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# Review + Photos: Green Day at the Oakland Coliseum

By Kaiya Gordon | August 7, 2017 | 1 Comment




*Green Day (photo: SarahJayn Kemp)*

Two years ago, I injured my knee screaming "Basket Case" at a karaoke party. The lingering injury is just one of countless ways **Green Day** has impacted me throughout the years; many of my most memorable elementary and middle school moments can be conjured by the opening notes of a Green Day song, and their music has threaded myself and my childhood friends together, even as we live our adult lives.

I'm not going to lie to you and say that I grew up at 924 Gilman, or that I saw Green Day before they were cool. First, Green Day has always been cool; second, I was born the same year that *Dookie*, the band's breakthrough album, was released. Were I a truly punk fetus, perhaps I would have slid out of the womb crying "Welcome to paradise"! I didn't. But my position as a small child growing up in the Bay Area has forever endeared Green Day to me, so much so that I've often laced my interest in the band into my author bios and artists statements. "Kaiya is a writer and poet from the San Francisco Bay Area," I tell the world. "After graduating from school in Portland, Oregon, Kaiya returned to the Bay Area to scream Green Day lyrics and re-commit to learning about art and community."

At Oakland Coliseum on Saturday night, Green Day played to a full spectrum of fans — locals who've been with the band since the beginning, kids who grew up listening to *American Idiot* (and maybe even watching the musical), and casual listeners flocking to the Coliseum just to see the spectacle. It was a spectacle — the band was accompanied by fireworks, sparklers, and a saxophonist — and it was really goddamn fun. In Oakland, surrounded by die-hards and hometown friends, Green Day could have sliced vegetables and had the support of the crowd. Instead, they played an energetic and affecting set, pulling from all eras of their career.

The band also heavily involved the crowd in the set, repeatedly asking fans to sing lyrics, and even to get onstage. During "Longview," frontman Billie Joe Armstrong asked for a volunteer to sing vocals. "Do you really know the lyrics?" he asked to one such volunteer, before pulling away abruptly. "No," he yelled, "you don't get to fucking play my guitar!"

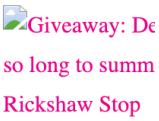
The vocalist Armstrong eventually chose to pull onstage killed it, singing and dancing with abandon. As the last notes faded out, Armstrong quietly instructed the crowd — and the chosen vocalist flung themself forward, swan diving into a sea of open arms.

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Later, somebody *did* get to play Armstrong's "fucking guitar," an 18-year-old with a choppy green haircut and messed up Doc Martens who shredded on "Welcome to Paradise." After the song was over, Armstrong instructed the teen to introduce themself — "Maddie" — to the frenzied crowd, then leaned over the kid to take the microphone back. "Well," he announced to cheers, "how about Maddie gets to keep that guitar?"

That both of these audience members joined the stage on songs from *Dookie* was representative of the night — Green Day wasn't afraid to play songs from earlier releases, including a song, "2,000 Light Years Away," released before the band grew out of its DIY crowds in Berkeley. "This song is dedicated to everyone we met or became friends with at 924 Gilman," Armstrong announced before launching into the song. Later, the band reiterated their Bay Area roots. "Thank you to the Oakland Athletics," Armstrong said. "Thank you to our hometown — this is our hometown. And thank you for the last 30 years of being in Green Day."

That the audience members Armstrong chose to bring onstage were both young and femme-presenting also felt representative — not of the night, maybe, but of the East Bay's thriving contemporary punk scene, which is stacked with talented women and femme folks, many of them Black, brown, disabled, or queer. The same weekend as Green Day's huge show in Oakland, Black and brown punk festival "The Universe is Lit" was highlighting local talent in DIY-organized showcases.

During an elongated cover mash-up of "Twist and Shout," "Always Look on the Bright Side of Life," "(I Can't Get No) Satisfaction," and "Hey Jude," Armstrong spoke about his admiration for the Bay Area's ability to "come together."
"You get to this point where you just [feel] so sick...and sometimes you want to bring it together, not just a normal crowd, but a gathering," Armstrong said. "Because that's what the Bay Area has always been about, about people coming together. From the hippies in the '60s, to the punks right now, to the very knowledgeable millennials," Amrstrong laughed. He finished: "What I expect out of our America is some equality...that's right, this is revolution, baby!"

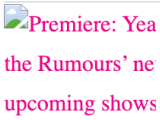
Do I think that Green Day is "revolutionary"? No. And there were some moments during the show that gave me pause. During "King For A Day," some of the band wore costumes that read, from afar, as a Dia De Los Muertos mask and a sarcophagus-style headdress. It felt unsettling to me to see the members wear these outfits without any vocalized acknowledgement of the cultures they were impersonating. It also felt unsettling to hear Armstrong continue to use slurs in songs like "American Idiot" and "Jesus of Suburbia," without any real recognition of the communities — queer and disabled folks, for the most part — that those slurs impact.

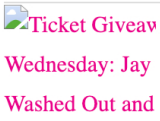
But honestly, I didn't go to the Green Day show expecting a revolutionary band. I expected raucous renditions of songs that have grown to mean much to me over the years, and I did get that. I expected to tear up a bit at the small children singing to Green Day alongside their parents, and I got that too. I also got some incredible moves by drummer Tre Cool, some moving bass riffs by Mike Dirnt, and a hell of a performance by Billie Joe Armstrong. And it bears repeating — I got fireworks.

"Tonight I don't give a shit what the curfew says, because we're going to play all night long!" Armstrong shouted at one point during the show. And while the show did eventually end, Green Day's impact on me remains: my knee, freshly re-tweaked, groans the lyrics to "Basket Case" to me with every step. And as the last notes of Armstrong's acoustic rendition to "Good Riddance" wafted in the air, and the confetti cannons burst color onto the field, I felt buoyant, and a bit weepy — the impact of listening to well-played music in a well-placed crowd.



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## About the Author: Kaiya Gordon



Kaiya Gordon is a writer and poet from the SF peninsula. Kaiya believes that impact is more important than intent, and is not interested in listening to your normcore noise band. Follow them on twitter @ayobaio

## One Comment



**Andrew** August 7, 2017 at 11:49 pm - Reply

I think Maddie, the guitarist from the audience, joined for a cover of Operation Ivy's Knowledge, not GD's Welcome to Paradise. Then again, all I know is that I don't know nothing.

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