

Music Reviews, or How NELA Partied the Summer Away

by Tim Tritch

From Latin Jazz and techno to rock 'n roll and experimental fusion, the parks and streets were filled in August with great bands and musicians.

8/14: Sgt. Pepper, the Beatles tribute band, rocked the crowd at Concerts in the Park in the Eagle Rock Recreation Center. It clearly didn't matter that many in the audience weren't yet born when the Beatles music first came out (or even when the group disbanded in 1970 for that matter). The Beatles aren't classic rock, they're timeless.

The show, sponsored by The Uptown Gay and Lesbian Alliance, included the Beatles' early hits like A Hard Day's Night, I Wanna Hold Your Hand, Eight Days A Week, Can't Buy Me Love; it also covered the middle years with songs including Day Tripper, We Can Work It Out, Eleanor Rigby, Taxman; and the later years with Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band, Hey Jude, Let It Be. You've probably got the tunes in your head just reading the song titles! To call the concert special and successful is an understatement.

8/20 and 8/21: The annual Latin Jazz and Music Festival, sponsored by Councilmember Gil Cedillo, took over Sycamore Park in Highland Park. The festival included the stars of L.A.'s jazz world - Plaza De La Raza, Andy Vargas & The Souleros, the Gilbert Castellano Latin Jazz Project - and, more than holding their own among those greats, the Bravo High School Latin Jazz Ensemble of Boyle Heights. The high schoolers' youth added energy to their music as they played off each other and, in true jazz fashion, drew from the other acts, including an especially spirited performance by the Gilbert Castellano Latin Jazz Project that had the crowd dancing

from the first note to the last.

8/20: The 17th Eagle Rock Music Festival, put on by the Center for the Arts, had eight stages and over 40 bands, slightly scaled back in size from previous years, but not in musical energy and ambition.

There was something for every taste, including stages devoted to Blues and Jazz, Experimental music, Americana, Family acts and even a Subtropical Stage, featuring bands with that island feel, including Kotolan and La Chandra.

And yet, amid all that variety, the Locals Stage stood out. And one band, in particular, owned it: The V.U., a trio of young rockers from NELA including Alison Bews, her sister Emily Bews and their lifelong friend, Emily Polis, have been playing together for 10 years - and the oldest one, Alison, is only 19! The V.U. is now a polished rock 'n roll band with great stage presence and excellent musical skills. If there had been an award for Most Killer Guitar of the festival, the winner would have been the 1992 Tennessee Rose Gretsch that Alison was playing - her dad's guitar, it turns out.

Another outstanding act on the Locals Stage, Salt Petal, delivered high energy rock, great vocals with a Latin flavor and some screaming lead guitar for good measure.

And - in the middle of it all - Guns N' Roses returned to Dodger Stadium for two performances! The perennial bad boys of rock did not disappoint, playing a set of their hits, including, Sweet Child O' Mine, Paradise City, Knocking On Heaven's Door, Mr. Brownstone and, into the mix, a rockin' version of The Who's classic, The Seeker. A little bit bigger, a little bit older, GnR still rocks!

