

Originally Posted Online: Oct. 15, 2010, 11:24 pm

Last Updated: Oct. 15, 2010, 11:27 pm

Carrie makes i wi her temporary home Friday

[Comment on this story](#)

By **Seth Kabala**, correspondent@qconline.com

If you asked me to name all the American Idol winners from memory, I'd have to admit I'm a failure.

Oh, sure, everybody remembers Kelly (hey, I was young once), and a few of the (rolling eyes, shaking head), um, less-talented winners and wannabees — Sanjaya, Mr. Hung, anyone? — but after Season 4, I purposefully boycotted the show, fearing continued viewing of the witless and whiners— Paula ... and Randy ... (longer pause) and, okay, the British dude, too (should he have gone first?)— would steal away whatever brain cells my full-time college schedule wasn't doing a good job of holding a sun-assisted magnifying glass to already.

Actually (current expression: sheepish grin), I didn't even finish the whole season. Didn't even vote (gasp!) I know. What kind of horrible fan am I? Well, read on, and you'll see that Carrie Underwood's permanent place on my iPod playlist is justified.

With that ringing endorsement behind us, you might be thinking that I groaned before accepting the assignment when I was asked to review the Ms. Underwood's show at the i wireless center Friday night. Such an arduous, laborious business is this sitting, listening and typing stuff.



[More photos from this shoot](#)

Photo: John Greenwood

Since winning the fourth season of American Idol in 2005, Carrie Underwood has gone on to become a multi-platinum selling recording artist, Grammy Award winner, a three-time Academy of Country Music and Country Music Association Female Vocalist winner, and the current ACM Entertainer of the Year. Underwood and her band performed for a near-capacity crowd at the i-wireless Center Friday night.



[More photos from this shoot](#)

Photo: John Greenwood

Since winning the fourth season of American Idol in 2005, Carrie Underwood has gone on to become a multi-platinum selling recording artist, Grammy Award winner, a three-time Academy of Country Music and Country Music Association Female Vocalist winner, and the current ACM Entertainer of the Year. Underwood and her band performed for a near-capacity crowd at the i-wireless Center Friday night.

In reality, I immediately saw a vision of Ms. Underwood -- the one winner I recall, uh, totally -- singing "Alone." The 80s power-ballad performance, complete with big hair, is not a country song by any stretch of the imagination, not THE SONG for that season and, maybe, not the song or songs you think of when you hear Carrie's name.

But for me, that song, that performance brought the hairs on my neck to military attention, encapsulating in three words the essence of a Carrie Underwood performance: power under control.

Simon told her in 2005 that she would sell more records than any other previous Idol. Simon was right: 11.9 million for Carrie, 10.6 million for Kelly, according to Nielsen SoundScan this week.

Opening act No. 1 was the hard-to-genre-pigeon-hole Sons of Silvia, featuring the vocal/instrumental talents of the Clarke brothers — Adam, Ashley and Austin. Throw country, rock, fusion and bluegrass into a pot, mix it up good, and you've got Sons of Silvia.

Lead singer Ashley strutted onto the stage, hit a note too high above the staff to fathom and pretty much remained in choir-boy tenor range, starting with a cover of Led Zeppelin's "Rock and Roll" and finishing their 25-minute set with "Love Left."

In the middle was a mix of Elvis impersonating vocals and gyrations, bluegrass set-the-strings-on-fire picking and I've-had-waaay-too-much-coffee jittering facial expressions. Ashley's voice seemed to tire a bit toward the end, but it's no small wonder when you're trying to be heard across the river.

"Thanks for putting up with us here," he said. "And our shouting."

Billy Currington ambled on stage next, slowed things down and turned them up, blasting out hits like "That's How Country Boys Roll" and "Pretty Good At Drinking Beer" -- with many a beer-drinking fan dancing and gesturing with their long-neck bottles. I was not a Currington fan before tonight's show, considering his vocals weak and uninteresting, but despite one chord mix up -- the band going one direction, him another -- his heavy, full-throated baritone actually sounded better than his recordings.

Plus, he just looked like he was having fun. Must be all that beer.

As a vocalist, I always listen intently to hear if a star can bring their singing chops guns-blazing to a live performance or if they're simply a recording studio baby, grasping for anything that sounds like on-key and whiffing huge. Underwood is decidedly the former.

The 2010 Entertainer of the Year, five-time Grammy winner, and four-time selectee for People Magazine's 100 Most Beautiful People list took the stage in her inaugural headlining i-wireless appearance — or, rather, rose through it — and re-earned all her auditory and

aesthetic accolades.

Sporting a tight-legged, sequined and tailed tuxedo, she rotated with the stage, illuminated by blood-red lights, while singing and, when necessary, screaming her mega-hit "Cowboy Casanova" from her latest album to the near-sellout crowd.

Audience participation reached a climax with her performance, with it tough to find a person sitting. Fans sang/screamed along to, clapped in rhythm with and sometimes danced at her prompting to the hits she churned out one after another.

She changed things up with "Some Hearts," a shout-out to her first album, and removed her jacket to reveal sleeveless arms before strapping on an electric guitar. She changed again with "This is Just a Dream," wearing a billowing skirt while swinging on a swing as she crooned the sad tale.

After each song, background images changed as the light show morphed into various seizure-inducing polygons and the transformer-esque stage took on impossible shapes, leaving me scrambling to find out -- Ok, just where the heck is she now? Oh, 20 feet in the air.

I tried really, really hard to find something wrong with her performance. But her voice was so powerful, so sharp and well-resonated -- no matter the vowel formation -- that all I could think about was making an appointment with the ear-doctor to make certain the incredibly perfect sound waves hadn't done permanent damage.

Throughout her set, Underwood moved seamlessly between her three albums, placing particular attention on "Temporary Home" and "All American Girl," songs she co-wrote and she said express her development as an artist.

Due to deadline pressures (business before art and all that jazz), I couldn't stay for the whole show, bowing out after "So Small." But as I walked away, I analyzed what 'd heard at the show and what Underwood offers on her three albums.

It confirmed my hypothesis before the concert: although her voice was stellar on "Some Hearts," it didn't have the depth and layers of color of her later work -- what I like to call "the interesting factor".

This is a bad analogy, so please forgive me in advance, but if "Some Hearts" was a Twinkie, "Carnival Ride," "Play On," (second and third albums) and what I heard at the show have patiently baked into a fattening piece of chocolate raspberry cheesecake.

Just no comparison. Both good, but the latter sooo much more fulfilling.

It's a good thing music can't make you fat, or I'd be worried about what Underwood's going to do to my waist line in a few years, so sweet her maturing skills have become. But I'll

worry (wink, wink) about that the next time she comes to the i-wi.

I plan to come hungry.