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Brass sounds fill Festival Fair Day

Bourbon Street Strutters play for, tell jokes to audience

By NATALIE DeBRUIN
EG Correspondent

LANCASTER — Melissa Raymer was looking for a place to bottle-feed her baby, but she found more than that when she stumbled upon the Bourbon Street Strutters stage show Saturday.

The Strutters, a Springfield-based big-brass ensemble, made their Lancaster Festival debut as part of Festival Fair Day at the Fairfield County Fairgrounds.

The band comprises four members. Jerry Steinke on saxophone and vocals, Lynn Fullerton on trumpet and vocals, Phil Bohay on banjo and Aaron Jackson on tuba and vocals.

"I thought they sounded good," Raymer said.

"I liked the costumes," she added about the performers' red vests. "They drew my attention ... And they had good personality."

"Hello, antique music lovers!" Steinke called to the crowd before introducing the band's second song: "The Chicken Dance."

"We got the little ones to dance a bit, and that was kind of fun," Steinke said. He said the band tailors what to play based on the audience. "I kind of watch the crowd, see who's there," he said.

This attitude was reflected in the band's openness to requests from the audience, as they played such songs as "The Entertainer" and "This Land is Your Land."

"If you have any songs you'd like to hear, if we know 'em, we'll play 'em. If we don't know, we won't play 'em," Steinke said to the audience.

"There's a gentleman right here looking at me and shaking his head like, 'What kind of idiot is this?'"

Between songs, the Strutters cracked jokes and coaxed chuckles from the crowd.

"Did you hear this week that the composer of the 'Hokey-Pokey' died? It was kind of an unusual situation ... They were laying him out in the casket.

"You know, the audience was-

n't just the people who were sitting here. It's everybody that walks by or stands by. Anywhere they go, anywhere around here, they can hear it."

"Everybody has just been raving, 'Where do these guys come from, New Orleans?' And I said, 'Yeah, we just brought 'em up on a riverboat.'" Festival volunteer Phil Walker joked.

"They just gave us a middy tempo lift with their strong brass presentation."

Although the Bourbon Street Strutters sometimes do stage shows like these, more often they walk while they play.

"This group, basically, is a strolling group," Steinke said. "We'll walk around the crowds and harass people and play and things like that. That's kind of a fun thing."

Steinke said that the day had gone smoothly.

"Everyone's friendly," he said. "Everybody is very cooperative. It's all a matter of cooperation, communication and teamwork."

Most importantly, the band shared its old big-brass sound with listeners.

"Sometimes (the music is) forgotten, but it's still there," Steinke said the crowd. "Kind of like an ex-wife."



The Bourbon Street Strutters perform during The Lancaster Festival's Festival Fair Day on Saturday at the Fairfield County Fairgrounds. The band played big-brass music for festivalgoers. E-G photo by Carl Burnett Jr.

Today's Festival Schedule

- 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.: Antiques Show and Sale, Zane Square, free admission
- 12 p.m.: Mark and Wendy, Kroger on East Main Street, free, acoustic trio
- 1 to 2 p.m.: Bob Ford and the Ragamuffins, Bandstand, free, golden oldies from the 1950s to the 1970s
- 1:30 p.m.: Women in the Arts Symposium, Ohio University Lancaster Campus Wilkes Gallery, 5th Floor, free, interactive discussion with Maya Beiser, Joan Morris and Nancy Crow
- 2 p.m.: The Zinna, Bandstand, free, hand-picked bluegrass tunes
- 2 p.m.: Hilltop Quartet, Fairfield Medical Center, free, barber-shop, gospel and more
- 2 p.m.: Mark and Wendy, Kroger on Memorial Drive, free
- 4 p.m.: Chamber Music, Almost Human with Maya Beiser, cello, OLU's Wagner Theatre, Adult \$15, student/child \$10

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Sun, Mar 24, 2019