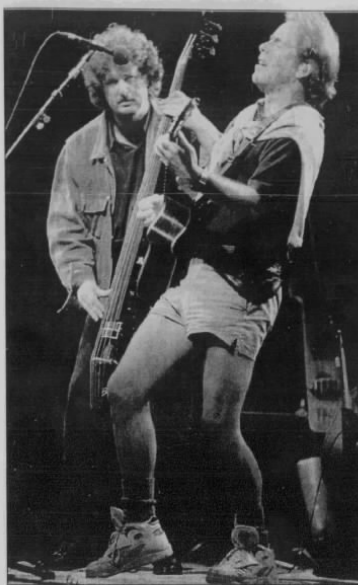


The Salt Lake Tribune **ENTERTAINMENT** Monday, July 13, 1992
A7



Low-key approach offers Dead fans another alternative

By Martin Renzhofer
THE SALT LAKE TRIBUNE

Bob Weir made it quickly clear that Saturday's concert wasn't going to be a Dead evening.

When Mr. Weir, a member of the Grateful Dead, took the ParkWest stage with bassist extraordinaire Rob Wasserman, they brought an eclectic bag of songs. Muted applause greeted the endings of "Take Me to the River" and a Frank Sinatra standard, "Witchcraft."

The performance took many by surprise. Deadheads — and they were there in abundance — may have been disappointed. Some left, but those who stayed were entertained with low-key, jazz-influenced music.

In effect, they were offering their fans an alternative musical direction. It was up to the audience to accept it, and the majority did.

However, Mr. Wasserman proved that there aren't too many musicians who can play the acoustic and electric standup bass with his efficiency and flair. He coaxed from his basses a myriad of sounds, complementing Mr. Weir's subtle acoustic and, later, electric guitar work.

Mr. Wasserman's solo was a masterpiece.

The duo did retain one Grateful Dead trait — no breaks between songs. The start of a new tune was signaled by a blackout or different lighting and subtle cord changes.

It wasn't a flawless performance. Since Saturday's concert was just the second stop on the Scaring the Children Tour, the timing between Mr. Wasserman and Mr. Weir wasn't tight, and Mr. Weir's voice lacked consistency. It was good music, but they need time to perfect the sound.

Plus, the encore was too brief. Messrs. Weir and Wasserman were joined onstage by opening acts Bruce Cockburn and Michelle Shocked. They performed "Spoonful" as the rain began to fall.

The night, which began in a drizzle of rain, was not without its technical glitches and flubs. There were moments when it seemed as if a member of the stage crew was on stage as much as the musicians. Ms. Shocked's set seemed beset by the most problems.

All the acts performed on a nearly bare stage, leaving out any traditional trappings of a rock concert. The show may have been better suited to a smaller venue.

Mr. Cockburn opened with an acoustic instrumental tune, "Train in the Rain." The selection worked, for the rain stopped and the clouds began to break.

"I thought it [the song] might fit," said Mr. Cockburn, who, without any accompaniment, brought the crowd to its feet.

While the audience in the reserved-seating section was wiping rain water off the seats, Mr. Cockburn presented a mixture of folk and rock that included no-holds-barred political offerings about Central America, "Rocket Launcher."

Ms. Shocked brought her version of east Texas blues to Utah. She began with "Memories of East Texas," following that with life in Los Angeles, "Come A Long Way." She walked on stage alone, but was eventually accompanied by three other musicians, including her brother Mike.

Ms. Shocked, whose performance was all too short, began by playing blues and rock. But she had the audience up and dancing with traditional banjo and fiddle music. She also tread on the same political path as Mr. Cockburn with "Gaffiti Limbo," a song about a young black man in New York killed while in police custody.

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