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"I'M A ROCK CHICK": RINA SAWAYAMA LIVE FOR BRITS WEEK

+ WAR CHILD

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11:11 13TH FEBRUARY 2023



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Rina Sawayama has become a pop powerhouse in record time. It's easy to see why, when she effortlessly transcends genres, breaks barriers and has transformed the UK music awards landscape. She's becoming renowned for her high-energy, immaculately choreographed live shows- no exaggeration to say that she's one of the best pop stars in the UK in a long time.

For a show at London's Lafayette, as part of BRITs Week Presented by Mastercard for War Child, Sawayama stripped back, bringing along herself, three denim-clad musicians and a toy cat with a piece of toast wrapped around its head won during a recent tour in Japan.

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Opening with the title track of her last record, 'Hold The Girl', Sawayama comfortably country-fies it. The track takes on a new life, a complete 180 from the brash beats and heavy production it was known for.

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Sawayama continues into 'Catch Me In The Air' and 'Hurricanes', quickly finding her footing in these folky renditions. Both tracks allow Sawayama's massive vocals a moment to shine in restraint. She makes it seem effortless, delicately sitting on a stool whilst draped in an incredible denim look. Even when she fumbles some lyrics and the audience catches on, she giggles her way through it with her fans at the front.

Whilst her stellar performances are the main attraction of this part of this intimate night, the informal setting allows her personality to shine. The vibe isn't dissimilar to friends gathered around a campfire, singing their favourite songs together. It just happens to be that one of those friends is a world-famous singer/songwriter.

Sawayama's big hits feel just as encompassing and engaging as long as she has her moment to shine and belt out her vocals. Hits like 'STFU', 'XS' and 'Cherry' hit differently, but just as sweetly.

Sawayama is a natural comedian and gets the humour of her fans, constantly chatting back and firing back with quick quips instantaneously. It should come as no surprise that she chooses to cover a song by Dolly Parton, whose wit and wisdom Sawayama embodies. She chooses a deeply personal Dolly hit that she believes no one in the audience will know, 'My Tennessee Mountain Home'.



This follows from covers of Shania Twain, Avril Lavigne (introduced by Sawayama quoting Lavigne's now infamous 'I'm a rock chick' interview) and Brandi Carlisle, the latter of which was feigned as a request from the audience in another moment that gives those in attendance a sneak peek into her bubbly personality.

She talks in reverence of these artists, how much they mean to her, how they shaped who she has become and the music she creates. At this moment it's apparent that she's on her way to standing in the same stead as them. She's unafraid to reference, quote and speak in awe of them, maybe without realising she's about to become as much of a blueprint for success as they have.

Sawayama slows the night down with two intimately devastating tracks, 'Chosen Family' and 'Send My Love to John'. Both tracks are adored by the queer community, the former expressing Sawayama's experience finding her own queer family and home when deciphering her own sexuality and not feeling accepted at home, the latter putting her in the perspective of the struggling parent trying to understand the child's experience whilst accepting it's not what they would have chosen themselves. It's heartbreakingly beautiful, and as Sawayama puts it, is the 'apology from your parents that you'll never get'.

Finishing with 'This Hell', she laughs that it's like being in the pub hearing the crowd chant the lyrics back with such force. It's a tiny place, but she has it feeling like you're at a packed-out stadium gig, yet only surrounded by close friends. It's surreal how she can curate an atmosphere as easily as a playlist.

Sawayama is as much at home with a stool and a Stetson as she is backed with curated visuals, custom outfits and backing dancers. Her talent is undeniable, and her ability to take risks in her sound and performances, bundled with her absolutely magnetic charisma proves Sawayama, yet again, to be a powerhouse.

Of course, she's heckled non-stop about rumours of a Eurovision performance, which she coyly bats away all night. Either she's unable to deny her entry, or she's loving this opportunity to lean into the chaos. No matter whether she's in Liverpool or not, her meteoric rise to the top shows no sign of stopping.

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