

Lovett brings blend of Americana to Tulsa

by: JENNIFER CHANCELLOR World Scene Writer

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Early in Sunday's set, Lyle Lovett thanked his audience for inviting him back to Tulsa, he joked with a kind and wry grin.

"It's amazing what some upholstery and paint can do," he said, reminiscing about early '90s Green Country sets, filled with audience brawls and flying pitchers of beer.

More than 15 years ago, it was hard going as he tried to win fans while playing in the non-air-conditioned swelter of the historic Cain's Ballroom.

Oh, how times have changed.

Sunday night's cool concert at the Tulsa Performing Arts Center filled the nearcapacity venue with convention-defying and genre-bending, charming and laughing cowboys. And that was just Lovett and his large band's sound — its musical sum far greater than its seam-bursting collection of parts. What flew across the stage this time around were colorful stories and loving lyrical journeys with his band of more than one dozen merry men.

In fact, he kicked off his latest tour with a three-night stand of dates across the Sooner State, ending Sunday night at the Tulsa Performing Arts Center. He will ride his 37-date trek through Nebraska, Utah, Idaho and more in the coming days and weeks.

On Sunday night, the troubadour melded warm tones of country, swing, blues, jazz, gospel and folk for a blend of unsurpassed Americana.

Indeed, Lovett transcends any arbitrary genre label and that's by design.

Lovett's high-stacked curls, dark and dapper suit, keen humor and subtle-yet-sharp storytelling only reinforced his bluesy balladry and command of his distinctive bigband sound.

Tunes included the new and the tried and true, "Cute As a Bug," "Nothing But a Good Ride," "Loretta," "Choke My Chicken," "Sun and Moon and Stars," "Natural Forces," "Farther Down the Line," "Whooping Crane," "It's Rock and Roll," "If I Had a Boat," "Up in Indiana," "No Big Deal," "San Antonio Girl," "I'll Come Knocking," "Give Me Back My Heart" and more.

His soul-bearing anthem "I Will Rise Up," gleamed on pillars of harmony and bittersweet triumph.

Lovett was laid back but not overly so. He's lively in a way that invites a feeling of intimacy and mysteriousness — alluring but not flamboyant.

He's a polished performer and a gentle-spirited (and sometimes charmingly ornery) storyteller.

More than once during the night, he even prodded old friend, former schoolmate and audience member Scott Pendleton and his family of fiddlers.

He dedicated "That's Right (You're Not From Texas)" to Pendleton, as "his Texas man behind the lines" here in Tulsa.

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Associate Images:



**Lyle Lovett and his Large Band perform Sunday at the Tulsa Performing Arts Center.
JEREMY CHARLES / For the Tulsa World**



Lyle Lovett, seen here during his Sunday concert at the Tulsa PAC, is starting on a 37-day tour through the United States. JEREMY CHARLES / For the Tulsa World

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