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The Killers at The Staples Center

Rebeca Zepeda

University of the Pacific, r_zepeda@u.pacific.edu

Rebecca Zepeda (2018) is pursuing a degree in Music Industry Studies.

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The Killers at The Staples Center

By Rebeca Zepeda

I can still remember the day that I saw “Mr. Brightside” on *VH1’s Top 20 Video Countdown* as I got ready for school in the morning – I was seven years old. Of course, the video blew my mind, as I did not understand the context of burlesque girls dancing strangely and the video’s focus on a girl that was in love with two men. Nevertheless, I loved the song and since that day I had longed to see the Killers live – that day came on February 2nd of this year.

The Killers made the announcement in August of 2017 that they were going to go on a world tour to promote their new album, “Wonderful, Wonderful”. This album was dropped in September and was a clear indication of the band’s musical evolution. If you have listened to the new album or even just their lead single off the album, “The Man”, you would know that the days of guyliner and ugly blazers are gone.

The band’s high demand status scored them two nights at the Staples Center, home of the Los Angeles Lakers. Though I’ve been to the Staples Center many times before, I hadn’t been in a while and had forgotten just how large it really was. The entire floor was standing general admission, with the rest of the arena holding the remaining 20,000 seats – my initial thought was, “hmm, not the most intimate setting”, but I was happy enough just being in the room.

Of course, like any famous rock band, the Killers walked on stage one at a time, walking leisurely to their place on stage while soaking in the roar of the crowd, before finally starting. As they began, a triangular screen rose above them, queuing the musicians to build tension with their instruments – until finally revealing that the song opening the show was “Wonderful, Wonderful” off their new album, *Wonderful, Wonderful*. This is not the song that I would have expected to open the show as it begins with a loud conch shell call, which would be strange, if

not for the conch shell that is the clear focus on the new album's cover. However, as you listen to it, especially live, it builds and drops in a way that leaves the audience wanting more and certainly shows the band's new focus on sonic experimentation.

The band, however, couldn't leave out the songs that garnered them their initial fame from the set list. Within the first half of the show they played "Read My Mind" off of their album *Sam's Town* and "Smile Like You Mean It" and "Jenny was a Friend of Mine" off of their first album, *Hot Fuss* – all of which the crowd screamed over throughout and all of which the band performed with just as much enthusiasm as the songs off their new album. However, they were clearly saving their most notable songs for last.

"Run for Cover" off of *Wonderful, Wonderful*, though not the Killer's lead single, has been equally as successful is not more so than their lead single, "The Man". The song is most musically like the songs off of *Hot Fuss* and *Sam's Town* – an up-tempo indie rock song with a strong hook and it did not disappoint live. Brandon Flowers begins at his keyboard hidden by a giant electric male symbol as the guitarist plays rapidly. As the song progresses, the band erupts into a fully nostalgic sound all while the music video plays on the triangular shaped screen behind the band; though the music video only portrays a woman running in slow motion, for some reason it make the performance much more enticing.

The band's lead single of their new album, "The Man", was the song that I expected to least enjoy. The song is very funk based, on the extreme end of their experimentation spectrum, and to top it off, has the cheesiest lyrics. However, this was one of the top highlights of the show. Brandon Flowers began chanting, "Who's the Man" as his keyboard lit up the male symbol and the screen showed a depiction of a neon cartoon cowboy sign pointing to himself. I think it was pretty safe to say that the band didn't take this song too seriously either, which was why it was so

much fun to see performed. Just as the band gets into the first verse, confetti explodes around the arena making the crowd go wild – but perhaps not as wild as a few moments later when Flowers pelvic thrusts, center stage as close as he could get to the audience.

As the show was drawing to a close, I was beginning to lose hope that my favorite song was going to be played – but just as the thought entered my mind, it quickly left as I heard the first few chords of “All These Things That I’ve Done”. As the crowd heard the familiar progression of the song and just as we reached the bridge, the crowd sang out, “I’ve got soul but I’m not a soldier” except Brandon Flowers wasn’t singing along. Instead, he paced back and forth on stage waving his arms and urging the crowd to sing the bridge all by themselves before he would join. However, the surprises didn’t end there – just as he began singing the last chorus another blast of confetti surrounded the arena, leaving the crowd yelling for an encore.

Of course, the band comes out to perform another three songs including their legendary “Mr. Brightside” – but the song didn’t begin very familiarly. In fact it was some strange electronic remix, reminiscent of their new sound. However, just as the crowd began to think that this was the only version they were going to get, the lights turn on and they begin playing the original version. Everyone in the arena looks at each other in confusion because it’s usually at the end of the show that the lighting gets more intense not completely turned off. This, however, just gets the crowd more pumped because the entire show we have been able to see the Killers but now for the first time they can see us.

Though the venue carried more than 20,000 people, the band’s energetic performance and interaction with the crowd made the large size irrelevant. In my experience, the best shows do not depend on the size of the venue, the city it takes place in, or even the personality of the

crowd – it always depends on the interaction of the band with the audience and that’s why this show has been entered in my top five favorite concerts.