

Finger picking fun from Fredericton

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On Sunday, May 17, Fredericton, New Brunswick's Ross Neilsen and the Sufferin' Bastards returned to tear up the Slice with high energy blues powered by some impressive finger picking which sounded like Delta Blues on steroids and with a lot of volume. But not only did Neilsen know how to control his feedbacking cherry red hollow body Yamaha guitar. He punished that poor axe, especially on an outstanding version of "Cortez the Killer," squeezing every tenderly feedbacked note from it. He bent the neck and put it on the stage, tapping out notes and strange sounds.

He had a fantastic feel for his instrument, demonstrating he knew how to properly use dynamics, playing softly and loudly for effect in all the right places, he even wandered through the crowd playing his wireless guitar in the middle of his first set with "Texas," at one point looking like he was about to leave the Slice while still playing. He also showed he knew how to use a slide.

Neilsen, and the Sufferin' Bastards, bassist Shawn Worden and drummer Karl Gans played a lot of their CD, "Early Grave," some of Neilsen's solo material from his two solo Cds as well as some excellent new material.

He was playing all of this cool stuff with just a thumb and a badly bandaged forefinger, not only showing supreme feel, but also extreme speed.

"It's kind of hard. I wish it would hurry up and heal already. But it's better than bleeding all over the place," he laughed in between sets adding he used to play with a pick but took to fingerpicking after listening to a lot of cats who do it well.

"I listen to a lot of delta blues players like Morgan Davis, he's from the east coast too," Neilsen said. The band is in the middle of a nine week tour.

I played with a pick for 15 years but fingers give you a little more variety. You can chord a little bit like a piano. I just like it. I listen to a lot of Delta blues guys. I pick up a lot of stuff from people just by watching them," Neilsen continued adding the band plans to record a live CD in Mississippi.

"If all goes as planned we'll be back here in the fall with a live CD," he continued.