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LOVING LOTUS



COURTNEY DECKARD | IDS

Zombies invade music fest

BY JOHN SEASLY
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They stagger like zombies into the unsuspecting Lotus World Music & Arts Festival crowd Saturday. A werewolf howls through the boom box. They lie down in the middle of Kirkwood Avenue, 11 corpses this time. A circle of spectators forms, and all manner of cell phones and cameras emerge.

Spectator Kay Miller has a flash of recognition.

"Oh, they're going to do the 'Thriller' dance," she said to her husband.

The boom box confirms her suspicions as the synthesizer beat kicks into gear and the corpses suddenly stagger to their feet. They form rows to march the Zombie March, the first stage of Thrill The World's dance script.

Alice Dobie-Galuska, a university division academic advisor, repeats the words to herself in her head.

"Right, left, right, left," Alice thinks, stepping forward, then back, before Michael Jackson's voice penetrates the eerie lush rhythm of the 1982 hit, still iconic 28 years later.

This zombie mob scene is only a precursor to Thrill The World 2010, when Thriller dancers worldwide will join the Bloomington crew and simultaneously perform to break a world record.

Alice, who is organizing the Bloomington dancers, says she hopes 200 people will show up for this year's dance, which will take place at 11 a.m. and 11 p.m. on Saturday, Oct. 23.

SEE **THRILLER**, PAGE 2

THRILL THE WORLD REHEARSAL

WHEN 6 p.m. every Saturday
WHERE Panache School of Ballroom and Social Dance, 311 E. Winslow Rd.
MORE INFO To join the dance, e-mail Alice Dobie-Galuska at adobiega@indiana.edu.

ABOVE

Attendees of the 2010 Lotus Festival watch Red Baraat during the band's Friday performance in the Lifecycles Tent.

RIGHT

Sonny Singh, of Red Baraat, plays the trumpet during the group's Friday performance.



COURTNEY DECKARD | IDS

17th Annual Lotus Festival weekend celebrates international music, art

BY TAYLOR SMITH | smithtay@indiana.edu

Savoring the sunshine, with sweat beading on their foreheads, the audience gathered around the Tree of Life Stage on Saturday at Lotus World Music & Arts Festival's free event, Lotus in the Park.

Rainbow-striped lawn chairs, plastic cups filled with wine and tattered picnic blankets littered the ground.

Standing in the middle of the stage, Jessica Fichot, singer and songwriter from Paris, held her accordion across her chest. Her body swayed back and forth as she began to sing her music, which

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PHOTO PAGE

Check out more photos from Lotus on page 6.

ONLINE

More coverage of the event can be found online at idsnews.com.

Muslim Student Union celebrates end of Ramadan, reflects on Islamic image

BY JAKE NEW

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Ramadan, the Islamic month of fasting between sunrise and sunset, ended Sept. 10, and members of the IU Muslim Student Union were hungry.

Roughly 40 students gathered in Olcott Park Saturday to celebrate Eid ul-Fitr, the end of Ramadan, with a barbecue picnic.

Senior Taufik Chhotani, vice president of the MSU, wearing a Chicago Bears football jersey, stood at the grill.

Behind him, all of the female students were crowded at one table chatting while Fergie's "Big Girls Don't Cry" played over the stereo.

Across the way, eight of the men were playing football in an empty field, while the rest milled around the barbecue and

the picnic tables, waiting for Chhotani to give the word that the food was ready.

"Who wants chicken?" Chhotani finally yelled. "Who wants a hot dog? Grab a plate."

A line formed, and Chhotani began filling empty plates with burgers, chicken and hotdogs.

"Here, I'm going to hook you up," Chhotani said to a student at the end of the line, slipping two patties onto the bun. "There

you go. Double Cheeseburger."

MSU's co-president, junior Baseer Ahmad, said he is used to the challenges of fasting during Ramadan. Most of it fell in August this year, though, which did make the experience more difficult, he said.

"The days are longer and hotter," he said. "It does get hard, but you learn to cherish things a lot more during Ramadan."

Ahmad also said the planned

Quran burning and Mosque debate that happened during Ramadan, while distressing, did not make the month any more difficult.

"It has been hurtful," he said. "It has been annoying, but you learn to tune some of it out."

Freshman Ryan Kabir, sitting at a packed picnic table, said he found this year's Ramadan to be more challenging — but for a different reason.

"This is my first year of college," he said. "Having all my classes, it did make it difficult."

Rabiatal Abd Patah, a sophomore and international student from Malaysia, said Ramadan can be hard, but it is worth it — both spiritually and, thanks to Eid, physically.

"After 30 days of fasting, you get 30 days of celebration," she

SEE **RAMADAN**, PAGE 2

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LOTUS

BLOSSOMS AGAIN



Kali-Ma Fire Troupe of Bloomington dances in the middle of Kirkwood Avenue on Friday during Lotus Festival.

