



moe. @ Central park Summerstage

It's not easy to attract a new audience without alienating the old one, especially for a decade-old improv-oriented band with an obsessively dedicated following. But the five guys in Moe—or as they prefer it, moe.—couldn't care less about toeing that line: After all, the unpredictability of sudden stylistic swerves is one of the appeals of jam bands such as this. But what happens when the path of stylistic experimentation leads you into the land of poppy rock songs and radio-length singles? In Moe's case, at least, the fans just keep cheering you on.

Consider two of the group's gigs at this year's New Orleans Jazz Festival. One was a Saturday-night marathon that ran from 3 to 7:30am in a small, dark club packed with diehards; the other, a concise 55-minute Sunday-afternoon set at the Louisiana Fairgrounds, opening for local heroes the Radiators—two significantly different crowds. The first show consisted of long, intense grooves; the second was a five-song sampler, offering old and new cuts condensed into palatable mainstream-ish mini versions that even jam junkies enjoyed. Yet the set was just short enough to make many Radiators fans wish Moe had played longer.

To accomplish such divergent feats, the group arms itself with an extensive repertoire of stylistically varied originals, along with covers like Zappa's "San Ber'dino," Aerosmith's "Sweet Emotion," Camper Van Beethoven's "Take the Skinheads Bowling" and Big Country's "In a Big Country." The audience mix at Central Park may be as challenging as New Orleans (and Woodstock '99 before that), but this group is more than up to the task.

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