

Celebrating "in insomnia" with eaJ

By Kya Brogdon | 10 July, 2023



eaJ Park via @eajpark Instagram

"Last weekend was a dream" is the caption of eaJ's Instagram post, showcasing photos from his two-day *in insomnia* release party held at the El Rey Theatre in Los Angeles. Held in celebration of his trilogy of EPs released this year - *laughing in insomnia*, *smiling in insomnia*, and *medicated insomnia* - the concert felt like a perfect amalgamation of everything eaJ and Jars have been hoping for since the release of "Car Crash" back in April of 2022. I've been a fan of Jae since his time in Day6, and after seeing him play at Head In The Clouds in 2021, I knew I had to do anything I could to secure a ticket for any solo show he would end up doing. Thankfully, with the help of a friend, I was able to score a ticket to the first night of the shows.

Arriving at the venue, I quickly found people handing out freebies in the form of stickers, keychains, and even some embroidered socks! While hanging out and chatting with other fans in line, about thirty minutes before the doors were set to open, we were greeted by none other than eaJ himself, who came out to say hi to everyone in line and thank us all for coming to his show. Despite tickets selling out within minutes, you could see how surprised and shocked he was to see how many people showed up to see him. He walked up and down both the regular GA and VIP lines, eaJ greeted every single fan - taking photos, accepting some gifts, and making sure everyone felt his thankfulness in full force. Not going to lie, I was shaking for a bit after he shook my hand and looked directly at me to thank me for coming - I was not at all prepared to be perceived by him in that capacity.

Once inside, I was surprised to see how small and intimate the venue was. Just off to the side, eaJ was hanging out by the merch stand, signing people's purchases and having little conversations with each fan. It was really heartwarming to see how much attention he paid to his fans, and how he made sure everyone felt appreciated and special - it felt more like a reunion of his Twitch chat than just a regular concert, with fans recognizing each other from online as well as eaJ knowing some usernames of those he sees often in chat.

After a killer opening set by [Rhea Raj](#), the anticipation thrummed through the venue as we waited for eaJ to take the stage. I was prepared to cry towards the end of the show - I just get emotional at concerts, especially for my favorite artists, and eaJ makes emotional music anyway - but I was not prepared to be brought to tears at the very beginning of the show.

Amongst the opening notes to "Visions," eaJ played an audio recording of himself explaining why he chose the insomnia theme to base his first bodies of work around and what the word insomnia means to him in his journey. This story isn't something completely unknown, eaJ has talked about his struggles with sleep on his Twitch channel and during Instagram lives. Hearing this story told over the background music of "Visions" surrounded by over seven hundred people who admire him as much as I do immediately brought tears to my eyes.

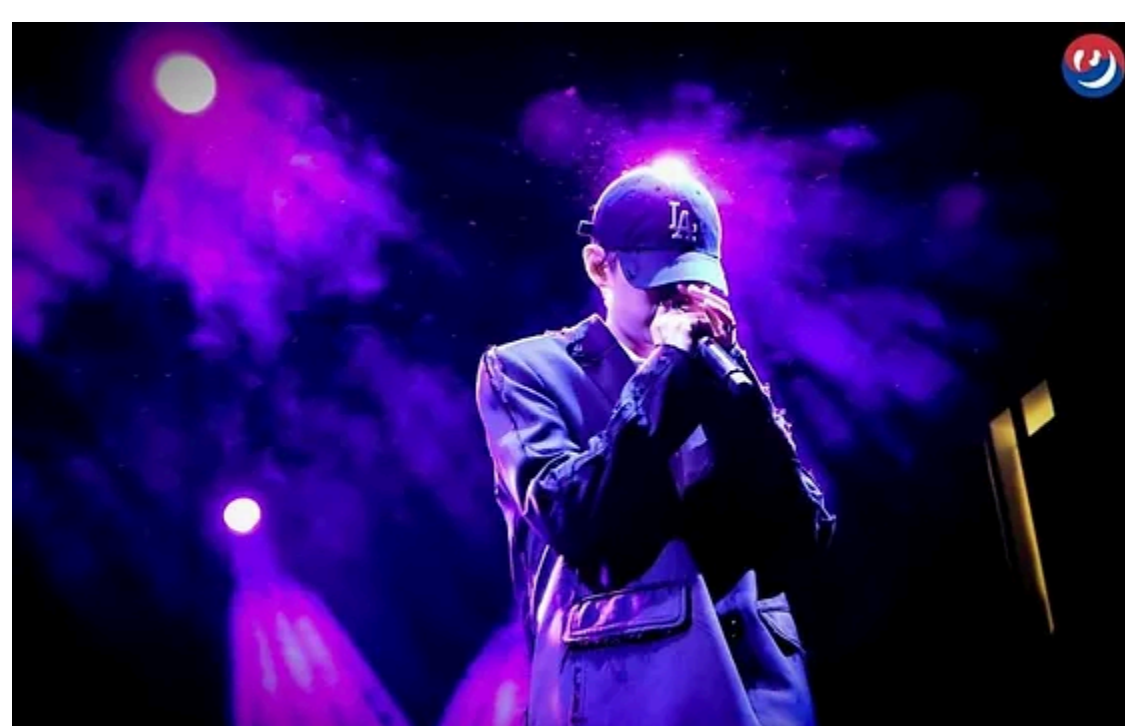
I wasn't the only one almost crying - throughout the crowd, you could see people getting emotional over their favorite songs being played, and at many moments throughout the night you could see eaJ himself pulling his hat down over his face to cover up the tears. Before his performance of "typical story," he said, "This song means a lot to me [...] it's very personal, and every single one of you singing the lyrics back to me, it means a lot more to me than you would ever think." Seeing "typical story" live has been something I've thought about ever since the song dropped late last year, and even when I wrote [my review](#) for it I knew that hearing it with an audience exceeded every expectation I could have had for it.

