

**GOO GOO DOLLS AND COUNTING CROWS**

**CONCORD PAVILION**

**JUNE 26, 2006**



The editorial staff drove on into the heat Of the Valley to hear The Goo Goo Dolls And Counting Crows played at the Chronicle Pavilion (Nee Concord

pavilion), Sunday night. Which explains why this particular issue is one day late. The Pavilion is nestled amid the dry hills on the far side of Concord near the town of Clayton in an area which routinely sees triple digit temperatures. Fortunately the seated area is shaded by a large structure and as the sun went down gentle breezes cooled in the area pleasantly. If you have not visited the Pavilion in some time, which was our case, you will be pleased to see the general lawn seating vastly decreased in favor of decent folding seats bolted to concrete with every seat having a clear and unobstructed view of the stage. The scale remains small in comparison with venues such as the Shoreline with total capacity under 5000. In addition, unlike other venues this one allows and encourages picnic baskets with food and sealed fluid containers. In fact, picnic tables are provided in the area outside of the amphitheater itself. Given that a 24 ounce beer costs somewhat like \$10, this is welcome relief.

### Augustana



The opener consisted of a pleasantly surprising group of lads riding high on the release of their debut CD titled "Stars and Boulevards". Their name derives from a misinterpretation of a phrase in Latin, which they took to mean "a rare and slim hope". Stylistically, they are postpunk originals chunking out road-trip speaker-blasters alternating with smooth ballads. It was pretty clear that this band is going to go far and we pity the yakkers and gabbers too busy with their insipid drivel in the background to pay attention to the sound of the next big thing. Coeditor Sharon has tended to be right on the mark in these judgments. Years from now, those who paid attention will remember how Augustana opened for their idols, the Goo Goo Dolls. Mike Powers has already picked up on their sound.

#### Goo Goo Dolls

The Goo Goo Dolls are guys who produced such a wealth of good music in their previous efforts and out of such a bleak set of origins from the factory districts of Buffalo, New York that we want them to do well. Sadly, their most recent effort has been thoroughly trashed by the critics and many of their most devoted fans. The judgment summary and of the co-editor was terse and harsh: "white boy whine rock."

The truth is, the material from their early CDs is absolutely head and shoulders above the crap you hear on radio these days. They were edgy, they rocked hard with punk inflection and Rzeznick's lyrics were the best, most insightful, and most cutting of anything out there. The band still possesses explosive energy and performance. As the last notes of Pink Floyd's "You Better

Run." barely drifted off the air from the canned PA system the band members charged onto the stage playing as they galloped into position. And once there, they held the entire crowd in the palm of their hands. But the truth is the best moments of their set involved all the music of everything they had put out before their most recent CD, which appears to be a slickly overproduced mistake and a venture into emo-rock. Now some people can do emo, but Rzeznick is someone from whom we expect sharper and noisier things.



Songs like Black Balloon and Better Days are filled with sharper insights and there is good reason why they got a lot of radio airplay. Some people have unkindly accused The Goo Goo Dolls of pandering to the hit list, and the company dollar, and appealing to older versions of Britney Spears. This might be true on the CD but in performance, we felt Resnick & Co. still have the stuff to rock out. This opinion was confirmed when we talked to a professional musician sitting in our row. Besides, Black Balloon and Name are songs that going to live a

long time. It's clear the spirit of garage rock with all of its messy, unproduced, mistake laden, but joyously energetic energy persists in the band, especially in the form of the bassist Robby Tacac, who cannot sing worth a good god damn, but who clearly preserves the original punk energy Of the Goo Goo Dolls we first loved. We think if they just unload that miserable producer who damaged their sound during the last CD recording they will vastly improve.

Quote from a private critic on Amazon.com

"In summary: Let Love In is another weak effort by a band that's phoning it in trying to make a quick buck. Any band that changes their sound this drastically should have changed their name - what once used to be an energetic, visceral rock band is now a group of cheesy, maudlin balladeers with material that sounds like bad Bon Jovi songs. I know that John Rzeznik claims that he hates the Bon Jovi comparisons, but if it really bothered him I'm sure he would have written something other than all the lame soap opera anthems that can be heard on Let Love In. This band has become washed up, predictable, bland and thoroughly forgettable. Goo Goo Dolls, it was fun while it lasted, but now it's time to throw in the towel and call it a career."

Well, that's rather harsh. And it does seem to ignore the fact that a band is a continuum and artists sometimes do make mistakes. Along these lines we note that the CD production of a vastly different artist, Coco Montoya, also runs into this overproduction problem, wherein the live performance is so vastly superior that it seems a completely different person or band was involved in the project. Montoya's CD is undistinguished junk, however, every performance we have seen of Montoya stood head and shoulders above the vast majority of concerts we have seen from anyone else. The man simply burns down the house every

time. And it was clear Sunday night that Rzeznick, with his boys, enchanted the crowd.

