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# NedFest 2013: Standing strong

For second festival after death of founder, NedFest soldiers on

By Dave Kirby

A year after Michigan Mike's tie-dye-in-the-dust music fest proved it can go on without him, with a little help from his friends, NedFest still swings a pretty mean hula hoop.

When NedFest founder Michigan Mike Torpie shed this mortal coil about a year and a half ago, word went out early from his friends that they intended to see that his yearly enterprise would carry on. There was little question that keeping NedFest was probably what Torpie would have wanted; beyond that, though, NedFest had matured into a genuine community event, a kind of multi-hued sandlot block party sewing together jam and grass and funk vibes with threads of Nederland's genial weirdness.

And it wasn't necessarily the easiest thing for the festival committee, loosely consolidated as the Peak to Peak Music Education Association, to pull off. Although the committee was formed with friends and periodic NedFest collaborators of Torpie's, the guy himself was fondly recalled as a terrible delegator, keeping much of the artist relations, vendor coordinating and other key aspects of the festival under his tight and chaotically documented control.



Photo by Jay Blakesberg  
Tea Leaf Green plays at 6 p.m. Aug. 24

As an enterprise, NedFest largely existed in the nano-realms between Torpie's head and his famously battered clipboard.

But last year, as if keeping the festival going without Torpie wasn't struggle enough, the PPMEA had at least a couple of other complications to manage. The U.S. Pro Cycling Challenge, Colorado's shiny new bike race, was scheduled to burn its way up Boulder Canyon on the festival's Saturday, threatening a Roland Emmerich-worthy traffic event; bikes and cops and barricades and 20-year-old Subarus all competing for their share of Boulder Canyon's notoriously meager real estate.

They managed to finesse that, for the most part.

But a bit more worrying was the parallel scheduling of Yonder Mountain String Band's two-day Kinfolk Celebration down at Planet Bluegrass in Lyons, coinciding with Nedfest's Friday and Saturday shows. That one raised some eyebrows, but PPMEA Secretary Kristen McFarland largely shrugs it off as an unfortunate scheduling oversight,



not, as some suggested, a brazen exercise in audience poaching, especially by a big-draw act that made its early bones in part playing Torpie's fledgling NedFest shows a decade earlier.



Gipsy Moon | Courtesy photo

"You know," explains McFarland, "in the end, I found out from Yonder's agent that that was totally inaccurate, totally unintentional. It hurt them and it hurt us, it hurt everybody. ... They didn't get as much audience as they would have, and we didn't as much audience as we would have. It hurt us, though. I definitely moved away from booking the bluegrass [acts] that Saturday, but either way, I still think we would have had 400 more people."

Still, even though last year's show didn't break even, they managed to squeeze out a small grant for an afterschool music teacher for Nederland's Teen Center, and all is good in the Yonder/NedFest world, as Yonder mando player Jeff Austin is playing this year's Sunday bill.

In fact, Austin's Sunday set lines up just before the festival's closer, Dr. Ralph Stanley, who appears with his Clinch Mountain Boys. Now in his 87th year and beyond question one of bluegrass music's most fundamental artists, Stanley is a fitting headliner for a festival that consistently draws deep for both acoustic and (Torpie's obsession) funk acts. (The Funky Meters play Saturday night.) Filling out the marquee, though, isn't always as easy as it looks. NedFest has always provided a good stage for local artists, but picking and choosing carefully between local acts in their ascendancy (who haven't already been over-exposed through regular club gigs) and bigger acts that the small festival can actually afford is a delicate and usually thankless exercise.

McFarland is taking it in stride.

"It is such a matter of perspective," McFarland laughs. "I am really learning to let stuff roll off me. Last year, depending on their taste, some would say, 'Oh, I don't like who you have booked', and this year, again depending on their preference, people would say, 'Oh I don't like who you have booked...' It just all depends on your taste, you know? I had one lady at the grocery store say to me, 'What? Nobody's headlining this year?'"

Mike Torpie's parents made the trip last year to show their support and appreciation for the PPMEA and NedFest's continued success. McFarland says Torpie's dad Russ had back surgery recently, and they won't be able to make the trip this year.

"I think they had a good time last year. Mike's mom was a little up and down I think, but his dad definitely had a ball. We were so glad that they came, to see what their son had given all of us."

And according to McFarland, it's probably beyond the point whether NedFest's continued existence is even a question.

"The event kind of had its own inertia even before Mike passed. I'd say it's safe to say it will be around in the future."



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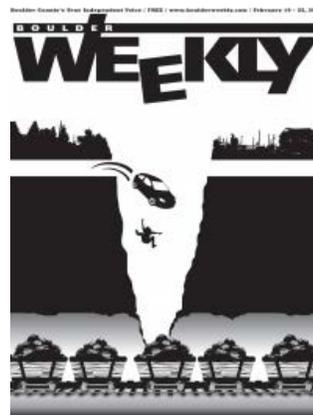
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The crowd at a previous NedFest

**NedFest 2013 Lineup**

Friday, Aug. 23

- 5:30 p.m. — Gates open
- 6 p.m. — Whitewater Ramble
- 7:30 p.m. — Tweener by Caribou Mountain Collective
- 8 p.m. — Mountain Standard Time
- 10 p.m. — Late night with Magic Beans

Saturday, Aug. 24

- 11:30 a.m. — Gates open
- 12 p.m. — Danny Shafer and the 21st Century
- 1:30 p.m. — Tweener by Teen Center Teens
- 2 p.m. — The Congress
- 3:30 p.m. — Tweener by Jaden Carlson
- 4 p.m. — Euforquestra
- 5:30 p.m. — Tweener TBA
- 6 p.m. — Tea Leaf Green
- 8 p.m. — Funky Meters
- 10:30 p.m. — Late night with Smooth Money Gesture

Sunday, Aug. 25

- 10:30 a.m. — Gates open
- 11 a.m. — Gipsy Moon with special guest Vince Herman of Leftover Salmon
- 12:30 p.m. — Tweener by No Go Gillbillies
- 1 p.m. — Ridnell Van Meter featuring Grammy winner Sally Van Meter
- 2:30 p.m. — Tweener by Monocle
- 3 p.m. — Drew Emmitt Band (of Leftover Salmon)
- 4:30 p.m. — Tweener by Birds of Chicago
- 5 p.m. — Jeff Austin (of Yonder Mountain String Band) and Friends, featuring Danny Barnes
- 7 p.m. — Dr. Ralph Stanley and his Clinch Mountain Boys
- 9:30 p.m. — Late night with Birds of Chicago

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