In between every few songs, eaJ would play another audio recording of himself talking about his struggles with anxiety, depression, and other mental health issues. His journey with his mental health is not something unknown, even if you don't follow him closely on social media his story is the most prominent thing in his music. The most emotional moment of the night, at least for me, is when eaJ performed "castle in the sky." The lyrics for this song already wreck me on a daily basis ("Does it ever get heavy? / When holding me steady / Picking me off the ground / I know it's not easy to have me around.") and hearing the emotion both in eaJ's voice and the crowd singing back to him had me crying as I sang along. At the end, he showed off his vocals by singing the chorus again, this time acoustically and not even into the mic. Despite his face being covered by the brim of his hat, the emotions

were obvious in the way he sang the words "Promise me, I'm not too much / Not too much for you."



eaJ Park by Kya Brogdon



eaJ Park by optimusnins / Genius Korea

The show wasn't only filled with emotional moments though, there was plenty of laughter and jokes shared throughout the night. During one of his breaks between songs, eaJ gave a special shout out to the boyfriends in the crowd by saying, "I see lots of boyfriends dragged here by their girlfriends, I'm sorry." Transitioning into the more upbeat songs from *smiling in insomnia*, the crowd picked up energy almost immediately. Jumping and shouting along to the lyrics of "lennon," the smile on eaJ's face was brighter than the sun. There's something so powerful about singing "And we might go and break our hearts / But it happens / And that's cool" with a crowd, it might have been my favorite song to experience that night. At the end of "lennon," eaJ also seemed similarly overwhelmed at the amount of joy in the theatre - so much so that he had to take a full break and [lay down on the stage](#) to soak in all of the emotions.

After standing back up, he expressed his despair at having to move on to the final part of the show. "I'm just dragging this out forever I just don't want to go onto the next part, man," he lamented, and the crowd agreed, "thank you guys so much!" Honestly, he could have just completely started over, and we all would have given him the same attention and energy as we did from the start.

In one last pull-at-the-heartstrings moment, eaJ played another audio recording as he prepared for the final few songs of the night. In it, he says, "I hope you'll be able to leave this place knowing the truth that you are the reason I was able to continue on. You are the reason that the show is happening. And you're kind of the reason I still make music."

For his final song, eaJ surprised all the fans by suddenly appearing in the crowd (as we've learned, he likes to just pop up in random places) and singing along to the song that started it all, "Car Crash," from the pit with us. Despite him being in the crowd, everyone was incredibly respectful and made sure to give him enough space to move around - at one point, he even waved some fans closer to him so they could jump and sing the chorus together.



@linpoemcelery via Twitter

I can - and will - forever sing the praises of eaJ's vocals. The raw emotion, power, and talent that runs through his voice is so inherent even in studio recordings, and live is just a whole new level of talent. One of eaJ's constant wishes is to be an artist that his fans feel proud to speak about, and I think he has accomplished this - not just with these shows, but with the growth he has shown during these past few years. Despite having been through an insane amount of trials and tribulations, he has come out of the other end nothing but humble and grateful for those still with him. His music, as well as his gaming streams, offer a safe place for his fans to escape to, and in return, he is able to find a safe place in the fans. You can tell that he wrote his music for himself and for his own healing, and then we all clung on to it because of how universal the experience of hurting and feeling not enough is - but we have found safety in each other, we feel seen with each other, and we are not alone as long as we have each other.

Thank you for an incredible night, Jae. Jars are forever proud of you, and we will never be ashamed to say "that's my singer."



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