

Grand Rapids audience swoons as Brandi Carlile comes courting

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"I've never seen it like this," said my friend Beth, as we drove past a line that snaked its way three blocks up Grandville Street in front of The Intersection Lounge in Grand Rapids.

The sold-out show even seemed to stun Brandi Carlile who chuckled when she surveyed the cheering audience of 800.

"I can hardly believe my eyes, Grand Rapids," she said with a laugh. "Who knew?"

After the cheers faded, she added, "This kind of reception is really exciting, thank you."

The enthusiastic, often-times worshipful, crowd was a mix of men and women, straight and gay, middle-age and college-age. And judging from those who raised their hands when Carlile asked how many had come from Ann Arbor, a big part of the crowd was from out of town.

From the moment she began with "Oh Dear" which was sung A capella with her band gathered around her, Carlile captivated the loud, slightly boozy, crowd. Calling to mind other singers with memorable voices such as k.d. lang and Freddie Mercury, she ambled through the 15-song, 90-minute set that included selections from all three of her albums and a few covers.

One of the most memorable parts of the evening came early on the in the show when Carlile announced she'd like to try something a little different.

"I'd like to play you a song completely unplugged and then we'll commence to rocking," she said.

Carlile, and twins Phil and Tim Hanseroth harmonized for "Dying Day" a song many critics have



[Brandi Carlile performs in Grand Rapids.](#)
[Photo by Kathy Kratz.](#)

[2]

called the best on Carlile's new album "Give Up the Ghost."

After pockets of shushing rolled through the crowd, the somewhat noisy audience calmed to a low hum while the three sang. Carlile's voice was clear and strong and warm. She stood at the stage's edge, and for most of the song, clasped her hands behind her back looking like an earnest 10-year-old at a talent show.

"I can't believe that worked," she said as she ended it. "You guys are amazing." I couldn't find a video of the Grand Rapids show, but [here](#) [3] it is at another concert.

Another favorite was "Caroline" a song she wrote for her 2-and-half-year-old niece. On the CD she sings it as a duet with Sir Elton John. Carlile said she had just added the song to her touring repertoire because she had found an arrangement that worked with the Hanseroth's providing the "big beautiful Queen harmonies," she said.

Near the end, Carlile admitted she had snuck out before her set started to hear part of opening act Miranda Lambert's set at the Brad Paisely concert just up the street at the VanAndel Arena. She spoke admiringly of the singers and the audience they drew.

"I understand the redneck vibe. This is for those guys," she said as she played the opening lines of "Jackson," by Johnny Cash and June Carter Cash, just before ripping into Cash's "Folsom Prison Blues."

"This must be a great show," she said. "You guys made my fingers bleed."

I have to agree, I was a *great* show.

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