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The Nadas Rock at Home

By Avery Gregurich

Back in Des Moines for the Metro Arts Rock 'n Run, this folk band jammed to support music education.

“Home” isn’t such a simple word.

Is it physical—a certain place like your hometown or the house you grew up in? Is it mental—a feeling that comes over you when you’re with family?

For Des Moines-based rockers, The Nadas, it’s a little bit of both.

When the band stepped onto the outdoor stage as the closing act of the 2013 Metro Arts Rock ‘n Run 5k race, there was no question that they were “home” in both senses of the word. The September 21 event raised money for arts education in the Des Moines area. Participants and bystanders were treated to music every half mile of the course from various local acts, culminating with The Nadas at the finish line near the Clive Aquatic Center.

In the physical sense of the word “home”, the band was a little over six miles from their downtown Des Moines recording studio. The nearly 20-year-old rock/folk quintet has converted the century-old Lovejoy building, once a Mack Truck production plant, into home base. Guitarist and co-lead singer Jason Walsmith’s family once ran a printing company out of the same building and the band cut their latest record, aptly named *Lovejoy Revival*, inside.

In the mental sense of the word “home”, The Nadas concert gave the feeling of a barbeque at a neighbor’s house. Instead of a stereo blasting, The Nadas ripped through two electric sets just a few feet from the audience on the grass. Sipping beer and laughing under Midwestern stars, the band carried on an honest, unrestricted conversation with the spectators throughout the concert. Those in attendance traversed the age spectrum—kids and AARP members shook side by side to the band’s tunes.

The crowd was treated to staples from the band’s catalogue, including “Long Goodbye,” “Beautiful Girl,” “Coming Home,” and “Hold On.” The road-tested tunes—The Nadas have opened for Bon Jovi and appeared at SXSW—were presented with energy as fevered guitar and keyboard solos gave them a fresh feel. Some bands grow weary of older material after years of gigs, but The Nadas seemed to thoroughly enjoy the opportunity to play material that has carried them on tours across the country and back again.

New additions from *Lovejoy Revival*, which was released in February, were inserted sporadically throughout the two sets. These new songs received as much, if not more, reaction from the hometown audience as the older music. “Starcrossed,” which opens the new album, has a pop hook and was infused with inspired guitar playing by lead guitarist and co-lead singer

<http://drakemagazine.com/the-nadas-rock-at-home/>

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23 Oct 2013 - 15 Aug 2016

A few on-lookers whirled multi-colored hula-hoops in the grass, mostly to celebrate the evening, but partly to keep warm as the early fall temperature plummeted. These cavorting fans led Butterworth to announce the first-ever Nadas Hula-Hoop Contest. Many tried to twirl as long as The Nadas played, most failed. After nearly 10 minutes of music, three women were left snaking and weaving. Sensing a stalemate, Butterworth called the competition a draw, and all three winners took home band merchandise for their efforts. The crowd called for the band to participate, which proved only that the group should stick to playing music.

Fan requests then brought on the crowd favorite "Templeton Rye," which chronicles the making of rye whiskey in Templeton, Iowa during the Prohibition. The Nadas finished the night with an upbeat version of Johnny Cash's "Folsom Prison Blues." It sounded a little country-western compared to the rest of the evening's folk/rock music, but felt just right to the crowd. Humble and happy, the band had ended the hometown show with an experimental nod to the past.

Watching and listening to both the band and the crowd, you could tell it felt good to be "home."

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