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Soul Asylum plays on Oval

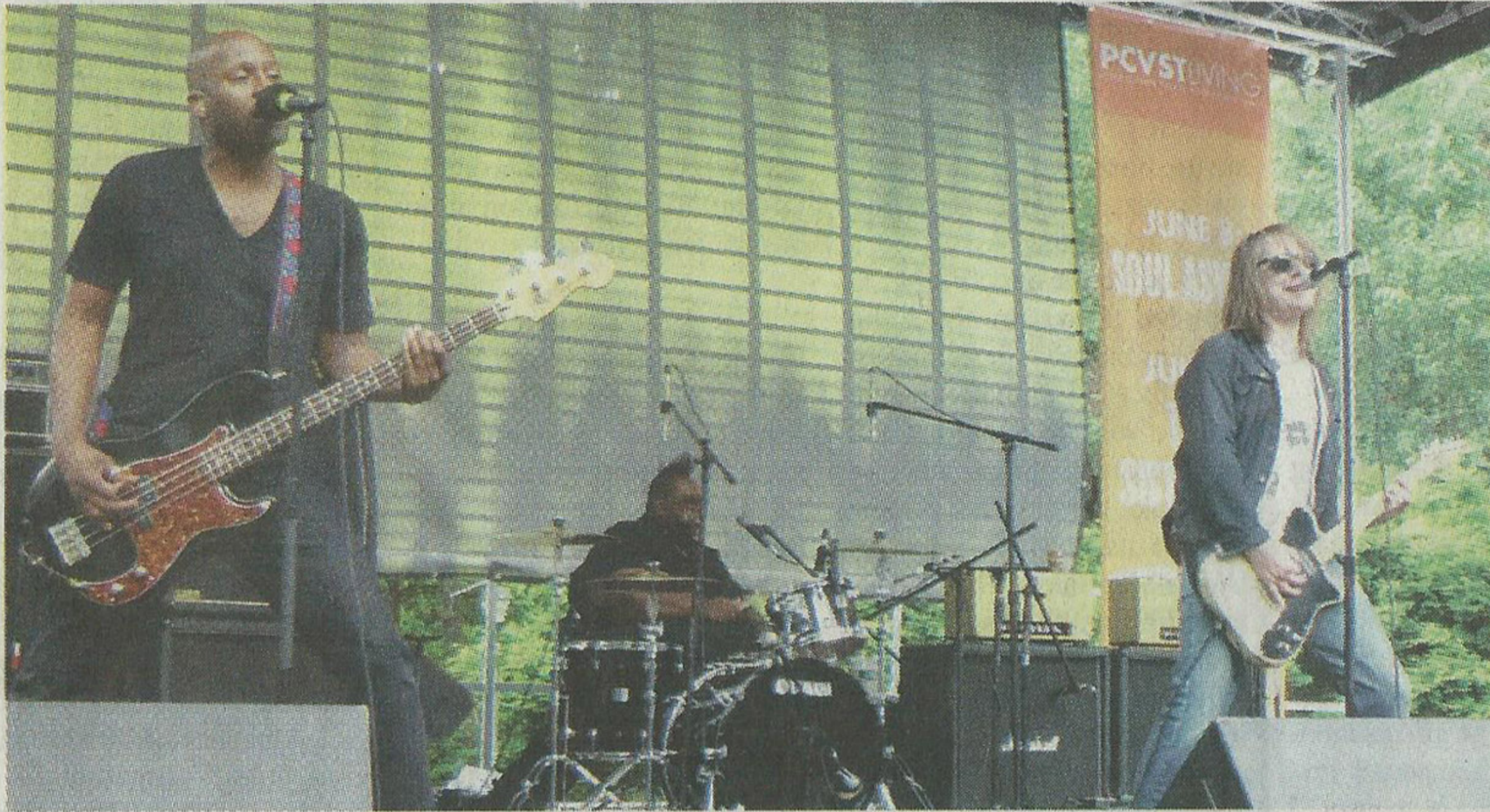


Photo by Sabina Mollot

Soul Asylum performs on the Oval on Saturday.

By Sabina Mollot

On Saturday morning, a crowd of around 300 people headed out to the Oval for a concert by rock band Soul Asylum, whose lead singer Dave Pirner, in a recent interview with Town & Village, noted that this would be the first time the band has played in a residential complex.

The crowd was kept somewhat limited since numerous security guards were on site, strictly enforcing the usually

ignored rule about big events being for residents and their guests only. Those who didn't get a coveted spot on the lawn (drenched from the previous night's storm) still listened in from the benches on the south side of the Oval.

Also taking the stage was rock band Skyfactor, the opening rock act whose lead singer, Bob Ziegler, is a Stuy Town resident. The band played music from its new CD, "Signal Strength," which was just released on Tuesday.

"I live here so this is a big thrill for me," said Ziegler.

Soul Asylum, known best for 1990s alternative rock hits like "Runaway Train" and "Somebody to Shove," also played songs from their most recent album, "Delayed Reaction," released last summer.

