

SOUNDS LIKE NASHVILLE

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A Day On the Road With Rascal Flatts



LAURA HOSTELLEY • SEPTEMBER 20, 2016 - 2:16 PM



Photo by Todd Owyong

There are worse ways to spend a Saturday than being on tour with award winning country group, Rascal Flatts. And thanks to the band's generosity, Sounds Like Nashville can tell you that from personal experience.

Rascal Flatts played their last night of the Rhythm and Roots tour with openers Kelsea Ballerini and Chris Lane Saturday evening (Sep. 17). To celebrate a summer full of good company with even better music and the announcement of a pending Christmas album, the “I Like the Sound of That” singers decked the halls of a full-size tour bus with holiday decorations, plus the new record, and invited Nashville media to come out to the show in Indianapolis to get a glimpse of all the fun they’ve been having.

The Flatts could be considered masters of the road, especially since they’ve been doing it since 1999. Their years of practice was obvious during Saturday night’s set as they commanded the stage from the first song all the way to the end of the encore. Gary LeVox, Jay DeMarcus and Joe Don Rooney entertained everyone, from those in the front all the way to the lawn seats.

The award-winning group has enjoyed their time on the road with Lane and Ballerini and even passed along some road knowledge to the newcomers.

“We’ve given them lots of advice. What we told them was something that was told to us a long time ago: Every night when you hit the stage, your only goal should be to go out there and try to steal every single fan that’s out there and that’s it,” LeVox shared. “We hate that this tour is ending, it’s been an incredible summer.”

Back on stage, the men looked like three best friends having the time of their life while playing music. That energy transferred into the rest of their show with the shared laughs, obvious talent and a few entertainment tactics.

The dialogue between the songs was hilarious and added to the flare of the show. Some highlights included ragging on fans who only stood up when they thought there was about to be a cover of “Don’t Stop Believing” and DeMarcus announcing his plans to run for president (In his defense, he might not be the worst option!).

In honor of the tour’s final show as a summer family, the sets were littered with pranks. During Bellerini’s set, Lane and his crew bombarded the stage clad in Peter Pan costumes, appropriately while she was singing the ballad of the same name. And just because Rascal Flatts were the headliners doesn’t mean they were safe from their openers antics.

During Flatts’ performance of “Life is a Highway” Lane and Bellerini took it upon themselves to make a cameo appearance on stage, riding on in toy cars. And later on in the set during “Fast Cars and Freedom,” Lane found it the perfect time to throw the football on stage and play a friendly game of cornhole. Everybody had a good laugh and the camaraderie and respect between all the acts was evident.

Rascal Flatts’ set was filled with songs from their impressive catalogue you would expect including “What Hurts the Most,” “Bless the Broken Road,” “Summer Nights” and “Mayberry.” To keep the show lively, the boys did a medley of their songs with slower tempos including “I Melt” and “Come Wake Me Up.” They also did a Prince tribute by doing a rendition of the classic, “Purple Rain.” It would be impossible for the Flatts to play all of their hits since they have so many. Some that were noticeably left off the set list were “I’m Moving On,” “Take Me There” and “Easy.”

The encore of the show, "Me and My Gang," brought Ballerini and Lane back on stage for them all to sing together. It was an appropriate ending for a memorable night. The looks on all of the performer's faces matched the energy of the crowd, where once again, music brought a group of strangers together, even if only for a two hour set.