

arts and entertainment

Jennings attracts cosmic cowboys

Despite the sage country advice of Waylon Jennings, apparently a lot of mama's have let their babies grow up to be cowboys.

At least 4,000 of them, cowboys in mind if not body, came to hear Ol' Waylon sing his homespun country tales at last Friday's Pershing Auditorium appearance.

But despite the frequent presence of Stetsons, and bottles of Jack Daniels, the audience was a diverse mixture of young and old, men and women, and white and blue collar workers, representing the unique status Jennings has achieved as the king of a new wave of popular country music.

At first subdued but appreciative, the crowd was warmed up by a set from fellow "outlaw" Jessi Colter, and The Waylers, a back up group of experienced country musicians who also share the stage with Waylon.

Popular country

Adept at playing in pure country fashion, both Colter and the band showed ability to cross over to a more popular country vein—The Waylers, with tunes like Elton John's "Ballad of A Well Known Gun," and The Band's "The Weight", and Colter with "I'm Not Lisa," the whining country ballad that saw Top 40 success a few years back.

Top 40 success has also brought Waylon Jennings to more ears and eyes lately,



though his loyal following goes back much further than his recent surge in the popular market.

Many of his devotees apparently were in attendance—an opening chord was all they needed to recognize an old favorite, resulting in whoops and hollers of pure cowboy joy.

Cheers, cowboy hats

Jennings opened with a stylized remake of Neil Young's "Are You Ready For The Country?" and assuming the audience was, went on with tales of drinkin', women, hard livin' and country compatriot Willie Nelson. The mere mention of Texas and honky tonks by Waylon brought cheers and cowboy hats in the air from the now substantially livened crowd.

"This Time" showed Waylon at his best capacity for combining talents, with blatant country and western lyrics, and the hardest guitar lines of the night. By this time even those older cowboys and cowgirls in the audience were starting to stomp and holler. Some admitted it was their first encounter with a "rock-style" concert.

Best for last

Like a wise showman, Jennings saved the most popular of his repertoire for the finale. Starting with his first breakthrough hit, "Good Hearted Woman", a song he ob-

viously directed to his own lifestyle, he followed with "Mama's Don't Let Your Babies Grow Up To Be Cowboys", "Luckenbach Texas", and finished with his best work, "Are You Sure Hank Done It This Way?"

The song paints a picture of Jennings induction to Nashville and the country music world, and makes a statement on its curious evolution since Hank Williams brought it out of relative obscurity in the 1950s.

At the end of the song, the crowd gave Jennings a full-scale standing ovation. Some left their reserved seats and began working their way up the aisles. The clapping and foot-stomping which successfully got him back for an encore, literally thundered through the auditorium which had been concertless this summer.

Non-cowboys, too

In one song, Jennings sings "I don't look the way a normal cowboy looks," which is true. But with the new popularity his music is enjoying, Waylon Jennings is proving you don't have to be a cowboy to like country and western music.

The couple at the souvenir booth pondering whether they could use a Waylon Pick-Up Truck Sunscreen on their 280-Z, is just another case in point.



Photographs by
Ted Kirk
Story by Casey McCabe

