

Advertising



September 22nd at the Majestic Theatre
Click here for tickets!

What to do in Dallas/Fort Worth, Texas
Tuesday, September 12, 2006

- Search Site
- Home
- The Arts
 - Books
 - Performing Arts
 - Visual Arts
- Attractions
- Movies
- Music & Nightclubs
- Overnight Reviews
- Restaurants
- Television
 - TV Listings
 - Video Games
- Visitors' Guide
- Columnists
- GuideLive.com/extra
- About GuideLive
- Blog: Over the Top
- Blog: Shop Better Here
- Newsletters
- Submit an Event
- Search Archives

Make This Your Home Page
Get GuideLive Newsletters

Advertising

Verizon Online High-speed Internet
The best value in broadband
Now as low as
\$14.95/mo.
for up to 768K
Modem Included
[LEARN MORE](#)



Polka to the people!

Festival season is a prime time for Brave Combo to connect with fans

By [ANN PINSON](#) / Staff Writer

Brave Combo is known for getting festivalgoers dancing. But the group's not just aiming for the crowd.

Also Online

- [Spring festivals for March, April, May and June](#)

"Last year, at the Muenster Germanfest, we actually got a person to do the chicken dance from inside the porta-potty," says bandleader and founder Carl Finch. "We could actually see the porta-potty weaving and shaking and bouncing around. That's probably one of the funniest moments, to be up onstage and have someone actually take you up on a request that's that absurd. I admired the guy and felt painfully sorry for him at the same time."

Through the years, Brave Combo has played just about every big festival in the area at least once, as well as many others across the country. And the Denton-based group's unpredictable blend of polka and multiple other styles has been a regular attraction at many, ranging from the Denton Arts & Jazz Festival to the National Polka Festival in Ennis.

Throughout the band's almost 27 years of existence, its lineup has gone through some variations. The current members are Alan Emert, Ann Marie Harrop, Jeffrey Barnes, Danny O'Brien and Mr. Finch. In honor of Guide's spring festivals issue, Mr. Finch talked feasts with us.



Nathan Hunsinger / DMN

What motivates you to play so many local feasts?

We love playing locally anytime we can, so we're delighted that so many good festivals are popping up. I really do believe that part of the appeal is that there's sort of a shifting in people's entertainment attitudes. The big mass that supported the club scene and the music scene 20 years ago, they're 20 years older. Or even 10 years ago, they're 10 years older. For the young crowd, their entertainment options are so disparate and so many. The live music scene, where the clubs have people playing original music, isn't getting the percentage of the pie it used to. And I think festivals are filling that in.

Brave Combo

There's probably a certain unpredictability involved. For example, do you have problems with the weather or not knowing who's going to be in the audience?

Oh, weather is the big one. The audience, we never really worry about too much. We're lucky that we've reached a point where our profile's high enough that – I hate to say this,

ROLL OVER TO VIEW PARTNERS

get the most out of chicago



The IN:CHICAGO® Card from American Express

- No Annual Fee
- Special Savings on Tuesdays
- Dining, Entertainment & Spa Rewards

[APPLY NOW](#)

because as soon as I do, I'll be wrong – but there seems to be a fairly good percentage of people that make up the Brave Combo fan base everywhere now that we play. There's a base of people there who know where we're coming from musically, much better than it was even 10 years ago, with these larger situations. That element tends to be kind of verbal and excited. They want to dance and have a good time. Thankfully, that's somewhat infectious for the rest of the crowd.

The weather's another thing; that's the big downside. It's way unpredictable and hardly ever just nails it. We've done lots of festivals where we're freezing. And the last couple of years, it seems like most of the festivals, starting in April and going through October, have been pretty miserably hot. We played the ACL Festival, Austin City Limits, and it was 107 degrees. I felt a level of heat that I had never felt before.

What do you like to do at festivals when you're not performing?

I like to go hear music. At the big Addison Oktoberfest, that's a great time for us to see other polka bands that we don't get to see throughout the year. That's almost the best part about it. In a way, at festivals, especially the big ones, you're playing with seven and eight bands in a day. You get a lot more opportunities to hear music at those that you don't when you're touring, playing clubs all the time.

You really do seem to be able to get the crowd dancing. Is that part of your goal?

We've always looked at Brave Combo as a respite from the troubles of the world. We love being perceived that way, but it's a lot of responsibility to continue to make that a goal. I do consider it a very important part of my job, to reach each and every person there and try to at least get them to have a good time. I'm not a dancer; I'm not going to force anyone to dance. But if they're so inclined, I hope we provide the inspiration.

What's something besides the weather that might be tough about playing festivals?

The biggest downside, I think everyone would agree with this – on the audience side or the performers side – are porta-potties.

SEE THE BAND

Brave Combo's upcoming festival appearances include the Main St. Fort Worth Arts Festival and the Denton Arts & Jazz Festival, both in April, and Grapevine Main Street Days in May. For more information on the fests, [see the listings here](#). For more on the band, including a schedule of additional performances, see www.brave.com/bo.

BY THE NUMBERS

Years that Brave Combo has been around: 27, come April. Carl Finch started the band in 1979 (members have varied through the years).

Festivals the group plays per year: About 30.

Performances per year: About 140.

Episodes of *The Simpsons* the group has appeared in: 1, titled "Co-Dependent's Day." It comes as no surprise that the animated version of the band played at the Oktoberfest in Springfield.

Grammy Awards for best polka album: 2 (*Polkasonic* in 2000 and *Let's Kiss* in 2005).

Published in The Dallas Morning News: 03.03.06