

arts/entertainment

'True American' Thorogood keeps crowd happy

By Pat Higgins and Casey McCabe

News Item: George Thorogood and the Destroyers played in Omaha's Music Hall Wednesday night.

"What can you say about George Thorogood?"

"He's the best salesman of Budweiser since Ed McMahon."

"He's Delaware's greatest export."

"He's a true American. He played his entire show beneath the stars and stripes, and sent the crowd home with the national anthem."

concert review

"Thorogood keeps playing Chuck Berry for the umpteenth time, but after all, isn't that the same music NASA sent out in a space probe a few years back?"

"Yep. The *Sounds of Earth* package, one of NASA's best moves. Funny thing is, some of the folks up there at the music hall probably don't know Chuck Berry from Adam and the Ants, but George Thorogood is rapidly becoming God for the new generation of rock and roll bluesters."

"He must be seen to be believed. His live performance is far, far better than the records. I guess that's the point."

"He was awesome, I mean the man was sweating buckets."

"Giving 110 percent all night. Plus, I doubt if even Chuck Berry can do the duckwalk anymore as well as he does."

"Well Chuck's getting pretty old. Old enough to be George's dad. You don't suppose . . .?"

Holy Trinity

"Naw, spiritual father at the most. Along with Elmore James and Hank Williams, he forms Thorogood's Holy Trinity."

"Well, all I know is George is a fun guy. He dared the audience to be great and they took him on."

"What other artist would invite the crowd to storm the stage?"

"It was reminiscent of his last music hall

show. You couldn't even see the band for all the twisting humanity trying to grab the spotlight dance. The security guards seemed a little more uptight this time."

"They must have been Communists. After all, George represents everything good about today's youth. He's out for fun . . . and sex and alcohol. That seemed pretty obvious."

"He looked good. He looked healthy for doing the grueling 50 states in 50 days tour. I don't know how he's going to make it to Alaska. But he looked like a real athlete. He's got the moves, it must be his baseball training showing through."

"I loved it when he was Christening people with the neck of his guitar. Truly a religious experience. He even kept the people in the third balcony happy."

"He just plays old rock and blues, which is irresistible in the first place. And Thorogood can pull it off as well as anybody else. Probably better."

Buying rounds

"I don't know. I think people should advance beyond playing the same old stuff. But maybe he's right, maybe that was the best music. Even with all my qualms about him, he's still better than 92 percent of performers out there, probably more."

"He belongs in a bar. He should be buying rounds for the crowd."

"Exactly. He could also play one of the most ultimate *Animal House* Fraternity parties of all time."

"But if you're a bar band and you charge \$9, you'd better be pretty awesome. And he was."

"Truly. It never once appeared that he wasn't enjoying himself. He never let up for a second."

"Speaking of bar bands, I think it's time we mentioned how good Cocktail Shorty and the Tablerockers were."

"They were inspired. I've never heard Sean Benjamin play better."

"One of the best incarnations of the Heartmurmurs brotherhood. They handled the big stage well. They just didn't have big George's star quality."

"The crowd treated them great for an opening band. They deserved an encore, but the management pulled a cheap shot



Photo by Rhonda Hahn

George Thorogood

by hitting the house lights right after their set."

Complaints?

"Any complaints about the Thorogood show?"

"He never introduced his fine band, the Destroyers, which is a great name by the way."

"He made too much of a point about mentioning Omaha and Nebraska throughout the show. That got a bit old. Also, I'm

sure my ears will be ringing for days."

"Well, we probably shouldn't have stuck our heads in the speakers. Plus, I started getting really thirsty during 'One Bourbon, One Scotch, One Beer'. I swear the man can drive you to drinkin'."

"But all in all it was a memorable evening. The one, four and five chords have rarely had such a workout."

"Thorogood's a class guy, certainly one of the cooler dudes in the universe."

"I think he's still looking for a crowd that's as wild as he is."

