



## My OK Go experience at Summerfest Milwaukee, July 2, 2015

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by Jan Cooney

Someone on the OK Go board wanted to hear stories of Summerfest, so I wrote this gigantic rundown before I realized it was way too big for the fan forum. I decided to save it as a PDF and upload it to my web space. Here ya go...

The best part of going to Summerfest was meeting another fan from the message boards and hanging with her for the day. Coincidentally, we were staying on the same floor of the same hotel, so it was easy to meet up. Another interesting aspect of the experience was seeing the translation of the OKGo theater show to the festival stage. I learned that although the music was still FANTASTIC, the feel of the show was entirely different. I had a great time, but having seen all 7 of my prior OK Go shows on the fall and spring Hungry Ghosts tour, it was impossible to feel the same intimacy that I have felt at all prior shows. Damian kind of sums up why in this video interview I found later from the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel:

We began our day by heading over to the Oak Lounge to first, see it in daylight and make sure we knew the way back to the hotel and second, to get details on the VIP to make sure we could get in later. We got the information we needed from a poster posted outside the lounge. After that we headed to the grounds. It was only 10 am (two hours prior to the gate time), but the Uline stage was on the end, and we could hear music, so we walked around toward the lakefront. We saw several familiar crew on stage from there and knew it wouldn't be long before we could get a sneak peek of our favorite guys.



When sound check actually started, we saw the entire thing from the walking path, so we could see where Last Leaf would be performed and scope out the Uline a little. Best of all, we had a little pre-concert excitement and couldn't help dancing along to "Upside Down and Inside Out," "The One Moment," and "I Won't Let You Down" during sound check. Our view was something like the photo at left, which I realize looks a little stalker-ish, but we were excited. We street-teamed for OKGO as people walked by, saw us rocking out, and asked us who the band playing was. We sold them as best we could to three different

people who walked by and asked. When OK Go finished warming up and were about to leave the stage, I yelled out a "whooooooo!," but I know they can't hear anything with their earplugs in.

After sound check, we really didn't think about hanging out, so I don't know if they talked to anyone, walked the grounds, or what. I know they did at least two interviews because I found those later online. Instead we hit the nearby art museum (free the first Thursday of every month) and walked out to the point on the lake front. Milwaukee was a beautiful place to walk, and the museum was great. They had an exhibition called "Van Gogh to Pollock: Modern Rebels," and it was fun talking with my friend about how we interpreted the images and what may have inspired their creation. On the lakefront walk, we saw several people setting up camp in preparation for fireworks a few days later. That looked like a great plan for a future visit to Summerfest. I could definitely have stayed a few more days had I not had to return for 4th of July festivities in Indy.

We returned to the grounds around 3:30 to stake out second row center. We were a little envious of those in front row, and hoped to move up after the opening acts. Seeing part of Taylor Dayne, The Highs, and The Living Statues was ok. Taylor Dayne's bassist was badass, and The Living Statues had a cute "freeze" thing they did as part of their performance where they froze in position mid song. We were really happy with our view, but when the OK Go set started, the front row stood, and people on the sides and behind us were scrambling to stand on their benches in front of us. This is when we discovered that second row was a little better than row one as far as vantage point. We had no choice but to stand on the row one benches to protect our position behind the row one people, so that brought us quite a bit higher with no one in front of us. Although we could then only dance with our upper bodies (feet firmly planted to prevent injury), it felt like front row. We are in this Instagram video in center (thanks jedimasterlui).

The music was fantastic and totally on point. I love, love, love "Obsession" and am always amazed at how that song and all of the songs on Hungry Ghosts translate flawlessly to the stage. I have a video of "Obsession" at left (for some reason I can't resist making a short video of this every time I see it. I think it is because of the agogo bell).

Being so close to the stage was a must, and it was the best we could do to feel the same intimacy as the theater shows. I was kind of hoping for a slight change in set list from the spring, but they played the same songs, just fewer. I was also kind of hoping for a new cover song, but Dan's drum solo on the "Black Dog" cover was as good as ever. I found it on facebook at left (thanks Luis Singh).

