the shores of Bondi. But Hay has stayed busy traveling the summer circuit with Ringo and his All-Starr Band, contributing to TV and film soundtracks and producing guitar-driven albums full of quirky, wry ditties like those that made his fortune. (1998's "Transcendental Highway": Zen dreamscape or car-worship satire?)

Hay can also write a fine love song, or more accurately, a relationship song -- with a specialty in those unions that have gone south. The world-weariness he hinted at early on fits him all the better in middle age. "I've bought myself new glasses/I'm taking salsa classes," he croons drolly on the wistful "Lonely Without You" from last year's "Are You Lookin' At Me?", a record also buoyed by the autobiographical title track and the infectious Dylan paean "What Would Bob Do?"

Hay's live show is much more than the perfunctory regurgitation of jukebox memories -- though his voice is still in implausibly good form. His raucous gig at the [Tractor Tavern](#) last summer was as full of storytelling as it was songs, as he riffed on everything from a Christopher Walken-Keith Richards presidential ticket to the good-looking black guy at his gym who undermines his self-confidence.

The Aussie twang of old has been supplanted by his native Scottish accent, a brogue that somehow makes everything seem bawdier and more fun. Will this gifted raconteur tame his promiscuous use of the f-word for the arts-center crowd? Oh, let's hope not.

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