



Jessica Meeks
The Giving Hand

ACOUSTIC Artist

Hannah Bucciarelli

Lights dim and murmurs rise in the giant arena. No falsified beats or bass drops introduce the entertainer – he walks on stage in silence, accompanied by only an acoustic guitar.

Unlike most of today's artists with their cliché tracks, Ed Sheeran has climbed his way through the top charts by writing his own songs with meaningful lyrics – and no synthesized bubble gum pop music.

Sheeran is beaming as the audience screams and chants on Thursday, Sept. 11, possibly thinking about the last time he played at Time Warner Cable Arena, which was as Taylor Swift's opening act. That was more than a year ago. Since then, he's put out a new album, *x*, which debuted at No. 1 in the United States and the United Kingdom.

Sheeran seems mesmerized by the adoring fans as he takes a sip from his water bottle. "My job for the next two hours is to entertain you guys," Sheeran says, causing the crowd to quiet immediately. And entertain he does.

The British singer released his first EP when he was only 14-years-old. He then went on to London, getting gigs and releasing more EPs – all without a record label.

It wasn't until 2011 that Sheeran signed with Atlantic Records after one of his EPs had reached No. 2 on iTunes with no promotion. After signing, Sheeran released his first studio album, entitled *+*, and began co-writing songs with major artists. Eventually, he tagged along with superstar Taylor Swift on her *Red* tour.

Tonight, Sheeran includes songs from *+*, creating a nostalgic aura.

Music has always been an emotional outlet for artists, but Sheeran takes it to a new level when he sings "Afire Love" from *x*. He prompts the crowd to stay silent throughout the entire song, saying the song impacts him and his fans are able to relate to it.

Sheeran does more than perform – he interacts with his audience. As the end of the night rolls along, he creates a harmony throughout the entire arena by giving sections of the audience different notes to sing. Not once does the crowd feel left out.

Going to Ed Sheeran's concert is a fantastic way to spend a Thursday night. The concert feels more intimate because it is not sold out. He shares his emotions fearlessly, transferring them to the eager crowd. Ed Sheeran proves through his concert that real music still exists in today's synthesized world.