Pirner, who lives in New Orleans, at one point gave a shout out to "all the bridge and tunnel people" in the audience while also

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Skyfactor releases new album

By Sabina Mollot

Skyfactor, the band to open for Soul Asylum in Stuyvesant Town, has just released a new album, "Signal Strength," and this Saturday, will be celebrating its release with a concert and party at The Bitter End at 9 p.m.

Bob Ziegler, the singer, is a Stuyvesant Town resident who describes his band as "very local," having been birthed atop an East Village rooftop seven years ago, although the truth is since then its audience has grown far wider than just the city.

Following the release of its first album, "Daydreams" in 2010, Skyfactor gained a larger following when the ballad "OK" was played on the popular MTV reality show "Teen Mom." That song, said Ziegler, is "a positive message about staying true to yourself, that something better is around the corner and having faith that things will be okay."

Another song, "Something's Going to Change" also got some airtime, played during a segment of NBC's show, "The Voice."

As for "Signal Strength," just released on iTunes on Tuesday, it's the band's second full album. Like the first one, this

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Photo by Brett Deutsch

Skyfactor takes the stage on Saturday. (Pictured) Singer Bob Ziegler

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Photo by Brett Deutsch

Skyfactor's Jon Rubin, Bob Ziegler and Cliff Rubin

one was self-produced, recorded at Mark Dann Studios in TriBeCa. Sound-wise, it's a stripped down kind of rock that Ziegler described as "acoustic pop/rock with an edge." There's also a video for one of the songs, "Wake Up," which on Tuesday went up on YouTube.

Along with Ziegler, other members of the band are brothers Jon and Cliff Rubin and Ziegler's longtime friend Jason Taylor. Jon is the guitarist and co-writer, Cliff plays bass and Taylor plays drums. Musically, their influences vary, but the Rubins "have been in bands since they were in diapers,"

said Ziegler, while he and Taylor have played in a band together once before. That was Brother Rabbit, during the mid-90s when Ziegler was living in Michigan and attending university there.

Having been influenced musically by grunge and alternative bands in the 90s like Pearl Jam and Soul Asylum, Ziegler naturally said he was thrilled to be opening for the latter group last Saturday.

"It was great meeting the guys from Soul Asylum and (lead singer) Dave's (Pirner) a great guy and very supportive of us."

It was also the first time Ziegler had performed in

front of his neighbors, some of whom he recognized in the audience as being parents of kids where his own son goes to daycare, the Manhattan Kids Club.

"They know me as Mike's dad although now I guess they see me in a bit of a different lights," said Ziegler, 38, who's lived with his family in Stuy Town for the past four years. Prior to that, he and his wife Monika would sometimes just wander up from their 9th Street home to hang out.

"That was our escape and then my wife said we should move," he said, and of course the rest is history.

Fortunately he wasn't one

of the residents to get socked with a mid-lease increase. "We weren't," said Ziegler, "but I definitely feel for those guys who did. I'm hoping it will get rectified and remedied."

Ziegler, who now has a second child, three-year-old Sofie, grew up in San Diego and had been in bands there since was 16. He got the bug to start a new band after having Jon Rubin play guitar at his wedding.

"A conversation started and then on my rooftop in the East Village, we just started jamming and that's when Skyfactor was formed," said Ziegler. "I think we finished three songs that day."

Today, Ziegler, who also works in marketing for the healthy snacks company Pirate's Booty, said the band is looking to branch out and hopefully get more TV spots or film. This is a world the band has some knowledge of since Jon is a television producer. (Cliff runs a website design firm called Jonasweb.net and Taylor runs an architecture firm, J Taylor Design.) As for working with a label, Ziegler said while the band's members were open to working with one, "The right offer hasn't come along yet."

Meanwhile, it's the DIY route for them and, he added, "So far it's working."

Soul Asylum plays on Oval

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praising the whole audience for being a good one. In keeping with Stuy Town tradition, the most active audience members were the children dancing right by the stage.

"I love seeing all these kids here," said Pirner, who then attempted to think of a family-friendly joke. "If a man had a uterus, it'd be a dude-erus," he said. "That's kid-friendly, right?"

Others hanging out near the stage were audience members attempting to take pictures or videotape but a security guard tried to stop anyone from tap-

ing. One of those people was documentary filmmaker Sandi Bachom, a former resident, who's working on a video about the mid-lease rent hike issue. But when a guard tried to stop her, she refused, and as a result was warned she'd be thrown out.

"There would have had to have been an announcement for that rule to apply," Bachom told T&V as she continued to film the action.

Meanwhile, though the audience seemed to be in high spirits, picnicking on blankets or sitting on lawn chairs, some residents in nearby buildings

who hadn't attended still reported hearing the music from the concert echo in the loop roads.

Though this concert has a more famous band than those who usually perform at the Oval, there have been big-name acts in the past, including jazz performer Arturo O'Farrill, pop-rock group Fountains of Wayne and Stuyvesant Town's own rock crooner Garland Jeffreys.

There is one more big concert scheduled to take place in the Oval this summer, with rock groups Sister Hazel and Tonic set to play on July 27 at 3 p.m.



Above and bottom right photos by Seth Shire, others by Sabina Mollo

The crowd watches Skyfactor (above) and Soul Asylum (below left).

