

Music of Elton John fits well with evening of WSO pops

By Andrew Thompson

THE idea of devoting an entire pops concert to the music of Elton John is a good one.

His music is well-known, well-arranged, and well-suited to the pops environment. And on Thursday night, the spirit of the Rocket Man was evoked with fondness by Jeans 'n' Classics in co-operation with the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra under the baton of John Miller.

After a brief medley overture, Jean Meilleur, the Elton for the day, emerged to jump into Love Lies Bleeding. He did a good job, despite the fact that he didn't wear funky glasses, nor did he dress up like a Christmas tree.

His husky voice had the Elton mid-range stylings nicely cornered. His ominous and soulful Have Mercy on the Criminal was typical of this sound, and his Bennie and the Jets caused the audience to respond with warmth and familiarity.

Pianist John Regan did double duty on the night. Not only did he cover John's trademark thick chording style on the piano, but he also handled some especially tender vocal moments, including a warm Your Song.

Interestingly enough, Elton John's actual voice really ends up being a combination of Meilleur and Regan's sounds: it has the melodic flavour of Regan with the huskiness of Meilleur.

Therefore, tunes like Levon, Rocket Man and Mona Lisa and Mad Hatters, where the two men shared vocal duties,

ConcertReview

MTS Pops Tribute to Elton John

- Thursday, April 10, 2003
- Attendance: 1,800

were especially successful.

The contributions of the WSO were slightly less than normal in this concert. However, the arrangements, written by Peter Brennan, were actually quite tasteful and true to the originals. They filled gaps where necessary and thickened the core rock quartet's sound effectively.

Also enjoyable was the banter between Meilleur and Regan.

Meilleur's brash sensibilities contrasted nicely with Regan's deadpan but razor-sharp wit and the gaps between the songs were filled with the sounds of audience laughter.

This was not exactly a pure greatest hits run-through. In fact it was quite the opposite: the group traversed a great number of stages of John's career, touching on everything from Madman Across the Water and I'm Still Standing to Circle of Life and Tiny Dancer.

This variety, despite dipping a little deeper into the catalogue than some might have expected, was appreciated by the crowd, as evidenced by the continuous whoops emanating from the hall throughout the night. At press time, Meilleur was heating up the pops veterans with his solid rendition of The Bitch is Back.