



San Diego Crasher

PARTY CRASHER: Jewel Trumps Carrie Bradshaw

CD release party beats out Sex and the City fete

By Josh Board

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I hit two events downtown a few weeks back.

One was a reception for the opening of *Sex and the City 2*. There were hors d'oeuvres and drinks, and lots of belly dancers.



Jewel's CD Release Party was a hit.

Courtesy photo

My girlfriend and I glanced at the three trays of appetizers and the long line to get to them, and decided to grab some food at the Fridays next to the theater.

When we walked back in, there was no line for the hors d'oeuvres. And none left.

They had what I thought was champagne in plastic glasses that said *Sex and the City 2*. Many of the women were keeping them as souvenirs. It turned out they were filled with a sparkling tea that was pretty good.

I bought a popcorn and we went in to watch what was one of the most disappointing films I've seen all year.

I'm glad the other event we went to downtown rocked. Literally.

Jewel was doing a CD release, and it was being played live all around the world. It cost \$50 to get in (which included the new CD autographed); but hey, I'm the Party Crasher. I found a way in for free.

It was at the University Club on the 34th floor of Copley Symphony Hall.

I arrived at 6 p.m., just in time for free parking downtown (note to self: stop using the word "free" in stories, or people will think you're a cheapskate).

The University Club is a private club with a strict dress code. I wore a jacket, and was surprised I saw a few people in jeans. I'm guessing for this event, they were more casual about the rules.

The opening band was Steel Magnolias, and from down the hallway, you would swear live music was going on. The sound system was incredible.

When they said "This is going to be our last song," I wondered if the crowd was relieved, as they were obviously there to see Jewel. When the singer said, "This song is called 'Keep on Lovin' You'," he laughed. I did too, thinking of the REO Speedwagon song.

There were two speakers near the big screen, and two more set up half-way down the room. There wasn't a bad seat in the house.

There was a great selection of fancy foods set out; crab cakes, square things that I can't even begin to describe (they were surprisingly delicious); but since I have the palate of a 10-year-old, I didn't get to adventurous. I stuck with the sliders and a glass of wine (that was \$10; the Diet Coke I got later was free...whoops, I can't control it!).

The device they gave you to "communicate" with Jewel scared me. It looked like a calculator, but instead of regular numbers, it had things like 1/A, 2/B, Ch, O/J...it was looking like we were going to decide the OJ Simpson verdict, not help pick her set list.

Jewel seemed comfortable, as the host of the event talked with her about the new CD, and she asked us to pick which song she'd open with, and a few minutes later I voted for *Who Will Save Your Soul* over *Yodel*, to close the show.

There was a trivia contesting using the device, and the older crowd seemed surprisingly into it. I was glancing around at the great view of the city, and the Coronado Bridge.

I was shocked to see the selections for the "first coffee house Jewel performed at" didn't have *Java Joe's* as an answer. That was always the story I heard.

There was only one kid at the event, who looked to be around 7. Her mom baffled me, as she stood over the table the food was set at, and throwing things into her mouth. I was tempted to say, "Try using a plate and taking some of that back to your seat."

When cookies were put out later, the kid ran over to grab one.

The trivia contest ended and a woman in North Carolina won. It was cute to hear such an enthusiastic fan, talking about the concerts she's been to in the mid-90s, and how she's one of Jewel's "Everyday Angels" (which Jewel explained was what her fans were called). I remember my days working in radio, when we had winners get U2 tickets or win a new car, and they'd sound like they could care less. It didn't make for the most exciting calls on the air.

Jewel drew an angel on the iPad this woman won, and autographed it to her. Nothing funnier than hearing the fan quickly throw out a song request, and a surprised Jewel having to say "I don't know if I'll have time to do that, but I'll try."

With moments like this, I have no doubt this style of CD release can be very big in the future.

Jewel then walked over to three outfits, and we were allowed to vote on which one she would wear. I thought that was a tad silly, and also thought -- this would've been *huge* at the *Sex and the City* screening.

Some people in the crowd applauded after songs, but most didn't. It was kind of like how laugh tracks work on sitcoms. Since Jewel was performing for a studio audience, they would naturally applaud after songs. This, in turn, made some in our crowd applaud as well.

A guy was bringing around Mai Tai shooters, saying to everyone at the various tables, "Yes, they're free. Just because."

Of course, that's all I needed to hear. I grabbed one when he came over with the tray.

The first song Jewel performed was beautiful. I loved when she hit the high notes, but she did a bizarre sounding thing when she went low.

Everyone's heard the story of Jewel living in a car in San Diego while trying to make it. What I hadn't heard was the story she told about writing the hit *Hands*. She had a job out here answering phones in a warehouse, and her boss propositioned her. She turned him down, didn't get paid and lost her apartment. This led to her stealing carrots to eat, and as she explained, "Those must be the gateway vegetable, because I started stealing apples, peanut butter, and eventually a sun dress."

During 9/11, she was camping with her husband, and when she came down from the mountains, they saw flags at half-mast. The first DJ they tuned in, talked about the World Trade Centers and dedicated the song *Hands* to America. Talk about a powerful opening.

I left after a few songs, because I had a movie preview I had to attend. The crowd was having a good time, and I get the feeling this is the way artists will start releasing discs in the future. It beats listening parties at a tiny record store, and as Velocity Broadcasting CEO Philip Elias told me in an interview a few days prior to the event, "I was 10-years-old in 1965, and I remember buying a 45, vinyl record with an A side and a B side. You'd fall in love with the A side, and flip it over and discover the B side after you ruined the A side. You'd move into LPs, and enjoy the whole body of work the artist did. That would include the large album covers, liner notes...it was all very cultural. The record industry took off, artists made good money, labels did, too. The Rolling Stones, Madonna, groups became iconic. Now, it's hard for an artist to become socially deep. Teenagers download one song, and it becomes a one-hit wonder to them. They get tired of it and ditch it."

My 13-year-old will dump 3,000 songs, and has nothing to show for it. I think autographed CDs are like baseball cards, and they are collectable, and will be valuable down the road. And us charging \$7.50, which is our cost, gets the product out there and makes the fans very happy.”

That’s true.

(Want to invite Josh Board to crash your party? Drop him a line at josh@sandiego.com.)