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The secret to The Warped Tour in Scranton

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Posted by **John J. Moser** at 12:07:56 PM on July 15, 2011



SCRANTON --  The secret of the Warped Tour is finding its secrets.

While shows by headliners such as **Simple Plan**, **Less Than Jake** and **3OH!3** at the 17th annual alt music festival that stopped Thursday at Toyota Montage Mountain in Scranton are great, they're also the most crowded and the most difficult at which to get a good vantage point and be co

And at an all-day event that offered 71 performances on seven stages – only a seventh of which, logistically, any one person could actually see for enjoying Warped.

Paramore's Hayley Williams

Photos by Brian Hinline/Special to The Morning Call

The set by headliner **Paramore** was so overcrowded that it was nearly impossible to move or see well – a shame, because the band's set was great and enthusiastic. Singer Hayley Williams, noting the Warped shows are the band's first in the United States in more than a year, sang and danced w

They opened with the 2008 gold single, "That's What You Get," Williams looking, acting and sounding an awful lot like Avril Lavigne as she sang along. By the second song, "I'm Pretty Optimistic," there were multiple crowd surfers.

But shows away from the headliners, even ones on smaller stages, were some of the festival's gems.

Country punkers **Lucero** are no newcomers (they've been around for a decade, with a major label three years), but suddenly seemed to be even favorite. And with good reason: They were very good.

Singer Ben Nichols sounded like Joe Cocker – both in tone and expression – and the band was cracking good with expressive steel pedal guitar riffs. The dramatic "My Best Girl" was their best song.



Another pleasant surprise was West Chester-based **Terrible Things**.

The group, lead by former Taking Back Sunday guitarist Fred Macherino with former Silvertide bassist Brian Weaver and former Coheed and Cambria, played a six-song, 30-minute set that was mostly post-punk rock, but also had elements of reggae and other styles.

Fred Macherino of Terrible Things

"We are Terrible Things; we live in your state," Macherino told the crowd. "If you haven't heard of us, it's OK; we're a new band."

Macherino's voice was delightfully ragged, as he emoted on the opening "Terrible Things," the title song of the band's 2010 self-titled debut disc.

The band started its set at the small Ernie Ball side stage with perhaps 100 people watching – 3OH!3 was putting on its set at a main stage at the time its music was so magnetic the audience was four times that by the set's end.

The band played "Lullaby," originally a song by Macherino's former group Breaking Pangaea, and "Hate to See You Go," a tune by The Color Field solo project. Their second last song, "The Arsonist's Wife," had Macherino playing on his knees, and they closed with "Revolution" after a long intro of Led Zeppelin's "The Song Remains the Same."

Philadelphia speed-pop-punk band **The Wonder Years** also was very good, with a very full sound, good songs such as “My Last Semester.” And crowd reaction – arms swinging in unison, jumping and singing along, and crowd surfing.



The Ready Set was far better than his tepid set at Allentown’s Mayfair Festival, and it might have been the highlight of the crowd – huge, similar to last year’s audience for similarly popular Nevershoutnever, whom The Ready Set clearly emulates. He’s clearly on the path to bigger fame.

The Ready Set's Jordan Witzgreuter

He opened with his recent single “Young Forever,” and though some of his music was clearly pre-recorded, the singer – real name Jordan Witzgreuter – was energetic. His speedy rap and turn on the drum set on “Stays Four the Same” both were good.

He closed with his hit “Love Like Woe,” and the crowd loved it, waving their arms and singing along. On a hot day, they no doubt also love the band’s music tossed to the crowd.

There were other fun surprises. Right after The Ready Set had so played to the crowd, Michigan post-hardcore band **D.R.U.G.S.** opened with a hit to the crowd: “Suck [this], Pennsylvania,” lead singer Craig Owens said. “In a good way.”

The Expandables, a California ska-rock band, also were very good.

But surprises at Warped aren’t limited to just new bands.





Veteran (!) pop-punkers **Relient K**, who played the a main stage, were early favorites.

As startlingly different as was their acoustic set at Bethlehem's Musikfest Café in May, their seven-song, 30-minute set at Warped was surprisir rock content.

Opening with "Who I Am Hates Who I've Been," with front man Matt Theissen playing only guitar instead of his usual keyboards, the band obvi intimacy of the Musikfest Café show, but was far more energetic.

Relient K's Matt Theissen

Just days after the release of their new album of covers, "Relient K is for Karaoke," they played a wonderfully loopy, hard rock version of Cyndi Just Want to Have Fun," with Theissen wailing on vocals and the crowd pointing and thrusting their arms at him.

"Forget and Not Slow Down" was a pounding rock version, and the crowd clapped above their heads to the beat. Only "The Lining Is Silver" was gentler.

And they closed with a delightfully ragged "Be My Escape."

"Jump if you want," Theissen told the crowd. He certainly didn't need to – it was guaranteed they would.

That was no secret.

The Vans Warped Tour 2011 returns to the area 11 a.m. July 21 at Susquehanna Bank Cente, 1 Harbour Blvd., Camden, N.J. Tickets: \$43.85, www.livenation.com, 856-365-1300.

