

A rock guitarist who has class? That's Jeff Beck

By PETER GODDARD
Star staff writer

You can expect a lot of things from a rock lead guitarist — blistering solos, sex appeal, on-stage antics and even a word or two to the audience. But class? This you don't expect — unless the guitarist is Jeff Beck.

Beck's reputation preceded him to his concert at Maple Leaf Gardens' concert bowl where more than 8,000 people turned out to hear him last night.

It's a reputation based on many factors, including his work with the old Yardbirds in England, his own late-'60s band with Rod Stewart as lead singer, and his more recent, jazz-influenced music. He may be the best guitarist in rock today.

Review

Concise and precise

It's not what Beck does that matters as much as what he doesn't do. He's a concise, precise, intelligent player. He never plays two notes when one will do, never screeches when a sigh is enough.

In short, he has class.

His approach, of course, frustrated some in the crowd last night who kept yelling at him to "turn it up" and "boogie."

In part, though, their frustration was understandable. First they had to sit through the murky efforts of the opening act, REO Speedwagon. Then they weren't told before the show that Beck was only the guest artist for keyboard player Jan Hammer's band.

Not that this band was disappointing. Both Hammer and bassist Fernando Saunders provided lengthy and involved solos, while drummer Tony Smith and violinist Steve Kindler produced the necessary background.

Rhythmic riffs

But the night was indifferent until Beck ambled on stage, looped the strap of his white guitar around his neck, and started playing.

Brisk, chippy, rhythmic riffs were followed by long, arching phrases that soared up and up. It was playing so neat, so perfectly planned you never wondered how else it could be done. It was Beck at his most understated, but still near the top of his form.

A moody blues based around Charlie Mingus' tune, Goodbye Pork Pie Hat, brought the English guitarist, in his fourth appearance in town in four years, back to his earliest days as a blues player. It showed he hadn't forgotten anything.

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PRESENTS

JEFF BECK

At Maple Leaf Gardens
Concert Bowl
Friday, October 15,
at 8:00 p.m.

Tickets: \$7.70

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