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**WORKING THE CROWD:** Drake, who performed Sunday at the MTV Video Music Awards in L.A., opened his first large-venue tour Monday at the Knight Center in Miami.

## MUSIC REVIEW

# Drake lights up the Knight

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Now that he's a Miamian, it's only appropriate that the most hyped freshman in hip-hop opened his first large-venue tour in the Magic City.

"I just moved to Miami, y'all," Drake told the cheering crowd halfway through his 85-minute set.

The 23-year-old Toronto rapper, singer and former teen star kicked off his Light Dreams & Nightmares Tour with a sold-out, two-night stand at the James L. Knight Center in Miami. It was a spectacle of sight and sound that still managed to highlight Drake's nuanced, introspective songwriting.

Taking the stage Monday to the sounds of 9AM In Dallas, the artist born Aubrey Graham was joined by a DJ, guitarist, drummer, keyboardist and backup singer led by acclaimed bassist Adam Blackstone, who has served as musical director for Kanye West, Jay-Z and

Eminem.

Throughout the night, Drake tackled material from his platinum-selling debut, *Thank Me Later*, as well as tracks from his acclaimed mix tape *So Far Gone*. His songs, many of which are minimalist and reflective, seem like they would be the antithesis of arena music. But the up-and-coming star, with his trademark slouch and deep, robotic voice, kept the crowd on its feet.

Simple lighting rigs and a giant overhead globe provided the perfect backdrop. Somber hues of blue and purple bathed him during *The Resistance* and a sea of green lasers shot into the crowd during an energetic performance of *Unforgettable*. After he dropped to his knees during the melancholy *Fireworks*, the real thing lit up the stage behind him.

The band was dynamic, swinging from quiet, plush pianos to bombastic guitars and snappy drums on *Shut It Down* and *Light Up*. During a cover of *Unthinkable (I'm Ready)*, a

song that Drake wrote for Alicia Keys, he shared a suggestive slow dance on stage with a female fan, kissed her neck, then offered her a new BlackBerry Torch smart phone (all while plugging the tour's sponsor, AT&T).

His loyalty to Young Money Entertainment was on display all night. He asked the crowd to chant "Free Weezy" for record label boss Lil Wayne, who is serving a one-year prison sentence in New York. He performed his verses from Young Money songs *Every Girl* and *Bedrock* as well as *Right Above It*, the first single from Wayne's upcoming album, *I Am Not A Human Being*. And he was joined on stage by Cash Money Records co-founder Birdman for *Money to Blow*.

Drake closed big with straightforward performances of the hits *Best I Ever Had* and *Fancy* and, after asking the crowd if they thought he'd find the woman of his dreams in Miami, launched into a haunting version of the

Kanye West-produced single *Find Your Love*.

Earlier in the night he let prerecorded backing vocals handle the choruses, but on *Find Your Love* he showed that his live singing can match the studio sound. He ended the song with a fiery new rap verse declaring his arrival in the pop world and his departure for the night.

He emerged for an encore under a stage-engulfing cascade of fireworks with his orchestral hit *Over*, which was followed by an extended jam out-ro by his band. Before exiting the stage, he thanked Miami for "one of the best [bleeping] shows I've had in my life."

Young Money label-mate Tyga opened the show with a 30-minute set that included *Roger That* and his new collaboration with singer Chris Brown, *Deuces*. He brought out Miami artist and WEDR 99 Jamz radio personality DJ Khaled for *All I Do Is Win*.