The audience was also thrilled (as usual) when Damian entered the crowd for "Last Leaf." This seemingly small act of giving, taking a risk by willingly putting himself into the center of the crowd, is so intimate and exciting for the audience. "You seem like a peaceful people; I think I will come out there," he said, which immediately made everyone fall in love with him, even the dudes.



If you doubt the truth in this statement, just take a look at the dude in the photo I took pictured at left.

To seal the deal, Damian gave a shout out to Eric for holding his microphone, which surely won him many new fans (thanks Illiana Heis for capturing this moment on your Instagram). The highlight of the evening was the song "This Too Shall Pass" because, being in optimal position, Kat was Damian's support

for the entire chorus. This was an EPIC moment for Kat and me, and after the show, I found this picture on Instagram, which shows Kat's hand and my head and arm (thank you cheesephantom).

Later, a boardie named Becky posted a video on her Youtube channel and linked it out to Tumblr. Seeing Kat on this video makes me so happy!

Bottom line: MUSIC WAS AWESOME. I have listened to Hungry Ghosts so many times. Nothing beats that sound. They followed the exact set list of the spring Hungry Ghosts tour, minus "A Million Ways" and "Needing/Getting." Here is a picture of the set list (from the johnschroeder1 IG).

Despite the songs being wonderful, one really cannot compare the feel of a festival show to the feel of the theater show. It would be unfair; they are entirely different animals. No Kabuki screens and no choreographed dance PLUS no technical difficulties meant no ad-lib and not quite as much humor as can be created in the theater show. Doing their own tour definitely gives them full creative control, which lets them convey an entirely different implicit message and tone. It also is incredible for me seeing the AMAZEMENT on people's faces in the theater show. As soon as the Kabuki screen transitions from the opening video to the Wizard of Oz/Fahrenheit 451-esque giant projected heads of "Upside Down and Inside Out," there is a thrill and immediate enveloping of the audience into the sights and sounds of the band. More confetti per inch is also definitely better, and the open-air atmosphere didn't magnify the amount of confetti being blown out of the machines. It seemed to dissipate a little as it fell due to the endless sky. Audience participation was a little more limited as well. There wasn't the audience participation part, with "Needing/ Getting" (it would have been impossible to achieve the same sound), and no one was pulled on stage for "Here it Goes Again," which took away some connection. This is part of their hook. I didn't need to be pulled onto the stage, but I did want to see the thrill and disbelief on the faces of those who would be asked to dance. In particular (side note), there was a young girl standing next to me who I was ready to help in any way I could to get her up there. She looked about 19 and weighed less than 100 pounds. I was ready to assist in handing her up to the stage hands when that part of the show came. There also wasn't any impromptu dancing in the backyard, but even if there had been, it likely would not have had the same impact

without the “Fake it ‘til you make it” video montage as a prelude. Please do not mistake this as complaining; I am just making comparison for anyone who has seen the theater show. The Q&A was still present, but the entertainment value of this part of the show relies highly upon the audience questions. Damian is always witty and quick to come up with the perfect answers. Damian took the most pathetic question, “What is your favorite color” and made it quite humorous by answering in a very serpentine fashion, “the beige they made computers out of before they started making them out of metal.”

After the show, we had to immediately get out of there and get over to Oak Lounge. Damian announced during the show that there was a party there with some pretty good DJs, and “we” were all going to Oak Lounge afterwards. I was really happy about this because I had a few items to give to each member of the band, and I thought this would be the best opportunity to talk to Damian after the show. The good people at Oak told us earlier in the day to “get here by 11 and you’ll be fine,” but after the concert, it was well past that time. We were a little worried we wouldn’t get in, especially after Damian’s public announcement that Oak Lounge was the place to be. We could have gone VIP at Oak by buying one bottle of SKYY vodka and getting one free for \$150. We decided against it for obvious reasons (let’s drop \$150 and get really shit-faced for tomorrow!). We arrived as soon as we could walk the 7 tenths of a mile to the lounge and got right in. I can’t remember the last time I was at an actual dance club. I had seen XIA XIA in bars that year, but people here came dressed to dance. We surely looked a little out of place in Oak due to everyone there being young enough to be our biological children or our students, but we didn’t care. We wanted to dance like crazy people and have some drinks, so we danced almost the entire time, with a few breaks for restroom and drink runs. Here is a photo taken from the Weekend Natives facebook page that shows me in my “Beer + Music = Awesome” shirt among the crowd (looking awkward).

