

Lana Del Rey performs at Buku festival, but mostly for her first rows of fans

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By Laura Testino, NOLA.com | The Times-Picayune

March 22, 2019

Lana Del Rey headlined the Buku Music and Art festival Friday night (March 22) in New Orleans, and I was ready to feel 17 again and on the way to my high school. The weather cooperated, and Del Rey did, too - but only for the first few rows of her devoted fans.

By 10 p.m., festival goers had packed the Power Plant stage for Del Rey's hour-long set. Given the day's loud music, I began viewing from the back, hoping to take it all in.

By the end of her seventh song, "Video Games" - one of the hits I was used to blaring with the windows down in efforts to emulate the star's effortless cool - people began to leave. I didn't blame them, instead navigating easily closer to the stage, just in front of the cameras. How did we get here?

Del Rey began her set with "Blue Jeans." She was wearing a shimmery silver short dress with tall and sequined heeled boots and a light white track jacket. Big silver hoop earrings poked out from her shoulder-length, straight dark hair. It was parted down the middle, and I think she touched it as much during her hour-long show as much as the average person touches a phone in the same time (that'd be about 109 times, [according to one study](#)).

It was confusing: She wasn't singing much of any one song, and when she did, it was difficult to hear her voice over the rest of the track. Maybe it was a sound issue?

But when she spoke to the audience, it was easy to hear: "I just want to say how much it means to be here in one of the most interesting cities in the world," she said before introducing her last and new song, "Venice B---h." "It's not lost on me how lucky I am to get to share this set with you."



When I asked around me if her concerts are typically like this, a pair of girls agreed this was her style. One attributed the energy to the typical melancholy tone of Del Rey's music.

I wanted to believe that was it. Then Del Rey started taking Polaroids on stage.

She tossed the developed photographs into the audience, like the single strands of beads she had thrown earlier, then she stepped off stage and into the crowd. She signed autographs and took selfies while her band played and backup performers moved around the stage, one on the large wooden swing from which Del Rey had swung during a couple of songs.

Then it was over: No encore. No crowd-wide shouts for an encore. Some in the audience began to leave. It was just over.

So I walked up the gravel to the front of the stage to talk to the remaining fans. These people loved her.

“She was really good today,” said Ricardo Alvarado, 26. “I would say one of her best performances, for sure.”

Alvarado, who traveled to Buku from Los Angeles, has seen her eight times in concert. The first was in 2014 when the star gave what [NOLA.com | The Times-Picayune](#) review called a “cooly detached” performance at Champions Square.

“I have never seen her so confident,” Alvarado said. “I think it was because all the people [who] have seen her for a while were all at the barricade. She just looked so sexy, so free.”

Alvarado was holding a small green book that had the singer’s name on the front in gold. She had signed the back yellow page, and the book was open and displaying the Polaroid that Alvarado caught. He was holding it with nails painted lime green and displaying “L A N A” in black letters. He’d also caught a strand of gold beads.

“She was waiting for me to ask for a picture, but honestly I felt her vibe,” which wasn’t one for a selfie. That was OK, because he had “probably five” selfies with her already, and this time she was looking and “really connecting” with him, which “was what mattered to me.”

Aldo Rodriguez, 21, also thought it was Del Rey’s best performance. Traveling from Washington D.C., he has seen her perform 11 times, and he met Alvarado at a Del Rey concert in December in New York City. Though she doesn’t typically sing through each song, Rodriguez said, she always manages to interact with the crowd, “which is super admirable and which is why I love her like 10 times more.”



This makes the star approachable, he said.

Rodriguez has also seen Lady Gaga perform. That’s more of a production kind of performance, where she sings through all the songs.

It’s what I had expected for Del Rey at Buku performance.

“For Lana, I feel like she has as much energy,” Rodriguez said. “It’s just all shown in a different way.”

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