

As we cross into the month of July outdoor events are in full swing whether it's a local music series or a festival, outdoors is where the music fan wants to be. What is it that drives attendance to one or the other? Admission fees? Headliners? Radio sponsorship and/or level of advertising? Attraction to a particular venue or another, or is it a combination of all of the above? There seems to be no consistency besides whatever event is FREE is packed, regardless of the headliner or location, genre of music or quality of the acts that are performing. Does this reflect on the entitled nature of the population? Festival and concert promoters try to find the balance between anticipated attendance, cost of the talent, projected revenues and their precipitous bottom lines. Festival promoters try to put on their happy faces despite shrinking attendance figures as they put the load on the talent by paying them in tickets or a percentage of the tickets the talent sells. Concert series promoters lean heavily on beer sales when their events are listed as "free" despite parking charges and inflated drink prices. Promoters who attempt a different direction by charging a cover are shunned by the fickle crowds who have become accustomed to this "free" admission entitlement. The quality of the entertainment seems secondary, isn't this what these events are based on or is it just the event and the rest "is what it is"?

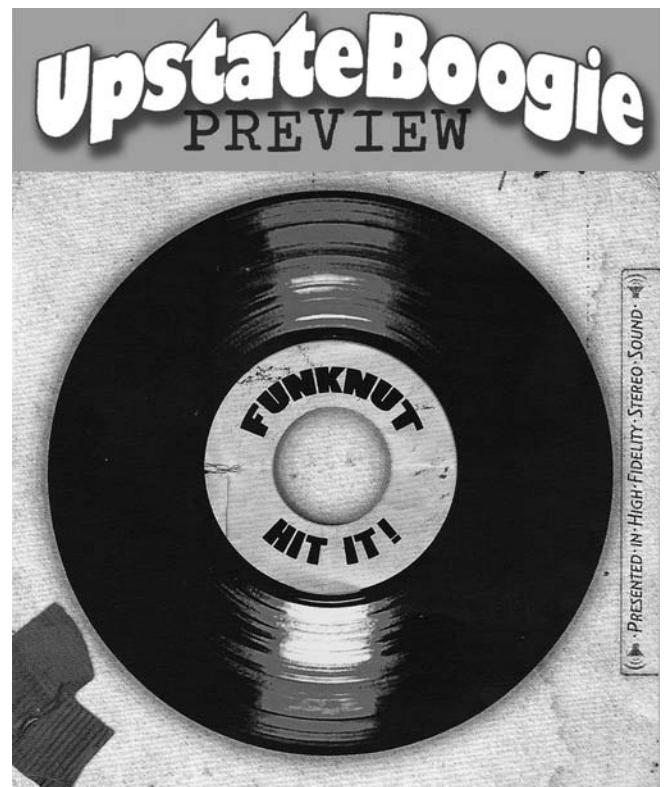
I'm personally witnessing this for the first time this year. Frankly speaking the idea of hanging out with a lot of alcohol consuming people who continually go see the same regurgitated bands over and over holds zero appeal to me. Much the same as seeing a parade of acts whose viability waned long ago and only pleases people stuck in a "Glory Days" syndrome. While I fully understand that these acts are more affordable to the promoter than ones that are currently popular, it's clear to me that this part of the equation isn't the most important to the viewing audience. The only difference is the admission fee or lack thereof. The venue is surely an arguable factor and we can see the competing promoters snipe at each other with small comments in their respective advertising schemes as well as thinly veiled false representations of who in fact is performing by all sides. The overwhelming fact is that the mindset is firmly 20 to 30 years behind the curve and the alternative is extremely over-priced groups of "talent" who are basically all doing the same thing. Is this really the best we can do? Can we expect more when we continually follow the Pavlovian path set before us? I think not, but it appears to me that the general population is so starved for entertainment that they'll attend whatever is "free" no matter what it is, choosing to spend their money on enough beer to make it palatable. I suppose the true tale of the tape is when the same act plays the opposing venue. Warrant played for free last summer at The "Hump Day" series at Inner Harbor to several thousand people while at The Regional Market Block Party this year there were several hundred. One was free, one was not, the only remaining factor unmentioned is radio support although the sponsorship at The Inner Harbor has changed invalidating this aspect.

It seems no one is willing to step outside of the box to try something different, it's too risky financially and our local promoters will continue to stay within the safe zone. There will

be opportunities to test these theories soon as bigger acts go against more mediocre offerings in the same week. I highly doubt the outcomes will vary. The promoter who tries to elevate the quality of the outdoor concert experience will probably be squashed by the lure of free admission reflecting the true position of the local music fan. Be prepared to compromise, it's the local norm, I hope it's satisfying to the collective palate. Keep choosing what's free over what isn't, what surface you stand on opposed to quality of talent and you'll be treated to more of the same over and over. It's really as simple as that and plainly as simple as the audience.

For clarity, neither UpstateLIVE Music Guide nor myself hold any vested interest in any of the local concert series'. Our interests lie far from Syracuse and encompass a completely different crowd. I've personally chosen to support one local concert series as it is trying something different, not because of the talent offerings besides one singular show. I made this decision well before the band I manage was asked to fill in at the last minute for a postponement. My participation has been strictly as a social observation and I'm not being paid for my time. Try as I may to remain objective my rage against the machine is strictly my own and I cannot argue with the successes of one event over the other. What works, works, and is consistently proven week after week, event after event, regardless of the title, talent or venue. From this point on my observations will strictly be related to the talent and quality of their performances, that is what UpstateLIVE is here for. We're about the music, which is the basis for all of these events and the real reason they exist.

(Words by Greg Jackson)



FUNKNUT “HIT IT!”

Hornell based Funknut's latest release on TinyAce Records delves deep into Tony's love for the genre. Smoothly changing tempos bolstered by Tristan and Sean's steady rhythm section provide a great foundation for Tony's swirling keyboard flourishes and Paul's staccato embellishments on the opening track "Hard To Get" and throughout the whole cd. "Tons Of Bricks" swings smooth allowing the listener to really feel the jazzy side of Funknut. "Interstellar Funk Transmission" gives Sean some room to cut it loose, driven by Tristan's signature changes. They really hit their collective stride here on "Emotions" and "Grind It", the latter's groove just calls out for movement in the hip region. Musically Tony seems to channel a bit from the P-Funk house, his tones and feel reflect the gospel influence on organ and more than a bit of Bernie Worrell in tonality when he brought the funk to Talking Heads. Vocally Tony is at his best when he lets the groove flow from inside himself rather than attempting to intentionally sound funky. Much like when a rapper needs to repeat his name for subject matter, it's best to leave the genre's name out of the actual lyric, we get it, really.

The band's real strength is in tracks like this offering's closer, "Wind Up" where you can easily anticipate an extended jam

and it certainly would be well received. This outfit has really got the funk and we want the funk! I haven't had the pleasure of seeing Funknut live, but I wager to guess the experience is where the band truly excels. Funk, much like it's brothers Jazz and Soul are almost always better live where the musicians have space to improvise and feel the audience. Funknut has everything you need and all you can hope for in a funk band, get with them when you can, it's bound to be a stone cold groove!

Funknut is:

Tony Gallicchio: Keyboards, Vocals

Tristan Greene: Drums, Vocals

Sean McLay: Bass, Vocals

Paul McArdle: Guitar, Vocals

Keep up with them via their various web exposures for news and show dates including *Upstate Boogie* among others.

www.tinyace.com/

www.myspace.com/tonygallicchio

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(Words by Greg Jackson)



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