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Local News



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Stars & Stripes summer fun

Festival fans enjoy sweaty, loud rock 'n' roll in downtown Mount Clemens

By Mitch Hotts
Macomb Daily Staff Writer



One of the hottest events of the festival was the BMX stunt riders track that had the crowds mesmerized by their gravity-defying acts. Here Brandon Dosch of Lake Orion demonstrates the principle of whatever goes up, must come down.

Macomb Daily photo by Craig Gaffield

If the Stars & Stripes Festival in downtown Mount Clemens is a celebration of all things summer, then the hot and humid weather was certainly a guest to the party.

And let's face it -- rock music is all about sweaty good times.

There was plenty of sweating going earlier in the day as promoters worried the seasonal weather would keep crowds away. But as day turned to night, cool breezes moved in, the temperature dropped and the people streamed in.

"This is what it's all about. You can't beat this," said Brandon Segnitz of Port Huron, moments before the Romantics took the stage behind the Emerald Theatre, one of several national acts performing during the three-day festival.

"I was here last night with some other folks and today I came down here with my son and daughter. I'm here to see the Romantics and I want to check out Uncle Kracker. It's all free. I

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know a good thing when I see it."

Uncle Kracker (Harrison Township native Matt Shafer) was Saturday's main event on the national stage, headlining after performances by the Romantics, Everclear and Rhythm Corps.

While many music fans turned out Saturday to see established, well-known acts, others were surprised at the talent of other performers such as Julian Pavone, 4, a Bloomfield Hills toddler billed as the world's youngest drummer. He performed with a band and had the audience mesmerized.

"He's phenomenal," said Anna Congdon of Mount Clemens as she watching the youngster rocking out at the Fountain Stage on Macomb Place. "I've never seen anyone that small and young playing drums so well."

The entertainers agreed that keeping well hydrated was the secret to making sure they could endure the outdoor conditions while performing on stage. For most, it was water, but Forbes Brothers lead singer Ron Jacobs went with two bottles of Gatorade.

"But you know what? Who cares about the weather? Everyone is here for the music and it's just been awesome," Jacobs said.

The promoters provided lunch for the performers at local bars and restaurants for the weekend. They also opened a VIP tent area featuring Outback steak and chicken, along with other refreshments to keep the VIP's happy, including Matt Dreger, a Mount Clemens city commissioner.

Dreger, who was hobnobbing with state Rep. Fred Miller, D-Mount Clemens, and others in the VIP tent, said he was excited to have seen veteran rocker Mitch Ryder performing on Friday evening at the festival.

"I used to see him much more often when I had more hair," said the 52-year-old Dreger. "Most of the audience there was my age. Everyone was entranced by him."

Mother Nature is expected to be a little nicer today with highs in the upper 70-degree range but rain and thunderstorms can't be ruled out.

Today's headliners include Jonny Lang, Candlebox, L.A. Guns and others. A full schedule is available at www.starsandstripesfest.com.

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