

Concert review: Taylor Swift performed a visually stunning two-hour show

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Taylor Swift performs during the CMA Fan Fest in Nashville, Tenn.

"She's prettier in person," said 6-year-old Mary Wamsley, who along with her sisters Sara Grace and Emma, were lucky enough to be invited to [Taylor Swift's](#) backstage meet and greet before the superstar's sold-out show at the [Rose Garden](#) last night.

"And she said her favorite thing about being famous was how all the people love her, and she loves them back," chimed in Sara Grace. In their hands were autographed pictures of Swift, and in their hearts the certainty that this was a night they'd always remember. Turns out the little girls were right.

Taylor Swift -- and her cast of back-up musicians, dancers, and sumptuous stage sets -- performed a visually stunning two-hour show that was part Broadway musical, part Cirque de Soleil, and just enough country to make her eligible for the five [CMA](#) awards for which she was nominated Tuesday.

After energetic opening sets from [Josh Kelley](#) and the talented pop band [Need To Breathe](#), the burgundy vintage movie theater-style curtain opened. The lights went down. And the audience shrieking began.

Emerging from the floor of the stage in a gold spangly dress and knee-high black boots, Swift launched the show with her latest hit "Sparks Fly" – and indeed they did, with a shower of fireworks raining down behind her. She followed with "Mine" and "The Story of Us," and then it was time for the first of eight costume changes. And more shrieking.

Wearing a lacey pastel shift, hair in a messy braid, Swift literally popped onstage for her next numbers, including the sweet "Our Song" and cheeky "Mean," performed with her band jamming away on a full-sized front porch.

When snow fell from the arena sky, everyone knew it was time for "Back to December," which Swift sang seated at a piano under an ornate, 10-foot-high bridge. But that was nothing compared to the set for "Speak Now." It featured a towering cathedral interior, complete with video arches, stained glass windows and a bride in full white splendor.

And after every other song, there was the now-famous Taylor Swift Pose of Awe. Wide-eyed, the singer looks around whatever stadium she's in, seemingly overwhelmed by the love of her fans. While no doubt she is genuinely touched by their passion and grateful for how they've blessed her, Swift might consider giving this bit of theatricality -- as well as the incessant hair swinging -- a rest.

What she does amazingly well, however, is work hard to make sure that even if you're seated in the upper 300s, you have a memorable moment. As she made her way from the main stage to a neon tree mini-stage at the back of the arena, she stopped to hug as many people as she could through the ring of security guards.

Accompanying herself on ukulele and then guitar, Swift sang acoustic versions of "Fearless," "Last Kiss," and a cover of "Closer to Love" from Eugene's [Matt Kearney](#).

But the standout song of the evening occurred when Swift returned to the main stage to belt out a surprising choice: "Dear John," the song rumored to have been written about her short fling with singer [John Mayer](#). If the rumors are true, Swift is either still angry about how things went down or she's one heck of an actress.

Another costume and set change. More shrieking. A red leather dress, a ballgown -- Look! A ballerina! -- a blindingly bejeweled guitar, fireworks. It was all pretty incredible, but what's not particularly incredible is Swift's voice. Certainly she can

carry a tune, but in tone she ranges from breathy verbalization to girlish shouting. It hardly matters, however; given the quality of her songwriting, top-notch performing skills and angelic good looks, it's easy to see why Swift is so popular. Her show was a sensational experience that ended with a shower of glittering gold confetti as she went flying around the arena in a portable balcony.

Sadly, Swift omitted her Grammy-winning ballad "White Horse," and "Tim McGraw" -- the tune that made her a star. But the Wamsley sisters were still thrilled.

"That was a lot of hair flipping," said Sara Grace.

"It was amazing," said Emma.

Yep, the little girls were right.