

## REVIEWS

## Ex-Backstreet Boy now a lone rocker

Heavier, sporting a guitar, Carter does a competent job

By NICK CARTER  
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The faces are a bit more mature, the screams a little less high pitched.

But it was still pretty much an underage brigade accounting for the mobbed ground-level Rave Saturday night, where former Backstreet Boy Nick Carter performed before an audience of about 1,200.

Carter, in town as part of a tour to support his debut solo album of last fall, "Now or Never," has changed both his look and repertoire in the last year: gone are the sleek white suits and other dapper accoutrements he wore while working his way through a repertoire of smooth dance pop and balladry.

Carter now affects more the lone rocker persona — baggy blue jeans, a red pullover sweater and his blond hair now styled into a punky display of razor-edged tufts. It also can't help but be noted that there's a lot more Nick in that sweater nowadays, as well, as the singer appears to be at least 50 pounds heavier than he was in his late-'90s splendor.

Carter also mixes a lot more traditional rockers, even some classic-rock covers, into his teen pop attack. But perhaps the biggest shock came right away Saturday on the first number, "Girls in the USA," a straight-ahead guitar-pop rocker that had Nick himself fiercely strumming away on guitar, which he also played on a couple other numbers.

## Bel Canto's 'Mass' not quite up to snuff

Performance affected by multiple problems in chorus, orchestra

By ELAINE SCHMIDT  
Special to the Journal Sentinel

The Bel Canto Chorus of Milwaukee and music director Richard Hynson presented Bach's "Mass in B minor" on Sunday afternoon, at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee's Helene Zelazo Center for the Performing Arts.

The chorus was joined by soprano Erin York, mezzo soprano Krisanne Weiss, tenor Salvatore Champagne, bass Ted Christopher and the Bel Canto Chamber Orchestra.

The Mass is an enormous work, created in the later years of Bach's life. Bach

Soon after came "Heart Without a Home (I'll Be Yours)," which has more of an '80s pop-rock flavor than anything traceable to the Backstreet sound.

Carter, however, did pay heed to his past by offering a few reworked Backstreet Boy hits: "Shape of my Heart," from their 2000 album "Black & Blue," and "I Want It That Way," from the "Millennium" album of a year earlier. The latter was converted into a nearly all-acoustic ballad and went over particularly well.

Between numbers, Carter alternately caught his breath and remained silent and engaged in coy crowd banter: "How many of you ever heard of the band I was with the last time I was in town," he said about midway through the set.

Despite the big crowd, the audience was well-behaved. It was nice to see, along with the genuine excitement of the audience, the hundreds of glow-in-the-dark wands and encouraging fan signs in place of the usual tobacco haze and spilled beer maze that typically come with Rave events geared toward younger audiences.

Other surprises came later in the set: a nifty revamping of a Cars classic, "Just What I Needed," and a raved-up take of the Isley Brothers' "Shout," which slowly evolved into a faithful rendition of the Tears for Fears song of the same name.

The concert began with brief sets from two other acts geared toward younger music fans: VI3, who offer an even mix of pop, rap and R&B confections; and Sev, who add a punky, hard-rock edge to their vanilla-R&B stylings.

ent. Some of the trouble occurred when the chorus encountered fast-moving passages. They tended to lose support in these passages, slipping into an unfocused, muddy sound. They also lost musical momentum in many of these passages, attaching sound to beats rather than shaping the overall phrase. Soft, restrained choral passages also had a tendency to sag in pitch and tempo.

Within the orchestra, pitch and tempo were constant issues. Different sections within the orchestra pushed and pulled at the beat, while aimless violin playing failed to support the musical efforts of the chorus and soloists.

Bright spots in the orchestra included some solid, nicely phrased continuo playing



Photos of a young Howie Epstein were on display for loved ones at Sunday's memorial service. He died Feb. 23 in Santa Fe, N.M.



MARY JO WALICKI/MILWAUKEE JOURNAL SENTINEL.COM

Epstein's casket is taken to a cemetery following a memorial service at Temple Menorah in Milwaukee on Sunday. Epstein performed for many years as a bass guitarist with Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers.

## Loved ones remember Epstein's skill, humility

Longtime Heartbreaker mourned without celebrity fanfare

By DAVE TIANEN  
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The world knew Howie Epstein as a Heartbreaker, and there was no shortage of anguish in the way he left it.

The longtime bassist for Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers died Feb. 23 in Santa Fe, N.M., of a suspected heroin overdose. He was only 47.

In a funeral service Sunday afternoon at Temple Menorah, 9363 N. 76th St., Epstein's family and friends acknowledged the heartbreak but remembered a man of striking talent who carried his musical gifts with unflinching modesty.

Although he won a Grammy and is a 2002 inductee into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame with Petty and the Heartbreakers, Epstein's funeral service was largely devoid of show business glamour.

