

Indie icon Rae Spoon shines at Arlington



Rae Spoon performs before a full house at the Arlington in Maynooth, on Saturday, June 18, on the eve of the Summer Solstice.

By Sarah Vance

You could have heard a pin drop as Canadian icon Rae Spoon took to the Arlington Hotel stage on Saturday night. Spoon's harmonies spliced into the eve of a ripening strawberry moon for the Summer Solstice. The packed crowd at the international hostel in Maynooth lingered on their every word.

Guests took to the floor to dance during Spoon's heavy guitar riffs that blended traditional folk country, with electronic beats. A solo performer, Spoon is amongst a new generation of artists whose music relentlessly questions traditional genre demarcations and whose refusal to conform to conventional constructs has been career forging.

Spoon arrived in Maynooth on the heels of a Canadian tour and the release of new album, *Armour*. Spoon has also been working alongside queer youth during a movie production in Halifax. They are the much-anticipated marshal of the city of Calgary's Pride parade.

A muse of the Highlands, in 2012, Spoon performed excerpts from the book *Gender Failure* alongside co-author Ivan Coyote, at the Hastings Highlands Library.

The same year, Spoon scheduled a concert at the Arlington, during which the stage caught fire quite literally before the first set ended. Cellphone lenses turned, as patrons shuffled into the street, capturing fire truck sirens rolling onto the scene. Instead, Spoon hauled guitar and amplifier down to the old Maynooth Station area. There they held an impromptu house party, where rock beats and slam poetry continued.

These experiences were recounted with edgy humour as Spoon banged out, "Come on forest fire, burn the disco down."

Spoon's premiere novel *First Spring Grass Fire* is a collection of short stories. They detail the quiet heartbreak of a childhood encapsulated within the Pentecostal faith and their father's often paranoid struggle with schizophrenia.

Spoon's oeuvre has become a beacon of hope for many LGTB youth who continue to find themselves along the fringes of contemporary expectations and infrastructure where even the choice of a washroom can bring profound danger and microscopic debate.

"The absurdity of gender is that the truth is lost and I lost the plot," said Spoon in *Gender Failure*. "It is more of a comedy than a fact, so I decided to retire from the gender binary altogether."

Spoon continues to deconstruct the values bound to language, having turned away from gender pronouns.

Indie-alternative lyricists LAL, took the stage after Rae. The house erupted to Rosina Kazi and Nicholas Murray's electronic avant-garde.

Spoon's writing has found its way into university course curricula. Their finesse as a deconstructionist parallels Foucault, and yet they were friendly, relaxed and approachable with fans on Saturday.