



It was like finding a mix tape from 25 years ago.

A half-dozen classic hip hop and R&B acts from the early 1990s came to Wings Stadium for the first “I Love The 90s” show of the year in west Michigan May 26.

Technical issues slowed the early part of the concert, but soon Young MC was on stage, finishing his brief set with his big hit, “Bust A Move,” stretching it out with a call-and-response bridge in the song. Another “fun time” rapper, Tone Loc, went one better and brought about two dozen women on stage to dance during “Funky Cold Medina,” which closed out his part of the show. He didn’t forget his other hit single, though; “Wild Thing” stirred the crowd up after a pause of about 15 minutes as crew moved around in the back of the stage. A hype man got the audience back on track as Tone Loc strolled out to about a hundred or more people in the pit area just in front of the stage.

As Tone Loc said his goodbyes, the show kept rolling. Lyrically, the show took a more serious turn with the next artist, Coolio. The rapper, known for his wild braids (and his hit songs, too) still had them — or at least two, sticking out of the top of his baseball cap like pigtails. His medley of songs, like his own “1, 2, 3, 4 (Sumpin’ New)” and “Fantastic Voyage” was a preview of the second half of the concert. Coolio ended his performance with the song everyone had been waiting to hear from him, the No. 1 hit from 1995, “Gangsta’s Paradise.” Unlike the music video, Coolio’s time on stage didn’t include a cameo from Michelle Pfeiffer. Instead, the lights went down and the crowd joined in, singing along in unison to the chorus.

The second half of the “I Love The 90s” show brought groups to the stage, starting with Color Me Badd. The current group, a quartet at the time of their blockbuster 1991 album C.M.B., is now a trio, but their vocals remained tight as they performed their chart-topping hits back-to-back: “I Adore Mi Amor,” “All 4 Love,” and “I Wanna Sex You Up.” Tone Loc’s music videos had played behind his live performance earlier in the show, but it was during Color Me Badd’s time on stage when audiences could see what was in style in 1991, at least for young, new jack swing pop bands on MTV.

In the early 1990s, it was easy to mistake Color Me Badd with the group that followed them in the “I Love

The 90s” concert: All-4-One. Even 20 years later, the group still features the same four singers that made “I Swear” and “I Can Love You Like That” hits in 1995. They moved around the stage easily, featuring a little of the synchronized dancing familiar to pop and R&B fans. All-4-One touched on other big songs from their repertoire, like their cover of the 1963 song “So Much In Love” and “Someday.” Then All-4-One made up for what was missing: artists of the time period who weren’t part of the concert. They led off with a few verses of “Motownphilly” by Boyz II Men and “This Is How We Do It” by Montell Jordan, among other songs.

Finally came the big stars of the night: Salt-N-Pepa, alongside backup dancers and their DJ, Spinderella. They combined pieces of all the other performers and added their own twist: their music videos from the late 1980s and early 1990s, and a tribute to other artists of that era (a backup dancer imitated Michael Jackson’s moonwalk as Spinderella played “Beat It,” and followed it up with samples from Nirvana’s “Smells Like Teen Spirit” and “Sweet Child O’ Mine” by Guns n’ Roses). They mentioned a 30-year friendship and career as Salt-N-Pepa, and turned to the audience to see who was born in which decade (judging by the screams, most of the crowd were “80s babies,” though there were plenty from the 70s and 90s, and even a few born in the 1960s).

Like everyone in the “I Love The 90s” show, Salt-N-Pepa were there to sing the hits, and they did, from “Let’s Talk About Sex” to “Whatta Man” (which brought a handful of guys on stage to dance) to “Shoop” and “Push It.”

There was no doubt that the audience was there to reminisce — whether they had heard the songs when they were new, or were just fans of classic hip hop — and a variety of experienced performers didn’t fail to deliver exactly what they were looking for.



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