

## *Bands, crowd share joy of bluegrass, in the rain*

**By Mark E. Gallo**  
special writer

Last year WDET radio's fund-raising Motor City Bluegrass Festival drew some 6,000 aficionados. The second annual event May 24 probably saw more than that — before the rains came.

After the rain, there was still a sizeable crowd of stubborn and vociferous fans. Having weathered the torrent together made for a strong party atmosphere, as those still on hand went about the business of drying clothes, blankets and people in the tardy sun.

Old friends, new acquaintances,



DAVID FRANK/staff photographer

Bluegrass fans do a little pickin' and strummin' of their own at WDET's Motor City Bluegrass Festival.

flags, picnics, feasts, kegs, bottled spir-  
its, old folks, babes, blankets, mimes,  
dancing, laughter, music-filled air —  
these were the sights and sounds from  
noon to past 11 p.m. at the Meadow  
Brook Music Festival site on the Oak-  
land University campus near Roches-  
ter.

The Stroh Brewery Co. is to be commended for its support of the affair as well as the fans of the music who, intentionally or not, helped support the severely ailing public radio station with their paid attendance.

**ALL PROCEEDS** from the gate went to the coffers of WDET.

A beautifully printed program made events of the long day easier to follow and gave some valuable background information on the performers, all of whom were excellent. The "lickin' pic-

## review

kin', stompin' and kickin'." was supplied by eight bands and the Costabella Cloggers, a traditional dance ensemble who combined the Irish jig with the Highland Fling to the accompaniment of the Reel World String Band.

Bands on the program were largely regional, though the all-woman Reel World String Band hailed from Kentucky and the Hot Mud Family journeyed from Ohio.

The most impressive bands, to my ears, were Ann Arborites, Stoney Creek and Footloose. In both aggregations, the musicality of the members was more than apparent in very tight en-

semble and solo playing. Stoney Creek's "Under the Double Eagle" was an amazing piece of virtuosity.

Footloose was even more impressive. Its "Walk Along John" had the hilltop jumping in the rain. "Hand Me Down My Walking Cane" produced even more dancers with, unfortunately, even more rain.

**MOST EXCITING** of the set was "There Ain't Nobody Here but Us Chickens," replete with "cluck, cluck" assistance from the band and the by-then-waterlogged audience.

Judy Donlin, co-host of the affair with local musical legend Joe Vermilion, summed up the far-situations with, "We're

**We can adapt. It's just heaven taking pictures."**

This statement was answered by a booming clap of thunder and the day's worst torrent of rain. At this point, poorly sheltered under a blanket on the lawn, my note pad became mud.

Suffice to say, rain notwithstanding, it was a day of extreme pleasure for those of us who stayed. I only hope this is not the last Motor City Bluegrass Festival. Frank Joyce, an announcer, suggested this might happen due to the impending drying up of funds at WHET.


A better group of people couldn't be imagined. The musicians, the sponsors and promoters and, most im-

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 [R]

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