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Spirit of inclusion pervades CRASHfest



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JUSTIN SAGLIO FOR THE BOSTON GLOBE

Emperor Norton's Stationary Marching Band in performance at the House of Blues.

By Jeremy D. Goodwin | GLOBE CORRESPONDENT JANUARY 30, 2017

As spontaneous protests broke out Saturday at airports across the country and lawyers rushed into courts to seek remedies against President Trump's executive order blocking

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immigration from seven majority Muslim nations, another view of world citizenship was on joyous, colorful, defiant display at CRASHfest.

“Tonight is what Boston is — a multi-racial, multicultural, multi-ethnic city,” said Maure Aronson, executive director of World Music/CRASHarts, the reliably eclectic concert promoter behind this second-annual event, which featured three stages at House of Blues. Aronson’s declaration came by way of introducing Bombino, the Nigerian guitarist whose quartet delivered a blistering, if monochromatic, dose of desert blues.

The politics of the moment came to the surface only intermittently, as performers noted the pervasive ethos of inclusion. But in days like these, this sort of celebration is its own form of resistance.

About six hours of music was augmented by belly dancing, a samba dance lesson, and an international variety of street food. Given that most of the event’s 2,000-person capacity was present, the festival was comfortable to navigate and seemed to present a surprise at every turn.

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LADAMA offered a joyous, musically deft mélange of sounds from around the Americas in the Foundation Room. Maria Fernanda Gonzalez’s lead lines on the bandola llanera weaved amid the dense grooves of percussionists Lara Klaus and Daniela Serna as Sara Lucas’s

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impassioned lead vocals floated above. Singing in Portuguese, Spanish, and English, the women dipped into folk styles from Venezuela, Brazil, Colombia, and elsewhere.

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Downstairs in the venue’s restaurant, the portable brass party music of Emperor Norton’s Stationary Marching Band paraded away to leave space for the breezy, bubbling rhythms of Air Congo. On the main stage, Orkesta Mendoza harvested sounds from both sides of the US border with Mexico and infused them with pop energy.

Later, a collaboration between Brooklyn indie rock band San Fermin and new-music group NOW Ensemble ginned up some big moments, with the glossy and dramatic moves of the former deepened by the chamber instincts of the latter.

The night offered a continual argument that walls meant to divide people are never tall enough to keep the music out.

CRASHfest

At House of Blues, Jan. 28

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