

The Herald



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Music

**STEVE YOUNG,
PLEASANCE CABARET BAR,
EDINBURGH**

ROB ADAMS

★★★★★

IT'S a family affair, Steve Young's latest tour of Scotland. Not only is his son, Jubal Lee, opening his concerts for him, Jubal Lee's mother provided the opening song of his set, the muscularly poetic Deep South Blues.

Both the staff and distaff songwriting genes have been passed on, with echoes of dad's writing on the hoof in the Streets of Caen's memories of earlier dates in the tour in Normandy. Jubal Lee has a tough, manly voice to go with his dark, rocking songs and a self-sufficient guitar style to project them strongly.

Although Young senior has written his fair share of classic songs and he slots them in as he sees fit, he uses his powers as an interpreter as much as a writer to present a broad tapestry of American music. With a rich voice that often draws on his Cherokee roots for a yodel-like tonal projection, he has an uncanny knack of making old Appalachian songs sound freshly minted, and songs of his own era sound as if they've been around forever.

Thus his visit to Elvis's Sun Session days turned Lawdy Miss Clawdy into a vintage Delta blues, and his own tribute to the street singers he heard growing up in America's southern states had a real passed-down-through-generations quality. Few performers paint as vivid a portrait of America's endless highways, blue-collar hardships and guitar-picking heroes – complete with heroic guitar-picking of his own – and can draw them together with tender but never cloying hymns to enduring love into one big picture, and it's always a real pleasure to hear Young do it.