

## Young greeted warmly at Toronto festival, but remembers when city was colder

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TORONTO - Neil Young received multiple standing ovations as his new concert film premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival on Monday, but after the screening he reminisced on a time when the city was considerably less friendly to him.

Young was born in Toronto and spent much of his early life in Ontario before moving to Winnipeg. He returned in the mid-60s as a fledgling folk musician, and found a frigid reception.

"You know, I was a complete failure," Young said during a Q-and-A session following the screening of "Neil Young Journeys," after claiming that he originally wound up in Toronto because his car broke down.

"We just tried and tried, but we couldn't get work here. I got some really terrible reviews."

"But I knew I was good. I was just in the wrong place."

He was in the right place Monday, as an adoring audience packed the Princess of Wales Theatre to watch his latest collaboration with Jonathan Demme, the Academy Award-winning director of "Silence of the Lambs" and "Rachel Getting Married."

"Neil Young Journeys" is Demme's third film about the grizzled rock hero. The previous two presented a sharp contrast. Demme's doleful 2006 flick "Heart of Gold" was dedicated to Young's recently deceased father and was recorded not long after Young suffered a brain aneurysm, while 2009's "Neil Young Trunk Show" presented the more tousled side of Young, with the rocker slamming his sweat-drenched guitar through a raucous set.

"Journeys," meanwhile, was recorded this past May, with Young bringing his solo tour to a close in Toronto's historic Massey Hall in a gig that offered the full sonic range. The 65-year-old Young played a sterling set culled mainly from his latest Daniel Lanois-produced disc "Le Noise," which earned Young his first-ever Grammy for music.

During the concert portion of the roughly 90-minute film, Young is alone onstage (except for a wooden statue of a native American), shifting effortlessly between an organ, two pianos and several guitars, performing tunes including "You Never Call," "Ohio," "Down by the River" and "Love and War."

But "Journeys" also features wistful footage of Young travelling on a roadtrip across Ontario in a 1956 Ford Crown Victoria. His journey included a tour of Omemee, where Young pointed out a school named for his father (the sports writer Scott Young), a community centre he used to frequent and a lake where he would catch fish and turtles and bring them home in a wagon when he was five years old.

The nostalgic vibe carried over into the post-film discussion, with Young joined onstage by Demme (who said that the men had been friends since Young contributed a song to Demme's 1993 film, "Philadelphia") and greeted by a string of audience members who happened to be old chums.

One woman named Mary-ellen identified herself as a former classmate, and Young's face immediately lit up. He remembered winning a sparkly little prize at a fair back in Grade 4 and giving it to the woman because he harboured a crush on her.

Later, it turned out that the trinket was actually a dog collar.

"I still haven't lost my touch," Young joked.

In the film, Young recalled a childhood friend named Goof who would take advantage of the naive Young in various ways — by paying him a nickel to make rude comments to old ladies, or by convincing him that the wet tar on the road was chocolate. On Monday, a representative of Goof's showed up with a mysterious envelope for Young.

"God knows what he wants me to do now," sighed Young, who intermittently munched on popcorn while onstage.

Young said that he's writing a book, so he's been reflecting on his childhood in Canada pretty frequently of late.

Meanwhile, he seemed pleased with Demme's latest effort, saying afterward that he had grown to trust the 67-year-old's vision implicitly.

"I always let him just do his thing, because his thing is great," Young said.

"He loves music, and I love movies."



Neil Young waves as he arrives for new movie "Neil Young Journeys" at the Toronto International Film Festival in Toronto on Monday, Sept., 12, 2011.

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<http://www.winnipegfreepress.com/arts-and-life/entertainment/movies/young-greeted-warmly-at-toronto-festival-but-remembers-when-city-was-colder-129697738.html>