



Red Sky Music Festival



DANIELLE BEEBE/THE WORLD-HERALD

Journey lead singer Arnel Pineda performs during the first night of the Red Sky Music Festival at TD Ameritrade Park on Monday. Journey and Night Ranger were the headliners for the inaugural festival's first day of concerts.

Off to a blazing start

BY KEVIN COFFEY | WORLD-HERALD STAFF WRITER



TODAY:
311
with Sublime with Rome
@ 6:30 p.m.

TOMORROW:
Kid Rock
with Jamey Johnson
@ 7:30 p.m.

The Red Sky Music Festival picked a red-hot day to dawn. * With temperatures already in the 90s at noon, bands took the stage playing to sparse crowds — we counted seven people near the stage for the first group, Rhythm Collective. * As the sun rose higher, more people poured into the festival grounds to see local and national bands play on two adjacent stages, though most stayed in covered areas and under trees. * The day's last two bands before the headliner, Better Than Ezra and Five For Fighting, drew the biggest crowds, as the sun was descending and shade became more plentiful. * While they were onstage outside, thousands filled the stands and infield inside TD Ameritrade Park for Journey and opener Night Ranger — and lots of singing and dancing along to the likes of "Don't Stop Believin'" and "Sister Christian."



MORE RED SKY COVERAGE ON **Pages 4 & 5**

ON THE SCENE

THE 99-DEGREE HEAT DIDN'T CAUSE THE BIGGEST PROBLEM on the first day of the first-ever Red Sky Music Festival at Omaha's TD Ameritrade Park.

A design issue did. The festival has two stages on parking lots near the ballpark. They were placed about 100 yards apart and faced slightly inward towards each other. And throughout the day, each stage was a constant swarm of activity, whether a band was playing, loading in, stripping down or doing a sound check.

All that caused problems with the sound, especially if two bands were performing at the same time. On Monday, the sound from each stage mixed together, especially if you were standing in the shaded areas between the two. What you heard there was mostly cacophony.

Both concertgoers and those involved in putting on the show found it frustrating.

See Scene: Page 5



DANIELLE BEEBE/THE WORLD-HERALD
From left, Cori Bowley, Karen Lopour, Klyn Lopour, Nikki Forrest and Teresa Rush listen to John Ondrasik of Five for Fighting outside TD Ameritrade Park.



MATT MILLER/THE WORLD-HERALD
Ali Fisher, 14, sings during Mojo Bag's Monday afternoon performance.

Fun in the sun (but more in the shade)



MATT MILLER/THE WORLD-HERALD
Emily Hephner, 8, of Arlington, Neb., dances in the mist tent during Monday's sweltering heat. Her father plays with the band Witness Tree, which was performing at Red Sky Music Festival.



DANIELLE BEEBE/THE WORLD-HERALD
Journey performs during the Red Sky Music Festival Monday night.



DANIELLE BEEBE/THE WORLD-HERALD
Fans cheer for opening-night headliner Journey at Omaha's TD Ameritrade Park.

Neal Schon of Journey takes the stage.



MATT MILLER/THE WORLD-HERALD
Gavin Harding, 10, said he had no problem with the heat while he kept cool in the shade with an iced treat.

Scene: One Red Sky souvenir offered? A hoodie

Continued from Page 1

"It's distracting," said Ashley Woodman.
"Especially if you're really wanting to listen to a band," added friend Melissa Petersen. The Omahans are Journey fans who came down early to catch some other acts.

One band's touring sound engineer, who wished to remain anonymous, said the sound was definitely a problem. The band knew in advance that sets on the two stages would overlap, he said, but not that the stages were so close.

When organizers realized the problem, they took steps to solve it. Performances by Better Than Ezra and Five for Fighting were delayed so they didn't run at the same time. And as soon as the festival moved inside the ballpark for Journey's performance, crews dismantled Stage B and rebuilt it facing away from Stage C.

It's a first-year festival," said Tom O'Gorman, vice president of corporate sales and marketing for the Metropolitan Entertainment and Convention Authority. "We identified a problem on the first day and we fixed it."

— Kevin Coffey

THE HEAT DID CAUSE CROWDS to be small, though paramedics and other officials said no major problems occurred with sickness or unruly fans.

The event kicked off at 12:01 p.m. with local reggae group Rhythm Collective playing in 90-plus-degree heat. The stage was situated on the cement parking lots near TD Ameritrade Park. Only seven people were in the immediate area of the stage, though others were wandering the festival grounds.

Crowds remained small for the local bands scheduled early in the day, while temperatures grew. Most bands drew a few dozen or less.

That started to change in midafternoon, when a couple hundred people gathered near the stage to see rock band Sister Hazel. Other fans watched from the shade of the tents.

Lead singer Ken Block may have identified the reason while he spoke to the crowd.

"We have the honor of being the first national band to play at Red Sky Music Festival," he said. Sister Hazel's popular songs include "Happy," "All For You" and "Your Winter."

Some of the band's huge fans anticipated its appearance. One group showed off autographs to another and one woman complained that the band played too early in the day.

