

The Chronicle Goes VIP At Mile High Music Festival

by Laura Loeff

The staff of the *Chronicle* had the VIP experience at the *Mile High Music Festival* this year. While music festivals are always a good idea in theory — seeing lots of music in the summertime over just a few days — there are many details that need to be considered. If the venue is far away then a road trip is necessary; if camping is allowed then concertgoers want to make sure to get a good spot and have all the nec-

essary supplies; everything is expensive so lots of cash must be brought and attire is also something to be careful about depending on the weather. Since it's the summer the temperatures will most likely be extremely hot which means drinking a lot of water to stay hydrated which means more money and more trips to the bathroom. Either way, the details matter and this year, Mile High Music Festival figured out a way to make the festival-going experience a lot more upscale by adding VIP tickets to the mix.



Best Yet: Cooler temperatures and a more organized setup made this year the best so far for the music festival.

The excitement began a few weeks before the festival when the VIP package arrived in the mail as it included tickets, wristbands, parking passes and a list of all the cool things being a VIP has to offer. When it was time to actually go to the festival we were very much looking forward to what our VIP adventure would be like. From the minute we arrived it was clear that VIP was definitely the way to go as it allowed us to park closer, provided several private shaded tents, private, air conditioned bathrooms (worth every penny), a cell phone charging station, plush seating, reduced food and drink prices, complimentary massage and esthetician services, and most importantly, premium viewing areas at each stage. It also gave us a relaxing home base to come back to after exploring the rest of the festival which definitely found its stride this summer after a few missteps over the past two years.

Lineups Make The Difference
In its inaugural year (2008) the Denver area's first musical festival boasted huge names like the Black Crowes, Dave Matthews Band, Steve Winwood and the unparalleled Tom Petty. Unfortunately the event took place on the two hottest days of the summer which resulted in exhaustion, dehydration and two very long days. There were also some organizational issues that needed to be addressed and the general layout of the venue was not particularly done well. That being said, the festival was a suc-

cess due the level of talent that was booked. Unfortunately, the next year (2009) the festival promoters did not make smart choices when booking the talent. The headliners were hippie-dippy jam band Widespread Panic and mosh or die metal band Tool. To be fair, both bands have a ton of fans but the fans couldn't be more different which creates a problem when you're trying to have a cohesive group of people attend a two-day festival. The numbers didn't lie and the second year of Mile High Music Festival was nowhere near as successful as the first.

When this year's lineup was released it was clear that the promoters learned from their mistakes. Headliners Dave Matthews Band (making a return from 2008) and Jack Johnson were solid choices for a music festival held in Colorado. Dave Matthews Band is one of the most successful touring



Pleased Crowd: The masses gathered to spend the weekend at Mile High Music Festival which found its stride in its third year.

acts of all time (Pollstar's number one touring act of the decade for 2000-2009) grossing nearly \$530 million. Surfer turned songwriter Jack Johnson is also known for his summer tours and his laid-back acoustic sets are usually crowd pleasers. But the talent didn't stop with the headliners. The lineup featured over 40 exciting acts performing on five stages including Steve Miller Band, Train, Cypress Hill, the Samples and Jimmy Cliff.

This Year's Festival

On Saturday, the Samples were a great old school way to kick off the festival and it was fun seeing Blues Traveler's John Popper play harmonica. Hip-hop group Cypress Hill was surprisingly fun as they played hits like "Insane In The Brain," "Hits From The Bong" and "Dr. Greenthumb." The army of medical marijuana card-carriers at the festival were vocally appreciative when the band made a huge spectacle about marijuana as they smoked joints and pulled out a bong that was over six feet high.

Apparently Steve Miller Band is no longer considered a headliner for music festivals these days but you wouldn't know it from their performance. Playing all the classics like "Take The Money And Run," "Living In The U.S.A.," "Fly Like An Eagle" and "Rock'n Me," the band rocked the audience to its core. The excitement created reached a crescendo when they were joined by Jack Johnson for "The Joker" and then Steve Miller encoored with "Jungle Love."

On Sunday, our day began with reggae legend Jimmy Cliff. Even at 62-years-old he

is no rock band geezer, as he treated us to gems like "The Harder They Come" and "I Can See Clearly Now." We then watched pop-rock band Train belt out their hits such as "Meet Virginia" and "Drops Of Jupiter," along with some new songs. At one point, Train lead singer Patrick Monahan demanded that all the "hot girls" join him on stage which was nothing short of a scene. While Saturday was well attended, the fields at *Dick's Sporting Goods* were packed to watch the main headliner, The Dave Matthews Band, on Sunday.

In addition to some unforgettable music the logistics of Mile High Music Festival were much better this year than they were in the past. The stages, tents, vendors and booths were better positioned and closer together leaving less dead space in the middle of the festival. It also helped that the event was scheduled in the middle of August rather than the middle of July which gave us temperatures that were 20 degrees cooler. One aspect that I was glad didn't change is one of the biggest reasons people attend music festivals: the impromptu collaborations between artists that normally would not happen. Seeing John Popper jump in with the Samples and Jack Johnson singing with Steve Miller Band was very cool and I'm sure something I'll never see again.

All things considered, 2010 was a great year for Mile High Music Festival — maybe even the best year yet. It was very smart of the promoters to offer VIP tickets and I hope it's a trend that will continue. I also hope the promoters maintain their ability to attract topnotch acts because if so, this festival will be around a long time.



Big Talent: Denver music fans were delighted to see top acts such as Train, left, and Steve Miller Band joined by Jack Johnson at this year's festival.

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