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LIVEDC: CAT JACK AND AMERICA HEARTS @ FORT RENO
AKA "THE BIGGEST LITTLE CONCERT SERIES IN DC"

JULY 13, 2011 | 3:15PM



Wednesday 09/11
Damien Dempsey @ The Hamilton Live

0 0 TICKETS>>

all words: Colin Wilhelm
all photos: Alex Joseph

Lightning on the not too distant horizon punctuated the meters of guitar riffs in [America Hearts'](#) final song of the evening, lending epic visuals to an the end ending of a set nearly a year in the making, but unfortunately cutting the evening short before indie pop 'headliner' [Title Tracks](#) had the opportunity to play.



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BRIGHTEST
YOUNG THINGS



Still, America Hearts stuck with it even as storm clouds snuck over the hills of Fort Reno park; the rain kept them off the stage beneath the single lamp post last year, and they, led by singer-songwriter-guitarist [which all always seem to go hand in hand] Jess Matthews would not let it dispatch them prematurely this time around, even as their equipment was readied for packing during "Race Car Driver". Near hubristic determination aside, America Hearts, as well as preternatural punk brothers [Cat Jack](#), gave a solid show to those who may have come mainly to see the former Q and Not U member's newish project.

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Just 45 or so minutes before, as the sun still shined, openers Cat Jack pleasantly surprised the crowd at Fort Reno. Normally a pre-tween duo doesn't inspire much hope for the quality of the show; most people expect at best an elementary school talent show. That's not the case with Cat Jack. Yes, part of their appeal comes from the "Aw, how adorable" effect of two young kids acting like rock stars, but they're not just a couple of alt-rock pageant kids trotted out on stage by their parents.



Both have a spark of talent and a real passion for their music (which they write themselves). They play faster and louder than a decent number of bands, and have more stage presence than most; the drummer meditated on his kit in preparation to play "Grim Reaper" while his brother changed guitars and vamped, they both spontaneously broke into the Pledge of Allegiance and demanded five bucks from their mom for doing so, and introduced their songs with an unabashed fervor: "This is our song about a crocodile that eats people. It is called Crocodile Tears!"

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One gets the impression that if they kept with it for ten years they could both be the next [Tim Harrington](#)...if their parents still let them play music after an article comparing them to a guy who 'bad touches' plastic snowmen. Still, if they can miraculously knock Justin Bieber out of the pop consciousness and from my niece's musical tastes I know at least one brother of mine will appreciate them, as well a host of inappropriately obsessed women aged between their 20s and 40s.



As one can imagine, rain-made headliners America Hearts could not have been much more different from the opening band, but somehow both bands seemed to belong at the same show together. The melancholy whimsy of Matthews' lyrics may have aided that transition [sample from "Be My Jones": "He's got two left feet/When he's coming for my heart"]; one probably could not have guessed which band wrote and performed "Race Car Driver".



Hearts' soul-bearing indie-folk-gone-electric sound played strongly after the straightahead at full sugar rush speed of Cat Jack, and they displayed why they're a local band worth checking out. Here's hoping someone does an anti-rain dance before their next show.









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GRAX SAYS:

JULY 14, 2011 AT 8:26 AM

Cat Jack should be pretty interesting once their voices change. Everything you noted about their music and their performance was spot-on.

I found the vocals of America Hearts to be downright wooden. It would be interesting to hear them if the singer sang as if she was not reading the lyrics from a lyric sheet. That said, kudos to them for hanging in there for a full set in the face of an advancing storm. If I recall correctly, last year they got rained out, re-scheduled, and rained out again.

BTW, Title Tracks have been re-scheduled for 7/25.

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