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Queen of the Desert

Rufus reigns at Coachella

If you detected a funny scent drifting into town from a southerly direction late last month, that was probably the smell of charred hipster flesh.

Nearly 60,000 indie fans descended upon Indio, Calif., for the eighth Coachella Valley Music & Arts Festival, a heavenly lineup of performers in a hellacious location. More than 100 acts took over five stages for three days of eardrum-splitting, sunburn-inducing fun in the sun. It's something akin to the ultimate mix tape come to life.

This year's fashion statement was white: oversized white-framed sunglasses, white leather belts, white kids dancing to hip-hop. Lots of white.

The musical highlight was Rufus Wainwright, who arrived wearing a long white hooded robe, which he later removed, revealing sexy silk pajama shorts and top. "I feel like a faggy Frank Sinatra," he told the adoring crowd as he performed an hourlong set of favorites along with a few new songs from *Release the Stars*, which just hit stores May 15. (See sidebar.)

I wasn't able to score an interview with Wainwright during the busy weekend, but he did deliver this delicious quote to The Associated Press backstage: "As usual, I'm jealous of Björk. I have only one French horn player, she has many more."

Here are some other memorable moments from the weekend:

- **Grizzly Bear:** Queer lead singer Edward Droste, who happens to be the cousin of Pink Martini chanteuse China Forbes, strummed on an autoharp during his Brooklyn band's mellow set.

- **Kaiser Chiefs:** A lively mosh pit chanted along to the title track of *Yours Truly, Angry Mob*: "We are the angry mob! We read the papers every day! We like who we like, we hate who we hate, but we're oh so easily swayed!"

- **The Arcade Fire:** Who cares about the music—I got to watch this band while standing next to hottie Adam Brody from *The O.C.* (Swoon.)

- **Happy Mondays:** A feeble comeback for the Manchester band's first gig since 1992. Frontman Shaun Ryder—his brain fried from all those years with the "24 Hour Party People"—had to read his own lyrics from monitors. It was like watching bad karaoke.



Jim's Closet
BY JIM RADOSTA

- **Amy Winehouse:** Just in time for Phil Spector's murder trial, the 23-year-old Brit resurrected his Wall of Sound with her Motown-esque set.



Rufus Wainwright has French horn envy.

Great music but lousy stage presence—painfully nervous, twitchy and skeletal. Halfway through the set, bad influence Kelly Osbourne ordered a drink for the "Rehab" singer. Also spotted behind the scenes: a glassy-eyed Cameron Diaz.

- **Mika:** Another 23-year-old Brit, the heir

apparent to Freddie Mercury rocked the main stage on closing day. Too bad the queer cutie was stuck performing for a bunch of straight dudes eagerly awaiting Rage Against the Machine. 19

RUFUS WAINWRIGHT performs with Sean Lennon and A Fine Frenzy on July 31 at Crystal Ballroom. Tickets go on sale May 26 at the box office and Ticketmaster.

Diehard fans should start planning now for RUFUS WAINWRIGHT PLAYS JUDY GARLAND: LIVE at the HOLLYWOOD BOWL Sept. 23. Following his acclaimed 2006 homage to Garland's 1961 Carnegie Hall concert, Wainwright pays tribute to her famous follow-up show at the Hollywood Bowl, singing all the songs she performed on that sensational night 46 years ago.

Arts and Culture Editor JIM RADOSTA needs your feedback. Write to jim@justout.com.

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