Reaching Out, Giving Back and Volunteering

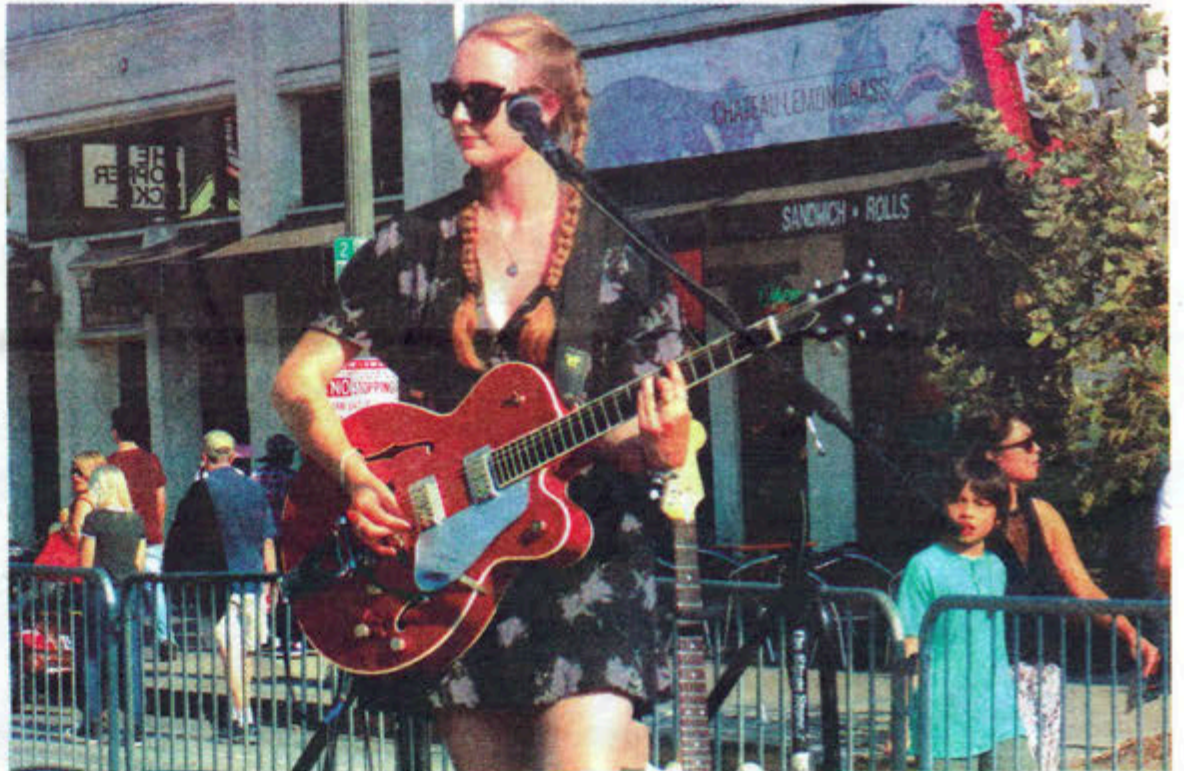
The summer concerts were a chance for community groups to tell others what they have to offer, for local businesses to pitch in and for volunteers to make it all happen.

There were booths at the Latin Jazz and Music Festival with volunteers providing information on the Historic Highland Park Neighborhood Council, the Arroyo Seco Neighborhood Council, Montecito Heights Community Emergency Response Team, Los Angeles Boys and Girls Club and Soledad Enrichment Action, a non-profit that provides educational mentoring, job training and other services to improve lives. This is the third year of the Festival, and the community groups have been a big part of the action each time. It certainly looks like a great new tradition is growing in Highland Park.

At the Eagle Rock Music Festival, a Comedy Stage was set up inside The Coffee Table restaurant (1958 Colorado Boulevard, at Shearin Avenue), so festival-goers could get their laugh on in between catching the music performances. The guys at Rantz Auto, Jesse Nuno and Anthony Antunez, hosted the Subtropical Stage and gave away free tacos and soft drinks from a taco truck they hosted in front of their shop (located at 1941 Colorado Boulevard, at Shearin Avenue).

Matthew Himes, the Events Coordinator at the Center for the Arts said there needs to be a big shout out to the many volunteers who make the Eagle Rock Music Festival work. "This event would not happen without the volunteers," he said. Kudos to all.

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Alison Bews, of The V.U., performing at the Locals Stage, rocked the crowd on her dad's '92 Tennessee Rose Gretsch guitar.



Families and friends take over Colorado Boulevard for a night of music, food and just plain fun.



The V.U.'s Emily Bews on bass (left), older sister Alison Bews on guitar (right), and lifelong friend Emily Polis on drums (center).



Mostly Kosher performed a blend of Jewish cultural music, with elements of modern rock 'n roll thrown in to at the Women's 20th Century Club.



The Gilbert Castellano Latin Jazz Project had the dance floor packed with its high energy Latin beat.



Doris Sanchez and Steven Ray tore up the dance floor and had a wonderful time.



Salt Petal performed a rock 'n roll set at the Locals Stage that had the audience literally dancing in the streets.