

Madison a music mecca

By Rob Thomas
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Whether your tastes run to classic heavy metal or contemporary teen pop, quirky indie rock or world jazz, or even if you don't like music at all, there's a show for you this summer in Madison.

Summer is usually a pretty quiet time for concerts in Madison, and music fans usually have to motor over to Alpine Valley or Summerfest to get their fix. But the upcoming local season features three arena shows, some worthy performers at the theater level, and a steady lineup of local and national acts at the club level, so even those on bicycles should get their fill.

Here's a rundown of a few of the more noteworthy shows coming to the city and surrounding area this summer:

Isthmus Jazz Festival, June 3-4, Overture Center for the Arts: There's a bevy of free jazz (free as in "no money required," not "out there") available at this two-day festival. The one ticketed performance at 8 p.m. June 4 is Spirit Music Jamia, singer-songwriter Meshell Ndegeocello's all-star ensemble that plays spiritual groove music in the vein of Miles Davis' 1970s work.

Umphrey's McGee, Barrymore Theatre, June 3: This Chicago jam band is rapidly rising in national popularity, but still finds time every few months to play the friendly confines of the Barrymore.

Radiators with Theresa Andersson, Barrymore Theatre, June 4: A double dose of New Orleans will arrive to warm us up for the Marquette Riverfront Festival the following weekend, with the soul-injected New Orleans rock band the Radiators headlining the show. Andersson is from Sweden, but her music has enough Big Easy in it to be featured in the film "A Love Song for Bobby Long."

Modest Mouse with Camper Van Beethoven, Orpheum Theatre, June 6: All of a sudden, the offbeat and sly Modest Mouse went from being a cult indie band to a mainstream sensation with the platinum-selling "Good News for People Who Like Bad News." The reformed Camper Van Beethoven might be seen as an early influence.

Neko Case with Low Skies, Barrymore Theatre, June 8: Case bristles when you call her "alt-country," but her fabulous, heartfelt country tunes just don't fit in with modern Nashville. Case is touring behind her live CD "The Tigers Have Spoken," and a new CD from her rock band the New Pornographers will arrive later this summer.

Madison Magazine's "Best of Madison," Monona Terrace Convention Center, June 10: Blues singer Shemekia Copeland will be playing a rooftop show at the event along with local treasures Westside Andy/Mel Ford Band.

Vans Warped Tour, Marcus Amphitheatre in Milwaukee, June 19: The punk-rockers and the pop-punkers will all be here on two stages in one of the year's most successful tours. The Offspring and My Chemical Romance top the bill.

Def Leppard, Alliant Energy Center Coliseum, June 20: The classic glam-metal band, which got teenagers everywhere saying "Gunter lieben glauten globen," will prance back to the Coliseum with a terrific new greatest-hits collection, "Rock of Ages."

Bill Maher, Orpheum Theater, June 25: Comedian and HBO talk show host Maher isn't known for pulling his punches when he talks about the current political climate, but he doesn't toe the liberal line, either. His current tour is a warm-up for his July HBO stand-up special, "I'm Swiss."

Summerfest, Henry J. Maier Festival Park on Milwaukee's lakefront, June 30 to July 10: Way too much music to see, let alone list, at the Midwest's largest music festival. But main stage acts worth making the trip for include John Fogerty and John Mellencamp (June 30), Tom Petty (July 1) and Santana (July 3).

Wallflowers, Barrymore Theatre, July 7: On their way to Summerfest to open for the BoDeans, Bob Dylan's son and his band will stop in for a headlining Barrymore show behind the new "Rebel, Sweetheart" CD.

Peter Dinklage, Luther's Blues, July 7: Incredibly, this is Himmelman's first show in town in seven years or so. The other big news of this show is that Marques Bovre will be reuniting with his band the Evil Twins to open the show.

Zooma Tour, Alpine Valley Music Theatre in Troy, July 16: For jam band fans, this is the year 2005 A.P. (After Phish). To ease their pain, Phish frontman Trey Anastasio has joined up with Ben Harper, Jurassic 5 and a host of other eclectic acts for what sounds like a great night of music.

Shelby Lynne, Luther's Blues, July 21: When Nashville tried to squeeze Lynne to fit its mold, she stuck to her guns, and now the country-rock singer is both a critical and commercial success.

Dave Matthews Band, Alpine Valley Music Theatre in Troy, July 23-24: The band has one of its best records in years with "Stand Up," but would probably sell out no matter what. As of press time, the July 23 show was sold out, and only lawn seats remained for July 24.

Neil Diamond, Alliant Energy Center Coliseum, July 28: Diamond is busy recording his new album with Rick Rubin, who has worked with everyone from Johnny Cash to Soundgarden. How much of that album's stripped-down sound makes it to the show is anyone's guess, but Diamond is definitely due for a comeback.

Sugar Maple Traditional Music Festival, Lake Farm County Park, July 29-30: Now in its second year, this two-day family-friendly festival brings together all sorts of traditional music, from bluegrass and blues to Appalachian country, polka and samba.

Ozzfest, Alpine Valley Music Theatre in Troy, Aug. 6: Ears are ringing already, as the venerable heavy metal festival makes its annual appearance in East Troy. Black Sabbath, Iron Maiden, Mudvayne and Rob Zombie top the bill.

Coldplay, Alpine Valley Music Theatre in Troy, Aug. 13: "The Next U2?" asks the cover of this week's Entertainment Weekly. The emotive British pop-rockers seem poised to hit that level with the new "X&Y" CD and should be pretty spectacular in concert.

Hilary Duff, Kohl Center, Aug. 21 (changed from Aug. 17, all tickets honored): It's been a while since we had a teen pop sensation in town, so Duff, who has conquered both the music and movie worlds, should bring the tweeners out in droves.

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