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Concert: Sade in Uncasville, CT

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Sade Adu -- or just Sade to her international legion of fans -- doesn't tour the United States very often, but when she does, the performance is nothing short of a spectacle. Combining exquisite musicianship, a comfortable, even laid-back stage presence and captivating set design, the 2011 tour which stopped Saturday (7/3) at Connecticut's Mohegan Sun Arena was no exception.



In the decade since she last hit the road, the sultry, Nigerian-born Brit didn't take long to make a splash, capturing her fourth Grammy earlier this year in the Best R&B Performance by a Duo or Group category for the title track of her "Soldier of Love" project. That single also served as the opening number of her live set.

The first segment of the show had the singer clad in a black body suit, with her bright smile beaming as she sang and chatted casually with the audience between songs, which included "Your Love is King" and featured the first of many soulful saxophone solos by Stuart Matthewman, who contributed some great, hard-driving guitar work during the set as well.

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While generally sparse, the staging of Sade's show was enhanced by four elevator platforms moving the artist, as well as her musicians and backup singers, up onto or down from the performance space. Several risers

also shifted positions allowing, for example, the keyboards to move from the rear to the front to spotlight that instrument during a particular song before shifting back upstage again or disappearing altogether.

The combination of the few moving set pieces put most of the visual attention on a huge, high-definition video screen that spanned the entire width of the stage. The intensely bright and crisp projections were most effective on "Kiss of Life" which showed the freckle-faced singer frolicking through a field of wildflowers.

Switching to an Middle-Eastern flavor reminiscent of Led Zeppelin's "Kashmir," Matthewman cranked out the power chords on "Love is Found," one of Sade's newest releases, while bassist Paul Denman laid down

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6 - Boston, MA - TD Garden (w/ John Legend)
8 - Indianapolis, IN - Conseco Fieldhouse (w/ John Legend)
9 - Cleveland, OH - Quicken Loans Arena (w/ John Legend)
10 - Columbus, OH - Schottenstein Center (w/ John Legend)
12, 13 - Atlanta, GA - Phillips Arena (w/ John Legend)
15 - Fort Lauderdale, FL - BankAtlantic Cneter (w/ John Legend)
16 - Miami, FL - American Airlines Arena (w/ John Legend)
17 - Orlando, FL - Amway Center (w/ John Legend)
22 - New Orleans, LA - New Orleans Arena (w/ John Legend)
23 - Houston, TX - Toyota Center (w/ John Legend)
24 - Dallas, TX - American Airlines Center (w/ John Legend)
26 - Kansas City, MO - Sprint Center (w/ John Legend)
28 - St. Louis, MO - Scottrade Center (w/ John Legend)
29 - Memphis, TN - FedEx Forum (w/ John Legend)
31 - Charlotte, NC - Time Warner Cable Arena (w/ John Legend)

August 2011

1 - Nashville, TN - Bridgestone Arena (w/ John Legend)

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Concert: Sade in Uncasville, CT

the throbbing foundation. Then, as risers disappeared and reconfigured, the set became an intimate jazz club with all the musicians clustered around the piano for "In Another Time."

Sade's first single and first Grammy-winning hit, "Smooth Operator," featured an extended introduction -- with a narrator reciting what sounded like snippets from a pulp fiction detective novel -- before she and the band appeared back on stage to finish the song in front of a montage of images of the New York skyline.

One of the most dramatic moments, if not the highpoint of the show, had to be "Pearls," which stripped the stage completely bare as Sade entered alone from the rear in a shimmering white gown walking toward the audience as a projected sunrise filled the screen behind her. She delivered the sultry vocals, punctuated by a few wailing high notes, and then simply turned and headed off stage, walking back into the projected sun as it set.

Sade's staging also incorporated a movable, see-through scrim which trundled around the sides and front of the stage, occasionally encasing the performers inside a two-dimensional projection.

This configuration was particularly effective, giving Sade and her bandmates the appearance of floating within the projected image of stark, bare branch silhouettes, or a shimmering image of ocean waves. The effect was dramatic because it was used sparingly on the ballad "Morning Bird" and "The Moon and The Sky," both from "Soldier of Love."

But the tour was also promoting a more recent greatest hits package entitled "The Ultimate Collection," so a number of other, more popular favorites were also in the offing.

"Paradise/Nothing Can Come Between Us," "The Sweetest Taboo," "Jezebel," "No Ordinary Love" and the only encore, "Cherish The Day," left all Sade's fans - and even those unfamiliar with the artists diverse catalog -- with something to remember.

John Legend opened with an energetic set that showcased his warm voice and humble demeanor, providing a very accessible warm-up as Sade's fans headed for their seats. The U.S. tour continues through Sept. 3, when it wraps up in sunny Las Vegas at the MGM Grand Hotel's arena.

- 3 - Auburn Hills, MI - The Palace at Auburn Hills (w/John Legend)
- 5-7 - Chicago, IL - United Center (w/John Legend)
- 9 - Minneapolis, MN - Target Center (w/John Legend)
- 11 - Denver, CO - Pepsi Center (w/John Legend)
- 13 - Vancouver, British Columbia - Rogers Arena (w/John Legend)
- 14 - Seattle, WA - Key Arena (w/John Legend)
- 15 - Portland, OR - Rose Garden Arena (w/John Legend)
- 17 - Sacramento, CA - Power Balance Pavilion (w/John Legend)
- 19-21 - Los Angeles, CA - Staples Center (w/John Legend)
- 23 - San Diego, CA - Cricket Wireless Amphitheatre (w/John Legend)
- 25 - San Jose, CA - HP Pavilion (w/John Legend)
- 26, 27 - Oakland, CA - Oracle Arena (w/John Legend)
- 30, 31 - Anaheim, CA - Honda Center (w/John Legend)

September 2011


- 2 - Phoenix, AZ - US Airways Center (w/John Legend)
- 3 - Las Vegas, NV - MGM Grand Arena (w/John Legend)

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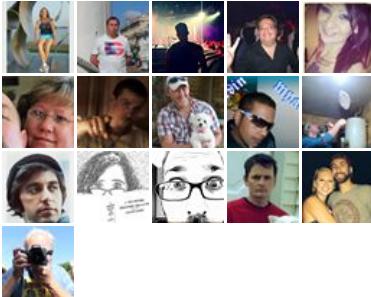


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