

Ron Sexsmith: New video a runaway success, D7

Go!

Your Comprehensive Guide to a Capital Good Time • Thursday September 18 2003 • Times Colonist



Go! Giveaway

It's too late to buy tickets to see Rex Harrington dance at the Royal Theatre Tuesday night, but that doesn't mean you can't see the show. Indeed, we've got a couple of pairs to hand out this morning.

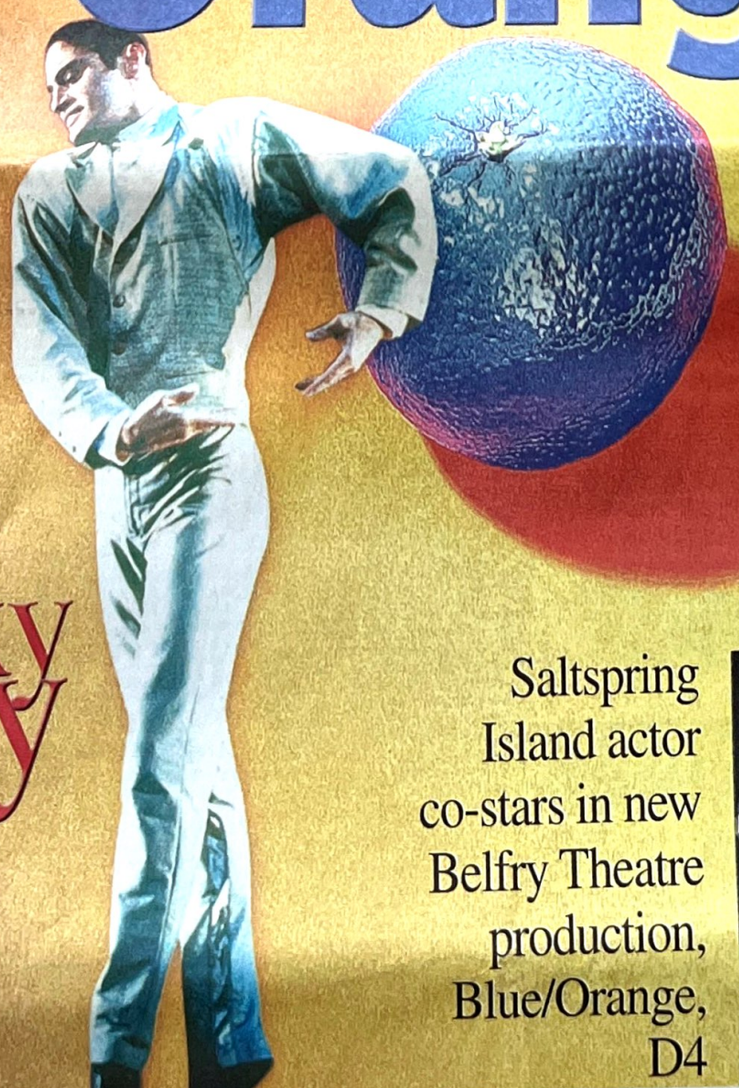
If you're interested, we've also got a pair of tickets to the Greater Victoria Film Commission's Groovy Party fundraiser set for Saturday night (see D3 for more on event).

Remember Patsy Cline. That's close to the CD title of an all-star tribute lineup we have today. It features Norah Jones, Diana Krall, Natalie Cole, Michelle Branch and Terri Clark among others and is actually titled *Remembering Patsy Cline*.

We've got another set of CDs to give away from a television show you've probably heard of. The CD is called *Canadian Idol Greatest Moments*.

For your chance to win, call 380-5347 at 10 a.m. You must reach us in person. If you get voicemail, try again. The contest ends at 10:08 a.m. If you have won a prize from us within the last 30 days, you are not eligible for today's prizes. Good luck.

