Doc & Merle Watson: they've been around

If you were to pass Doc and Merle Watson in the street, you might see Doc's chino pants and white socks and think that he was just another person coming to the big city for the first time. But if you were to pass them again, you might set down to play for you, you would soon discover that they indeed have a following.

Doc and Merle played at Harvard's Sanders Theatre recently, and, setting from the size of the lines that I had to wait in, the Watsons have quite a following in this area.

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It is obvious that Doc has taught his sister how to play guitar. Their styles are almost identical and yet they complement each other because they often switch lead and rhythm successfully. Their guitar work is smooth and polished. They are true professionals.

Doc and Merle opened the Sanders concert with Jimmy Rodgers' "Peach Pickin' Time in Georgia" in which Doc did some rather yodelling but some rather nice flat-picking.

Together the Watsons did flawless guitar work for the entire concert. Especially wonderful was the instrumental version of "Sweet Georgia Brown." They went on their Southbound album (Vanguard). Doc played a solo that he worked for 12 years with a country swing band that he consequently knew all sorts of songs such as "Georgia Brown" from the country swing era. Doc fooled around a bit with a strange-looking instrument in an initiation in which he deepened his voice, sang a few bars of "Blue Suede Shoes," and laughed a great deal. The audience sensed of humored him while he was having a good time with the people of the audience as we were having a good time with the music. He soon settled down into some bicnic music and contemporary country music.

The Watsons performed two Jimmy Duffield songs, "Tennessee Stud" and "Tennessee Swing." Both songs were well done and showed Doc's virtuosity both in flat-picking and fingerpicking.

Merle Watson

Doc may have seen some members of the audience with his competent banjo playing. Merle has been playing banjo for over 10 years and was ready to play as if he were a veteran of the war. His style includes fingerpicking, and he effectively played lead to Doc's guitar on "Poggy Mountain Breakdown." The Watsons mixed country and contemporary country music with The Sanders concert. In addition to the contemporary music already mentioned, they did "Little Sadie," "Lost John," and "Woody's Night" for the traditionalists in the audience. Doc's singing is harmonically well-balanced with the harmonica to back-up "Lost John," which is a train song. Doc usually saves his harmonica playing for train songs to help him simulate the actual train sound.

Doc and Merle were called back for two encores. Doc seemed pleased with his Boston reception. For one encore, he did "Georgia Brown," saying that it took him ten years to play it satisfactorily after having heard Merle Travis' version. For his second encore, he did "Hawm Don't Allow No Music Playing Around Here," to which he added sounds of the various instruments that means don't allow no playin' of, such as harmonica and accordion.

In addition to the Watsons, the Sanders concert also featured the Cantata radio orchestra. This group is composed of three regulars and a bass player they hired on their recent tour in Ireland. The thought of native American playing bluegrass music was surprising, but far more talented than some "southern" Cantardioligans played bluegrass music well. One of their members is an outstanding 60-year-old fiddler whose name is thought to be of several excellent performers. Doc Watson's music well. One of their members is an outstanding 60-year-old fiddler whose name is thought to be of several excellent performers. Doc Watson's music well. The string section was provided by professional player Bob Myatt, and his two sidemen walked on the stage dressed in white suits with flowers, three piece suits, and a white hat. Two of these were provided by professional player Bob Myatt, and his two sidemen walked on the stage dressed in white suits with flowers, three piece suits, and a white hat. Two of these were.

Doc Waton: "The Beloved Return of Cliff Robertson"

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