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Ashley Hagar
Seattle University

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Super Bowl LV Halftime Show Excites Seattle U Students Amid the Pandemic

Ashley Hagar, Staff Reporter

A year has passed since the COVID-19 pandemic began, and the U.S. has not held large events—until the Super Bowl LV. The 2021 Super Bowl hosted roughly 22,000 fans, about 30% of normal capacity, to watch the Chiefs take on the Buccaneers. While this number seems large in comparison to recent events, it was actually the smallest attendance in Super Bowl history.

In an attempt to honor those fighting the COVID-19 pandemic firsthand, the NFL gave about 7,500 free tickets to health care workers. Those that received the free tickets had all been vaccinated and mostly came from the Tampa area, with fewer attendees coming from other cities home to NFL teams.

The other 14,500 tickets for the game were given to buyers selected by lottery, as in normal years. Attendees were also given masks and hand sanitizer upon entrance. Fans that attended any NFL game this season were required to wear masks and maintain proper social distancing in their seats.

The Super Bowl also made efforts to recognize diversity and the events that occurred in 2020 as a majority of the performers this year were people of color.

To kick off the Super Bowl, Grammy award winning artist, H.E.R., sang “America the Beautiful.” The artist performed her unique version of the song, including an electric guitar solo. Following her performance, Jazmine Sullivan and Eric Church performed the national anthem.

Just before the coin toss, National Youth Poet Laureate, Amanda Gorman, took the stage to recite a new original poem. This was the first time in Super Bowl history that poetry was included as a performance.

The poem, “Chorus of the Captains,” honors the three frontline workers—educator Trimaine Davis, nurse manager Suzie Dorner and Marine veteran James Martine—who were the honorary captains of the game.

The Weeknd performed the Super Bowl LV halftime show. The performance was created to be the end of a storyline The Weeknd has been carefully crafting over the last year. He included his bandage wrapped face in various music videos and when he attended several award shows. The Weeknd also posted photos on social media leading fans to question what was to come from the secretive performance details.

“The significance of the entire head bandages is reflecting on the absurd culture of Hollywood celebrities and people manipulating themselves for superficial reasons to please and be validated,” The Weeknd told various news sources.



Leon Lee

Second-year Business pre-major, Jay Grant, is a longtime fan of The Weeknd. Grant was excited to see how the story the Weeknd had been creating would finally come to an end.

"I personally enjoyed the Weeknd's halftime performance. He has cultivated a storyline that has been months in the making, so it was very interesting and definitely drew lots of attention," Grant said. "I also saw that he spent \$7 million on his own performance to fully create his vision, which I believe showed his true artistic abilities not only as a songwriter, but also as an artist."

Fourth-year Business Analytics and Economics double major, Kyle Kennedy, also shared his enjoyment of the halftime show.

"I thought the Weeknd's performance was really good. He's a very talented performer, and I liked the visual aspect of the concert," Kennedy said.

The Weeknd also wanted to ensure the safety of his crew during the pandemic. As part of COVID-19 precautions, all of the dancers in the Weeknd's performance were seen wearing N95 masks in disguise with their head bandages.

Nate Shani, a third-year sociology major, was pleased to see that the NFL continued the tradition of the Super Bowl halftime show despite the ongoing pandemic.

"I think that it was worth it to execute a halftime show due to the fact that millions of people watch the Super Bowl for the halftime show and don't care much for the football," Shani said. "Because of that reason, along with the halftime show tradition, I would say it was worth it for the NFL to coordinate a show (with the highest of safety measures) to give people something to look forward to during these hard times."

Due to the large capacity at the Super Bowl for fans, players, performers and crew, some had concerns about the event having many attendees. Others were glad to have some return to normalcy this year. Shani didn't find it to be entirely problematic to host a Super Bowl, but he also wants the NFL to recognize the impact they have on viewers and their decisions.

"Allowing fans to be there in high capacities sends the message to all the American people that it is okay to gather in huge crowds for events. The Super Bowl committee should know that what they do is something that is in a leadership role, and will be followed by others, so for them to allow so many fans was a very bad choice for me and sent the wrong message," Shani said.

Seattle U students enjoyed the halftime show, especially the Weeknd's performance, to wrap up his yearlong storyline. Although this Super Bowl occurred during a pandemic causing concerns about COVID-19 safety, the Super Bowl committee, performers and attendees were committed to hosting a safe event following the necessary protocols.