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## **Concert Review: Governors Ball; Kanye West, Guns N' Roses and more rock NYC**

Despite the weather forecast warning of torrential Tropical Storm Andrea-related rain all day Friday, the Governors Ball festival (held on Randall's Island in New York City from Friday to Sunday) went full steam ahead. Friday's rain was not initially a threat to enjoyment, until attendees were quickly reminded of a fact that is often forgotten when heading to an outdoor festival. Which is that when it rains, mud will follow. And it wasn't just a few patches of mud here and there. The entire festival grounds had transformed into one gigantic mud pit.

Those concertgoers who weren't outfitted in proper rain gear easily lost their shoes to the Earth nearly immediately after their arrival to the event field. They opted to go barefoot to save themselves aggravation, while festival veterans arrived wearing knee high boots and ponchos to help them brave the treacherous terrain. It was all fun and games, until the early evening when it became clear that, due to high wind warnings and unsafe stage conditions, the plug needed to be pulled on the evening's festivities. Feist had to bolt early on into her set, while headliners Kings of Leon and Pretty Lights had to cancel their 9:30 sets altogether. Not helping matters

were the constant complaints of ferries operating too infrequently and a few incidents where cars had to be left in the mud overnight because the rescue wasn't worth the effort for those who were just going to come back the next day.

To make it up to those attendees who were dedicated enough to come out on Friday, Governors Ball admitted Friday single-day ticket holders on Saturday so that they could enjoy a proper festival experience and kicked the ferry service up a notch to help transportation go more smoothly the rest of the weekend. As a surprise, Kings of Leon delayed their departure to London to play a makeup set for their fans who sacrificed their shoes to see them play the prior evening, only to be met with the cancellation. Normally playing at nighttime hours, the band's drummer, Nathan Followill, tweeted "To say that I'm excited about tonight would be an understatement. First time in a long time that I'll see the sunshine while I'm playing."

Of course there were still fans who found ways to complain about these solutions, but such is festival life. The organizers did the best they could under the circumstances. You can only fight Mother Nature so much before acknowledging you've been defeated, and it was better to make safety a priority, rather than take risks and have your festival be that day's tragic headline. Thankfully, Saturday and Sunday's warm sun made up for Friday's chilly rain.

After adapting to the less than desirable ground conditions, fans were finally able to focus on the main reason for being there: the music! While Friday saw the likes of Crystal Castles, Of Monsters

and Men, and the incomparable Erykah Badu, Saturday saw acts like Icona Pop, Azealia Banks, F\*cked Up, Cut/Copy, Guns N' Roses and Nas, while Sunday featured Gary Clark, Jr., Yeasayer, The Lumineers, Grizzly Bear, The XX, The Avett Brothers and Kanye West.

Though most people would have thought headliners Guns N' Roses would play Diva this weekend, they surprisingly took the Main Stage right on schedule as Queens-native Nas rocked the upper field at the Honda Stage. Fresh off an intimate club show two days earlier at Brooklyn Bowl (read NY Hard Rock Examiner Elliot Levin's review of that show [here](#)), GN'R played a set full of classics including "Welcome To The Jungle", "Knockin' On Heaven's Door", "Don't Cry", "November Rain", "Sweet Child O' Mine" and "Rocket Queen", singer W. Axl Rose and co. put on an amazing show full of loud guitars, awesome pyro and plenty of metal screams from the legendary frontman. After a confetti storm during the climax of "Paradise City", GN'R sent the crowd off into the night with sore neck muscles from headbanging to a magnificent set from the monster rock band.

On the complete opposite end of the musical spectrum, Kanye West was the main draw for Sunday night's crowd. Fans waited in the front row all day to see West rock faces up close and personal. But when the crew began lining the stage with rows of lighting, puzzled faces began questioning where this was all going. Once a mic stand was brought to the middle of the audience in front of the sound board, it was clear that West was intending on performing center-crowd at some point during the show.

The center-crowd platform was just a bit too low for the shorties to see him perform, so when it was clear West was staying put for the bulk of his set, most people took to dancing with their friends like they were in a giant club while others held their cameras over their heads and watched through their viewfinders. Anyone who planned to rely on the big screens on stage to show them the mid-crowd action were left hanging, as West chose to use the screens for artistic rather than functional purposes, displaying graphics of runways, pilots and soaring airplanes when they weren't showing a pink and blue distorted live feed of West. His set was comprised of Kanye favorites like "Jesus Walks", "Good Life", "Flashing Lights", "All of the Lights", "Say You Will", "Can't Tell Me Nothing", "Power", "Runaway" and a crowd singalong to "Heartless." He also debuted some new material, including "Black Skinhead", which he opened and closed with.

The festival had a great showing, great music and great food. A couple of celebrities even popped by to check out the action, including True Blood's Ryan Kwanten and comedian Aziz Ansari. Though there was the massive downside of having to deal with disgusting mud everywhere, the crowd made the best of it and managed to party away the weekend. Check out my photos from the festival [here!](#)

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