

# Dan Nailen's Lounge Act: Lucinda Williams at Deer Valley

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DEER VALLEY—While Lucinda Williams is beyond reproach as a songwriter, filling her albums with searing imagery and memorable hooks, her live shows in Utah are historically a bit more hit-or-miss.

Since I became a fan of Williams' roots-rock, I've seen her deliver stirring, hard-to-match concerts full of epic storytelling, and I've seen her offer rant-filled, sloppy gigs that certainly didn't do her talent, or her songs, justice.

Monday night's show at Deer Valley landed somewhere between those two extremes. While Williams certainly came up with ample reminders of why she is considered one of America's finest songwriters, she also led her band into holes of disjointed timing and clunky vocal performances that left some in the audience scratching their heads.

Even so, some of Williams' songs came off as ideal one-off shots of brilliant lyrical wordplay, and several of those examples were on display Monday at a sparsely populated Deer Valley amphitheatre.

Williams opened with two ringers from her acknowledged masterwork, *Car Wheels on a Gravel Road*; opener "2 Kool 2 B 4-Gotten" was a little wobbly, and "Can't Let Go" took up the energy on stage even as Williams struggled to keep up with her band's raucous take on the tune.

From there, Williams bounced around her catalog, touching on her most recent release, *Blessed*, on occasion (like the stellar rocker “Buttercup,” which she labeled the “only bad-boy song on the last album”), and playing some brand-new, yet-to-be-recorded cuts like “Protection,” which featured the very-Lucinda line of “I need protection from the enemy of love.”

As night fell and the Park City night got colder, Williams led her band through occasionally haphazard versions of songs like her excellent “Essence” and a cover of the Allman Brothers’ “It’s Not My Cross to Bear.” “Change the Locks” was a stomping rocker, while “Righteously” gave Williams a chance to inject a little funk into the proceedings, and it came off well.

The set closed with one of Williams’ best songs, “Joy,” and “Honey Bee” from her 2008 *Little Honey* album, before an encore that included Buffalo Springfield’s “For What It’s Worth.”

Much like Williams herself, the show was unpredictable, sometimes thrilling and sometimes sloppy, but definitely worth the effort to check out. I’ve seen her probably a dozen times now, and I’ll be there again the next time, too.