

Annual Greek Festival has traditional food and dance

Kyle West

Staff Writer

Despite all of Hurricane Ivan's fury, there was still cause for celebration at the 22nd Annual Greek Food Festival. Lasting from Sept. 17 to Sept. 19, the festival was held at the Dormition of the Theotokos Greek Orthodox Church on the corner of Westridge and Friendly Avenue.

I had to go. As a member of Carole Hoppe's FYE, The Greeks in Love and War, we were to go to the festival for approximately three hours. The weather was bad, pouring down in sheets at times, as Hurricane Ivan raged over us.

Ivan had taken its toll on all of us as we waited behind Bauman for our class to gather on Friday. At around 4:40 p.m., we piled into the van that ferried us over and back. I, along with the rest of the class, was particularly excited about the food. Some of us had enjoyed the gyros at the cafeteria at lunch that day, and were starved for more.

Arriving at the festival, we stepped back into the rain for the short walk from the parking lot, which sadly was close to empty, to the church across the street. Police were directing traffic, their bright orange jackets standing out against the dark sky. The church loomed ahead, and beside it were numerous tents, all striped blue and white in imitation of the Greek flag.

Everywhere you could see Greeks in traditional dress, milling about waiting for the music to start; despite the depressing weather, the crowd of approximately 100 was ready for a festive night.

We headed to the church's cafeteria first, eager to eat. After a few moments of deciding whether to eat

beef, chicken, or vegetarian, I chose the "Athenian Chicken" and headed with my class to indulge in some good food.

We got our food assembly line style, directed by kind impromptu Greek lunch ladies. My plate was full of food, from half a roasted chicken on a bed of white rice, to Greek style beans and a salad. Sitting down as a group, we ate and laughed; the conversation swirled around Greek food, and eventually the wonderful pastries we had passed coming in.

After eating Carole handed each of our tables a box of assorted pastries. My table got baklava. Those were possibly the best baklavas ever made. Either that or I was still ravenous after the two Greek salads and half of a chicken I consumed. According to classmate Jake Blumgart, the food was "most delicious."

After such a wonderful meal only entertainment could follow. As we finished, some live music was starting in the cafeteria, and more was playing outside in the main tent. Despite all the music, some of us headed to the pastry room to buy a few boxes of homemade Greek pastries. A few were still hungry, and bought some gyros outside, eating them as we sat and watched Greek youths attempt line dancing in traditional clothing.

At first, it was just music from CDs being played, as the younger children danced. Oddly enough, the music was a blend of techno and traditional Greek music. A few songs later, the older children jumped in and did a few dances. Even though the rain dampened some spirits, it was pretty hard not to



TALEISHA BOWEN/GUILFORDIAN

The Greek Festival's adult Opa dancers

clap to the music and thoroughly enjoy the dancing.

At around 7 p.m. the live band came on stage, while the youngest children came out and danced. All the girls wore black dresses with blue sashes, and the boys wore sailor hats, white shirts and black pants. After each dance, all the people cheered, and eventually the adults joined in.

By the time we left, everyone of all ages had joined in the dancing, laughing and singing along. Our class felt a little too shy and lazy to join in, still full from the dinner.

As we walked out, full of both food and enjoyment, I took a moment to look back on all the festivities, all the people gathered on such a rotten day to spend time amongst one another, and remarked to a friend that it's too bad there isn't more of this anywhere else.☼

CD review: *The Dirty South* from Drive-by Truckers

Aaron Varnum

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Southern Rock is typically associated with beer drinking and waving the Confederate flag, but the Drive-By Truckers are not the typical Southern Rock band. They are five-album veterans with Southern accents and a balls-to-the-wall rock sound, showcasing both sides of the "Southern Thing."

The Truckers are smart, which shines through their songwriting and musical structure. This has always been the case for these Muscle Shoals, Alabama, natives, but with the last two albums it's really become apparent. In their previous album, *Decoration Day*, the Truckers exposed the listener to songs of family feuds, irate farmers, and fatherly advice. On *The Dirty South*, they write about similar themes, but the general feel is much different. Musically, the songs are not as crunching and guitar-driven as previous efforts, but are more melodic and slower.

After the first song, "Where the Devil Don't Stay," an avid fan would realize this is a much

different album than any previous DBT outing. It's darker and the storytelling is almost creepy.

"Tornadoes," a song about a pair of twisters wrecking a small town in Alabama, is an instantly catchy song in which the chorus almost chokes me up. The Truckers have had this effect on me only once before, and on this album it happens twice (the



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The Drive-By Truckers released *The Dirty South* Aug. 24

second being "The Sands of Iwo Jima").

"The Sands of Iwo Jima" is my personal favorite song on *The Dirty South*. The lyrics are the story of an old man explaining to his grandchildren about World War II and how John Wayne was never there. Singer Patterson Hood's usual growl is set aside for a beautiful falsetto with his Southern twang still intact.

"The Day John Henry Died," is a no-excuses rocker that leaves your fists in the air 15 minutes after you listen to it. Jason Isbell, the youngest Trucker and newest member of the band, modeled this one after the story his grandfather told him about John Henry winning over the machine.

The Truckers bring the tempos down on *The Dirty South*, but the impact is greatly increased. Each song is a story that brings you into the action and makes you experience the ups and downs of coming from the South. This is almost a history lesson without the jackass teacher.

I definitely recommend this album for people familiar with The Drive-By Truckers, or any music fan with an open mind. Check it out; it's not Lynyrd Skynyrd, but it's pretty close.☼