

Jay-Z crowned King of Brooklyn as he delivers blockbuster performance to open \$1billion Barclays Center (but protesters crash party at 'soggy Oreo' arena)

- *Rapper wowed 18,000-person crowd at inaugural concert*
- *But ahead of event, the day was marred by protesters*
- *Plan for \$1billion structure has been controversial, with many Atlantic Avenue residents concerned about traffic and noise*
- *Renowned Obama supporter recently revealed: 'we need less government'*

By Beth Stebner
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Jay-Z was in a Brooklyn state of mind last night as he performed an inaugural sold-out concert at the borough's new Barclays Center to uproarious response. But the star-studded opening was tarnished in part due to protests that had taken place throughout the day, gathering in front of the grey domed arena which one person said resembled 'Chris Christie's old lumpy mattress.' Three women with scales in their hands wore signs reading 'Billionaires for Barclays' in front of the \$1billion arena. Many of the protesters who showed up were concerned that the new venue will mean overwhelming congestion and noise for nearby residents.



Others were protesting that the arrival of the large arena has brought an unwelcome shift to a diverse borough known for its gentler rent prices. 'What we need is two-bedroom, three-bedroom units that are affordable,' Pratt Area Community Council executive director Deborah Howard said. 'They have skewed what is needed.' The use of eminent domain also meant that residents were forced out of the area. Hundreds more will likely notice the cost of living will creep up, due to the proximity to Barclays. Similarly, Candace Carponter, a spokesperson for Develop Don't Destroy Brooklyn, rallied people ahead of the opening saying that Barclays was a 'monument to crazy capitalism,' according to the New York Times. Jay-Z said that performing in his hometown was better than performing at the Grammys, Glastonbury or Coachella. He yelled to the crowd of 18,000: 'Nothing feels like tonight!'

The arena was full of exciting concertgoers, as the chaotic crowd made way to their seats after waiting outside to enter the building. Jay-Z emerged onstage as a video about Brooklyn's history played in the background. He opened with his songs about Brooklyn - 'Where I'm From' and 'Brooklyn Go Hard.' He also performed two songs from fellow Brooklynite Notorious B.I.G. He then held a moment of silence for the late rap veteran.

He told the crowd when B.I.G.'s 'Juicy' played: 'Sing loud so he can hear you in heaven.' The rapper is the co-owner of the Brooklyn Nets, who will play at the new arena later this year. Earlier this week Jay-Z revealed that while he is happy to be seen as a high profile endorser of President Obama, at least one of his political ideas is more in line with Republican candidate Mitt Romney. 'I don't even like the word politics,' he told MTV News. 'It implies something underhanded and I think we need less government.' The Brooklyn rapper recently hosted a \$40,000 per plate fundraiser for President Obama, which raised a reported \$4 million. 'I support Barack because I gotta respect that sort of vision. I gotta respect a man who is the first black President ever,' he said. The Barclays Center will rival Manhattan's Madison Square Garden for musical events. A number of acts have booked shows at the venue, including Barbra Streisand, Lady Gaga, Bob Dylan, Rihanna, Rush, The Who, Justin Bieber and Neil Young and Crazy Horse.

To mark the stadium's opening, the New York Times asked readers what they thought the Barclays Center looked like and predictably the responses they received were not very complimentary. 'Chris Christie's old lumpy mattress,' was one description, comparing the New Jersey governor's bed to the rust coloured Barclays Center. Another reader called it 'A soggy Oreo', while someone else said 'In fifty years, if it is still standing, it will be called 'Iconic'. Submissions from those who live in the two neighborhood's most likely to be affected by the stadium, Park Slope and Prospect Heights, were slightly less forgiving about the \$1 billion construction. Carolyn from stroller-mom populated Park Slope called it 'Urban blight!', while Clayton G who also hails from the affluent area called it 'A beached humpback whale.'

Other comparisons submitted included, 'a huge George Foreman grill', 'a rotting turtle', 'a rusty alligator skull with a pronounced underbite', 'An angry clam. An angry, angry clam' and 'the burned bagel that will choke Brooklyn.' Originally envisaged as part of developer Bruce Ratner's Atlantic Yards urban regeneration plan for downtown Brooklyn, the proposals for the stadium were caught up in years of eminent domain challenges from local residents, which were resolved at the boroughs supreme court in 2010. With no size-able parking lot, the stadium is relying on spectators to make use of the extensive public transportation links to the arena, but residents worry about the extra cars and parking issues that will inevitably crop up. However, some of the likenesses seen by readers of the New York Times are positive, looking forward to the Barclays Center bringing new impetus to the already booming and confident borough of Brooklyn. 'Mega burger, medium well, pickle on the side', wrote in one hungry reader while another ignored the architecture to take a swipe at the Brooklyn Nets calling the arena 'An easy road win for the Milwaukee Bucks.' For Jay-Z though, tonight is his home-coming concert, having grown up a few blocks from Atlantic Avenue and the Long Island Rail Road.

The 42-year-old music mogul and entrepreneur says when he was a poor kid Brooklyn growing up in the nearby Marcy projects, he never imagined that he'd someday own a basketball team. Now Jay is part owner of the Brooklyn Nets and instrumental in moving the franchise from New Jersey. He feels his rags-to-riches story embodies all that is possible in America. 'Yeah I think I'm the American dream,' Jay-Z said. 'That whole thing that you could come here and pull yourself up by the bootstraps, like that whole thing what America has always put up to the world that we represent. I feel that. Yes, I've lived that.' As a child, he says, he dreamed of glory on the basketball court. 'You know the three-two-one, oh, he hits the winning shot,' Jay-Z said. 'But no one was ever on the court saying I was gonna own the Knicks. Yes, it's way beyond any of my wildest dreams.' As part owner of the Nets, he's even designed the team's black and white logo. Ads for the team have been prominently displayed throughout the subway system with the tagline 'Hello Brooklyn.' Brooklyn has not had a professional sports team since the Brooklyn Dodgers left for Los Angeles after the 1957 baseball season.