### Counting Crows

Adam Durwitz released his last album in the year 2002. With a single song offered for the soundtrack to an animated film called Shrek 2, it has been a while since the band has released anything new. Nevertheless, the band Returned to the Bay Area with a sense of homecoming (most of the band members were born and raised in Berkeley And Durwitz earned his bachelor's degree in English at the University of California and Berkeley), and most of the people in the crowd possessed fond memories of the band's early days. The Counting Crows are a band which has provided the soundtrack to many lives. Their web site lists, a discography of about five CDs, but really the best majority of their work consists of just two CDs, which contain a song list that is likely to persist within the American songbook for another 100 years. Which is not too shabby.



That being said, The Counting Crows put on a powerhouse show that dominated the House. A little bit heavier, breathing a little harder from exertion, and soaking his T-shirt in sweat, Durwitz rings every last possible emotion and a drop of energy out of every single note, putting to shame the best majority of wanna-be performers who nuzzle the microphone. Early in the set Adam grabbed the microphone stand and smashed it against the proscenium floor. It really was that energetic a performance. We were hesitant on going, because we have heard so much of the counting Crows on radio and music has lived with us for so

long, and we have not heard anything new for quite a long time. Against all odds, Durwitz made us fans. And we are really glad the homeboy has done well.

There is really no one else out there who writes more intelligent lyrics -- few and far between are those who can take a Saul Bellow novel and turn it into a top 40 pop song with any degree of self respect. The concert left us longing for more new stuff from the man. He seems vital enough that maybe it just might happen.

As part of a healthy development, We have observed musicians participating with a greater sense of social responsibility during these kinds of big festivities. Both the Goo Goo Dolls, and The Counting Crows, are combining their tours with charitable work. The Counting Crows have a hyperlink on their web site, which connects people directly to a government web site that will facilitate becoming registered to vote. Durwitz made several public announcements, between sets and during his own set, encouraging people to go out and vote. In addition, the band coordinates a community outreach project that chooses worthy charities in each city where the band performs such that the charity obtains significant advertising and exposure to help with fund-raising and sometimes simple information dissemination. For Concord, and the Bay area, the project selected an organization which assists victims of spousal abuse. Listed below is yet another project conducted in combination with the Goo Goo Dolls which seeks to feed the poor in each community, where the tour will pass.



COUNTING CROWS AND GOO GOO DOLLS ASK THEIR FANS TO MAKE A  
DIFFERENCE IN THEIR COMMUNITIES

"As Counting Crows' community outreach project marks its 10th year, we are partnering with the Goo Goo Dolls to collect food with USA Harvest. Please remember to be generous and bring non perishable food with you to the show. There will be volunteers stationed at the entrances to the show 30 minutes prior to doors opening. The food collected will be immediately distributed to your neighbors in need and the community organizations Counting Crows has invited to the shows. We also invite you to visit the information tables that will be set up at each concert learn about how you can get involved and make a difference in your community."

HENDERSON, THE RAIN KING

When I think of heaven (Deliver me in a black-winged bird)  
I think of flying down into a sea of pens and feathers  
and all other instruments of faith and sex and God  
In the belly of a black-winged bird  
Don't try to feed me  
I've been here before -- and I deserve a little more

I belong in the service of the Queen I belong anywhere but in between  
She's been crying I've been thinking And I am the Rain King

Mama, why am I so alone?  
I can't go outside  
I'm scared I might not make it home  
I'm alive but I'm sinking in  
If there's anyone at home at your place  
Why don't you invite me in  
Don't try to bleed me  
I've been there before -- and I deserve a little more

I belong in the service of the Queen  
I belong anywhere but in between  
She's been lying

I've been sinking  
And I am the Rain King

Hey, I only want the same as anyone  
Henderson is waiting for the sun  
Oh, it seems night endlessly begins and ends  
After all the dreaming I come home again...

When I think of heaven (Deliver me in a black-winged bird)  
I think of dying: Lay me down in a field of flame and heather  
Render up my body into the burning heart of God in the belly of a black-winged bird  
Don't try to bleed me  
I've been here before -- and I deserve a little more

I belong in the service of the Queen  
I belong anywhere but in between  
She's been dying  
I been drinking and I am the Rain King.

Lyrics by Adam Duritz

BLACK BALLOON

Baby's black balloon makes her fly  
I almost fell into that hole in your life  
And you're not thinking 'bout tomorrow  
Cuz you were the same as me  
But on your knees

A thousand other boys could never reach you  
How could I have been the one?  
I saw the world spin beneath you  
And scatter like ice from the spoon that was your womb

Comin' down the world turned over  
And angels fall without you there  
And I go on as you get colder  
Or are you someone's prayer?

You know the lies they always told you  
And the love you never knew  
What's the things they never showed you  
That swallow the light from the sun inside your room, yeah

Comin' down the world turned over  
And angels fall without you there  
And I go on as you get colder  
Always someone there

And there's no time left for losin'  
When you stand they fall, yeah

Comin' down the world turned over  
And angels fall without you there  
And I go on as you get colder  
All because I'm  
Comin' down the years turn over  
And angels fall without you there  
And I'll go on and I'll bring you home and  
All because I'm  
All because I'm  
And I'll become  
What you became to me

Lyrics by Johnny Rzeznick