

Jimmy Buffett brings sharks, fun to Frisco stop of Big Top Tour

Written by By DAVY MOSELEY and TERRY MATHEWS, News-Telegram Staff
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FRISCO – With “phins up,” beach balls flying and grass skirts shaking, Pizza Hut Park and its surrounding parking lots overflowed with loyal parrotheads May 22 for the second 2010 Texas stop of Jimmy Buffett’s Under the Big Top Tour.

The Jimmy Buffett machine has been touting and touring their unique brand of “Trop Rock,” or island-escapism-style entertainment, since 1976. Buffett’s brand of entertaining is truly a circus under a very big top. He has gone on the road 35 times in the last 34 years.

Buffett, the world’s richest beach bum, doesn’t have to tour. He is a shrewd businessman, making a gazillion dollars with his Margaritaville brand restaurants, gift shops, blenders, tequila and Land Shark Lager. Most recently, he’s gotten involved in the hotel business, with several Margaritaville-themed resorts on the drawing board.

Buffett obviously loves his summer job. He took the Frisco stage with a lot of energy and was on point during the show. He is a master entertainer completely at ease amongst the familiar chaos. The Texas wind, Einstein and beer were on his mind as he encouraged the crowd to participate in the madness.

One of the highlights of a stop in Frisco is the annual appearance of the Finhead Guys. This group of young parrotheads snakes through the crowd wearing 3 foot illuminated silver fins on their heads. Buffett obviously gets a real kick out of these guys and gives them a huge shout-out each year.



Although Buffett is a long-time singer/songwriter, he’s smart enough to surround himself with highly accomplished musicians known as The Coral Reefers. Mac McAnally is a member of the Nashville Songwriter’s Hall of Fame and was the Country Music Association’s Musician of the Year in 2009. McAnally, who also produces a lot of Nashville’s top artists, often performs with other band members, including lead guitarist Peter Mayer, vocalist Nadirah Shakoor and bass

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player Jim Mayer.

During their stop in Frisco, Buffett and band played 27 tunes, including ones from the CD "Songs You Know By Heart" like *Margaritaville*, *Come Monday*, *Fins*, *Volcano*, *Cheeseburger in Paradise* and two encores.

Buffett's annual salute to female parrotheads has become a Frisco tradition. He adds Willis Alan Ramsey's *Northeast Texas Women* to the set list, introducing it by saying, "I always love to do this song when I come to Northeast Texas. There have been a few Northeast Texas women in my life. I'd like to send this out to them."

Buffett has a good memory. When struggling to break through in the music business, the Mobile, Ala., native could always get work in Texas, and he's never forgotten his friends in the Lone Star State. As long as the 63-year old surfer continues to work, there will always be a Texas stop on the summer tour.

From *NETW*, Buffett and the Reefers broke into Stephen Stills' moving cover of *Southern Cross*. For long-time fans, this number has become as important as *Margaritaville* and *Come Monday*.

McAnally joined the boss on vocals for an acoustic version of *Growing Older But Not Up*, the night's encore.

Most fans at Frisco didn't sit down through the entire show. If they weren't swaying their arms in the air during *Fins*, they were fielding beach balls. And, of course, no one needed a teleprompter to sing along. The stadium was an omnipresent, party-tune chorus of singing.

A Jimmy Buffett concert is unlike any other. There is an unmistakable aura of closeness among the fans. It's a collective frenzy of partying, both inside the stadium and outside among the

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tailgating parrotheads, as Jimmy has named his fans. Everyone is friendly and had a smile on their face.

This is in stark contrast to many concerts, where event-goers are usually more introverted and short on camaraderie. At a Jimmy Buffett show, you'll find random fans taking pictures with each other and exchanging information.

Cruising the parking lots is a must. You'll find pirates, wenches, sharks, a full-scale pirate boat, sandy beaches, decorated golf carts, a "Leaky Tiki," hot tubs, and, of course, thousands of grills serving up for the ultimate "Cheeseburger in Paradise" experience.

The whole place becomes a community kitchen with lawn chairs and laps making up family dinner tables. A generous, seasoned parrothead shared one of two grass skirts he was wearing with a young, first-time parrothead who walked up and asked if she could have one. A "passing of the grass skirt" ceremony ensued with much jubilation.

Parrotheads are, at their core, happy souls who "party with a purpose," raising money for charitable causes throughout the parking lot.

PartiesThatMatter.org, a group of cyberspace parrotheads from the website BuffettNews.com, raised \$7,500 this year.

Other parrothead clubs join in the fun.

Parrotheads from Boston, Idaho and Seattle also traveled to Frisco this year, with festivities beginning at the Fox Sports Bar on Friday night.

Middle-age fans like to travel in style. These fans take their tailgating experience very seriously. The parking lots are a sea of top-of-the-line recreational vehicles that show up early – days early. This year's show was on Saturday. Dallas news stations reported a 6-hour wait to get into

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the parking lot on Thursday afternoon.

Nearby hotels are booked a year in advance (with some tripling their normal rates for the three-day weekend).

Buffett and the Coral Reefers are taking a break for a few weeks and will continue the Under The Big Top Tour June 17 in Mansfield, Mass.

For more information:

<http://www.margaritaville.com>

<http://www.buffettnews.com>