

Widespread highlights Center City Fest

by Clayton Kale
Assistant News Editor

I spent one of the best weekends of my short college career last weekend at Center City Fest listening to some good music and wandering aimlessly in downtown Charlotte. What a way to spend a weekend.

Because I am a poor college student, I couldn't afford the \$30 for a three-day pass, so instead, I had to shell out \$18 for a one day pass.

Five carloads of people made the pilgrimage from Columbia to Charlotte to see bands like The Jerry Garcia Band, the Four Tops, The Root Doctors, Cracker, G. Love and Special Sauce, and the headlining band, Widespread Panic.

Because of confusion of directions and the terrible service at the local Wendy's, the caravan made it in time to catch Cracker. I have been a Cracker fan since I was in the seventh grade, but I have never had a chance to see them live. It was great to finally hear them live, except of course, when

David Lowery told the audience that we were the lamest crowd they'd ever played for.

They played Teen Angst... I'll forgive him. I personally don't think Cracker's set was long enough, but I finally got to see them, and I would recommend a Cracker concert to any casual Cracker fan.

I didn't watch G. Love, but I could hear their music. It sounded good to me. But I was off experiencing the festival. Good food, good friends, good tunes. It reminds me of a beer commercial. To be honest, I was just killing time until Widespread took the stage.

The time finally came, and a few friends of mine and I held on to each other's T-shirts and pushed our way into the middle of the crowded parking lot that held the "Charlotte.com Stage." We stood there in a state of utter confusion until the lights came on and the Panic started to jam.

They opened the show with "Heroes." I remember the first chord hit me and made me close my eyes because it was a bit too loud, but the guys on the soundboard had the problem fixed good as new in no time.

The songs that truly stood out to me were, in set one, "One Arm Steve", "Ride Me High," and "Conrad the Caterpillar." In set two, "Love Tractor", "Blue Sunday" and of course the percussion solo put everyone in the crowd into a trance.

They played a two-song encore of "Pilgrims" and "Red Hot Mama." The show ended exactly on schedule: at midnight.

Except for getting lost on the way to our campsite from Charlotte, the weekend sticks out in my mind as one of the best of the year.

I highly recommend seeing Widespread Panic, even if you've never listened to them before. They put on such an amazing show that they will change your prejudices of jam-bands.

They will be playing Sunday in downtown Atlanta. Then, starting Tuesday, they will make their return to the Carolinas for a three-day stay at the House of Blues in Myrtle Beach.

For ticket information, past set lists and general information, check out www.widespreadpanic.com.

If you are planning to go to Myrtle Beach on Tuesday, perhaps I'll see you there.



Special to The Gamecock

Mikey (left) and JB work together on a jam during a November show in San Francisco. Widespread Panic made a stop in Charlotte during their spring tour. They'll be playing in Atlanta and Myrtle Beach in the coming weeks.

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