



monday, october 19, 2009

Albino Skunk Bluegrass Festival



I went to the Albino Skunk Bluegrass Festival in Greer, SC this weekend, and it exceeded my expectations. I used to have quite a romantic idea of what a bluegrass festival was like, until I started going to a few, but the ASBF really took me back to what I hoped it was all going to be about.

We couldn't leave town until late on Friday, we got there just before 9pm. It was dark and raining and the parking lot was a muddy field - but no so bad that I couldn't park pretty easily. We walked down the hill and between a stand of bamboo and some trees we could see fires lit and smoking in the rain. I'm not good at estimating crowds, but there were probably about 100 people around the stage and several dozen more hanging out under cover. People were camping in tents nearby, and everyone had brought their kids and their dogs. The band I really came all that way to see, the Infamous Stringdusters, came on at 9pm. Even though there was no cover near the stage I had to go down there and stand in the pouring rain to hear them along with all the other folks. The Stringdusters were excited to be there - they are all excellent musicians in their own right, but they work together so well. Jesse Cobb on Mandolin, Andy Falco on guitar, I don't think I should need to say more. Jeremy Garret's fiddle work is totally distinctive and right on. They created a great atmosphere, and that along with the falling rain, the bonfires, and the excitement of the fans made it well worth the trip just for that set. I suppose you might see a better bluegrass band in your lifetime, but the odds are not in your favor.

We stayed the following day, and saw the Steep Canyon Rangers (just off their tour with Steve Martin), Junior Sisk and Rambler's Choice (awesome straight ahead bluegrass), and Town Mountain (well worth checking out), among an assortment of other bands - a few with electric instruments and doing country or roots type music rather than strict bluegrass, but the mix was enjoyable.

If you were only ever going to go to one bluegrass festival, then you know I think I would make it the Albino Skunk. You couldn't really do better. It was kind of rainy and kind of cold, but it just added to the great atmosphere. The crowd was enthusiastic and well behaved, and it didn't hurt that you are allowed to bring your own cooler filled with whatever makes you happy for the show. The only thing that was missing was some off-stage jamming. I hope the organizers will do more to encourage that in future. Maybe next year...



Rambler's Choice



Steep Canyon Rangers



Town Mountain

posted by david mold at 11:10 am

welcome

I'm a student of bluegrass mandolin in between being a beginner and being someone who can really play. This blog is to share my ideas and discoveries with anyone who's in a similar position.

I live in Decatur, Georgia, USA.



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- Bluegrass Bonanza Band
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- Mandolin Cafe
- Buncombe String Band
- TablEdit tablature editor
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