

excalibur

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Jazz!

by Jason Nolan

Montreal is a city where Jazz never sleeps. More than 12 hours a day of solid Jazz, seven days a week! Well, it's only one week a year, but the Montreal Jazz festival, running from June 30 to July 8, has enough events that it would take a full year to see them all, and longer to recuperate.

Coming on the heels of the death of Meech and its popular burial on St. Jean Baptiste Day, the festival could easily have been a time of tension and linguistic hostility. It is a tribute to the power of music that it was not. The fact that the majority of headlining acts (the ones you have to pay to see) were American set the tone for the festival: musicians and fans of diverse origins were united by a common passion: Jazz.

In an attempt to avoid the noise complaints of previous years, the outdoor venues were centralized in a three block area of downtown Montreal. The site, bordered by rue Clark, boul. Rene Levesque, boul. de Maisonneuve and rue de Bleury, contained 14 —count 'em, 14! — venues, of which nine were reserved for free concerts. This did not include the eight clubs grouped under the banner "Les Nuits de Montreal," which hosted mainly free concerts featuring many acts not seen at regular festival venues.

I'm not even going to try to mention all the prime acts that graced the festival this year. Past masters include the late Chet Baker and Jaco Pastorius, Ray Charles, Bobby McFerrin, Tom Waits, Ella Fitzgerald and the late Sarah Vaughan. Pat Metheny returned. After his free concert last year, at which he wowed more than 100,000 fans with the signature sounds of his synclavier, he played on a bill with, get this, musicians extraordinaire Jack DeJohnette, Herbie Hancock and Dave Holland.

continued on page 6