

OCTOBER 10, 2024 MIKAYLA STOCK

# TINASHE KNOWS HOW TO MATCH CORNELL'S FREAK

*The singer-songwriter's Ithaca concert got folks of all age groups moving and grooving.*



*Tinashe's talents were on full display in Barton Hall. Photo credits: Mikayla Stock*

Homecoming weekend marked a pair of wins for both Cornell's football team and Tinashe. On Saturday night, the Cornell Concert Commission brought some light back to our gloomy campus with a show in Barton Hall starring the alternative R&B singer-songwriter whose angelic vocals dazzle all who are lucky enough to hear her.

Considering that this event signified my first encounter with Tinashe's music away from the grip of my TikTok for-you page, I went into the evening with a few reservations—sometimes the songs that are most often used in the background of short form content don't sound as pleasing when heard outside of a doom scroll. Tinashe used every second of her hour-long performance to counter that idea as she effortlessly presented her abilities to the college crowd. I can say with confidence that it won't be the last time I seek her out apart from social media—she has a voice that demands to be heard.

Even though the venue, which also serves as an indoor track, ROTC center, and the site of Cornell police, isn't quite as charming as her upcoming tour locations (consider LA's Greek Theatre), Tinashe made it feel like we were miles away from Ithaca. Although singing to a crowd of half-drunk, post-party students doesn't add up to my idea of a great time, she brought the heat as if we'd all paid hundreds to witness her most exquisite performance. The cavernous gym I'd nervously ventured through during the career fair just days prior had been transformed into a full-fledged concert space with a legitimate stage, complete with a widescreen for visuals and some (near blinding) strobe lights to sync up to her catchy tunes.

Tinashe and her four background dancers conjured up an electric vibe in (what is a typically dark, gray, dreary) Barton Hall. Their collective talents made the show a visual experience as they engaged the audience with fun choreographed bits. One minute they snapped pictures of us with their cell phones, and the next they stumbled around Tinashe with red Solo cups as she sang “all my friends are wasted” during “All My Friends,” her collaboration with Snakehips and Chance the Rapper. The entertainment value was all gas, no brakes throughout the set. Tinashe’s keen ability to rule the stage emerged during her dance breaks, boosted by her past experience as a dancer; in 2018, she competed as a contestant on *Dancing with the Stars*.

Tinashe performed songs from across her discography, as well as recent work from her latest album *Quantum Baby*. Of course, “Nasty” claimed its spot as the most popular track of the evening. The tune has garnered over 150 million streams on Spotify and been used as a sound in over 5.4 million posts on TikTok. I’ve never seen such a sea of iPhones pulled out all at once as I did when that song began playing—at least not at a Cornell gig. I think Taylor Swift has the actual record based on my personal concert viewing experience. Unfortunately, a handful of crowd members did not “match [her] freak” per se once the performance of her social-media-famous single came to an end—quite a few of them scurried out the back of the crowd (and out of the venue altogether) regardless of the fact that it wasn’t the last song of her set. A disappointing realization came when I learned that some had paid \$25 just to get a 10-second Instagram story to share with their friends, but the show went on just fine without a few image-driven fake fans.

Aside from her lively energy and seamless moves, the most memorable part of Tinashe’s performance came through in her voice. She commands a vast dynamic range that enthralled in numbers like “X” and “Story Of Us” as she transitioned from rich, velvety notes to crystal clear high tones with ease. Most of her live set sounded completely distinct when compared to the playfully suggestive tune “Nasty” that dominates our feeds, but every second of it demonstrated her indisputable raw talent as a singer-songwriter. She brought the audience back to 2014 with a fluid rendition of “2 On” (feat. ScHoolboy Q), proving that her vocal capabilities have only elevated over the last 10 years.

Halfway through the performance, she jumped on the mic to promote her new album with a humility that few artists with over 14 million monthly listeners may possess. Tinashe is evidently proud of her work, and all throughout her set she exuded a sense of pure enjoyment to be sharing her gifts with us. All the elements of her Barton Hall gig have me eager to take a deep dive into her past work and uncover the evolution of her artistry. I’ve found myself rewatching footage from the show in an attempt to

reignite the spark that she brought to me and everyone else in that space. One of my fellow concert-goers happened to be a middle-aged man (who seemingly materialized out of nowhere toward the back of the congregation of college students). If you won't take my word for Tinashe's brilliance, consider this: I've never seen a guy dance in public so shamelessly as this dude did to her songs.

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