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Concert review: Bamboozle 2012 takes over Asbury Park

This weekend the quaint beachside town of Asbury Park, NJ was transformed into a musical feast for the eyes and ears as this year's [Bamboozle](#) Festival rolled into town and took over the boardwalk. Visitors from around the globe journeyed to the small oceanside haven, where the great Bruce Springsteen kickstarted his career, to see a variety of performers play seven stages set up in the town square, the beach, Ocean Avenue and inside Convention Hall. Musical acts ranged from Nintendo pop band Anamanaguchi to DJ Riddler to alt-rockers Incubus to Ska greats Less Than Jake to arena rockers [Bon Jovi](#). Other offerings included Sailesh the Uncensored Hypnotist and Cavalcade Of The Odd, plus a slew of vendors offering various carnival food and merchandise.





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While people tweeted out the fabulous time they had on Friday getting crazy to Skrillex, there was some stress due to the sold out crowd on Saturday. Traffic heading into Monmouth, where the shuttle parking lot was located, saw a normally 10-15 minute journey take just over 90 minutes. However, once on the shuttle premises, lines were manageable enough that the wait to get onto the bus weren't very long and busses traveled traffic-free to the festival grounds. On the other side of town, though a train was held up on Friday causing some delay, people reported smooth service on the packed NJ Transit trains by Saturday afternoon.

There were a few incidents at the festival of course, including one situation where a near lifeless girl had to be fished out of the gigantic Main Stage crowd Sunday night to be attended to for excessive drinking. Other scuffles in the audience due to perceived personal space infringements were reported as well. But that's all to be expected in such a large crowd where many are partying it up all day and night and become overprotective of their good viewing spots in a general admission situation.

The main buzz of the festival on Saturday was about headliners

Foo Fighters playing an unusually early 7:30 set so they could helicopter back up to Manhattan to perform as Mick Jagger's backup band on Saturday Night Live's season finale. Also, DJ Pauly D of "Jersey Shore" fame did a set at the Temple of Boozle stage inside Convention Hall, but many fans were shut out due to the limited capacity of the indoor stage. So as you can imagine, many Jersey Shore enthusiasts were disappointed that they couldn't catch a glimpse of the famous reality star do his thing.

Those who didn't want to get lost in the sea of bodies on the beach or inside the Hall headed over to one of the many other stages where other bands were ready to entertain. Less Than Jake raised a ruckus, followed by [Hot Water Music](#) who gave an electric performance before going on to sell out Monday and Tuesday night shows in Manhattan at the Blender Theater at Gramercy this week.

Sunday night was all about Bon Jovi. Many superfans traveled from all over, including some who flew from Spain, to catch the local Jersey heroes play on the beach. Reminiscing about his time starting out in the area, singer Jon Bon Jovi mentioned how Asbury was quite a scene in the late 70's, name checking The Fast Lane where the rocker got his start. Earlier in the day, Jersey's latest fast-rising export [The Gaslight Anthem](#) played a stellar set to a somewhat subdued crowd who were clearly there to see the elder statesmen Bon Jovi, even though The Gaslight Anthem also hails from the same area as the arena giants. Singer Brian Fallon teased the crowd "You better not be like this for Bon Jovi!"

The Jovi crowd was seemingly unfamiliar with not only The Gaslight

Anthem, but also [Buckcherry](#) whose singer Josh Todd shocked many crowd members with his graphically hilarious stage banter before introducing their wildly popular song "Crazy Bitch". [Brand New](#), who also seemed slightly lost on the older crowd, ended their set with a classic drum-trashing after a brilliant performance that included a wicked cover of Nine Inch Nails' "Wish." Though the other bands on the Main Stage all put on great sets and had small factions of their fanbase in attendance, the Bon Jovi fans ruled the day, taking up most of the front section of the barricade, where they hung handwritten tributes to the band on homemade banners.

By the time Bon Jovi hit the stage, needless to say, their fans were ready to rock. Opening with the classic "Raise Your Hands" off their first major hit album "Slippery When Wet", the band delivered on the promise to play all their hits which included "You Give Love A Bad Name", "Keep The Faith", "Wanted Dead or Alive", "I'll Be There For You", "It's My Life", "Livin' On A Prayer" and even reached back to the early days with "Runaway."

Looking and sounding great, Jon Bon Jovi is the consummate frontman and knows his band has its act together. After recognizing there were other great bands at Bamboozle, specifically mentioning Foo Fighters and The Gaslight Anthem, Jon shrugged off the challenge of following such great acts saying "We've got nothing to prove." He also mentioned that Bamboozle was on the smaller side of the audiences they play for these days, as they normally play "behemoth" gigs at places like Giants Stadium.

Overall the guys seemed to enjoy playing for their hometown

crowd, grinning at them throughout the set. Ending the show with a group bow, the band's stage exit was promptly followed by a fireworks display, sending Bamboozlers home with a smile.

Check out my slideshow on the left for photos from the show, with additional shots [here](#). Follow me on Twitter at [@ConcertExaminer!](#)