

Backstage Pass

INSIGHTS ON STAGE, SCREEN AND BEYOND

Milsap Brings Heart of Country Genre To The Sharon

By KRISTEN FIORE | Daily Sun Senior Staff Writer

Country music legend Ronnie Milsap and his band were greeted by roaring applause as the curtain rose at The Sharon L. Morse Performing Arts Center.

Milsap, seated at a piano, opened Saturday night's show with "Prisoner of the Highway" and "He Got You."

At the beginning of the show, Milsap expressed his excitement about being in Florida and said the ride to The Villages was smooth. "People can criticize my driving record, but I'm better than George Jones," he joked.

"You set the bar pretty low," said one of the band members. "I should," Milsap said. "We're in The Villages!"

At 75 years old, Milsap is still riding the wave of the musical success that he had in the 1970s.

And he should — his music has influenced the country music genre as it is today.

"I thank you all for making all of these songs No. 1," Milsap said. "Forty of them! We're going to try to play all of them right now."

Much of the show was a long medley of some of those No. 1 hits, such as "I Wouldn't Have Missed it For the World," "What a Difference You've Made in My Life," "Where Do the Nights Go" and "Let's Take the Long Way Around

the World."

"His music is all original," said Dan Smith, of the Village of Bonita. "It's all from him, most of it. He's a great songwriter."

Smith saw Milsap perform live years ago and said the show was spectacular.

"When I found out he was coming here, we wanted to sign up right away," he said.

You could say that Linda Thomas, of the Village De La Vista, also "wouldn't have missed it for the world."

A big Milsap fan, Thomas has seen the artist perform a few times.

She also met him at O'Hare International Airport in Chicago in 2011.

"I called my daughter and said, 'Ronnie Milsap's here!'



Bill Mitchell | Daily Sun

Ronnie Milsap, one of country music's most successful artists, plays the piano as he sings "Any Day Now" during Saturday's concert at The Sharon. The group even changed things up a bit by performing a few doo-wop songs.

She said, 'Are you sure, Mom?' I was a nervous wreck, but she said, 'You better go up to him, or you won't forget it,'" Thomas said. "So I got a signed picture."

Milsap, backed by a talented six-piece band, still has the smooth and soothing voice that people love him for.

The group even changed things up a bit by performing a few doo-wop songs, but the core of the show was pure country.

Kristen Fiore is a senior staff writer with The Villages Daily Sun. She can be reached at 352-753-1119, ext. 5270, or kristen.fiore@thevillagesmedia.com.



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