By Brent Drinkut/Journal & Courier

Lady Gaga performs "Bad Romance" during the final show of her Monster Ball tour in Elliott Hall of Music.

Lady Gaga show worth returning to Elliott Hall for

It's safe to say Purdue University forgave Lady Gaga for her much anticipated, then abruptly canceled, Jan. 14 concert.

My ears are still ringing from the screams that started as soon as the lights went out and continued intermittently to the last encore as Lady Gaga finally delivered a polished, two-hour set Tuesday night at a sold-out Elliott Hall of Music.

For Purdue, the wait likely made for a better show. What would have been a middle of the pack concert back on the 14th turned out to be the finale of Gaga's Monster Ball tour.

You could tell it had been a long tour for the young singer, but determination and respect for her fans produced one of the best overall shows in recent Elliott Hall history.

Yeah, the tunes are radio and dance club fodder. Sure, the music is lacking at times. Example: "Alejandro" sounds like Madonna had a fivesome with Abba. But what sets Gaga apart is that she is not jaded, cares for her fans and comes from a genuine place.

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For a photo gallery from the sold-out show, go to jconline.com and click on this story.

Gaga didn't have to come back to Purdue. She played a string of shows at Radio City Music Hall in her home city of New York last weekend. She has the Grammys on Sunday. Yet she came back and put on a spectacle: several costume changes of leather underwear, sequined brassieres, a black raven-esque feathered concoction and a body suit of blinking lights; a passionate miniset of Gaga at a smoking piano; and huge video screens showing artful S&M-style video of the singer.

Also, Gaga didn't have to explain herself. However, Gaga stopped the show a handful of times to apologize for missing the 14th and to say she loved and missed her "little monsters," aka fans.

The crowd reaction was something epic, if not a little scary. Along with the volume, the entire room was jumping and dancing along. When Gaga made hand gestures, it seemed every little monster followed suit.

Perhaps this dedication would not have been possible if Gaga decided to mail it in, live up to her contractual obligations and not acknowledge what occurred 12 days ago.

Hits and non-hits were gobbled up. "Just Dance" was the second song and it accelerated the show into high gear.

Like George Clinton at an old Parliament-Funkadelic show, Gaga was transported to the stage via a futuristic vessel and

See GAGA, Page B4

GAGA

FROM PAGE B1

was elevated to the ceiling, keytar in hand.

Here is where Gaga further separates herself from most pop stars: Usually dedicated to her father, "Speechless" was dedicated to the Purdue fans.

Earlier in the set, she explained that only one ticket was returned to Purdue box offices. That news seemed to deeply affect the singer. The ballad featured spaces for the crowd to sing.

Gaga informed the crowd that she spent "all her money" on the Monster Ball tour. True or not, this tour has helped raise the bar for pop stars. Who would pay to see Britney Spears or a 50-plus-year-old Madonna now?

The 23-year-old still has some growing to do, musically. Though Gaga's writing and recording haven't hit their peak, she has already arrived in the performance area, which shows that Gaga has substance. That is something quite scarce on the pop charts today.

Brouk is the arts and entertainment reporter for the Journal & Courier. E-mail him at tbrouk@jconline.com