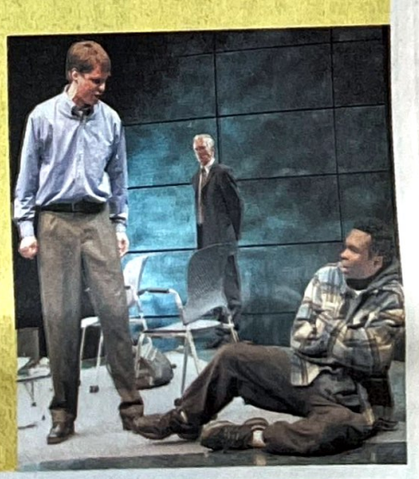
Blue Orange

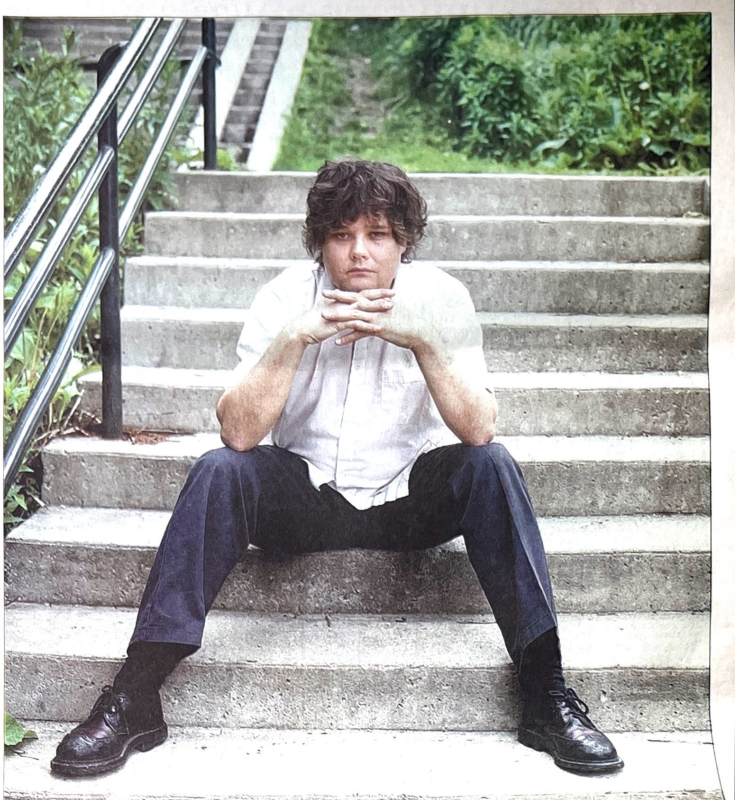


Sexy Rexy

Rex Harrington dances off the stage with farewell-tour performance at the Royal Theatre, D6

Saltspring Island actor co-stars in new Belfry Theatre production, Blue/Orange, D4



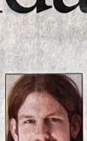


Ron Sexsmith, sitting at No. 1 on MuchMoreMusic for the video *Gold in Them Hills*, performs at the Central Bar and Grill tonight.

Sexsmith finds Midas touch

ON STAGE

Who: Ron Sexsmith with Mad Violet and Adam K & Antonia
When: Tonight, 8:30 p.m.
Where: Central Bar & Grill
Tickets: $15 in advance at Lyle's Place and Ditch Records



MIKE DEVLIN

Ron Sexsmith, who has been performing his folk rock brand of music for 20 years, is pleased that his new video shot to No. 1 at MuchMoreMusic. 'It's a new thing for me. I don't know what to make of it,' he says.

It's taken two decades and lots of heartbreak, but Ron Sexsmith has finally reached the top of the charts. Not that he was desperately trying to get there, mind you. Sexsmith says he gave up on those sorts of career aspirations long ago.

"I've been surviving well enough all these years without being on the charts or radio, so it's the icing on the cake."

Sexsmith, 39, has been performing his heartfelt folk-pop since the early '80s, during which time he spent four months living and performing in Victoria. But it wasn't until the release of his latest video, *Gold in Them Hills*, that Sexsmith finally achieved widespread commercial success in his home country.

The video, a duet with Chris Martin of Coldplay, currently sits at the top spot on video channel MuchMoreMusic, ahead of clips by Grammy Award winners Beyonce Knowles, John Mayer, Sting and Coldplay.

Not bad for a performer who's been critically adored yet commercially ignored for the better part of his illustrious career. "That's the first time I've been No. 1 at anything," Sexsmith says with a laugh.

"It's a new thing for me. I don't know what to make of it."

The runaway success of *Gold in Them Hills* has given Sexsmith's career a huge boost. The St. Catherine's, Ont., native figures his current Canadian tour is a career-best in terms of attendance, and he's having a ball flirting with the notoriety that's been thrust upon him because of it.

"It seems like I exist a little more than I did before, I think. I've found my profile has been raised all around the world, to the point where I get recognized all the time now. It's a new development and it's really nice, but I wouldn't want to get much more than that. I've seen what Coldplay has to go through; Chris has to walk around with disguises and things. That's not the kind of level I would want anyway."

Sexsmith's friendship with Coldplay was borne out of mutual admiration. It resulted in an extensive U.S. tour with Coldplay this summer, dates that included a sold-out show at Madison Square Garden.

During a Phoenix stop on the tour, a familiar thing happened to Sexsmith. He recalls being dragged out of the bathroom by a bandmate in order to meet a fan who was dying to meet him — in this particular case, country singer Glen Campbell.

It's par for the course for Sexsmith. He's met more stars than a team of astronauts, plenty who also happen to be legendary fixtures in music; Paul McCartney, Elton John, and Elvis Costello among them.

The latter is often closely associated with Sexsmith, as it was Costello's praise that encouraged a hesitant Interscope Records to finally release Sexsmith's major label debut.

That was then, this is now.

Having released five records since then — including his latest B-sides compilation, *Rarities* — and notching one Juno Award win and three nominations since 1998, Sexsmith is hoping his work stands on its own nowadays.

"Some of it can be kind of embarrassing," he says sheepishly.

"Elvis's name still gets thrown around a lot, but that was back in '95 when he said that. When the labels are promoting me, often time they ask me to get a quote from people. I don't want to bother people. And I don't want that to be the story all the time. I think it can be distracting."

He has no difficulty praising his peers in return, however. A big topic on this day was the passing of Johnny Cash, whom Sexsmith greatly admired. He was somewhat close to the ordeal, as his girlfriend, By Divine Right guitarist Colleen Hixenbaugh, worked as an assistant for Roseanne Cash. As a tribute, Sexsmith now covers Cash's *Guess Things Happen That Way* in his concerts.

Sexsmith says he'll also trot out a cover of Gordon Lightfoot's *Drifters* during his solo show at the Central Bar & Grill tonight. He also recorded the song for inclusion on the upcoming *Beautiful: A Tribute to Gordon Lightfoot*, which will be in stores Oct. 7.

Like Cash, Sexsmith counts Lightfoot as one of his biggest heroes, simply because he cut an original swath as a performer — something Sexsmith aspires to as well.

"It's not about *trying* to be unique," he says. "It's more about finding your own voice, and giving the people something they can't get anywhere else."