

Concert Report: Rise Against returns to West Palm Beach after controversy

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Tim McIlrath of Rise Against. Photo by Lorraine Schwartz.

Though the title "Collapse (Post-Amerika)" suggests an angry tirade is about to come your way, [Rise Against](#) vocalist Tim McIlrath happily smiled as he sang their opening song to a sea of fans boiling in the afternoon heat during downtown West Palm Beach's [Sunfest 2010](#).



Photo by Lorraine Schwartz

This past Saturday marked the Chicago punk rock band's first visit back to West Palm Beach, Florida since the cancellation of their scheduled performance at radio station WPBZ's "Buzz Bake Sale" concert in December. Going by the crowd's enthusiastic response, they were glad to finally have the band in town. And judging from McIlrath's words of gratitude, the guys were excited to play for the Floridians.

Just before launching into "Long Forgotten Sons", McIlrath said: "Last year somebody at a radio station here tried to boycott Rise Against for standing up for what we believe. But they underestimated the Rise Against fans that are here in West Palm Beach. West Palm, you have forever linked yourself to Rise Against and we have forever linked ourselves to this city right here. So this story is a happy story. It's a story not of us, but of you—the audience, the music fans—who stood up and said 'Give me a f***ing break! We wanna hear Rise Against!'"

Though the band made an [official statement](#) on their site upon the announcement of the Buzz Bake Sale cancellation, many people still mistook their actions as a sign of disrespect towards the troops. For those who who didn't understand the back-out, perhaps listening to McIlrath explain their controversial single "[Hero Of War](#)" might shed some light on where the band is coming from when they make such decisions: "It's not a story of all soldiers, but it is a story of some soldiers. This song came out of some honest conversations that some people wanted to have about the war, and I suggest if you want to have an honest conversation about the war, ask somebody who's been there. Don't trust the Super Bowl commercial, don't trust the military recruiters, don't trust the institutions that have sent our families to fight. Ask the soldiers themselves because they have a whole different story to tell."

Over the course of an hour, the band played a nice dose anthemic punk rock for the Rise loyalists including "Ready to Fall", "Re-Education (Through Labor)", and "The Good Left Undone" as well as hits "Savior" and "The Dirt Whispered." As they launched into "Intro/Chamber the Cartridge", McIlrath made note of the [West Palm Beach Police protests](#) outside of the Sunfest entrance gate on Clematis Street: "Some people ask me, does protest work? Does activism work? I bet those police out there have been to more about protests than anyone in the world, and they know it works!"

The foursome (which is rounded out by guitarist Zach Blair, bassist Joe Principe and drummer Brandon Barnes) also played the acoustic favorite "[Swing Life Away](#)", before which McIlrath remarked "It's rare that I get an opportunity to sing a song that involves palm trees in the lyrics and play it in a perfect field of palm trees. It's beautiful- the air, the water, the people...!", referring to the gorgeous landscape of the park where the Bank of America stage was situated, and the Sunfest crowds strolling waterside. Towards the end of the set, they dedicated one of their first singles "[Give It All](#)" to the fans, pointing out that one individual down in the front row was so hardcore he drove from New Jersey to be at Sunfest, one of the few US dates Rise Against will be playing for awhile. Next up on their US schedule will be Rock on the Range in Columbus, OH, then the mega-festival Bonnaroo in Manchester, TN.



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