

Eli Mosley/Tracy Byrd show thrills Lakeland

By JIM ERVIN
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LAKELAND — Future country music superstar and Bartow resident Eli Mosley was able to realize a life-long dream Thursday, Feb. 13. Mosley was tapped as the opening act for country music heavyweight Tracy Byrd. The performance took place at RP Funding Center.

Mosley has famously stated many times that Byrd is the reason he got into country music after seeing Byrd perform when he was just 6 years old.

Mosley and his excellent band were in top form as they blazed through their set with equal parts professionalism and enthusiasm. The band consists of Jerry Escobedo on drums, Kheagun Fleckenstein lead guitar, Josh McGaffigan on rhythm guitar, Chris Choto steel guitar, Anna Lee on acoustic guitar/background vocals and on bass guitar, Sebring resident Rich Shepherd.

Things started out in high gear as the group opened with Mosley favorite, “Stay.” The band immediately followed with the first track from the latest album, “Sunday Morning Sinners.” That song was “Think About You,” a redemptive song about new beginnings.

After “Brand New Man”



MICHAEL MOSLEY PHOTO

From left; Anna Lee, Josh McGaffigan, Sebring resident Rich Shepherd, Kheagun Fleckenstein, Jerry Escobedo (in the back on drums) and Eli Mosley. Not pictured, Chris Choto (on steel guitar).

and the ever-popular “Better Run,” the Polk County singer had a surprise for the crowd, many of whom were sporting Mosley T-shirts. Setting up the song “Naturally,” the young talent called out his “fiance” to help him with the duet. Long-time bandmate Anna Lee stepped out to reveal herself as the bride-to-be.

The Mosley Band barreled towards the end of their set with the high-energy “Our Song” from the current album. The night ended with new single, “T-R-O-U-B-L-E”

followed by another new and typically great song, “He Listens To Country.”

“We have really increased our show as far as performance level and energy level,” Mosley said. “We’re always trying to make it something new, something different, something better. This never ends for us. We’re always in it.”

“To me it’s hard to comprehend so much of the stuff that’s happening. Sometimes I don’t even have time to blink. Sometimes I just want to get in a boat and go fishing,” the local-boy-does-good Mosley said with a laugh.

Tracy Byrd walked onto the stage to an excited roar from the crowd. From the first note he proceeded to take control and hold the audience in the palm of his hand. He played many of his most loved songs including “Ten Rounds With Jose Cuervo,” “I’m From The Country,” “Holdin’ Heaven,” “Lifestyles Of

The Not So Rich And Famous,” “Walking To Jerusalem,” and his huge No. 1 hit, “Keeper Of The Stars.”

The night however would not be complete without the inclusion of the song audience members were shouting for throughout the night. Byrd did not disappoint and brought the house down with “Watermelon Crawl,” a song Mosley regularly performs in his own headlining shows.

Byrd has been a solid and much-loved country artist throughout a career that began in 1992. In 1993 his third single, “Holdin’ Heaven,” off of his self-titled debut reached No. 1 on the Billboard Country charts.

Byrd has had 11 top 10 hits, released 10 studio albums and two greatest hits records. Four of those releases went gold and one double-platinum. In 1995 he won “Song of the Year” for his smash hit single “Keeper Of The Stars.” He has sold over 6 million records in his



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Tracy Byrd greeting fans after the show.

28-year career and the Byrd train just keeps on rollin’.

Those wanting to see

Mosley locally will be able to do so when he returns to the Circle Theatre in Sebring on April 3.



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Eli Mosley and bandmates on stage.



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Anna Lee and Eli Mosley.



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Eli Mosley performing in Lakeland.



From left; drummer Jerry Escobedo, Anna Lee, Chris Choto in the background on steel guitar, Eli Mosley and Kheagun Fleckenstein.