

# Concert review: 'American Idol' runner-up Adam Lambert a winner to fans in Portland

By Special to The Oregonian

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*Michele Coppola, Special to The Oregonian* Adam Lambert performs Wednesday at the Crystal Ballroom.

On Tuesday afternoon, Michelle Garbett from Ridgefield, Wash., paid a homeless man \$50 to hold her place in front of the line outside the [Crystal Ballroom](#) so she could be first inside the venue for [Adam Lambert's](#) "Glam Nation" concert Wednesday night.

"If I had a son, I would want him to be like Adam," said the petite 57-year-old, who had decorated her left cheek with a blue rhinestone swirl for the show. "He's beautiful inside and out."

The capacity crowd wrapped around the building -- an excited mix of moms in cropped pants and crocs, glitter-goth teenagers and beautiful tattooed boys -- obviously agreed, squealing with delight when the Season 8 "[American Idol](#)" runner-up emerged from his tour bus to sign autographs and take a few pictures. Humble and personable, Lambert's low-key demeanor and relatively cosmetic-free face was almost incongruent with the glamboyant performer who has been selling out smaller venues across the nation in a concert season that's seen more than its share of struggling tours -- even from bigger names.

Two hours later, he was stalking the laser-lit stage in full furred-and-feathered regalia, undulating between dancers and giving the passionate fans sweltering inside the Crystal their time and money's worth.

Unfortunately, the opening acts on the Glam Nation tour -- Lambert's talented "Idol"-mate [Allison Iraheta](#) and former Michael Jackson guitarist [Orianthi](#) -- seemed tired. The former yelled her way through a short, manic set that shredded what was left of her powerful pipes; Aussie Orianthi fared better, her stellar guitar chops accompanying a pleasant but unremarkable voice.



*Michele Coppola, Special to The Oregonian* Adam Lambert at the Crystal Ballroom on Wednesday night.

Looking like the love child of Boy George and Captain Jack Sparrow, Lambert finally appeared at 9:50 p.m. -- nearly two hours after the concert's start time -- launching the show with the thumping dance number "Voodoo," and then working his way through most of the songs from his debut album, "For Your Entertainment," including the infectious Lady Gaga-penned "Fever" and a rushed, acoustic version of his Top 10 hit, "Whataya Want From Me."

The back-to-back ballads that followed -- including the potent "Aftermath" -- were lovely, but the show lost some energy at this point, as it did during a couple of clunky costume changes. Lambert regained momentum after the last of these, sporting a fresh coat of sparkle and finally unleashing his signature pitch-perfect scream during "If I Had You" and on his encore cover of Led Zeppelin's "Whole Lotta Love." Disappointing, however, was his breathless rendition of "Mad World," which ended the 90-minute show: The Tears for Fears song that set him apart on "Idol" lost poignancy in the too-hasty live arrangement.

Whether you're one of the fervent fans who waited all day outside the Crystal, or you see Lambert as an overly theatrical talent competition creation, there is no getting around the fact that the guy can seriously sing and knows a thing or two about how to entertain -- which means we'll likely be hearing from Adam Lambert long after the reality show that made him famous is just a footnote on his Wikipedia bio.

-- [Michele Coppola](#)