

2015 American Folk Festival delights young and old alike

BY ANGELA SMITH
SPECIAL TO THE WEEKLY

We wait. And wait. All through the cold and seemingly never ending Maine winter for this. Summer. Sun. Tubing at the lake, barbecues with friends and family, s'mores after dark around the fire at camp. All leading up to the final weekend of summer before the kids go back to school and fall sets in.

Oh, but what a lovely weekend it is. It's when the American Folk Festival comes to light up the Bangor Waterfront with sights, sounds and flavors from around the world. All in our backyard. How lucky are we?

Our family has been attending since the very beginning and each of my three kids anxiously awaits the festival all summer. They have yet to make the connection about it being the last weekend before school. Once the schedule is printed and distributed they pour over it like the Toys R' Us catalog right before Christmas, marking out what they want to see and making sure if one groups performance time clashes with another, that they find another time and rearrange a bit if necessary -- proof positive that they are definitely my kids.

Friday night for us al-

ways starts with the parade. We wait at the Sea Dog and follow the parade right down to the Railroad Stage, dancing the entire way. This year the parade was The Asociacion Carnavalesca de Massachusetts. They were so fun to watch, and probably the most colorful parade we've seen yet! The intricate costumes and masks were simply stunning to look at. So thankful we got to see it again the following night. Then, we start eating and continue eating right through Sunday. It's not easy, but we take one for the team and sample as much as possible.

We stayed for about a half hour that evening to listen to Mickey Galyean and Cullen's Bridge and heard some of the best mountain bluegrass around. Mickey and his band made me happy we hadn't brought chairs because they was no way to sit still during his lively performance. Dancing was a must. We hit the road after that so the kids could get a good nights rest for the next day of festival going.

We were back Saturday and the first thing circled on the kids schedule was The Family Tree -- World Guitar Styles. Usually the kids are only happy for about 30 minutes before they get

antsy. About 20 minutes into the show, my little guy fell asleep on me. The rest of our crew moved on and I was able to see the entire performance. And let me tell you -- was I glad he fell asleep! Each of the performers explained a bit about their heritage and their particular instrument -- everything from electric guitars to Bouzouki and an Oud, which I had never heard of but was so cool.

Then they played a melody on their respective guitars. After being thoroughly impressed by this, the magic started happening. They came together for a few tunes in a way that a passerby may have thought these gentleman have been playing together for 20 years. I literally had chills listening to them play and harmoniously blend the music from Syria, Greece, Niger and the U.S. What a way to kick off the day!

The little guy on my lap woke up at the end of the performance and we were off to explore. Quebecois music is always a favorite of ours at the festival and De Temps Antan put on a few stellar performances that had everyone's feet tapping and bodies moving. Their blend of fiddle, accordion, harmonica, guitar, bouzouki and a num-



ASHLEY CONTI/BANGOR DAILY NEWS

An Asociacion Carnavalesca de Massachusetts member high fives Faustina Millien (left), 6, to open the American Folk Festival with a parade Friday in Bangor. The group was one of sixteen acts which performed all weekend at the AFF.

ber of other instruments was truly spectacular to see in person. Another favorite was The Dardanelles, a five-man band from Newfoundland that brought a lot of energy to the stage. Their music had my kids dancing and twirling and full of smiles. Mitch Frohman and The Bronx Horns' mambo/salsa performance also was phenomenal. They were a perfectly orchestrated band and the listeners couldn't help being instantly immersed into the music and rhythm.

More highlights from

Saturday include Tal National, a high energy band that represented the music of their country of Niger fantastically. What fun they all were to watch and dance to! We also caught about 20 minutes each of Sleepy LaBeef (Rockabilly) and Preston Shannon (Memphis Blues) between eating and catching up with friends we hadn't seen in a while. That's another favorite about the festival -- we see so many friends, coworkers and family members there! It's like a big reunion where we can have fun, eat and drink and catch up while listening to music we'd never get to hear all in one place anywhere else.

With that, we took our leftover kettle korn -- the trick is to buy plenty so you can bring some home -- and hit the road with a few more must see performances on the schedule for the next day, Sunday.

One of the highlights for Sunday was, without a doubt, the Red Trouser Show. This duo has been doing acrobatics together for many years and have been friends since 1st grade. The stunts they performed were amazing feats of strength and agility. And they were absolutely hilarious! The crowd was a sea of smiles and laughs.

Sunday we also saw the classic Indian Bharata Natyam dance and music of Kasi Aysola and Ensemble. The beauty, color and grace of the dance left us speechless and in awe. I didn't want it to end but there was more music to be had before we had to head home. We saw Wylie & the Wild

West light up the stage and my kids got the biggest kick out of them and the yodeling! I didn't tell them ahead of time what the performance would be like and they were majorly impressed and entertained. We wanted to see De Temps Antan one more time before leaving and we had just enough time to make our way through the beloved food court one more time before their performance.

A nice mid afternoon snack of potato chip fries and smoothies and we were back on our way over to Two Rivers Stage (a family favorite) to wrap up the weekend. The difference in performances between seeing them on the Railroad stage and this one was vast. It felt like we were seeing two totally different shows!

All in all, there's just so many things we love about the American Folk Festival. The community, the atmosphere, the music, the food, the crafts, running into old friends, immersing my kids in many facets of the world right along the Bangor Waterfront, dancing alongside the smiling faces of strangers bobbing their heads. Too much to mention.

And that was a wrap for us this year. We walked away with smiles on our faces and said goodbye to our friends, the Folk Festival and summer vacation taking solace in the fact that we know next week the AFF staff will be hard at work planning next years festival.

This story appeared on the American Folk Festival's official Bangor Daily News blog, Behind The Scenes At The American Folk Festival.



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE THING OF THE MOMENT

The Red Trouser Show, an acrobatic duo performing feats of strength and agility, performed several times throughout the weekend at the American Folk Festival, including near the Railroad Road, and on the street in front of the Sea Dog Brewing Company.



PHOTO BY MICHAEL C. YORK/BANGOR DAILY NEWS

A young girl enjoys fresh, hot pizza from a food vendor at the American Folk Festival in Bangor on Saturday afternoon. The Festival ran from Friday, Aug. 28 through Sunday, Aug. 30 on the Bangor Waterfront. It was the fourteenth time a folk festival has been held in Bangor.



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE THING OF THE MOMENT

A crowd gathers at the Railroad Stage, one of the four stages besides the Dance Pavilion, the Penobscot Stage and the Two Rivers Stage, at the 2015 American Folk Festival. Tens of thousands of people attend the festival each year.

The

Weekly

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