

HOTTEST TICKET

Go Gaga

IRREPRESSIBLE POP ICON LADY GAGA BRINGS HER ARTRAVE TOUR TO BOARDWALK HALL.

BY ALEXANDRA LESHNER

Recognized just as much for her outrageous wardrobe choices as for her soaring vocals, Lady Gaga has been shocking and captivating audiences around the world since she announced her presence in 2008 with the electric club anthem “Just Dance.” The five-time Grammy Award-winning pop music queen, on the heels of releasing her fourth studio album—the buzzed-about, high-concept *Artpop*—is one of the world’s foremost entertainers, with elaborate videos and stage performances making her the premier multimedia artist of her generation. ArtRave: The Artpop Ball tour, Gaga’s much-anticipated return to the stage, hits Atlantic City’s Boardwalk Hall on June 28.

Even though style experts may gawk at her never-before-seen clothing creations and critics are quick to label her pretentious and bizarre, there’s no denying that Gaga has been a game changer in both the fashion and performance spheres.

“If you look at the majority of music videos from other artists today, everybody seems to be taking bits and pieces from her,” says George “Spanky” McCurdy, a Philadelphia native and seasoned drummer now on his third consecutive tour with the singer.

Although a broken hip caused her to cancel many dates on the North American leg of her Born This Way Ball tour in 2013, it was still the second-highest-grossing tour for a female artist worldwide in 2012, and Gaga boasted the second-highest earnings among musicians in 2013. And though the enigmatic diva remains often impenetrably “poker-faced,” McCurdy, who grew up in Philly’s Olney section, paints a different picture altogether. “She is crazy and just very funny,” he says. “A lot of people aren’t always comfortable around her because of who she is, but then she’ll crack a joke and they realize she’s just a regular person. We joke around a lot, but you have to know her [to see that side].”

Gaga’s eccentric, fiercely creative personality has not only influenced her fellow performers, but it is what keeps her “Little Monsters” fan base intrigued and clawing for more. It’s no surprise that working so closely with her is just as fascinating. “[There’s] never a dull moment,” says McCurdy, who has also collaborated with Justin Timberlake and Kanye West. “As far as the shows and tours, she [freestyles] every night, so there’s always a certain part of the show where you’re like, Wow did she really just say or do that? I love that—it keeps you on your toes.”

As for what will differentiate ArtRave from past tours, McCurdy’s lips are tightly sealed: “I can’t share any secrets, but with Gaga, the bar always has to be raised—she’s always 30 steps ahead. Jaws will drop, that’s for sure.” *Boardwalk Hall, 2301 Boardwalk, Atlantic City, 609-348-7000; boardwalkhall.com* **PS**



Lady Gaga’s ArtRave tour marks the performer’s highly anticipated return to the stage.