

# It was downright Fun – period



Fun's high-energy music kept people on their feet all night Aug. 27 at Harveys. Photos/Kathryn Reed

**By Susan Wood**

STATELINE – Against a hazy, blood-orange Sierra Nevada sky, indie band Fun lived up to its name with a red-hot performance that energized a youthful crowd at Harveys Lake Tahoe this week.

The electric production is one of the last of the outdoor concert series as the summer winds down.

John Packer, Harrah's spokesman and entertainment director, was optimistic Tuesday night before the show because the poor air quality from the massive Rim Fire raging in the Yosemite area had improved. He promised a "smokin' good time" based on the promise of Fun, with the help of opening synthpop act

Tegan and Sara of Canada.

And boy, Fun delivered – period.

After a stunning performance by sister duo Tegan and Sara, the three core members of Fun, the high-energy New York-based band led by vocalist Nate Ruess, entered the dark stage in tuxedos and quickly tore them off as if stripping themselves of all inhibitions.

Take the bellowing vocal chords of U2's Bono, the perfectly synchronized '70s rock band Yes with Rick Wakeman and the pulsating rhythms of David Byrne's Talking Heads – and throw in Styx, Queen and Electric Light Orchestra – and you've got a new generation's modern-day band with a dynamic stage presence, diverse music style and even a civil rights conscience. (The band has brought the Ally Coalition and Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays on tour with them to support LGBTQ equality.)

“It's really important for Jack (Antonoff, Fun guitarist) to cultivate a safe space (for the LGBT community),” Michael White of Boston, who has toured with the band in 15 cities, told Lake Tahoe News. He was joined at the Stateline concert tables by local volunteer Betti Christensen of Minden who was there in support of her gay nephew “to protect him from the big bad world.”



Sara and Tegan are destined to be headliners.

Serious activism aside, Fun soon showed how the band raked in last year's Grammy Award for Best New Artist and another for

Song of the Year, "We Are Young" – which had the Harveys crowd roaring and mouthing all the words near the end of the show. In the bridge where the song stops before the chorus, one could hear a rare silence.

For the entire show, the audience stood in anticipation of what would happen next on stage and on the flashy giant video screen behind it.

Ruess, with Antonoff and keyboardist Andrew Dost, wove a web of recognizable and lesser-known tunes and fed off the enthusiasm of the audience.

Their hit single "Carry On" had the entire crowd dancing, swaying and singing. They even brought out their version of an old favorite, the Rolling Stones' "You Can't Always Get What You Want." The baby boomers danced and sang in unison to that number.

They were often personable and seemed so enthused to be in Tahoe that Ruess pledged to bring the band back during another tour. This one, which started July 6 and ends in September, is expected to be followed by the making of another album to follow the ever-popular "Some Nights." The title track was the encore of the night, upon the demands of thousands of dedicated, screaming fans.



Nate Ruess rarely stops moving on stage.

The adoration and respect was reciprocated when, in so many words, Ruess and Antonoff broke between songs to tell the locals among the crowd how lucky they are to live in paradise – despite the residual smoke. He reminded those who may fret over the smoky haze that he was unsure he could even sing a few days ago. But Ruess was so spot on with the melodies his vocals could fill Yosemite Valley.

“I’m so sorry it smells like a wilderness campfire,” Ruess said, after declaring it was the first time the band spent time in the Tahoe region. The band apparently took full advantage of the three-day experience, going out on Jet Skis and golfing. He added the band members liked Edgewood Tahoe so much they let the cost of the activities cut into the show’s proceeds.

Fun was not alone in their fun that night.

The up-and-coming band Tegan and Sara – with a loyal following of their own electro-induced sounds and deep, angst-filled lyrics – insisted a few times how they enjoyed coming to Tahoe.

Tegan Quin especially liked watching some people chair

dancing.

"We are thrilled to be here," she yelled out to the crowd. This was a notable tip of the hat to Tahoe from a duo that country sensation Taylor Swift singled out as a favorite act of hers to listen to. The Quin sisters have enjoyed a diverse appeal through the years, touring with the Pretenders, Neil Young, The Killers and Cyndi Lauper. They recently performed for a Major League Baseball Fan Cave online concert.

The Harveys show was a testament to vibrant, synthesizer-driven keyboards in concert with flashy images on the video screen behind the duo and the three-member backup band.

Mostly, it was the dark side of the lovelorn that the Quin sisters belted out in their self-written lyrics. They both seemed to be in a perpetual breakup. But in the music world, that's what so many in the fan base can relate to. In their popular "I Was a Fool," the lyrics appeared to bleed down the video screen. It was almost reassuring between sets when they smiled and seemed jovial.

The show turned a little torchy with their hit "Closer," with lyrics highlighting the excitement of sexual energy between two people. Anyone who's lived through puberty, high school or even the exhilaration of the pursuit could relate.

"There's something so liberating about their music. It's amazing with an '80s influence. I feel they're charismatic and honest on stage," said Taylor Gaddy of Reno, who has listened to Tegan and Sara for three years.

And yet there is more to come before the summer closes its doors at the Harveys Lake Tahoe outdoor concert series.

Country superstar Brad Paisley hits the arena tonight, the Dave Matthews Band comes to Tahoe Sept. 4 and rock band Journey follows 10 days later.