Her suggestion?
"They should be a headliner," she said.

As the sun went down, the shade in front of Stage C got bigger. And so did the crowd. Better Than Ezra and The Fab Four attracted a few hundred fans. Even the bands noticed.

"Maybe we'll keep playing all night and when it gets dark, this place will be packed," joked Better Than Ezra's lead singer, Kevin Griffin.

— Kevin Coffey

OMAHAN LORIN GUENETTE COULDN'T RESIST Rhythm Collective's tropical beats. She left her tent seat to dance near the front of the stage, despite the oppressive heat.

This is great that Omaha bands are getting an opportunity to play in this," she said. Rhythm Collective performs every Thursday at the Foundry, a downtown bar. Guenette has become a big fan and advocate of the group. She attends the group's shows as often as she can.

Janet Stoope's later joined her on the cement dance floor.

"They're a great band," Stoope said. "I follow them around."

Stoope hopes to see more fans in the coming week.

— Josefinna Loza

RED SKY'S BIGGEST FAN appears to be Kevin Lindgren. The 34-year-old drove from Des Moines and arrived at the festival at 10:30 a.m. When the first bands started, he was positioned at the front of the stage in a red camping chair.

Lindgren camped out early to see Sister Hazel.

"I kinda follow around Sister Hazel like a Deadhead," he said. "Sometimes they'll let me in early or someone from the band will see me and get me in. It's kinda one of the perks of being a diehard."

After Monday, Lindgren has seen the band perform eight times. He planned to stay for Better Than Ezra in the late afternoon, but was headed on the two-hour drive back home before the night's headliner, Journey.

— Kevin Coffey

WHERE'D YOU PARK?
Laura Faria of Council Bluffs called parking a nightmare. She hoped she could park in a garage or at a lot that would allow re-entry.

"They wanted to charge me \$10 for parking and if I left and came back it would be another \$10," she said. "I wasn't going to do



Matthew Pohlman, 13, from La Vista, buries his head in a handkerchief to try to keep cool during Monday's opening day of the Red Sky Music Festival in and around TD Ameritrade Park. He said it helped.



Kevin Griffin of Better Than Ezra performs outside TD Ameritrade Park on Monday.

DANIELLE BEEBE/THE WORLD-HERALD

that." Instead, she plugged a meter for three hours, left for lunch and planned to return to see two of her favorite bands: Journey and Night Ranger.

"I love classic rock 'n' roll," Farris said.

She took the day off work to attend.

"It's totally worth it."

— Josefinna Loza

OMAHAN KEVINISHA HARDING, 37, found prime real estate—a shade tree — to set up her canvas folding chairs.

She sat with her 10-year-old son, Gavin, and friend Brandy Hues, who was in town visiting from California.

In just a few minutes, Witness Tree would take the stage. Harding's husband, PJ, is a band member.

Harding knew heat would determine how long she stayed at Red Sky.

To keep cool, she made sure she dressed appropriately.

"I wore as light and minimal of clothing as possible," she said. "Really, that's all you can do."

Harding sported a strapless turquoise top, white shorts and flip-flops. She topped her summery garb with a straw cowboy hat she got from a friend in Texas.

"Oh, I'm so glad she sent it to me a couple weeks ago," she said. "This is the perfect place to wear it."

Harding wasn't alone. Other fans wore skimpy sun dresses, big floppy sun hats, jean shorts and straw hats. Many guys, of course, went shirtless.

— Josefinna Loza

IT WAS A LITTLE AFTER 1 P.M. MONDAY, and the first band had already performed.

Quest banquet server Terry Kaplan stocked beer in iced tubs and served drinks to the handful of people who sat under his tent.

"After four," he said out loud, a prediction about when business would pick up.

"Being it's a blue-collar crowd, school's out and it's a Monday," Kaplan said. "We'll see it pick up after four."

Kaplan cringed at the thought of complainants stopping at his bar once the crowd got larger. He'd already heard more than one gripe about drink prices.

Kaplan said beer and cocktail prices are no more expensive than College World Series beer garden prices.

The two alcoholic beverages he sells the most of are Coors Light and Mike's Hard Lemonade.

"If you show up with \$60 in your pocket," he said, "expect to spend it."

— Josefinna Loza

HERE'S A RUNDOWN OF RED SKY beer garden prices:

A 12-ounce beer — \$4

A single (shot) cocktail — \$4

Mike's Hard Lemonade — \$7

Water — \$4

North downtown restaurant prices

A 15-ounce beer — \$4 at the Old Mattress Factory.

A single (shot) cocktail — \$3.50 at Gooding's Pizza Bar & Patio.

Water — \$3-\$4 at various locations.

Water — free on tap at all locations.

— Josefinna Loza

A DIFFERENT KIND OF BAR also attracted patrons.

The shaved-ice bar. As the temperature rose to near 100 degrees on Monday afternoon, people sought out ways to cool off from the heat.

Food vendor Matthew Faltys watched over his rainbow-colored syrup bottles from his air-conditioned cart.

