

Book delves into Cash's lyric about Reno

By Susan Skorupa, Reno Gazette-Journal

The reaction usually started with the opening notes of the song, eight dark tones leading up to the first line of lyric.

Johnny Cash's audiences waited for it – the second verse of “Folsom Prison Blues,” the line “but I shot a man in Reno just to watch him die.” He'd sing it, they'd hoot or bay like coyotes and clap until their hands hurt.



Johnny Cash

Northern Nevada audiences took it very personally. They'd wait. They'd hold their breath. He'd sing the line. They'd just go nuts, stomping and shouting. In 1995, Cash told a Reno Gazette-Journal reporter that on the stage he could feel the audience anticipation, feel it build from the opening chords.

Caleb Cage has taken the line personally, too.

Cage was a child in Reno when he first heard “Folsom Prison Blues” and was enraptured by the song's Reno connection – the “Reno line.”

Read the whole story