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Show Reviews

The Avett Brothers in Huntsville



The Avett Brothers made their final appearance of their fall tour in Huntsville, Ala. on Oct. 27, 2012, and they put on a show that left the audience aching for more tour dates. With an almost thirty-song set, they captivated Alabama fans from beginning to end. And co-lead singer and guitarist Seth Avett reassured the audience by saying that they had been performing in Alabama for years and would keep on coming back in years to come.

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They opened with a rarely-played gem off their 2006 album *Four Thieves Gone* called "Pretty Girl from Feltre," which seemed to send the hard core fans into a subdued frenzy at the first line: "Susanna, Italiana, what do you want to do? I thought I had

figured it out, but that was before you." It felt like the crowd wanted to scream in support, but were afraid to overpower the Avetts' soft falsettos. The opening song almost stole the entire show. With their strong harmonies and their Southern accents pronouncing Italian words, the brothers grabbed the audience's attention quickly.

But it isn't hard for them to command attention, so they easily kept going into the half-rapped, upbeat number "Talk On Indolence." Always a crowd-pleaser. The other co-lead singer, banjo player and blood-related Avett brother Scott Avett always has a kick drum at his feet, while Seth has a hi-hat. "Indolence" is a stomping kind of song, so the percussion really came through. Toward the end of the song, Seth kicked the cymbals on the hi-hit in his typical dramatic fashion. Scott screamed and jumped on his kick drum pedal. Scott screams so often during shows that many audience members know exactly when to shout with him. During "Indolence," he sings the lyrics, "Because I had to/Because I loved you" and then lets out a loud shriek, "I did! I swear I did!" with which the audience joined in.

Another highlight was "A Father's First Spring," a lovely, new tune off of 2012's *The Carpenter*, written by Scott after the birth of his daughter Eleanor. It's a beautiful, moving song. He could have easily performed it alone on an acoustic guitar, but the rest of the band backed him up tastefully.

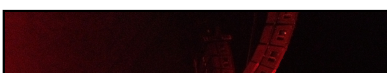


Immediately following, they went into the live favorite "Laundry Room." The song from 2009's *I And Love And You* builds from a gentle ballad to a foot-stomping hoedown. At the start, the audience hung on every word that left Scott's lips, and by the end, the crowd was jumping and flailing along with him.

Without pause, the band continued into the mostly instrumental song "Old Joe Clark." In the middle, Scott asked the crowd, "Do you know Bobby Crawford?" Crawford is the band's bass player, an original member and honorary brother, though he isn't a blood-related Avett. Crawford has been absent for much of the past couple years' touring schedule because of his young daughter's cancer diagnosis. With circumstances greatly improving, he is back, and he let the Alabama audience know. He broke it down with an intense upright bass solo that went on for a good few minutes. It was obvious that Scott and the rest of the band wanted to celebrate his return.

The Avetts typically do two songs acoustic and unplugged in front of a condenser mic, one featuring each brother. They started with the heart-wrenching "Through My Prayers," sung by Seth. Scott complemented Seth on harmonies and acoustic guitar, and they were huddled together in a display of brotherly love. Then Scott sang lead on "Murder In The City," a gorgeous declaration of strong familial bond. The only disappointment was that the crowd couldn't stay quiet enough for the softer songs to really shine. But you could tell that the brothers' emotions weren't hindered.

Then the brothers showed off their punk rock roots with the heavy, pop tune "Kick Drum Heart." Seth switched from acoustic to electric and Scott switched from banjo to keys. At the end, Seth pulled out an impressive solo, demonstrating his strong technical ability. Scott got up from the piano and joined Seth at stage left, putting his arms around his brother from behind and laying his head on the back of Seth's neck.



Another emotional, gut-wrenching fan favorite is "If It's The Beaches," a song that has recently been reworked to include Crawford's violin playing. The multi-talented Paul

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Defiglia has been subbing for Crawford in his absence and has stayed on the road with the band despite Crawford's return. Now Crawford has the freedom to play fiddle while Defiglia plays bass, and while Crawford plays bass, Defiglia fills in on keys.

For "Beaches," Scott and Seth played acoustic guitar and sang, while Crawford, Defiglia and cellist Joe Kwon formed a lovely string section. Scott's lyrics dripped with love, and the strings all bowed long, drawn out chords. Seth played subtle, yet still intricate solos on acoustic. I think my heart fell out of my chest and ran up on stage with them when Scott sang, "If it's the beaches' sands you want then you can have them/If it's the mountains' bending rivers you can have them" with the vibrant string accompaniment and brotherly harmony behind him.

After a momentary break, the band played a four-song encore that included three amazing covers. Because they are being featured on CMT's TV show *Crossroads* (a show that pairs classic country acts with up-and-comers to

perform a concert together) with Randy Travis, they learned the song "Forever And Ever Amen." I would have expected Scott to lead it, as he has a deeper, more Southern sounding voice than his brother that more closely resembles Travis's. But Seth sang it, and his rendition was heartfelt and cheerful.

The condenser mic then returned, and they ended the set with a couple old-timey bluegrass songs: Charlie Poole's "Moving Day" and the traditional "Alabama Gals." Crawford picked the fiddle back up. All six touring members gathered around one mic, each singing harmony. Seth danced like he was having the time of his life, his keys that dangled from his belt loop jingling like an extra percussion instrument.

Since we were in Alabama, the final song "Alabama Gals" was very well received. It was a jubilant end to their long tour as they put down their instruments and beckoned the audience to join them for one last chorus, "Alabama gals, won't you come out tonight/And dance by the light of the moon."

The Avetts put on a fantastic show. They aren't the most proficient musicians you've ever seen in your life, nor the most flawless singers, but they have heart. They radiate humility and appreciation for their fans and for each other as bandmates and friends. To see an Avett show is to feel a bond with everyone in the room: the fans and the band members. You'll be jumping and singing along because their joy and energy is completely infectious.



Setlist:

1. Pretty Girl From Feltre
2. Talk On Indolence
3. Distraction #74
4. Shame
5. Paranoia In Bb Major
6. Live And Die
7. Go To Sleep
8. Gimmeakiss
9. Weight Of Lies
0. The Prettiest Thing
1. A Father's First Spring
2. Laundry Room
3. Old Joe Clark
4. I Never Knew You
5. Winter In My Heart
6. Slight Figure Of Speech
7. Through My Prayers
8. Murder In The City
9. January Wedding
0. The Fall
1. Kick Drum Heart
2. If It's The Beaches
3. The Once and Future Carpenter
4. I Killed Sally's Lover
5. I And Love And You

Encores:

1. Forever And Ever Amen
2. Head Full of Doubt/Road Full of Promise
3. Moving Day
4. Alabama Gals

All Photos By Ansley Rushing

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