Patrons chose from three cup sizes and 30 flavors. Some ate traditional shaved ice with flavors like cherry and lemonade. Others went for the more exotic blends like Granny Smith Apple, Big Juice, Piña Colada and a tart berry blend called "Jamaican Me Crazy."

Faltys, 18, said shaved ice was a hit with the College World Series crowd as well.

Red Sky food vendors also sold fries, spicy nachos, hot dogs, corn dogs, and so on. It was truly a junk-food fest.

Other random vendors: A sterling silver jeweler; an Omaha Nighthawks football team representative who collected names for an autographed football raffle; and Wake 'n Skate Boardhouse from west Omaha, which will give skate demos Tuesday through Thursday.

— Josefinna Loza

AMONG RED SKY MEMORABILIA you can buy: a \$30 grey hoodie.

On the hottest day of the year. Hmmm.

The booth had 15 hats and visors; \$10 sunglasses; \$20 pink shirts with the Red Sky logo; \$30 men's straw sun hat and \$25 "burnout" women's T-shirts, burnout meaning that distressed, thin, worn vintage look.

"The burnouts will do well,"

said Sandy McCune, a vendor with Gale Enterprises Inc., who screenprinted the items.

"And, uh . . ." She hesitated a moment before continuing. "We don't expect to sell too many of those hoodies. But who knows?"

— Josefinna Loza

THE FAB FOUR MADE ME WONDER if someone had stashed a time machine nearby.

The band is a tribute act that plays songs by the Beatles. They're so good that an announcement comes on before the band (read by magician/comedian Penn Jillette) informing the crowd that everything is performed live and nothing is pre-recorded.

In mop-top haircuts and black suits, the band took the stage with vintage instruments and stuck mostly to early Beatles tunes such as "I Want to Hold Your Hand" and "Please Please Me."

Each band member was a lookalike for his real-life counterpart down to the hair, looks and facial expressions.

"Paul" was left-handed; they all spoke with Liverpudlian accents and "George" looked eerily like a young George Harrison.

As for the music, it really would have been hard to discern between it and a Beatles record.

— Kevin Coffey

ACROSS 12TH STREET FROM THE FESTIVAL, the Old Mattress Factory gated its parking lot and built a tent.

Pete Viofi, restaurant general manager, said the outdoor tent was created to help extend its seating area and food offering.

Several outside eateries, such as Dante's Pizza, were invited to serve food.

The Old Mattress Factory cut back its food menu to about 10 traditional bar food items such as hot wings, wraps and burgers so they didn't compete with the area.

Viofi hopes to re-create the College World Series scene he had just weeks earlier.

12 Big Pops will spin jams from 11 p.m. to 1:30 a.m. throughout the week. And local band Avarticious will perform Saturday from 7 p.m. to 11 p.m.

"As the week goes on, the crowds will fill out more. Viofi said. . . . We're just pleased that we can be a part of it from the start."

— Josefinna Loza

AT 3:23 P.M., OMAHAN KATIE POLLREIS whipped her car into a vacant metered-parking spot near Gooding's Pizza Bar and Patio, 1302 Mike Faltys St.

She and two friends — Mark Meschede, 50, and Lacey Allen, 29 — hopped out.

The three had talked about attending the Red Sky Festival for nearly a month while signing and serving drinks at McFly's Tavern, 4503 Center St.

Pollreis, 23, and Meschede are bartenders who had to request the week off to attend. Pollreis will go all five festival days. Meschede will join her four out of the five.

Allen is a teacher, so she already had the time off.

They stopped in the pizza parlor to refresh their plans for the week before buying tickets to Monday's festival concert.

In the evening before the headliner, they'd keep an eye out for Lemon Fresh Day, a local cover band, who'll open for national acts Sister Hazel and Better Than Ezra.

"I'm more excited to see the festival band than I am Journey," Pollreis said. She's been a fan of Sister Hazel since, well, forever.

She's seen the Gainesville, Florida-band four times in concert.

"What I'd like to know," Pollreis said, "is why is there no band playing Saturday?"

"I heard they were trying to get Garth Brooks but couldn't," Allen said.

Meschede posed another question: If festival organizers said it takes a year to create a successful music event, then why didn't they take that year? This year's band lineup seemed a bit lackluster, he added.

"They could've made this first festival a three-day one and build from it," Meschede said. "If they don't do it well, excitement for the event will fizzle out."

— Josefinna Loza

BETTER THAN EZRA AND FIVE FOR FIGHTING offered contrasting styles for the end of Red Sky's daytime music.

Better Than Ezra is an alternative rock group and played hits such as "Good." In "The Blood" and "Extra Ordinary."

Lead singer Kevin Griffin also had a good time impersonating other singers, cracking jokes and playing songs by other bands such as the Beatles' "Here Comes The Sun," which he dedicated to the heat.

Five For Fighting is the alter ego of singer-songwriter John Ondrasik. He performed alone and alternated between piano and guitar for a quieter set.

Songs including "Supernova" were big hits with gathered fans and Ondrasik talked about his songs, sports and movies.

Even though the artists were completely different, lots of the same fans enjoyed the both acts.

— Kevin Coffey

