

San Jose Mercury News

ENTERTAINMENT

Review: Kenny Chesney, Jason Aldean delight in inaugural Levi's Stadium show



It's official -- Levi's Stadium is now a concert venue.

The new home of the San Francisco 49ers, which has hosted everything from hockey to wrestling to soccer since opening its doors some nine months ago, held its first-ever live-music event on Saturday.

Over 45,000 fans turned out to witness Kenny Chesney and Jason Aldean -- two of country music's biggest stars -- perform an enjoyable co-headlining show. The concert, which stretched some six hours, also featured a number of opening acts, including the up-and-coming Nashville band Old Dominion.

It was the first of seven concerts announced for the Santa Clara venue. Levi's will also host two Grateful Dead reunion gigs (June 27-28), One Direction (July 11), a pair of Taylor Swift concerts (Aug. 14-15) and Luke Bryan (Aug. 29).

Kenny Chesney performs during a concert at Levi's Stadium in Santa Clara, Calif., on Saturday, May 2, 2015. Levi's Stadium hosted its first live concert as the county music stars Kenny Chesney and Aldean merged their two current tours, "The Big Revival Tour" and "The Burn It Down Tour," to headline the show. (Anda Chu/Bay Area News Group) (ANDA CHU)

In all, Levi's seemed to pass its first test as a concert venue with flying colors. The event seemed well managed, in regard to crowd and traffic issues. The sound was good and the sightlines were better. Plus, it didn't feel crowded or cramped inside, even though the show was sold out.

Of course, it didn't hurt matters one iota that most fans just seemed so happy to be there. And why wouldn't they be? They were getting to see two stadium-sized headliners for one ticket price.

Following the three opening acts, Aldean took the stage and started rocking amid a flurry of fireworks and pyrotechnics. Wearing his cowboy hat pulled down fairly low, the 38-year-old Georgia native crooned with purpose through such favorites as "Hicktown," "My Kinda Party" and "Tattoos on this Town."

Aldean might not have the same name recognition as Chesney outside of the country music realm. Yet, he's an absolute juggernaut instead the genre, having watched all six of his studio albums -- including the recent "Old Boots, New Dirt" - reach platinum (or better) sales figures.

There was a bit of a hard-rock/metal edge to the music, which could be heard in the spiraling electric guitar solos and felt in so many other ways. Aldean brought such attitude and thunder to his songs, making the fireworks and pyrotechnics that returned once again at the end of the set feel all that more redundant.

Jason Aldean performs during a concert at Levi's Stadium in Santa Clara, Calif., on Saturday, May 2, 2015. Levi's Stadium hosts its first live concert as county music stars Kenny Chesney and Jason Aldean merge their two current tours, "The Big Revival Tour," and "The Burn It Down Tour," to headline the show. (Anda Chu/Bay Area News Group) (ANDA CHU)

Kenny Chesney was even stronger once he made his grand entrance, sailing over the heads of fans in a small vessel attached to a wire, on his way to the stage.

He looked familiar -- wearing his cowboy hat, boots, jeans and sleeveless shirt -- as he led his top-notch band through one sunny/sudsy number after another ("Drink It Up," "Beer in Mexico," "Keg in the Closet," etc.).

The 47-year-old Tennessean was in constant motion during the 20-plus song set, exhibiting an amazing amount of energy as he raced back and forth about the big stage.

There wasn't much in the way of special effects -- just some big video screens that were used to show beautiful beach scenery, shots of singer's smash rum business (Blue Chair Bay) and other evidence of just how much fun it is to be Kenny Chesney.

Chesney closed his main set with (appropriately enough for the setting) the football-themed "The Boys of Fall." He'd then return with Aldean for an encore, capping off the first-ever concert at Levi's Stadium with some memorable duets.