

Written by MAC

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## World's Greatest Supertramp Cover Band



By Mike Ross ,Edmonton Sun

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**It's time to issue an ultimatum to "Supertramp" — get back together with Rodger Hodgson or pack it in. Until then, this band must simply stop calling itself Supertramp.**

What cheek, you say! Yes. Of course this ultimatum has no legal weight whatsoever, but this is a personal thing. Some bands become so universal that their fans actually take ownership of the songs in their own minds (and also literally if they steal them from the Internet). Mess with them at your peril, classic rock dudes.

So the band that played for about 8,000 fans Sunday night at Rexall Place ought to have been called "The World's Greatest Supertramp Cover Band." Sure, we all know that Wurlitzer-pounder Rick Davies actually started Supertramp and Hodgson was the one who

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answered the ad, but the important thing is that these gifted lads were together when it mattered — the '70s, and a little bit of the early '80s. And now they're both touring the world, playing most of the same songs. Ridiculous.

Truth be told, the band calling itself Supertramp was pretty great on Sunday night, as was Roger Hodgson when he came to the River Cree Casino in March. Imagine how great they'd be together. Again.

The musicianship was stellar. Davies' distinctive piano style was in fine form, even if his voice wasn't. The band rocked. They jammed. They boogied. They grooved like monsters. They folded and mangled the arrangements — sometimes too much, as in the groove-challenged Wurly intro in Bloody Well Right. They had a guy come out to sit under an umbrella to recreate the cover of Crisis? What Crisis? Little touches like a tasty clarinet solo from John Helliwell and a squad of terrific back-up singers were much appreciated. Things got a bit dodgy, vocally-speaking, in the monster jazz chords of songs like Ain't Nobody But Me, but at least you knew they were really singing. It's just a treat to be at a concert were there wasn't any canned music for a change.

Overall it was a **slow-moving, slow-building show** that boasted some great playing what it lacked in focus. It took at least three different singers to cop Hodgson's parts in songs like Breakfast in America, Take the Long Way Home, Give a Little Bit and The Logical Song. That was the strangest part of the show: To hear Supertramp that didn't look like Supertramp.

A lot of the set was bulked by several unmemorable B-sides Davies did lead vocals on back in the day, like the frothy, plodding ballad From Now On, or Put on Your Old Brown Shoes, from the unmemorable but aptly-titled album Famous Last Words, or the melancholy Downstream — not your A-list line-up, and Davies distinctively growly voice sounded weathered. There was even "one from the new album." OK, there is no new album — but there was that one-chord funk jam Cannonball, from Brother Where You Bound, the first Supertramp studio album without Hodgson.

The sad truth of the matter is that no one who comes to a major classic rock event like Supertramp wants to hear new songs. Sure, it's great for the rock stars of yore to exercise their creativity and keep their brains alive when you're playing the same damned songs 10,000 times in a row, and there's even an off-chance that they'll score another hit and become another second-coming success story like Aerosmith, but the fans aren't patient with this sort of thing.

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The other problem here is that anything recorded after 1983 isn't Supertramp. It's Rick Davies, so to inflict this filler on a paying Supertramp fans is tantamount to some third world tyrant refusing to leave the presidential palace even after he was voted out in a democratic election. Sooner or later, you're going to get ousted. Too much? Maybe. Thankfully, the World's Greatest Supertramp Cover Band didn't dwell too much in the present, saving the killer hits like Dreamer and Goodbye Stranger for later, School and Crime of the Century for the encore.

Perhaps they didn't want to shock the crowd with the big ones right away, for fear of killing an unwary baby boomer an overdose of pure nostalgia.

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