

2019

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June Benoit (2022) is pursuing a degree in Music Industry Studies.

This article was written as part of the curriculum for the Bachelor of Music in Music Management and the Bachelor of Science in Music Industry Studies at University of the Pacific. Each student conducted research based on his or her own areas of interest and study.

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Recommended Citation

Benoit, June (2019) "Justin Timberlake's 20/20 Experience," *Backstage Pass*: Vol. 2 : Iss. 1 , Article 7.

Available at: <https://scholarlycommons.pacific.edu/backstage-pass/vol2/iss1/7>

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Justin Timberlake's 20/20 Experience

By June Benoit

The concert I am reviewing is Justin Timberlake's sold-out final performance of his *20/20 Experience* World Tour. He performed his hour and twenty minute set at the MGM Grand Garden Arena in Las Vegas on January 2, 2015. The concert was filmed, and is currently on Netflix for viewing.

Justin Timberlake performed 28 songs during his set: mostly from his album *The 20/20 Experience*, but also featured some of his older hits and "Human Nature" by Michael Jackson. The massive venue held 17,157 people along with Justin's custom stage. The entire back of the stage had a giant screen that took up the whole wall, as well as hundreds of lasers and spotlights under, above, in front, and behind the stage. The sound system and microphones were very impressive, too. Justin had his band, the Tennessee Kids, playing live on stage with him the entire time. There were two percussionists, both almost completely surrounded by drums and other percussion instruments. The cameras zoomed in on their setups, and you could see all the different kinds of microphones they had to use. There were six different mics for the drum set alone, and numerous tiny mics for the rest of the percussion setup (especially for the congas).

The concert starts off with strings playing a sweeping romantic line while Justin comes up from under the stage. The stage is really dark, minus some backlights to show silhouettes of Justin and string players. I do not think there were any actual string players however, just silhouettes, because there were no strings on stage for the rest of the concert. The energy in the stadium was high, the audience was screaming even before Justin came on stage and screamed even louder after he popped up. Then, the front lights go off and you can finally see Justin, who is wearing a nice suit and bowtie. Justin sings acapella, but after a little bit he starts jumping, and while he is jumping in place, the drums come in at same tempo. Lights start flashing on and off as the brass

come in. Without the song really starting, you can see how high the production values are-- everything is timed and well choreographed so the lights come on and off with the band's hits. The electric guitars and back up vocalists rise up from the ground and the screaming gets louder. Everyone on stage claps on two and four, perfectly in synch while swaying.

The song is "Pusher Love Girl," and has an R&B feel. The way he sings, the rhythm, the back up vocals and brass all have that signature R&B style. Justin shows off his amazing vocal abilities; he effortlessly is able to jump up to a higher register and sings incredibly high for a good half of the song. He also makes sure to engage the audience, and takes a break in the middle of the song to walk around the stage and point to different parts of the audience to ask them how they're doing. After the break, he continues the song, but the mood shifts from a laid-back R&B vibe to a more high-energy rap. Everyone is jumping around and dancing in synch, even the musicians. Even though Justin is dancing, he is still standing in one spot.

The second song, "Rock Your Body", is more pop R&B. The song is incredibly funny and featured a heavy bass part. Two female backup dancers join him in matching suits. He now is moving across the stage, and his dancing is definitely choreographed compared to his earlier dancing. The tempo is constant, the drum part is pretty basic with snare hits on two and four, but the bass part keeps the energy intense and high.

Skipping to the sixth song, "My Love," Justin really showcases his amazing dance skills. The stage is dark again, and instead of spotlights, he has green and blue laser lights and has a giant pre-recorded video of his face mouthing the words behind him while he dances and sings with the backup vocalists. Instead of the rap part, Justin's electric guitarist walked to the front of the stage and performed an epic solo that was reminiscent of iconic rock solos. The camera pans to the keyboardist, who is playing two keyboards at once while swaying on beat with the rest of the band. The brass also had a feature, and showed off their skills and talents of playing while dancing. I was

really impressed because the trumpet was playing really high notes and never got squeaky, even though the trumpet player was dancing and playing pretty fast.

Something I noticed during the show was that there weren't really any breaks between songs, just a pause and then usually they jump into the next song. They toured from November 6, 2013 - January 2, 2015, so I can't believe any of them could still play and dance and be in tune after being on the road for so long and having to be performing nonstop.

The next big song was "Let the Groove Get In." Suddenly red lights are flashing and the bongos play a very fast rhythm that kind of reminds me of samba rhythms. Part of the stage lights up and rises, with Justin and four backup singers on it. The song still sounds like a pop song but the percussion and the dancing is reminiscent of Latin music and dancing. Also, Justin's ad-lib vocal break down between him, the crowd, the backup vocalists, and the brass has a Latin vibe. The crowd went crazy for this song and sang along the entire time.

Skipping ahead a couple of songs, Justin then sings his big hit "SexyBack." Justin gets the whole crowd chanting "Hell, yeah." This version is better than the recorded version, in my opinion, because of the live band. The real instruments make this song sound more full than a club song, which is what the original sounded like with the techno-beat. In the middle of the song, he puts in a drum break that's in half-time, which adds suspense and excitement. The electric bass comes in and plays a percussive noise that sounds like a heartbeat, which melts back into the techno beat. Justin also has an effect put on his mic at this time, making the sound more gravely. The dancing was also impeccable for this number.

The concert comes to an end with "Mirrors." The congas get a huge feature at the beginning, which is really awesome. Everyone in the arena is singing along with their iPhone lights on. The music cuts out except for the drums and clapping on beats two and four, with only the crowd and backup singers singing the chorus. The band and Justin join in when the screens

behind them show audience members. Justin gets all teary-eyed at the last show, and thanks the audience and the band for an amazing night. The show finishes with another epic guitar solo while the band is sustaining a note, before the the last hit.

This concert was amazing. I didn't attend the concert in person, but according to thestreet.com, ticket prices averaged to about \$349.50. That is pretty expensive, but for the production, it's well worth the money. The tour is over, but I highly recommend the 90-minute Netflix special. The lighting, the live band, the singers, the dancers, and of course, Justin Timberlake, were all amazing; everything was immaculately planned out and well choreographed. The crowd was going crazy the entire time and obviously the tour went well because it lasted over 400 days. Overall, the entire concert was well produced and exciting the whole way through. I can't wait to see what Justin Timberlake comes out with next.