CHAZ MOTTINGER | IDS



Bassist Nicholas Cudahy of Chicha Libre plays Friday in the Lifecycle Tent. Chicha Libre, from Brooklyn, N.Y., plays Peruvian surf cumbia music.

ALYCIN BEKTESH | IDS



Chicha Libre's Josh Camp plays the electravox on Friday during Lotus Fest.

MARK FELIX | IDS



Madison and Dylan Bongsak wear their Lotus Fest Parade costume downtown Saturday.

OLIVIA ELSNER | IDS



Soul singer Charles Walker performs his set with The Dynamites during the 2010 Lotus Fest on Saturday in the Carey Worldwide Limousine Service Tent.

TED SOMERVILLE | IDS

» LOTUS

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incorporates French chanson, the sounds of gypsy jazz, along with Chinese and Latin American folk music.

"I've been wanting to play at this festival for years now," Fichot said to the audience. "This is my first time in Indiana."

Fichot, who lived in France from age 3 to 20, is an alumna of the School of Audio Engineering in Paris and one of the many artists who filled Bloomington's streets during this year's Lotus Festival.

Fichot traveled to Boston to study at the Berklee College of Music and currently lives in L.A., where she has resided for the past six years.

"I always knew that I wanted to be a singer or a poet," Fichot said. "From an early age I knew I wanted to be musical."

While she started learning mu-

sic by playing the piano, she said she was never disciplined enough to stick with one particular instrument and throughout the years has dabbled in a variety of musical sounds.

Fichot, who sings in six different languages, said she did not always have the same sense of pride in her multicultural background.

Growing up in France, she found herself attracted to the foreign aspect of English.

It wasn't until she moved to L.A. that she realized she wanted to do something more exotic with her musical style.

"Music is a universal language," Fichot said. "I usually perform for an audience that doesn't understand what I'm saying. My music is a way to unite them."

One of the musicians who works with Fichot, Dave Wilson, played the clarinet, flute and saxophone alongside her Saturday.

Wilson, a 2002 graduate of the

Jacobs School of Music, first met Fichot five years ago when he moved to L.A.

When Wilson heard about the opportunity to perform at the Lotus Festival with Jessica, he knew he had to return to his alma mater.

"I was going to drop everything to make sure that I could come," Wilson said.

For both Fichot and Wilson, their performances this weekend were an expression of their connection to home and a new sense of community they have created through their music.

The warm air lingered as nightfall approached Saturday, waiting for musicians to begin their performances at seven different venues in the downtown area.

George Huntington, who has volunteered with the festival for 15 years, directed volunteers to help with various parts of the stage setup and artist hospitality.

Standing alongside four paid

staff members, Huntington said the festival is run entirely on the efforts of hundreds of volunteers.

"In Bloomington, there is a strong sense in the quality of life that is embraced," Huntington said. "It brings in diversity because people are happy to give their time to something like this."

Huntington described the festival as controlled chaos with an awful lot of dancing.

"Lotus is part of my core being," Huntington said. "I eat, sleep and breathe it."

Crooked Still was this year's recipient of the Lotus Dickey award, which is an award named after the Indiana native musician for whom the festival is named.

Two minutes before they were scheduled to start, the group was still gathered around a table outside of the Lifecycle Tent on Fourth and Grant streets, drinking Upland Brewery beer and writing out their song list for the evening.

On stage, the emcee introduced Crooked Still as a group often described as "easy to listen to, but difficult to describe."

While they are labeled as new folk, the band likes to consider themselves as alternative bluegrass or chamber grass, with emphasis on the grass.

As their introductions finished, Crooked Still bounded onto the stage and picked up their instruments, beer still in hand.

The Boston-based band is composed of five members who play the banjo, fiddle, cello and the double bass.

Lead singer Aoife O'Donovan lit up a smile as she began singing the folk sounds that took the audience on a journey through the roots of the heartland.

Cellist Tristan Clarridge seemed mesmerized by the bluegrass rhythms as he closed his eyes and allowed his arm to flow effortlessly across his body, guiding the

bow as an upbeat melody streamed from his cello.

Fiddle player Brittany Haas has been playing since she was 4 years old and chose to play barefoot on stage that night in order to feel more comfortable.

Despite a busy schedule of traveling and performances, Haas said she and the rest of the band love playing together.

"Mostly we just feed off the energy of the crowd," Haas said. "We are so lucky to get to do it all the time. It brings us so much happiness and joy."

O'Donovan, who studied at the New England Conservatory, grew up in a musical household and said that music is 100 percent a part of her being.

"I was taken by the energy and people's willingness to be right up there next to the stage," O'Donovan said. "It's rewarding to see music affecting people note by note."