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Music

MUSIC REVIEW

Eclectic bill lights up first Nines festival

By **Scott McLennan** | GLOBE CORRESPONDENT AUGUST 12, 2013



ERIC ANTONIOU FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

(From left): Frank McElroy and Toby Leaman of Dr. Dog.

DEVENS — After Air Traffic Controller dedicated “If You Build It” to the inaugural

Nines festival Saturday, singer Dave Munro realized that he was singing the song inspired by the baseball movie “Field of Dreams” on an actual baseball field.

Call it a “Nines moment,” those flashes of “whoa” that occurred throughout the 10-hour music and arts festival held at Willard Field in Devens. Perhaps a piece of visual art or that giant silver fish on the festival grounds stopped you in your tracks. Or maybe a piquant observation from the tormented mind of comic Joe List landed just (uncomfortably) right. Or perhaps the musical lineup that spanned the savvy rhythm and soul of Shuggie Otis to the raw hip-hop of K.Fl原因 prompted an “I need more of this on my iPod” mental note.

Bands and DJ Kid Koala performed on two stages, and there were no overlapping set times between them. The comics had a tent of their own, and the six performers did two sets in trio formats, making it possible to catch plenty of punch lines.

Whimsical sculptures and large paintings dotted the field, while several artists from the area displayed their work in tents set up in a row across from the main music stage. The Nines was built for roaming and poking around as well as for listening and discovering.

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Boston’s Walter Sickert & the Army of Broken Toys launched the music with a set of carnivalesque mayhem. Though just a sliver of the attendance that eventually reached a few thousand was on hand at that point, the band was undeterred, with Sickert, in flowing white skirt and elaborate headdress atop his long dreadlocks, out in the audience for “I Put a Spell on You.”

Air Traffic Controller followed on the festival’s smaller Lucky Cat stage, airing a whole other facet of Boston’s music scene with well-turned

THE NINES, With: Explosions in the Sky, Dr. Dog, Kid Koala, Delta Spirit

Willard Field,, Devens

Also performing: K.Fl原因, Matt Pond, Walk Off the Earth, Shuggie Otis, And others

Date of concert: Saturday, August 10

pop that bridged modern flourish and rootsy honesty.

For classic flair, Otis and his band dug into his 1974 album “Inspiration Information” as well as previously unreleased material included in a recent reissue of that cult classic. A sprawling “Wings of Love” from those newly unearthed recordings boggled the mind as to how this artist and his material have been so far off the radar for the past 40 years.

Eclecticism flowed through the fest, as Matt Pond’s indie pop led into Walk Off the Earth’s pep-rally rock.

Delta Spirit and Dr. Dog provided the twin peaks of the main stage. Delta Spirit played with a rollicking energy, confessing that it has been cooped up for too long in the studio working on a new album. Dr. Dog, recently out of the studio, played only one song from its forthcoming “B-Room” album — the ramshackle “Distant Light” — amid its listing and yearning songs.

The churning post-rock jams of Explosions in the Sky provided a soft landing for the first Nines. It wasn’t a grand-gesture finale, but more of a meditative, shimmering moment of introspection. Not typical, but true to The Nines’s promise of something different.

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ERIC ANTONIOU FOR THE GLOBE

Michael James of Explosions in the Sky.