Our main objective was to see the “debut” of XIA XIA Technique. Although I saw two after-parties on the tour and they DJ’d that New Year’s Eve party at Beercade Chicago last year, this was the first time they were playing under their official name. I noticed a small 11x17 poster in the window, in the bathroom, and right outside the door, and immediately thought I would try to get one of those and get it signed before I left that night. The picture at right is the one that was hanging in the front window of the club.

We saw Tim and Dan hanging out chatting with some others in a roped off area behind the DJ stand during the time that the other DJs played. I obviously didn’t try to go up there or anything because I had no business there. We just danced until they started and kept on dancing the entire time. The dance floor was totally packed with polished, young, beautiful clubbers, so though I felt a little out of place, I really didn’t care. I must admit, I was very out of touch with the music played by the DJs. There was a little ‘80s pop mixed in and some Beastie Boys (No Sleep ‘til Brooklyn) with the DJs leading up to XIA XIA, but other than that, my familiarity was limited to the little music I hear my students playing outside of school and whatever is on Dan’s Sound Cloud channel. Despite this, a beat is a beat, so we held our own. All in all it was exciting to be there because I wanted to “party” with Dan and Tim, show them some support, enjoy the music, and frankly, it’s a lot of fun staying out until 3



am. The club closed at 2:30 according to all posted information, so we were pretty disappointed that Oak shut XIA XIA down at 1:45 to clear the place out and clean up. I think they only got to play for something like 30 or 40 minutes. This photo at right is my favorite photo of the evening, shot by Weekend Natives.

I stopped at the restroom again and afterwards, I asked a bartender if I could have a poster off of the wall. He told me to take the one outside of the bathroom door. As I was getting ready to go, I noticed Tim back in the roped off area again. The people I was with had gotten their fill, so they said they would wait outside for me. I really wanted to at least say HI to Tim and Dan and thank them for another great show. The bouncers were guarding the rope pretty heavily, so I said to the guy, "I am a really big fan of OK Go, and I would really like to see if they will sign my poster because it is the first ever with their printed name on it. I know they will do it because that is the kind of guys they are." He said to wait over to the side a minute as they cleared the area. In the meantime, I made eye contact with Tim through the DJ stand to the back where he was standing, held up the poster, then the sharpie, and smiled, kind of pointing the sharpie at the poster. He smiled and gave me a "wait just a minute" sign by holding up his forefinger.

After a few moments, Dan came back up to the DJ stand and said, "Hi Jan" with his usual friendly demeanor. He has seen a lot of me in the past year, both at the shows and on Instagram, so I wasn't surprised he remembered my name. He agreed it was a great idea to have their first official poster signed by both of them, and he even wrote my name and "thanks for coming" on it. Yay! Tim also signed and added "#1 XIA XIA" to the poster. I found a picture (at right) of this happening at the Weekend Natives facebook page. That poster is now getting a pretty swaggy \$170 mat and frame job at the local frame shop. Needless to say, Weekend Natives is my new hero for capturing these memories.

As they were signing, I told Dan, "You know I never come to see you guys without bringing gifts." I gave Dan and Tim each one of the notebooks I created using OK Go promo cards from the May 2 show in Los Angeles (pictured at left). I was glad to leave them with something that I had carried around all day in hopes of finding a time to talk to them. I gave Dan two extra notebooks to pass along to Damian and Andy, which he said he could give them in a couple of days. I hung on to the other gifts that I wanted to give Damian and Andy in person. They will have to wait for another day.

Even though I felt like a plant that had just undergone transplant shock, having gone from the theater shows to the festival show, I know what to expect now, both from them and from myself, and I can adjust to the new soil. I am anxiously awaiting the specific details of the other festival shows planned for this summer. I will be back at work when OK Go returns from China, but I will book my next show as soon as I find out details and figure out logistics with my work schedule. I will not miss the opportunity to enjoy my favorite band as they give us a little piece of themselves, no matter how big or small. After being a newbie last summer with this band and seeing 8 shows in 11 months, I have learned one simple truth: One cannot out give OK Go. They will ALWAYS be worth my time and money to see them share the awesome art they have created for us.