

Elk Rapids Live

News as it happens



Switchback fills Town Hall with holiday spirit

Concert review

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—by Don Weeks, Elk Rapids, Michigan, with help from Jenna & Max



It's amazing how much sound can come from two guys with guitars, using no percussion other than foot-stomping and guitar-slapping. No electronic mumbo-jumbo like beat boxes or pre-recorded back-up music was present, which is a welcome treat and a tribute to tradition.

Martin McCormack and Brian FitzGerald have been performing together for a long time, and it shows. Their camaraderie is obvious and their timing, accompaniments and harmonies are impeccable. Also impressive is their sense of mixing up the selection and tempo of the songs they play—a wonderful mix of ballads, rabble-rousing, original and traditional.

I saw them perform in Elk Rapids, Michigan December 28, 2010 (to a full house), a benefit concert for restoration of the venue, the historic town hall. Marty told the audience that he and Brian have an affinity for tradition, which explains some of the

music that Switchback performs, but also is the reason they often play in old buildings with a history and, hopefully, a future.

At this particular concert, they threw in a lot of Christmas favorites and sing-a-longs. It was a few days past Christmas, but there was still plenty of Holiday spirit in the crowd, which was remarkably in tune. Sometimes when a band asks the audience to sing, it is fun, but audibly grating. Not the case here. It almost sounded like a practiced choir. Switchback does a great job of including the audience in their musical magic.

I was with my wife and three of my grandchildren (7-8-year-olds). Granddaughter Jenna showed a knack for music reviewing when she noted how amazed she was that Brian could play so many different instruments. She wondered why they played some songs with no words. So that night she learned a *new* word: instrumental.

The prowess of Brian on guitars and mandolin made my fingers hurt just watching him, and prompted grandson Max to ask "how does he strum so fast?" He also noted that Marty can really kick his legs up high.

Local up-and-comer Stephanie O'Dell joined Switchback at various times on stage, and she was superb. She got understandably emotional when she pointed out her significant other in the audience, who was home for the holidays from the Navy.

Switchback and Stephanie made this more than a concert. It was a true community gathering.

Story by Don Weeks, photo by Jim Sundberg