

PLAYTESTING THE REVAMPED COLOSSEUM AT CAESARS PALACE

C. MOON REED TUE, SEP 10, 2019 (2:44 P.M.)



Keith Urban plays the Colosseum

Photo: Denise Truscello

The Colosseum at Caesars Palace has long been a premier musical destination. So it's a big deal that the venue, which is most famous for hosting resident performers such as Celine Dion, Elton John and Cher, just emerged from renovations.

Montreal-based **Scéno Plus** designed the original Colosseum and returned 16 years later to upgrade its creation. Technology advanced in that time, so the

new Colosseum benefits from innovations in sight and sound that just weren't available in the early 2000s. A representative of the casino said that while specific renovation costs are not being disclosed, "It was significant."

How do the updates play out in real life? I attended the September 7 Keith Urban performance to find out for myself.

DECOR & SEATING: The red carpet is so new and plush, fibers shift under your feet as you walk. The seats have some outstanding lumbar support—who thought seeing a concert could be good for your back? But two new experiences highlight the changes: a standing, general admission section and up to 163 VIP seats.

An automated lift system allows for various seating configurations. Max capacity is 4,470, with 380 guests in GA and the rest seated. Even though the GA comprises a small percentage of the total audience, it did seem to energize the room and make it more dynamic. It felt like everybody was standing more often, perhaps feeding off those in GA.

SOUNDSYSTEM: The sound is crystalline clear, especially noticeable during acoustic guitar numbers. It's my advice for every concert, but bring earplugs. That crystal-clear sound can still be loud.

VIDEO & LIGHTS: Measuring 110-feet-by-43-feet, the 4K LED wall is a show in and of itself. It made the concert feel like a live-action music video playing on an IMAX screen. With 12.3 million pixels and 281 trillion colors, the picture is so sharp you could almost see Keith Urban's five o'clock shadow growing in over the course

of the evening. Or you could analyze the sway of the guitar string during a finger-picking solo. Moving light fixtures further elevated the vibe, adding a state-of-the-art light show to the music.

EXTRAS: Perhaps most importantly, the lobby bar and merch areas have been reworked for better flow and faster service. Because you can't enjoy the great acoustics if you're in the lobby waiting on a beverage.

OVERALL EXPERIENCE: With no viewer more than 145 feet from the stage, the new Colosseum feels intimate ... with the power of an arena show. It's now more of a blast-your-face-off concert experience than a fancy sit-down affair. It will work well for the scheduled lineup, which includes Rod Stewart, Journey, Guns N' Roses, Madonna, Mariah Carey and Sting. Fortunately for a lover of nostalgia like myself, the changes have not diminished the Classic Vegas allure of the Colosseum. The overall look remains the same, just nicer.

Toward the end of the show, Urban told the audience "I hope you had a great time at Caesars Palace." Then he ended with a note about the future, which could apply to all the shows at the Colosseum: "It might be a sign of things to come in 2020. Who knows?"