

Beautiful Scenery, Great Tunes at Porcupine Music Festival

Jeanne Tonkin
Reader Weekly

with us after the shows.

There was a wide variety of musical styles by over thirty bands ranging from singer/songwriters like Natalia Zuckerman, the Texas blues of Randy McCallister, swing by Papa John Kolstad, Boiled in Lead's Celtic, and the comical themes of Conge Se Menne in their Finnish reggae Yooper style.

Strolling the wooded path between the two main stages was a good way to stretch our legs during this three day event.

The Friends of the Porkies volunteers were exceptionally warm and helpful, even shuttling us with our hefty coolers and chairs back and forth from the parking lot to the festival.

Our first taste of music welcomed us as we approached the Busking Stage. Any performer could sign up to jam on this unamplified stage. The Peace Women, a passionate group from Central Minnesota entertained and roused us to sing along to anti war songs. For instance, to the tune of "Let my people go," they sang "Go down (insert senator's name) way down to Washington. Tell old "W" to let our soldiers go."

Summer music festivals are not done yet; we just experienced the best last blast in the Porcupine Mountains of Michigan. This third annual event in the natural amphitheater of the mountain ski hill was a well organized, non-stop musical smorgasbord of fun.

There was plenty of front stage dance area, and dance we did to Gandalf Murphy and the Slambovian Circus of Dreams, Blues Caravan, and Boiled in Lead. In fact, the billowing dust from all the dancing was mistaken by the evening performers for a smoke machine! The performers were unusually accessible, signing CDs and hanging out



great addition to the group and we were mesmerized as we listened to the sound of the music resonating through the chalet.

Joel Mabus made us laugh with his lighthearted song "Hopelessly Midwestern." The lyrics include "If you think sushi is a lot like bait...if you have at least three uncles named Bob or Jim, you're hopelessly Midwestern."

The festival was a family friendly event with a children's area, which kept the kids busy with art activities and culminated with a charming children's performance including peace messages and homemade musical instruments. A sign posted in front of the area proclaiming: "All unattended children will be given an espresso and a free puppy" got lots of chuckles.

A major crowd pleaser was Saturday night's headliner, Gandalf Murphy and the Slambovian Circus of Dreams, an East Coast band, self described as "Hillbilly-Floyd, folk-pop."

They really engaged the crowd with discourses of Slambovian philosophy of "dancing freely between the

existing and the mythical," dedicating the songs to the "Buddha in everybody."

Joziiah, the band leader, led us in a hillbilly sing along yodel that he assured us was "better than drugs." We were pulled up, caught up in the wave to the dance area by groupies who had traveled from lower Michigan.

A party pod of locals invited us to join them, especially when they learned we were from Duluth. "You're so lucky to live in Duluth, to be able to hear Charlie Parr every week. We just love that Charlie Parr," exclaimed Jim Mati, a regular listener of KUMD since the 60s. Dancing Jim, as we dubbed him, wore out 2 pairs of flip flops during the weekend. He entertained us with lots of conversation, except when Charlie was playing, he shushed us and said, "No talking, Charlie's on." Jim and his friends, (all named

Jim- really!) referred to themselves as Jim squared, Jim cubed, and Jim quad. These truly Yooper folks shared their Keweenaw local beer and directions to the best hiking to find the rare Hemlock trees in the park.

So, as the summer winds down, we're marking our calendars for next year as we savor our memories of the beautiful scenery, great music and fun people at this first class festival in the Porkies.



Inside the chalet was a workshop area where artists gave more informal performances on song writing and musical reading. Boiled in Lead had an interactive session where they explained the different musical styles such as the Polska (emphasis on the first and third beat) as we clapped along. This relaxed atmosphere allowed time for questions and a bit of joking around. When the drummer was asked what he called his African style drum, he replied, "a drum." Dean McGraw is a

