

Local Motion

Awesomeness and Hearing Loss at the 2011 Texas BigBeat

By Lauren Marmaduke Mon., Nov. 7 2011 at 1:00 PM
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How do a crapload of drums sound when playing in unison in an airplane hangar? Pretty freaking awesome.

In the Cameron Crowe-directed documentary *Pearl Jam Twenty*, lead singer Eddie Vedder discusses the detrimental impact of the band's Spinal Tap-like replacement of drummers, equating each change to an organ transplant and saying, "When you remove the drummer it's like removing the heart."

And when a five or six dozen metaphorical hearts beat together in an airline hangar the resulting sound is overwhelming, glorious, powerful -- and deafening.

Rocks Off had the opportunity to witness such a spectacle yesterday at the [2011 Texas BigBeat](#). Now in its fifth year, the annual charity event billed as "the world's largest multi-city drum set event" showcases drummers of all ages and skill sets and culminates with more than a thousand drum-sets grooving in unison, a monumental feat achieved via internet video connection in each of the fifteen participating cities. All proceeds were dedicated to funding music programs in Houston-area schools through the [Mr. Holland's Opus Foundation](#) and [Cherish Our Children International](#).



A future Meg White.

This year's festivities took place on Sunday in a warehouse near Bush Intercontinental Airport and featured a variety of activities ranging from a speed competition to group jam sessions under the direction of HCC's Dr. Aubrey Tucker -- the man worked with Elvis AND Sinatra in Vegas in the 1970s -- conducting the mass of percussionists through rock and blues classics like Junior Walker and the All Star's "Shotgun" and Wilson Pickett's "Mustang Sally" with the help of the stage band (Barry Sea Paradox) and a drumstick the size of a baseball bat.

We were amazed every time the throng of drummers young and old, male and female, transformed into a single, thumping organism. Every time those symbols smashed in unison our own heart leapt a little, and we're quite certain that the group's rendition of ZZ Top's "Sharp Dressed Man" would've made Billy Gibbons beam with pride for his hometown.

The other highlight of our afternoon was the individual performances by a trio of celebrity drummers including 25-year-old New Jersey-based aficionado [Mike McPhee](#) who wowed the crowd with acrobatics and a beat so fast it was more of a vibration, a lesson is cool from

veteran [Erik Hargrove](#), former drummer for the late great James Brown, among others, and [Daniel Glass](#) (Royal Crown Revue, Brian Setzer, Bette Midler, Gene Simmons), who preached the importance of learning the history and tradition behind drumming -- specifically, mastering the shuffle -- as a means to improving one's art.



What happens when rock stars become parents.



Yeah baby. Smoke machine in full effect.

Our only regret was that we didn't bring earplugs. We've gone to plenty of concerts in our day, but this was the kind of loud that had us needing subtitles to watch tv later that evening. Seriously.