

?Oowatanite? it was with April Wine in Machell Park at Ribfest 2023



A Review by Jim Stewart

Thousands of classic rock fans filled Machell Park on Saturday night to enjoy the latest incarnation of April Wine.

Marc Parent, the band's dynamic new lead singer and guitarist who succeeded April Wine's original vocalist Myles Goodwin earlier in March, took the audience down memory lane at Machell.

Backed by veteran guitarist Brian Greenway, who's been with April Wine since 1977, bassist Richard Lanther, and drummer Roy ?Nip? Nichol, Parent plowed through the April Wine catalogue and, if you closed your eyes, the sounds of Myles Goodwyn seemed to emanate from the smoky stage.

With the Magna and Desjardins sponsorship banners fluttering on either side of the stage, Parent, Greenway, Lanther, and Nichol warmed up the packed Ribfest venue with ?Enough is Enough? and ?Say Hello??a pair of chart-toppers from 1982 and 1979 when the band was at its commercial peak.

It sounded like vintage April Wine.

The four-man ensemble moved seamlessly from hit to hit as thousands of fans swayed to the tunes and danced off their beer tent fare and tasty rib dinners derived from Billy Bones BBQ, Sticky Fingers, Uncle Sam's, Camp 31, and Tater King.

The vendors' neon-lit signs on the western edge of the park provided background illumination as did the midway on a damp, cool, overcast August night.

Parent showed off his vocal range as he rolled into ?Coulda Been a Lady? with the twang of his predecessor and showed off his lead guitar licks during the delivery of April Wine's first big hit ?Fast Train.?

Parent's showmanship inspired the chanting of familiar choruses, thus showing the band's brand is safe with its new front man.

Lanther's throbbing bass runs during ?Wheels of Love? and periodic lead vocals by Nichol behind the drum kit gives this newest version of April Wine much versatility.

Lanther and Nichol are veteran band members, having toured with Greenway and Goodwyn for thirteen and eleven years,

respectively.

The quartet's cohesive quality was evident as it sped through to the crescendo of the concert, especially their delivery of 'I Like to Rock' from 1979's *Harder/Faster*, 'Rock and Roll is a Vicious Game,' and 'Tonight is a Wonderful Time to Fall in Love' from their double-platinum album *Stand Back*.

The back-to-back-to-back presentation of 'Just Between You and Me,' 'Night of the Gypsy Queen,' and 'Roller' drove the quartet to a big finish that featured searing guitar solos by Parent and Greenway as well as the percussive power of Lanther and Nichol.

Back by popular demand, the highlight of April Wine's encore was the legendary Jim Clench song 'Oowatanite' from *Stand Back* that Parent and Greenway covered brilliantly.

Nichol delivered the signature fire bells to open the song much to the delight of those gathered and concertgoers exited Machell Park having witnessed one of Canada's finest classic rock bands in fine, reconfigured form from start to finish.

It's noteworthy that the legendary Myles Goodwyn delivered his final performance as the lead vocalist of April Wine on March 2 in Nova Scotia after fifty-plus years on the road. However, based on the band's performance on Saturday night in Aurora, the vocal and guitar work of Mark Parent and Brian Greenway's enduring 46-year presence show that perhaps rock and roll isn't always a vicious game.

Sometimes it just rolls along amicably as April Wine seems to do--delivering classic rock tunes to appreciative audiences on both sides of the border.