

Features

The Counting Crows



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STAFF WRITER

Davidson College, Monday Sept. 3. A vivid crowd of thousands stands in anticipation beneath an indeterminate haze at the Baker Sports Complex. The lights burn brightly in the home of Wildcats basketball. Tonight, however, the people have not come for the pick and roll of college hoops; tonight, they have come for the rock and roll stylings of the Counting Crows.



The bassist jammin.'

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Perhaps it is the fact that I have loved the Counting Crows ever since their first radio hit "Mr. Jones" brought the first smile to my face on a day of disappointment and frustration. Maybe it is that I am with my two best friends in the world. Or it could even be that we are lucky enough to have a few of the thousand tickets reserved for those who don't attend Davidson. Whatever the contributing factors, there is something magical in the air.

After a week's worth of waiting, a two-hour drive, and a 15-minute walk, we are finally here. We have general admissions tickets but opt to sit in the bleachers until the show starts. We talk about nothing at all and stare at all the people that are so different from us in appearance, and we wish that we could smoke a cigarette. Then suddenly the lights go out, and the crowd roars. It is time. The mo-

ment has arrived.

Lead singer Adam Duritz is the first to take the stage, and, although we have heard that he has been feeling under the weather, he appears happy and healthy. We

make our way down to the floor, but it is bursting with the thriving mass, so we stand towards the back. We can see everything perfectly. The band starts in, and, even though it is a new song that nobody recognizes, the moment of joy is pure. The crowd moves to the beat, and my friends and I follow suit. I have never seen the Counting Crows live before, but this moment alone is worth the \$25.

The band moves through their set fluidly, from the juxtaposition of the lyric and melody that is "Round Here," through a slew of songs Duritz tells us are new. They all sound amazing. The new songs, which Duritz tells us are all going to be on their upcoming album, all have a Southern blues feel that is not unlike a cross between Lynnyrd Skynnyrd and Crosby Stills and Nash. Some may call it heresy to compare the Counting Crows to Skynnyrd, but this live performance is proof that they are worthy of such a comparison.

The band closes out the set with an absolutely incredible version of "Rain King." Somehow, they manage to turn "Rain King" into "Oh Susanna" while wistfully changing nothing more than the lyrics. The entire crowd, my Yankee self in-

cluded, shouts the familiar southern anthem along with Duritz, and it is clear that the music has formed a bond between the band and the audience.

The crowd wants more, and refuses to shut up, and the band takes the stage for an encore that lasts five songs and another 45 minutes. The only old song in the set is "Mr. Jones,"

and when the first chords echo throughout the stadium, the entire audience, seated members included, seems to explode. The band finishes the set by bringing on the members of the opening band, Stew, to help them sing a rousing rendition of "Hangin' Around." By the end of the song, Duritz is singing "I don't want no scrubs," immaculately weaving the lyrics of an R&B hit with the chorus of a song that most aptly fits into the category of Southern Rock.

After ending the song with the appropriate flair, the band leaves the stage, and the crowd knows they have witnessed something amazing. It is seen everywhere, in sparkling stares, knees of jelly and gamma ray grins. We came expecting to be touched inside; now we leave with warmth in our hearts and bounce in our steps that is evidence that we shared a remarkable experience with 10,000 remarkable strangers.



Duritz, of The Counting Crows, gives the audience what they came for.

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