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**Nothing complicated about Avril Lavigne:
She's enchanting**

REVIEW



When pop-punk princess Avril Lavigne first burst onto the music scene, she differentiated herself by being the antithesis of cookie-cutter idols. Embracing quirky fashion statements, she paired striped ties with tank tops and then matched —or mismatched— them with military camouflage pants.

The songstress, who is responsible for bringing us head-bobbing earworms such as ‘Complicated’ and ‘Sk8er Boi’ took centre stage at the Singapore Indoor Stadium on Saturday night. The night saw Lavigne’s full blossom from an irascible tomboy into an elegant grown woman. Gone are her signature pink hair streaks; she was also wont to flashing adoring fans many a toothy grin.



The night opened with a retrospective vignette which drew footage from Lavigne's oeuvre of music videos. Then it was off to an explosive start with the first song: Lavigne's ode to her fascination with cartoon character Hello Kitty. To a thunderous peal of applause and cheers the singer popped onstage, wearing a skirt adorned with luminous motifs of Hello Kitty. Lyrics of the eponymous song go, 'Kawaii, Hello Kitty, you're so silly.' A silly song but it is a fun and catchy one nonetheless. It is an apt song to start off the concert too —what with Singaporeans' shared frenzied craze with the feline.

Seeing Lavigne in person made me realise this: The chanteuse either drank from the elusive fountain of youth or she must possess one of Tolkien's mythical magic rings. Get this: Lavigne does not get older, she just gets better.



She charged through her bevy of hits, acquired during a milestone-studded career that spanned 14 years. The handclap-rich ‘Girlfriend’ saw fans waving their concert paraphernalia in unison with the beat. Though a new song, fans knew every word to the bouncy anthem ‘Here’s To Never Growing Up’. Lavigne earned herself another round of unbridled applause after she channelled her inner rock star during ‘I Always Get What I Want’ and delivered protracted screams, one after another.

Her vocals shone especially during ‘Let Me Go’, the pithy and standout track on her self-titled fifth album, Avril Lavigne. Even with a powerful triumvirate of drums, guitars and piano playing, her dulcet voice, packed with unflinching emotions, soared ever higher as the crescendo swelled. She nailed the high notes with the same kind of concentration and precision a tightrope walker employs, yet her delivery was with such ease it was like she was taking a walk in the park.

A cacophony of guitar crunch and percolating drums heralded the night’s more haunting sound: A mashup of ‘Bad Girl’ and ‘The Beautiful People’. ‘Bad Girl’ is Lavigne’s opus with Marilyn Manson, who assumes the duties of background vocals in the song. Swathed in black, Lavigne returned to the stage dressed as a devil. The grating arrangement, along with the sporadic flashing of Manson’s picture and dizzying strobe lights, made us feel we were in the thick of a brainwashing experiment.

Other highlights came when the unmistakable notes of ‘Complicated’ echoed through the stadium. It was the single that started it all and Lavigne took the time to thank her fans for being so supportive of her all these years. Excitement reached fever pitch during ‘Sk8er Boi’ and later again during ‘What the Hell’. Fans threw their hands freely in the air and jumped to the ebullient rhythm, all the while essaying to out-sing one another.



Lavigne capped off the night with her most recognisable ballad, ‘I’m With You’. Holding her microphone aloft, she rallied the crowd to join in a sing-along. Not that she needed to—the enraptured fans were already fervently singing along. A fitting finale it was and no doubt the night’s hair-raising moment belonged here.

One gripe I do have is the careless omission of ‘Nobody’s Home’, which in my opinion is her best single to date. Back in the day, while on the promotion circuit, Lavigne would strum away on her guitar and sing a stripped-down rendition. Such understated performances solidified her as a true musician and distanced her from her less talented counterparts.

Also, for a global pop star, Lavigne’s set is surprisingly nondescript. She performed most of her songs against a backdrop of moving visualisations which could have been straight out of Window Media Player’s store. During ‘Rock n Roll’, the official music video was played in the screen. That is a tad disappointing for those expecting fresh content.



While not a glaring fault, it could be why her show was not a huge draw: Many rows of seats at the back were empty. By way of flashy costumes, riveting themes and intricate choreographies, many pop idols have upped the antes when it comes to their concerts. P!nk, for one, sings her ballads while hanging precariously off aerial silks.

Lavigne obviously prefers to let her voice carry the show, jettisoning the bells and whistles for an intimate showcase. However, by jazzing up a few performances with some pomp —say for example, recreating the choreography in the ‘Girlfriend’ music video— and adding quieter moments that put her musical abilities in the spotlight, Lavigne’s concert could turn into a bona-fide, must-see pop pageantry.

And given that Lavigne is just dripping with talent, she deserves to be a topnotch touring artiste.

Photo credit: Willie Lyou

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