



Last year 900,000 spectators watched the Great Circus Parade. These wagons used to tour Europe and America a century ago.

street fairs, and block parties.

"Campus was totally deserted so I took advantage of the city for the first time," she says. What she discovered was a city made for outdoor fun. "There's so much to do here in the summer. And I really can't say enough about how cool the festivals are," she adds. Noga's parents came to visit on her birthday, July 14, which is also when the city is in the midst of its Bastille Days celebration. Streets were blocked off downtown, lots of characters, dressed like French revolutionaries, wandered through the crowds, and bands like C. J. Chemer and the Red Hot Louisiana Band and Beausoleil played at night. "My parents

Wisconsin con queso: A chef carves a hunk of cheese into a replica of America's Dairyland at Summerfest.



were amazed at how everything was going on at once," Noga says, remembering the high-spirited chaos that permeated the festival. "I thoroughly enjoyed myself."

Like most Rust Belt cities, Milwaukee is in the throes of a postindustrial growth spurt, moving from smokestacks to a high-tech economy. Some cities never quite get over their growing pains, but Milwaukee has emerged as a funky, medium-sized (population: 965,000), down-to-earth town. Along the Milwaukee River, sleek office buildings shoulder up against splendid turn-of-the-century landmarks. Long-neglected warehouse districts are now up-and-coming neighborhoods with art galleries, lofts, nightclubs, and trendy restaurants. "Look, we used to be America's machine shop," says Judith Woodburn, editor of *Milwaukee* magazine, "and that's just not the case anymore." She adds, "We're one of the second-tier cities like Indianapolis or Cincinnati, so we have to try harder."

If there's a true symbol of Milwaukee's newfound spirit, it's Summerfest, the annual lakefront music marathon that begins in late June, spans 11 days, and includes the Fourth of July (Summerfest 1990 runs from June 28 to July 8). The atmosphere, thinks one native standing next to me, has to do with surviving winter. "When the warm weather rolls around," he says, "people just go a little crazy."

At high noon on a typical Summerfest day, with the smell of barbecue hanging in the air, the event kicks into gear. For the next 12 hours as many as 30 bands get theiricks in, playing everything from New Age to Rockabilly from a dozen strategically placed stages. It's a great opportunity to hear well-known local bands like Those Spanic Boys, Capitol Drive, Semi-Twang, and Paul Cebal and the Milwaukeeans, all for an admission price of \$6.

The best parts of the festival happen every evening when a big-name band takes the stage at the 23,000-seat Marcus Amphitheater, located at the south end of the Summerfest grounds. Last year's lineup included Tom Petty, Rod Stewart, Blue Oyster Cult, Judy Tenuta, the BoDeans, and *Late Night's* Paul Shaffer and the World's Most Dangerous Band. Though most of the concerts cost \$4 to \$10, Noga caught Jackson Browne's for next to nothing: admission was free if you bought a stack of newspapers to be recycled. "It was the best concert I've ever heard," she says.

All the music, it seems, satisfies most people, but don't be afraid to explore. Last summer, I stumbled into a gazebo tucked away next to the Marcus Amphitheater that had somehow been left off the schedules and map. All day, local blues bands belted out tight sets that kept the crowds dancing. A few yards away, duffers lined up at the water to hang balls out to an island green (a hole in one won a car). Bikini-clad judges stood by the flag, one eye open for sharpshooters.

Soon after the last Summerfest fireworks display, the city is onto new things, like celebrating France's independence with Bastille Days, or chronicling the rituals of circus life when the the Great Circus Pa-