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Second edition is first-rate

Non-stop offerings ranging from international acts to local stars make for a lusty lineup

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The Gazette

Sunday, September 09, 2007

If the weather is anything to go by, things are looking up for Osheaga. Sunny skies greeted 15,000 music fans who checked into Jean Drapeau Park yesterday to catch a hot roster of top indie-rock talent.

It was a welcome boost for the fledgling music and arts festival, which launched its inaugural edition last year amid occasional drizzle and the constant threat of downpour.

International acts Smashing Pumpkins, Damien Rice, Feist and Blonde Redhead were on the bill, flanked by a strong local contingent including Stars, Sam Roberts, Dumas and Patrick Watson.

Bigger bands tag-teamed on two main stages, while underground talent fired up two smaller alcoves, reached by a short trek along a tree-lined path. The set-up was much the same as last year, and the air of familiarity brought with it the sense that this fest is going to be around for a while.

The non-stop barrage of music meant there was something worth catching at all times, with occasional scheduling conflicts making for tough choices (Montreal-Toronto electro-rap duo Thunderheist vs. new-school Brit phenom Jamie T.; hometown crooner Watson vs. hip-hop adventurer Sixtoo). Cancellations by Peter Björn and John, the Coral and Amiina will surely emerge as mere footnotes in a lineup packed with substance.

As was the case last year, the MEG stage offers two days of under-the-radar acts, including Adam Keshner and Explosions in the Sky, and today's sets by Au Revoir Simone, Besnard Lakes and M.I.A.

Vice Magazine sponsored an afternoon corn roast with live performances by New York rockers Panthers and Montreal garage-punks CPC Gangbangs, among others.

The Salon des Arts tent featured photo and painting exhibits, occasional music performances and a late-night screening of Daft Punk's new film Electroma. An adjacent arts-and-crafts village offered wares by local craftsfolk and information tents for various causes (including Apathy is Boring and Action/Artists Against Hunger).

It took no fewer than three Gazette scribes and one intrepid blogger to keep up with the action (see reviews below and on Page A21 and visit www.montrealgazette.com/osheaga2007).

Today's shows include performances by Bloc Party, Interpol, Gotan Project, Macy Gray, Arctic Monkeys, Sam Roberts, Martha Wainwright, Brand New Heavies and Miracle Fortress.

Osheaga tickets cost \$79.50, available at Admission. Call 514-790-1245.

For more information, go to www.osheaga.com.

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