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Tabfest 2003

by WCBE's Richelle Antczak

To organize an event like Tabfest, it takes an understanding of many...an understanding that giving back and taking action for a better good is what makes our community thrive.

With the passing of September 23rd, it's now the official ending of summer 2003 and you know what comes with the end of summer – the “best of” articles. This summer, I was in search of an outdoor music festival that could not only guarantee me two days of good melodies but also a place that was dog friendly, not too big – but not too small, and the cost to attend wasn't outrageous. “I'd never find a festival like that,” I thought to myself. That was...until I discovered Tabfest.

Originally, Tabfest started in 1998 as a small outdoor party where people got together to collect pull-tabs, which were donated to the Ronald McDonald House Charities. Since then, it has grown into a 1500 plus professional event which includes two nights of camping, live entertainment, vendors, and great people. In my opinion, Tabfest has it all and that's why I believe this little festival should be nominated as the most “up-in-coming outdoor music festival of summer 2003”. My rationale? Well to start, the musical line-up was unbelievable! Closing out Friday night and back for their second consecutive Tabfest was The Recipe. On Saturday night, returning for the fourth appearance was local Columbus band, The Shantee and as if that wasn't enough, the festival ended with the Americana-rock sounds of the The David Nelson Band. Those bands weren't the only ones getting props from the audience though. Need I not forget The Slithy Tones, The One-eyed Show, Grasshopper Pie, Four Ohms, Broken Grass, The Ordinary Way, Guest, and Ray's Music Exchange, who all provided the audience with some rockin' foot-stomping beats. But every successful festival has it's up and downs, and this year it proved that maybe “the curse” had returned.

You see, every year since the beginning, Tabfest has had one musical casualty. In 2000, set to perform was The Big Creak. A week before Tabfest, The Big Creak broke up. Now that didn't stop the music entirely, in their place played two members of the band...a duo of sorts. In 2001, Admiral Walker was scheduled to perform, but they too broke up (oddly enough) a week before the festival. In 2002, it was a repeat of the prior year. This time though, the band broke up the Friday of Tabfest (goes to show you history does repeat itself). Continuing the “no-show” tradition in 2003 was The Flex Crew, who didn't make their Saturday time slot due to transportation problems. So, you'd think that by now Tabfest promoters would have learned a lesson, but how does one anticipate that? They can't! All they can do is believe that out of the 180 applications they receive over the year, they're making the right decision when finalizing the festival's musical line-up. The promoters, they're nice guys so don't give them a hard time for believing in the music. In the end, it's all about the big picture.

Which brings me to another point...the atmosphere of that weekend. At most festivals I attend nowadays, it's hard to feel utterly comfortable in your surroundings. I'm always worried about leaving my tent or cooler unsupervised with the thoughts that some disrespectful "gutter punk" will snag my stuff. But, not once did I feel that way at Tabfest. Not once! The atmosphere that was created over those two days in July was one of goodwill and regard for your friends and neighbors. I didn't want the weekend to end.

On the last day of Tabfest, tired and worn from dancing, I packed my gear thinking of how tomorrow I would return to my everyday routine. As I took one last glance around the campsite, I saw the faces of young and old and those of many different cultures and backgrounds coming together for one charitable cause. It was then I realized that indeed, this festival was NOT only about the music, but the sense of community that had been established over the past two days and the many years prior. To organize an event like Tabfest, it takes an understanding of many...an understanding that giving back and taking action for a better good is what makes our community thrive and for that realization I salute all those involved. Thanks Tabfest, for a wonderful weekend and may there be many more to come!

For more information on Tabfest please visit their website: www.tabfest.com.

Richelle Antczak is the host and producer of WCBE's eclectic music show, "All Access", which is heard Saturday nights from 8-10pm.

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