

# Diana Ross concert at Mann does not disappoint

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Diana Ross performed at the Mann Center on Wednesday, June 25. — FILE PHOTO

As a baby boomer who grew up idolizing the Supremes, I went to Diana Ross' recent concert at the Mann Center expecting to be dazzled, and "The Boss" did not disappoint.

Rocking a frothy turquoise creation, Ross began her sizzling show with the triumphant and joyous Nile Rodgers/Bernard Edwards composition, "I'm Coming Out," which has become a signature song for Ross over the years. This was followed by "More Today than Yesterday," originally recorded by Spiral Staircase.

Ross had very little work to do during the Supremes segment at the beginning of her show, because her diverse and enthusiastic audience of loyal fans sang all of the songs, including background vocals. Memories of the kinder, gentler '60s came flooding back through such hits

as “My World is Empty Without You,” “Baby Love,” “Stop in the Name of Love” and “Can’t Hurry Love.”

As a testament to her “old school” pedigree, Ross performed with live musicians including a rhythm section, a horn section and three background singers — rather than singing (or lip-synching, as is so common today) to a track. She also acknowledged her superb instrumentalists and vocalists by giving them a spotlight and introducing them individually.

When Ross and her amazing band literally exploded into “The Boss,” yet another of her trademark tunes, folks were dancing shamelessly out of control ... “big ups” to the girl wearing the leopard print dress and rocking the huge Afro! For the much-needed “cool-down,” Ross segued into the seductive “Touch Me in the Morning” only to get everyone all pumped up again with the infectious “Upside Down,” followed by the funk-infused “Take Me Higher.”

Just as one would expect from the Divine Ms. Ross, we were treated to a number of wardrobe changes, with each extravagant ensemble accompanied by a dainty matching fan so the songstress could cool herself on the steamy summer night.

A true diva, who earned the title before it became a worn-out, largely undeserved cliché, Ross presented a broad cross-section of her hits, performing songs from each phase of her long and varied career — from the Supremes, through her film career (“The Wiz,” “Mahogany”) to disco (“Love Hangover”) and pop (“Why Do Fools Fall in Love?”). Of course there was a nod to the great Billie Holiday, whom Ross portrayed in “Lady Sings the Blues,” earning an Academy Award nomination in the process. This segment was introduced by a sexy sax solo featuring “The Look of Love.”

After a quick change into outfit number four, a spangly gold creation, the show began to build to a climax with the powerful Ashford & Simpson classic, “Ain’t No Mountain High Enough,” and appropriately, Ross, now clad in a black “power suit,” (outfit number five) ended her highly satisfying show with a rollicking rendition of the Gloria Gaynor anthem, “I Will Survive.”

Now 70 years old, Diana Ross, the consummate entertainer, still performs with the drama, vigor and vocal quality that earned her induction into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1988, along with fellow Supremes Mary Wilson and Florence Ballard. No special effects, no twerking, no pyrotechnics — just pure talent, dedication and a whole lot of dues payin’ on the legendary chitlin’ circuit. It’s called “learning your craft.” Rihanna, Beyoncé ... I hope you’re taking notes.

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