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The more things change, the more Cher stays the same. She began her concert with her signature opener, U2's 'I Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For.'

Turning Back Time

'We're gonna get wild tonight,' Cher told 17,000 fans at Madison Square Garden Wednesday evening. Funny, our reviewer's parents got wild with her 30 years ago. In pop culture, apparently, the only constant is Cher

By B. J. Sigesmund
NEWSWEEK WEB EXCLUSIVE

June 27 — It was a hot summer night in the city. They had been looking forward to the show for weeks. After all, tickets had been hard to come by, and had sold out long ago.

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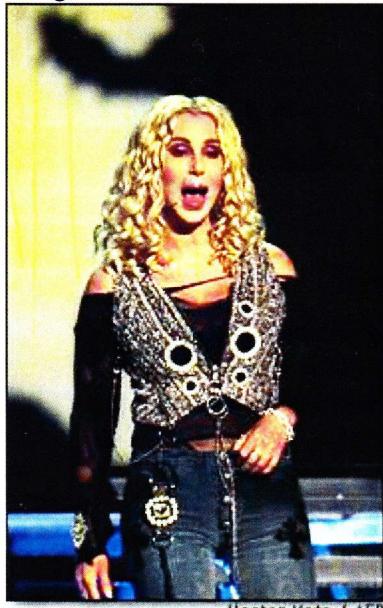
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A COUPLE HOURS before the event, they met up with some friends and had a round of drinks to get things started. The group—the women, especially—couldn't wait to get to the show. They needed to see the singer in person. The one who broke boundaries. The one with the wild, out-there style. The one who did her own thing: Cher.

While Cher didn't dance as much as she has in the past, she delivered her songs with characteristic warmth and energy



But no, this wasn't Wednesday night of this week in New York City. Nor was it last weekend in Philadelphia or a few days prior to that in Cleveland, some of the first stops on Cher's new tour. Nope. This was actually an evening back in 1970—and I'm talking about ... my parents. Yep, dear old Mom and Dad. That evening, those hip young things went to see Cher (and that other guy) perform at The

Cave, a popular theater-restaurant at the time in Vancouver, Canada. "I remember thinking how fabulous she was," my mother said this morning. "Her clothes were just unbelievable and she was so tall and skinny and gorgeous, and so funny, too."

The more things change, the more Cher stays the same. Thirty-two years ago, my parents went with a pack of friends to see slinky, sexy Cher sing, dance and make fun of poor Sonny. This week, I journeyed with a posse of eight (five guys, three women) to Madison

The program has images of Cher from her nearly 40 years in the public eye

Square Garden to see slinky, sexy Cher sing, dance and make fun of herself. "The bitch is tired and old," Cher joked with the 17,000-strong audience at the beginning of the night.



Of course, as everyone knows, the 56-year-old doesn't exactly age much. Looking fit and flawless as ever, she introduced the concert as "the Cherest Show on Earth," and really, who else's could it be? At the beginning of "All Or Nothing," she rode in on a fake elephant. We lost track of the costume changes—and we were counting. Throughout the

show, her dancers hung from trapeze rods and spun down drapes. Most impressive of all, the singer managed to establish a personal rapport with the audience, which is tough in a venue that large. At one point, someone in the crowd threw a sailor cap on to the stage; she put it on and danced around, all charm.

While Cher didn't quite move as much as she has in concerts in the past, she delivered her hits with characteristic warmth and energy. Four decades of music, and all the songs basically come down to finding love ("I Got You Babe," "I Found Someone") or getting over love once you've lost it ("Strong Enough," "Believe"). Still, Cher found new ways to deliver her set, effortlessly melding old and new. She even created a space for the smash tunes of the '60s and '70s—"Dark Lady," "Half-Breed" and "Gypsies, Tramps and Thieves"—turning them into a medley for the old-timers without boring those too young to have watched Sonny and Cher in prime time.

The Cher experience has always been about appreciating the incredible body, the wild hair and the outrageous clothing choices



Speaking of which, the show was stuffed with vintage TV clips and scenes from her videos, all of which ran in a streaming fashion on the big-screen TVs. (Guess it's not enough anymore to have the actual *star* in front of you; these days, you've also got to have his or her videos on display

high above—maybe in case you forgot why you paid \$100 for a ticket in the first place?) At one point, Cher's 1989 video "If I Could Turn Back Time"—notorious for her buttocks-bearing outfit—ran on the big-screen, and Cher appeared onstage wearing the very same get-up. Other clips included segments from her old variety show, scenes from her movies, even her TV appearances—including her recent ABC interview with Cynthia McFadden in which she asserted once and for all that "I've never even *thought* about having any ribs taken out." The best clip: seeing she and Sonny sing "I Got You Babe" on their show, and then again years later when David Letterman reunited them. The cheesiest: A scene of herself winning the best-actress Oscar for "Moonstruck."

As you'll recall, Bob Mackie designed her dress for that year's Academy Awards, as he did all the costumes on this tour. What can I say about the clothes? The Cher experience has always been about appreciating the incredible body, the wild hair and the saucy sartorial choices. After all, what did my father—a red-blooded (Canadian) male—remember most of the show he saw a generation ago? Her wardrobe! "Cher had this reputation of always wearing pants (usually jeans) day and night. Who could imagine a girl only wearing pants?" he e-mailed me today. "So seeing her wearing these beautiful white pants with high heels was smashing in itself." Which outfit will I remember most from Wednesday night? Ask me in about 30 years.



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