Burton discusses LP, TV, politics and Presley

By Matt Millea and Chuck Lieurance

Charlie Burton, leader of the Cut-Outs and the most creative performer on the local music scene, spoke about his new LP, his recent TV appearance, politics, and yes, even Elvis Presley.

Millea: What kind of plans have you for the band?

Burton: We recorded our own LP, you know, on our own, putting our own money behind it. Money that is yet to be made. We've only paid for about half of it so far. We should be getting the test pressing back this week, or very soon anyway.

Millea: What did you think about the "33rd Street Sessions" program you did on NETV?

Burton: Well, there were things I liked about it and things I didn't like about it. After we'd seen the stuff played back, we sat down and decided what should make it in there. The actual things that made it in there were somewhat different than what we'd agreed on with the director. So I was a little miffed at that. I thought the mix could have been better. But you know, I was grateful. It was a great opportunity to learn the ropes of the video situation. I wrote "Breathe for Me, Presley" for that show. When they didn't use it I was kind of hurt.

Millea: How do you feel about Elvis, anyway?

Burton: Presley?

Millea: (Laughs) Yeah.

Burton: Oh, I love Elvis Presley. I love Elvis Costello too. But you know Elvis Presley's great. Everyone's talking about all the drugs he used and everything. But basically when you go back and listen to the records he's great. All that stuff. I think the dust will settle and people will realize what the guy was about was music. At his

best he was the greatest. He was great. I love Elvis.

Millea: What's been the most difficult part of it for you, as far as keeping it all together?

Burton: I suppose the hardest thing has been trying to keep some sense of optimism while still being locked in the southeast Nebraska — uh, rut.

Millea: So this new LP is going to be crucial?

Burton: No, everything's crucial (chuckles). Life is crucial. I wouldn't say it's crucial, in the sense that if it doesn't bring me wealth and fame I doubt I'll retire. It's not so crucial, but it's the current project.

Millea: You just don't know why you would?

Burton: I can't think of why I would. Even though some nights one does wonder, "God, what the hell am I doing here."

(Laughs) But then you go home and you think "Well, what else can you do?" I feel like I'm doing what I need to do for whatever sick reasons — or healthy reasons.

And then I also like myself. I like the lyrics. Some of the lyrics are just great!

(Laughs) I get a kick out of them. It's only a matter of time before someone else gets a kick out of them. I sent a tape to a studio guitar player friend in Nashville. I'm trying to get my songs recorded by some country and western stars. There are a couple of songs I do that could be recorded in a country style.

Millea: (puzzled) Which ones do you mean?

Burton: There's one, "Even As We Speak," which is basically just a country and western song. I'm trying to get that one waxed by some country crooner.



Photo courtesy of Charlie Burton

Charlie Burton and the Cut-Outs

"There are two songs I think he might be able to adapt, but I hate to think what he thinks of 'Breathe for Me, Presley'. Its gotta weird the guy out. He's basically the white shoe, white belt, gold buckle, leisure suit type guy, though he has a beard now."

This guy has a completely different life-style than you or me. It's like "Pictures from life's other side" as Hank Williams would say. A Good ol' boy. Probably part owner of a football team or something. He could probably appreciate a good Elvis-is-Dead joke as well as anyone.

Millea: One of the most endearing things about your band is that you don't set yourselves off as "rock stars." You're just normal guys being performers.

Burton: Right, not the Macho preening of what I call the "Can I Give You My Keys" school of rock singing like Foreigner or bands like that, where they're really trying to come on as rock studs. That's sort of what I think "New Wave", if you will, is about, not subscribing to the sexist rock image.

I don't want to be saying "Hey, I'm a cool rock star and you're not." I don't want to set myself apart from people. If I'm up here and they like what I'm doing or even if they don't, the thing to do is that they should start their own band. I would sooner see them want to express themselves than emphasize that I'm someone different from them.

Millea: Do you watch the news and decide, "Hell, I'm going to make a political statement for a change?"

Burton: Everything's a political statement. I doubt I could sit down and write a song like, "Let's overthrow the state." Any political statement I would make would be a little more understated or . . . not so literally about politics.

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