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Concert recap: first annual Food Truck & Rock Carnival rocks New Jersey

Since [the demise](#) of New York City's 92.3 K-Rock and its annual Dysfunctional Family Picnic in the mid 2000's, it's been difficult, if not impossible, to find a true festival with an all-Rock bill local to the NY/NJ area. Finally, after way too long of a Rock fest absence, the creative partnership of John D'Esposito of GameChanger, Larry Fishman of Top Wave Entertainment and Stan Levinstone of SLP Concerts (all New Jersey based firms) brought the First Annual Food Truck and Rock Carnival to Oak Ridge Park in Clark, NJ last weekend.

In the past, it would have been hard to imagine heavier bands on the same bill as glam-influenced metal groups. It seemed people were always on one side of the Metal fence or the other, giving each other disapproving looks in school hallways and malls across America based on what band t-shirt they were wearing. If a band wore too much hairspray and eyeliner, they weren't hard enough. If they didn't wear makeup, they were too uninteresting. Etcetera. But in 2015, at the Food Truck and Rock Carnival, there was no such tension. The two main stages featured mighty acts like Anthrax, Black Label Society, Godsmack and Clutch. On the opposite side of the concert field, the Birch Hill Stage (named in honor of the

[now-defunct](#) Birch Hill rock nightclub that was located in nearby Old Bridge) featured bands heavier on melody, like L.A. Guns, Faster Pussycat, Lita Ford and Kix. One band on the weekend bill that always managed to straddle the aforementioned fence was Skid Row, who won both sides over with great power ballads like I Remember You and 18 & Life, as well as mosh-worthy tunes like Slave To The Grind and Monkey Business. But given the large amount of people in attendance, discrimination went out the window and everyone just want to have a good rocking time.

As an extra bonus, there was a free carnival area adjacent to the concert grounds. Bordered by a beer garden, it was also the location of the comedy tent where [That Metal Show](#) host/Comedian Don Jamieson MC'd during the afternoon. Traditional amusement rides were also available, should you wish to risk stomach upset after downing various delicious fried foods and sweet treats offered by the wall of food trucks that lined the division between the free carnival and ticketed concert areas.

Being that this is the first year of this festival, there were surely some lessons learned. The Birch Hill stage faced some difficulties leading to last minute schedule changes, as well as a bit of sonic competition in between songs from one of the nearby main stages. Festival traffic...well, that is a given at any large gathering, so it's to be expected. And though even though certain carnival family activities were promoted as ceasing at 8pm due to assumed adult content coming from the concert speakers, you could still clearly hear lots of R-Rated language from comedians and lead singers during the daytime as well. But given the fact lots of parents were in

BLS, Godsmack or Metallica t-shirts, something unseen in earlier times when parents feared Metal, kids home schooled on the music were probably already unfazed by anything they heard. As previously mentioned, it's 2015 and times have changed. Hopefully in 2016, the Food Truck and Rock Carnival will return, continuing to offer Metal Family fun.

To see photos from Saturday, click [here](#). To see photos from Sunday, click [here](#).

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