

Concert Manic!

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Concert Review: The Nines Festival (8/10/2013)

By [Sarah V.](#) | [August 13, 2013](#) | [Concert review](#)

My friend Jen won a pair of tickets to [The Nines Festival](#) in Devens, MA this weekend. Thanks to [Boston Emissions](#) for giving them away and thanks to Jen for bringing me along. I don't normally go to outdoor festivals (partly due to not having access to a car, partly because the sun hates me and my ghostly pale skin) so it was a bit of a novel scene for me. There was a pretty eclectic selection of music and a lot of them were not bands I would have seen if left to my own devices; but it's always good to open your ears to something new and remind yourself that there's a big world of music out there.

This was the inaugural Nines festival, so we didn't know exactly what to expect, aside from what was on their website – ten bands on two stages, a comedy tent with half a dozen comedians, and art installations/exhibits. We were in the unusual position of being most excited about the very first band of the day, [Walter Sickert & the Army of Broken Toys](#). (Regular readers of my blog probably remember them, as I have reviewed them twice already this summer – [here](#) and [here](#).) They put on an excellent show as usual, although it was distinctly weird to be seeing them at lunchtime, outdoors on a hot and sunny summer day. Not their natural habitat. The sound was far too loud for my little camera to deal with, so I'll have to pick a random awesome Youtube video for you to watch:

After this first set, I went to get some lunch and then caught the end of the [Air Traffic Controller](#) set. Like the Army of Toys, they are a local band, but I hadn't seen them before. I liked them, but having only seen 10-15 minutes of their set, I don't have much to write about. They're a fairly light-hearted indie rock/pop band, from what I heard.

After ATC we headed back to the main stage for [Shuggie Otis](#), whose career the [New York Times](#) has referred to as "baffling." 2013 saw his first album release since 1974, and he's been touring in support. He plays something along the lines of soul/funk – which is not usually a genre high on my list of favorites, but I did enjoy their set.

[Matt Pond PA](#) was up next, and although I spent most of his set hiding under a tree somewhere in an effort to be less sunburned, I was still able to hear the music, and I thought he was one of the better acts of the day. (Or maybe I just think music sounds better when I'm in the shade? I think we need more data on that one.) He's currently on tour across the U.S., [click here to see his tour dates](#). Here is the video for "Remains," from their second to last album, "The Dark Leaves."

Next on the list was Walk Off the Earth, a band whose name I didn't recognize at first but we figured they must be popular judging by the number of people walking around with their band T-shirts. It turned out that we'd both seen their viral video but had forgotten their name – you may have seen it yourself, it's the cover of Gotye's "Somebody I Used To Know" played by five people on one guitar. 150 million views on Youtube and counting ([click here](#) to see it if you haven't already). I had sort of mixed feelings about their set; they're clearly very talented, and they put a lot of effort into their live shows... and their fans lapped it up, so it's definitely working for them. I tend to like a more raw and emotional presentation instead of a slick, well-practiced performance. But I guess that's just a matter of taste. I did like them, it was just a bit too polished for me.

We took a break after that to sit in the shade for a while and, eventually, check out a set at the comedy tent. We got a trio of comedians: Jenny Zigrino, Joe List, and Mehran Khaghani. I'm not a big comedy buff, but it was fun. I think it was a good idea to have something non-music to do for a little while to break up the day. I was a little bit surprised that their material focused so heavily on 'adult' humor considering it was an all-ages festival, but the kids were all laughing in a non-traumatized sort of way, so I suppose it was fine.

We ended up being too tired to stick it out for the last two bands, [Dr. Dog](#) and [Explosions in the Sky](#). I felt a bit bad missing them because those were the only two that friends of mine had specifically told me I should see. But we'd been there for 7.5 hours at that point and I don't think we physically had the capacity to enjoy any more music. We heard some of Dr. Dog's set as we packed up our things and headed out, and I wasn't too sorry that we left because the sound quality was pretty poor – they are indie rock/folk with a big focus on vocals, and the sound was really heavy on the bass with buried, muddy vocals. Maybe the sound engineers were as tired as we were at that point. I'm not sure why you'd mix that band that way otherwise. Here's a song of theirs that I like so you can get a feel for their sound:

Overall: it was a very fun day. I do have a few bits of constructive criticism in hopes of improving future festivals... firstly, make tap water available and don't make us waste so many little plastic bottles. I hated having to buy and immediately toss seven containers between the two of us just to barely stay hydrated. Surely there is a better way! Secondly, there needed to be more shade in more convenient places. The only way to get out of the sun was way in the back of the festival away from the music under the lone shade tree, or the \$60-a-head VIP tent. I get that they want to sell VIP tickets, but again – surely there is a better way! They certainly would have sold me (and the rest of the ghostly-pale contingent) a lot more food/drinks if I could have relaxed in the shade with them. Just something to think about. Looking forward to seeing what sort of lineup they can put together for next year!