

Review: The Young @ Heart Chorus

Waikato Times



MARK TAYLOR/Waikato Times

NEVER TOO OLD: The Young @ Heart singers at Founders Theatre last night.

Relevant offers

Who: The Young @ Heart Chorus

Where: The Founders Theatre, Hamilton

When: Last night

Reviewed by: Steve Scott

The members of the US group Young @ Heart Chorus range in age from 73 to 89. Fuelled with spirit and delivering music from genres that most of their age group would never have heard of – let alone interpret on stages around the world – they pour their heart and soul into every song.

Last night, a near-capacity Founders Theatre audience witnessed how its musical arranger and director Bob Cilman's passionate drive and enthusiasm encouraged every ounce of energy and vocal talent from the chorus.

The show opener, a dedicated rendition of The Rolling Stones classic You Can't Always Get What You Want, with very confident soloists and chorus, was indicative of what followed.

As one song finished, it fused immediately into the next, proving that while some of these octogenarians may require a walking stick, they don't need to pause for breath. Especially when, walking up to the microphone like a gunslinger with chest puffed out and hands on hips, 82-year-old Steve Martin got stuck into the lyrics of Dancing In The Dark. With the chorus swaying and twisting and with hands raised, they celebrated the melodic power of Bruce Springsteen's hit song.

From rock and roll, Young @ Heart Chorus returned to the heady days of San Francisco for a powerful rendition of Jefferson Airplane's White Rabbit, led by 78-year-old vocalist Patricia Booth, whose diction and phrasing swept the audience up into the increasing rhythm. Alternately Jimi Hendrix's Purple Haze was turned into a biting, lyrical conversation between 84-year-old Jeanne Hatch and Martin.

Nearly every song became a passionate celebration, with stirring deliveries encouraging two-step, quick step and hip swaying moves which delighted the audience. They even produced a whirling dervish rendition of The Ramones' I Wanna Be Sedated. However, it was Hatch's late-night, jazz-blues delivery of Send Me Someone To Love that created a stir.

The accompanying four-piece band of saxophone, keyboards, guitar and drums also contributed its worth providing the odd wailing solo and strong rhythm to inspire these veteran singers to keep on keeping on. And they did.

Last night was the 30th anniversary of the death of John Lennon and not only did they include a special mention of Lennon, the Young @ Heart Chorus performed a stunning version of his Beatles' White Album track I'm So Tired.

With some members not stepping on to a stage until they were 80, the chorus proves you are never too old to rock and roll.