



Red Bank jazz/blues festival had "sax" appeal

By MIKE BARRIS • SPECIAL TO THE PRESS • June 3, 2008

On Friday, blues-rocker Matt O'Ree's quartet seemed to hold nothing back in a tour de force headlining show that mixed attitude and high decibel levels with old-fashioned stagecraft. The Holmdel guitarist's fast-fingered pyrotechnics — influenced by a range of guitarists from Jimi Hendrix to Eric Clapton to Stevie Ray Vaughan — are built on a lean, nasty tone that has a special silvery beauty. Hearing him merely trill a note makes the pulse quicken.

With many enthusiastic followers in the audience, the adrenaline was pumping on stage, driving each member of the band to attack their roles with gusto. O'Ree (who beat out 4,000 other guitar players to win the national Guitarmageddon guitar competition in 2006) was at his best playing pure, plaintive screeching blues slide on his own composition, "If You Want To Mess Around."

Coaxing a liquid tone that was part rock, part jazz, then fully blues rock out of his Gibson Les Paul, he was mesmerizing on "Tears," a piece penned by the late Bernie Brausewetter, the guitarist-founder of B.B. and the Stingers. O'Ree told the crowd that playing the tune was his way of paying tribute to Brausewetter, a former teacher and mentor who died last year.