There were two concessions to rock 'n' roll: A floral display in the shape of a guitar stood next to the closed casket, and as the pallbearers wheeled the casket from the sanctuary, the sound system played "Turn, Turn, Turn," the old Byrds hit from the biblical Ecclesiastes. Two of Epstein's old band mates attended the service: pianist Benmont Tench and drum-

mer Stan Lynch.

A Fox Point native, Epstein graduated from Nicolet High School in 1973 and was a familiar figure on the local music scene in his early years. Before joining Petty, Epstein also played with such stars as John Hiatt, Leslie West and Del Shannon.

When Petty's band last played in Milwaukee — Summerfest 2002 — Epstein had been dropped from the group.

Boyhood friend Rick Rand remembered a friend who would call at 2:30 in the morning to check on a sick buddy. A man who fussed over

his hair, ran chronically late and almost got disqualified from winning a Nicolet battle of the bands because he was only in the eighth grade. A kind man who seasoned his gentleness with a sharp streak of sarcasm.

"He was a keen observer of his own life and loves and his own pain and happiness. We loved Howie for all of his complexity and all of his smiles. We will remember the good times," Rand said.

Epstein's uncle Philip Atinsky recalled his feelings when he got the call in the middle of the night informing him of his nephew's death.

"There was a sadness and anger because his friends and his family weren't with him," Atinsky said. "He was alone."

But as the days passed and he took a steady stream of calls from Epstein's old friends, Atinsky started to reflect. Epstein's passing was clearly going to leave a void in many lives.

"He lived his dream, and he became what he wanted to be," Atinsky said. "Everything he did seemed so natural and intuitive. He realized he was blessed. It was very consoling to the family, and I didn't feel as bad as I did initially. Howard didn't die alone."

Before the funeral, Epstein's old Heartbreakers band mate Lynch reminisced about their years together.

Epstein, he said, was sharp-witted, well read, physically powerful and a gifted musician who disguised the limitations of his band mates with his own brilliance. Music seemed to come almost effortlessly. When Epstein took up record production, he soon won a Grammy for an album with John Prine.

"He made it a lot of fun for me," Lynch said. "He was all you could ask for in a good friend. Tom Petty was lucky to have him. He really was."

MOVIES  
BOX OFFICE

Estimates of the weekend's box office take at the nation's movie theaters:

1. "Cradle 2 The Grave," \$17.1 million.
2. "Old School," \$13.9 million.
3. "Daredevil," \$11 million.
4. "How To Lose A Guy in 10 Days," \$10.1 million.
5. "Chicago," \$8.1 million.
6. "The Jungle Book 2," \$6.8 million.
7. "Shanghai Knights," \$4.8 million.
8. "The Life of David Gale," \$4.4 million.
9. "Gods and Generals," \$2.8 million.
10. "The Recruit," \$2.6 million.

Source: Exhibitor Relations Inc.

## NOTEWORTHY

SHORT TAKES ON THE NEWS

### Stones to play 2 shows in China

It's official: Beijing and Shanghai will get their own taste of the Rolling Stones' "Forty Licks" tour.

Two Rolling Stones concert dates have been confirmed, for Beijing and Shanghai, an organizer said Sunday. The shows, part of the band's 40th anniversary tour, will be the band's first in the world's most populous country.

The British band will perform in Shanghai on April 1 and in Beijing on April 4.

Cui Jian, China's most famous rocker, will open for the Stones in Beijing. Cui, 42, is hugely popular in China but has rarely been allowed to play big shows in the capital because he performed on Tiananmen Square during the 1989 pro-democracy protests.

In Beijing, the Stones will play the 7,000-seat Workers' Gymnasium.

### Ashanti, Musiq honored

Ashanti and Musiq took top honors, while Mariah Carey and LL Cool J received career achievement awards, at the 17th annual Soul Train Awards.

Ashanti won best female R&B/soul single Saturday for "Foolish" and best album for "Ashanti," beating out works by fellow Grammy winners Erykah Badu and India.Arie.

Musiq won for best male R&B/soul single for the second year in a row with "Dontchange." He won best album in the same category with "Justisen," beating Maxwell, Justin Timberlake and last year's winner, Usher.

"Bump, Bump, Bump," by B2K Featuring P. Diddy, won in the best single by a group or duo category, while B2K won for their self-titled album in the same category.

Carey and LL Cool J each won the Quincy Jones Award for Outstanding Career Achievement during the event, co-hosted by Queen Latifah and Arsenio Hall at the Pasadena Civic Auditorium.

### 'Chicago' director wins

Freshman moviemaker Rob Marshall dazzled the Directors Guild of America with his musical "Chicago" Saturday night, claiming the group's top honor and defeating veteran directors Martin Scorsese and Roman Polanski.

In the 55 years since the guild's inception, the