

## Last Night: Gloria Estefan at Seminole Hard Rock

Sunday, Oct. 26 2008 @ 11:20AM



**Gloria Estefan**

**Friday, October 24, 2008**

**Seminole Hard Rock Hotel & Casino, Hollywood**

**Better Than:** The Santiago de Cuba Carnival

Who can pack a crowd of Gringos and Latinos equally in one South Florida concert arena? If you guessed Gloria Estefan, you are right. Step to the head of the class.

Estefan brought the final show of her tour that took her to Europe for summer vacation to the Seminole Hard Rock Hotel and Casino. The evening of her greatest hits and music from her latest CD *90 Millas* was billed as a benefit, in part, for the Education Funds of South Florida.

Anyone who looked at the fine print of their ticket would see that \$2 went to the

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education fund. Tickets, by the way, were priced at \$250, \$175, \$125 and \$95. Sorry, kids.

Benefit or not, Estefan had the fans at the Hard Rock in the palm of her hand, and the hostess was continually gracious for that. "Thank you for sticking with me all these years," she said. She was happy to be home, singing for *la familia y sus amigos*. The familiarity of South Florida gave the performer comfort after an up and down European tour that was embraced by fans in an outdoor concert in Valencia, where she greeted a crowd of 50,000 for the kick off in August and slogged through a torrential rainstorm, but saw a smaller crowd at London's Wembley in September; a reviewer from the *London Times* said the stadium was "half sold at best."

On Friday night, the swelling Hard Rock crowd grew restless waiting for the 8 p.m. start time as the clock ticked and ticked. However, piped-in, pre-music gave way to an impromptu letter formation to the Village People's YMCA by the floor crowd, and provided entertainment for at least a few minutes.

When she arrived 40 minutes late, Estefan, in a bright red full-length flamenco-type skirt with a Western jacket top, performed nothing short of a Gloriafest, a two-hour show that brought her back for a 15 minute encore.

She played to everyone, winking, pointing and waving at the front row all the way up to the rafters. She was a politician and this was her platform. Watch out, Sarah Palin.

At one point she accepted the feathered fedora from the Seminole tribe chief who was standing and cheering in the front row. "Shake your booty chief," she said from the stage.

It was a tour de force. Glorious Gloria didn't miss a beat. Even when she popped a button off her tight white shirt after the second costume change, she grabbed hold of the pulsating dance hits that made her a club favorite with the Miami Sound Machine in the mid-80s ("Rhythm Is Gonna Get You," "Turn The Beat Around," and, of course, "Conga") and took things down a notch for the adult contemporary hits ("Anything For You," "Don't Wanna Lose You"). The Spanish ballads and those with an upbeat tempo proved her versatility. She dedicated "Con Los Años"



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It was all in the family as Emilio came from back stage to share a dance with her for her 1989 "Oy Mi Canto." Daughter, Emily, 13, gave Mom a rest as she commanded the stage with some searing guitar riffs while the band backed her on Alice Cooper's "School's Out." A strange choice for this crowd, but that's teen rebellion for ya. Then she hopped up behind the drum kit and showed off her skill with the sticks. Cute, fun, but a bit of out place.

But this was Gloria's show, dammit, no question about it. As a plug for a movie she has in the works, the singer presented a nostalgic tribute to Connie Francis, who was in the audience Friday night. Estefan sang two of Francis's hits, "Where the Boys Are" and "Hold Me," while a video montage of Francis rolled in the background. Estefan wrote the screenplay and will star in the biopic.

At 51, she may not salsa as sprightly as she used to; she still needs physical therapy after an accident in Scranton, Pennsylvania, in 1990 involving her tour bus, where two of her vertebrae were shattered. (Personal aside: I was working the music beat at a newspaper in Scranton at the time and actually vividly remember the accident.)

And sometimes those high notes seem a little more difficult to reach, but on Friday night when it was just Gloria and her guitar for the ballad "Always Tomorrow," there was no mistaking that Mrs. Estefan has cemented her place in music history. Viva la Gloria!

### Critic's Notebook

**Personal Bias:** Gloria's taste in clothes was questionable Friday night (lose the piñata skirt, please), but girl, where were you hiding those Christian Leboutin shoes you were wearing for the encore?

**Random Detail:** I never realized that Gloria Estefan looked like a drag queen in her video for "Everlasting Love" (1994) until she was 50-feet-tall on the big screen

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**myheartsagrenad**  
In my bedroom, you'll find: "Chaos and plenty of disorganization."

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**By the Way:** Gloria has been invited as the headliner this year for Bette Midler's annual Hullaween Gala in New York City. The Gala benefits the New York Restoration Project and more than \$2 will go to the fund.

-- Michelle F. Solomon

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