

An All Together Pleasant Experience

by Kevin Walsh

What began as a sluggish start to the weekend caught in traffic transitioned in to a delightful festival experience brimming with musical discovery. Upon our arrival there was an incredulous buzz about the place. Though it was still early on a nice sunny Friday evening, sounds from all walks of music could be heard in different directions, youths were enthusiastically taking pictures to solidify the memories of what was to come and the endorphin inducing aromas of sweet and savoury foods were rampant.

Initially we found ourselves strolling around taking in all there was to see in the main festival area, from the booming club sounds of the Samsung Maze to the vastness of the main stage and the smaller venues like Schweppes Sessions which emanated a small bar like vibe. There was a wide assortment of food available in the main areas of the festival including sweet snacks like donuts, churros, cheesecakes and ice cream and of the savoury variety there were options galore after the standard pizzas, burgers and chips, you also had curries, vegan cuisine, Asian food, Canadian poutine, Mexican among numerous others but not to forget our very own Tastes of Waterford tent. Every craving was catered for.

The first music act we saw was Ships an electronic band from Dublin in the Road to Nowhere tent. The duo started out with ambient sounds reminiscent of Boards of Canada and rounded out their set with some funky tunes that felt unique. We thoroughly enjoyed Ships sticking around for the entire set before making our way to catch the end of Fontaines D.C. at the main stage. We arrived just in time to catch their hit tune "Boys in the Better Land", which really had the crowd going. Afterwards we sidled over to the Schweppes Sessions where we encountered Five to Two an Irish jazz group from Dublin. It was a great change of pace to see young Irish people embracing jazz, a normally downplayed genre in Irish music culture. The sounds and synergy between the band members on stage was encapsulating so we decided to stick around for the remainder of their performance.

We started Saturday evening with an amazing show put on by Argentinian-Swedish indie folk singer-songwriter and guitarist José González. Though I only knew "Far Away" by him going in (which he didn't play), I was pleasantly surprised with how much more I enjoyed his performance than expected. I would most certainly attend a concert of his in the future should I get the chance. The combination of his soulful voice and guitar playing was sublime and no amount of rain was going to change that. We then departed to get some drinks and listened to the end of Papa Rua an Irish musician based out of Meath who played tributes with his band of several great tunes like "Use Me" from Bill Withers and "You Won't See Me" by The Beatles. One couldn't help but think the crowd would have been more receptive and grooving to the nice sounds in the main area if not so preoccupied with seeking shelter from the rain under the marquees. After meeting with some friends for a period it was onward to the main stage to catch Hot Chip a well known electronic band from the UK who exploded out of the gate with a mesmerising performance of "Huarache Lights". They drew a huge crowd and the laser lights and overall atmosphere their act presented was unparalleled from any other I'd seen thus far making them easily one of the highlights of the festival. Their biggest hit "Over and Over" came towards the end which was met with tumultuous reaction from the crowd.

Overall I'd say the festival was a huge success and cast a light on many up and coming young Irish artists that many would likely not know of otherwise and whom I'll continue to listen to moving forward. Looking forward to next year!