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Concert review: Allen Event Center, Reba McEntire both prove themselves to be first-rate

12:00 AM CST on Sunday, November 8, 2009

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ALLEN – The new 8,600-seat Allen Event Center aced its first test as a concert venue Friday night with country superstar [Reba McEntire](#), not only passing but earning a solid A.

The oval-shaped mini-arena, just east of U.S. Highway 75 on Stacy Road, has a warm, honey-hued exterior; none of that steel-and-spaceship stuff as with Cowboys Stadium or Nokia Theatre. Golden hues dominate the interior, with slate-blue accents. The food is tasty and relatively inexpensive (for an arena, that is: \$7.50 for chicken nuggets and fries, \$3.75 for a soda, \$6.75 for a draft beer).

As for the acoustics inside the performance space, bravo. The interior's lack of carpeting and abundance of steel and concrete had me worried, but the sound was surprisingly warm, with little to no bounce-back. I had no trouble making out the lyrics from my seat near the top of the first balcony, about halfway back, and I also could pick out the sound from each instrument used by McEntire's wicked-good backup band.

As for McEntire herself, she was visually stunning and vocally riveting. Her 20-song set included a hefty chunk of her new CD, *Keep on Loving You*: the deliciously swingy "I'll Have What She's Having," which brings to mind [Patsy Cline](#) at her feistiest; the country-chicks-with-attitude anthem "Pink Guitar"; and "Strange," a wry beacon of hope to the heartbroken.

The set ranged across McEntire's career, from her first No. 1 hit, 1982's "I Can't Even Get the Blues," to "Consider Me Gone," the current single that's No. 10 on Billboard's latest country chart. She did a quick change into a sparkly red dress for the encore, "Fancy."

Well done, Reba. Well done, Allen. For those who live at the northern end of the Dallas area, especially, the new center is an extremely attractive new option for concertgoing.



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REX C. CURRY/Special Contributor
Reba McEntire displayed her versatile vocals in a wide-ranging show at the Allen Event Center on Friday.