

An Evening with Neil Diamond

April 20, 2015 - Mike Donahey

Don't sell Neil Diamond short.

That thought crossed my mind watching the 74-year old rocker and songwriter extraordinaire perform last week in Chicago's United Centre.

Diamond and band played to a full house, and kept everybody rockin' for a solid two hour concert which included five encore songs — classics "Sweet Caroline," "Cracklin' Rosie," "America" and "Brother Love's Travelling Salvation Show."

It was an older, mellow crowd, compared to the more raucous audience who greeted The Rolling Stones in the same venue two years ago, witnessed by this writer.

The Brooklyn, New York native is on his second world tour in three years.

And it stands to reason, he is promoting new cd "Melody Road," which bears a listen.

During the concert, Diamond mixed up tracks from the cd with other well known hits such as "Red, Red Wine" and "Forever in Blue Jeans," one of my personal favourites.

Diamond (his real name) has enjoyed a music career some can only dream about — ranking third behind high school classmate Barbara Streisand and Elton John in number one hits.

He was finally enshrined into the "Rock n' Roll Hall of Fame in 2011.

In my book it was a shame he had to wait so long.

His body of work easily exceeds that of a number of other lesser-known performers who were voted in previously.

The delay might be attributed to accusations his songs were too "middle of the road."

Baloney.

The man is gifted — he can write, rock, sing and play.

All in all, it was a grand time to be with my family, and see a great entertainer to boot.

My better half saw Diamond at the University of Iowa nearly 45 years ago, so it was a thrill for her, as well as my two daughters, both veteran concert-goers.

Diamond entered the song-writing business while attending New York University, where he was a member of the school's NCAA championship fencing team in 1960.

He still practices fencing moves to loosen up before a concert.