

[examiner.com](http://www.examiner.com)

Concert Review: Chuck Ragan at PVD Social Club

In the past, when I heard the words "folk music concert", I'd picture a group of people sitting around a campfire, holding hands and listening to a hippie lady play guitar and sing about how pretty the trees are. See: famous Animal House stairwell [scene](#) with a guitar-smashing Bluto. Like many, I cheered Bluto on. Lately though, I've come to realize I couldn't have been more wrong. In fact I would go so far as to say that at least a few in today's folk scene, [Frank Turner](#) for example, would take the role of Bluto rather than the poor wimpy guy.

Lorraine Schwartz

In reality, the folk music scene is so much more vibrant and diverse than I ever thought. These are not people who sit back and sing lazy tunes suitable for a Girl Scout singalong. Their lyrics can be so emotionally honest and edgy that even the hard rocking punk community has openly voiced appreciation for the songwriters. Sometimes hot pants & glitter halter tops might be necessary to attract people to an artist's music. But to win fans in the contemporary folk world, all that's needed is brutal sincerity and the

ability to rock a room. In the case of current folk-rock hero [Chuck Ragan](#), there is no doubt whatsoever that this man is singing from the heart, and the man and his band can certainly command a full room's attention with no problem.

Ragan first gained fans as a singer for the influential rock band [Hot Water Music](#), but has won his own audience as a solo artist with his unique country/rock/folk sound. Though he plays guitar and harmonica with great fervor and skill, his key instrument is his powerful voice. Ragan's sidemen, fiddler Jon Gaunt and stand-up bassist Joe Ginsberg, are equally asskicking and could not be better complements to Ragan on stage. Don't let the description "country/rock/folk" fool you either- these guys really do rock. The trio played Providence, RI's PVD Social Club on Thursday night and proved that electric guitars are not needed to give an electrifying performance.

The club, a large upstairs bar room in the historic district of the city, was filled with beer swigging tattooed rock kids who crowded the small stage to get up close to their hero. With such close proximity to the performers and the high energy coming from the stage and the crowd singalongs, the place turned into one of those shows you see on YouTube and wish you were at. You know, the kind of video that shows fans leaning into the stage and shouting the lyrics back at the singer and you think "Man, that looks like a great time."
(check out my video clip from the show here)

The setlist mostly drew from Ragan's latest CD, "Covering Ground", including songs like "Nomad By Fate", "Wish On The Moon",

"Valentine" and "Meet You In The Middle", which tell of challenges of road life and romance without being hokey or depressing. A few older tunes were also thrown in such as "Rotterdam", "Between The Lines", "Old Diesel" and given the nasty weather Thursday night, the appropriately titled "Let It Rain."

Though there is no percussionist traveling with the group, it didn't matter. The feetstomping and handclapping served just as well and gave the show that community feel that only really great shows provide. By the end of the show, both performers and fans were tired from all the rocking out that was done.

Check out my shots from the show [here](#), and additional photos [here](#).

For more info on Chuck Ragan, including upcoming dates with Social Distortion, visit Chuck's official [site](#). To follow me on Twitter, follow [@concertexaminer](#).