



Lancaster Festival was amazing

By JIM SABIN • The Eagle-Gazette Staff • August 1, 2010

I'm amazed!

In the eight months since I arrived in Lancaster, I've heard an awful lot about its signature festival. Biggest event of the year, I was told. Lots of great music. Plenty of things to do.

None of what I was told has done it justice, though.

I've lived in a lot of cities around Ohio, and many of them have music festivals of some variety. Usually, they're one-day affairs, with a couple of decent local bands and maybe a good one from out of town. Occasionally, the band playing the finale is a national act; I've seen .38 Special and what's left of Creedence Clearwater Revival that way, for example.

Individual acts aside, though, nothing in the state, that I've seen, anyway, compares to the Lancaster Festival. It's not just a couple of big-name acts on the weekends; everywhere you look is something artistic, and everywhere you turn your ear, there's another good musician playing.

Most of you know by now just how good the Lancaster Festival Orchestra is. I've never claimed to be a classical music fan, but I've heard enough live performances to know that this orchestra is second to none. And, folks, it's not just any orchestra that can blend its sounds with a rock band, even one with tunes such as those played by Beatles tribute band Classical Mystery Tour.

But it goes beyond the orchestra, too.

Its members play in quartets or quintets at various events around the county. Other musicians came out of the woodwork Thursday night to show off their own considerable talents.

Even during the ArtWalk, which wasn't really, at its core, about music, revealed Lancaster's talent. From the brass band playing in the Eagle-Gazette's parking lot to the blues guitarist on Columbus Street to the classic rockers down the street, that talent was obvious. The only drawback was that there was so much music being performed that it became difficult to hear performers over one another at times.

Look, anyone who's been going to this festival for years doesn't need to hear from me how great it is; you already know. So many people had built this up for me that I felt sure I was going to be let

down; too much anticipation, or something. If anything, it's exceeded my expectations. I just hope that even if you love the Lancaster Festival already, that you understand just how unique this event really is.

Try going to some of those music festivals around the state; most are done in a day. Then come back and check out this one again.

You might be amazed, too.

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