

Rajeev Nandakumaran/G-Vo Don't You Toy with My Emotions!

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[Photos](#)

Maybe I should've seen the signs, but I was too busy adjusting my camera and chatting it up with another photog about moving back East. Maybe I should've taken a hint from — oh, I don't know,— the gospel choir that opened the show, or the decorative stage lighting that resembled stained glass windows, or perhaps even by the journalist next to me who reacted to everything with an “mhhh” or an “amen.” But I did not.

What can I say? I'm just a woman.

My Sri Lankan friend asked me if I wanted to go to a “Healing Sri Lanka” benefit concert on Saturday.

I'm a good person, I thought. *I want to heal Sri Lanka*. Plus it's kinda hard to tell your Sri Lankan friend from Sri Lanka that you're not interested in healing Sri Lanka on Saturday night. So I go.

One of the volunteer ushers says to the group of us, “Are you guys going to be really loud?”

“Excuse me?” It's hard to think of acting rowdy in a venue as classy as the Ambassador Auditorium in Pasadena, and isn't this a benefit concert anyway? How loud are things going to get?

“Oh, well, if you were really big fans, I'd seat you near the front.”

Fans of who? I didn't really read the press packet too thoroughly. What can I say? I'm just a photographer.

“Oh, that's alright. Here's fine,” we tell her.

The show is half an hour late. I am repeatedly checking the time on my phone.

“Ha, you're on brown time now, white girl!” Says my Sri Lankan friend. *Hmm, maybe I am that white person that can't handle the 3rd world concept of no regular business hours.*

I figure that I'll head back to the press row down front, around the time when the first 6 rows start chanting “G-Vo!”. Not having read the press kit all that carefully, I chuckle again, because I could've sworn that they were all chanting “Devo!” in my head. I picture a Sri Lankan Devo cover band in road cone hats singing “Whip It,” and start fiddling with my camera excitedly.

“What model is that?” The photographer sitting next to me asks, motioning towards my camera. He resembles Gollum, although to be fair maybe only about 50 years post acquiring the power of the ring.

“Oh. Uh..., a 50D.”

“Ah, alright. a Canon lover!” He says, as he whips out some massive Nikon with a telescopic lens worth more than the shitbox car I'll be paying off for the next 6 years. We exchange information. He's based in Malibu. Maybe I could also afford better gear if I started shooting Doggie-Barmitzvahs on the weekends, too.

Finally, a gospel group of about seven people emerge on stage and begin to read impassioned self-written verses. More “amens” are thrown down by the guy next to me and I even start nodding myself, as if the last time I was in a church I was not there just to use the restroom after a bad gyro at Greek Fest. *Oom-pah!*

I don't think too much of all this God talk. I mean, this is a benefit for some war-torn, displaced people, so someone was bound to bring the Lord into this at some point.

The singers back up and the lights go dim. G-Vo's devout followers of mainly Sri Lankan 20-somethings know what's up, and they are screaming for their savior now.

Suddenly a dark man in aviator shades, wearing a red jacket that looks a lot like the one in Michael Jackson's “Beat It” video, rises on a platform from beneath the stage. This is G-Vo.



He isn't rapping for long before I'm out of my seat and stealing tiny fragments of G-Vo's soul with my camera. His lyrics are clever, his energy is rapturous, and his aura is smooth like an operator.

G-Vo's got the crowd to their feet, and I'm still in awe of the die hard G-Vo fans surrounding me now, whose existence I would have never imagined, even in my dreams, until this very moment. So how does G-Vo take the amp up to 11? Well, by busting out a pretty awesome Michael Jackson tribute medley, complete with fancy moves and ethnic cool.

This camera-hungry photo darling is bold enough to cover MJ hits in front of a packed 1,500 seat auditorium. And he is also striking all the right poses whenever my head would pop up for a photo. *Oh G-Vo! G-Vo! I feel like a Sri Lankan schoolgirl!* (Much like any of the actual Sri Lankan schoolgirls in the audience, ogling you and singing all the words to your songs!)



But then! Oh yes Lordy! But then! In the midst of my trigger-happy photo shooting I catch G-Vo rapping about abstinence. *Huh? Umm ok, that's a'ight. I'm still wit you bro!*

But the mocking Atheist within me can only think of the Family Guy imitation of Will Smith's rap: "Be kind to yo' mother!" "Ooo, haha, I respect women when I'm on a date, I take em to a park or maybe a museum, And I only try to kiss em if they're ready. Woo-hoo! What? What? I say, what? Help out ya mom and dad by gettin a job and you can help pay for school supplies! Woohoo! Say Oooooo!"



No! I refuse to mock this man, who is bearing his soul to the masses. But seriously, the security should probably scour the restrooms at the Ambassador just to make sure that Kanye West isn't tied up unconscious in his underwears. Come on, G-Vo, give the man his clothes back! But how did I not notice? "This world is not my home"...and "my CEO is God incorporated"! Exclaims G-Vo. And did I forget to mention that every single song so far had been introduced by the voice of God, debating with G-Vo on the issues of marriage, the meaning of life, or any other issue that the Almighty may have an opinion of?

I am feeling a little betrayed, a little lost, and a little sick of hearing the voice of God echo: "Rajeev, take a wife...Rajeev, know that I am good...Rajeev, give Kanye West his clothes back..."

And just when I think G-Vo's lost me and I've long since retreated back to my seat, Rajeev Nandakumaran, the man who is G-Vo, addresses the audience about how "it's time to make music with purpose" now.

Well, having just gone to an E-40 show, where countless rappers seemed fixated on talking about all different kinds of 'Muthafuckas,' I can see G-Vo's point. I can respect him for how deeply he believes in his music, and how creatively he is able to translate his experiences and convictions into a captivating art. A talented musician and an even more impressive performer, I applaud G-Vo for a 2-hour plus concert that left hardcore fans and first-timers alike wanting more.

G-Vo's "Zero and 1ne" album release concert helped the International Medical Health Organization (IMHO) raise over \$20,000 to assist the internally displaced Sri Lankan population living in overcrowded, penurious conditions.

And so, G-Vo, just as THUND*HER*STRUCK may be the world's greatest all female AC*DC cover band, you too might just well be the world's coolest God-loving, abstinence-preaching Sri Lankan-American rapper this side of the Mississippi!



