Once September arrive, it's easy to see why Boston is known as a college town. The peace and quiet that the city felt all summer gets rudely ruptured by the college students that take over the city and surrounding suburbs once September comes.

They're not all bad, however, as the return of the students means a surplus of unique events held on college campuses, often for free. This season, we've gathered the best events taking place in the numerous colleges around the city. If you can't be rid of 'em, join 'em.

**Berklee: Beantown Jazz Festival**

A complete takeover; Berklee College of Music’s BeanTown Jazz Festival floods the South End every year with fantastic food, energetic crowds, beautifully bluesy music, even an Instrument Petting Zoo (need we say more?). This year's festival, centered around the theme “Jazz: The Next Generation,” will focus the newest and best in the jazz scene, including the former Berklee grad and Grammy-Award-winning drummer for Living Colour, and more.

*Saturday, September 28, 12-6p.m., Columbus Avenue between Massachusetts Avenue and Burke Street, beantownjazz.org*
The Berklee BeanTown Jazz Festival -- Boston's biggest block party -- delighted over 65,000 music lovers on September 28th. Jazz, Latin, blues, and funky groove acts performed on three stages along Columbus Avenue.

Highlights included the critically acclaimed bassist Meshell Ndegeocello, Grammy Award-winner Will Calhoun and his Trio, Robin McKelle and the Flytones, and Grammy-nominated trumpeter Christian Scott. There were also many outstanding performances by Berklee faculty and students. In addition to world-class music, there were countless vendor booths offering foods and crafts from around the world. Whether it was teriyaki chicken, samosas, pizza, chicken fingers and fries, a cupcake, or anything else you could think of, you were able to get it.

Jazz: The Next Generation was the theme of this year's festival, essentially focusing on the next crop of creative musicians. “The next generation of creative musicians is quite strong, and having stood on the shoulders of their predecessors, are now hopefully prepared for unlimited boundaries,” said Terri Lyne Carrington, Grammy Award-winner, Berklee professor, and Artist Director for the festival. Many young talents showed off their chops on the three stages, including the Berklee Global Jazz Ambassadors, the Berklee P-Funk Ensemble, and the Berklee City Music All-Stars Big Band.

I talked to a few of the students who had the opportunity to perform with their idols at the festival. Berklee student Abraham Rounds performed with Meshell Ndegeocello. “I grew up listening to her music so this was an amazing experience for me,” said Rounds. “I was so thankful to work with such an amazing, influential, and humble singer-songwriter and bassist. We spent three days rehearsing. By the end, we had shared a bond that went beyond the music and gave it a family vibe. We worked together to produce music from our hearts and Meshell gave us the freedom to apply our own creative persona to the music.”

Another student, Dejehan Hamilton, performed with Berklee professor Lawrence “Larry” Watson
and the Workforce. “It was quite an amazing experience to play for so many people and with such incredible musicians,” said Hamilton. “We had a lot of fun, especially when the audience interacted with us.” Hamilton plays the steelpan, which is a hot commodity at Berklee. He brought a different flavor to the soul and gospel performance. Hamilton was also happy to be part of the headlining act on the Natixis Stage, finishing off the night with a bang.

As a Berklee student, I also have that passion for music and love attending festivals, especially free ones. I saw many Berklee students and faculty members roaming around the festival, and I also saw some familiar faces from Northeastern and Boston University as well as students with Boston College hoodies.

I caught up with a few area students for their thoughts on the festival. Berklee student James Malinowski said, “For me, the best part about the Beantown Jazz Fest was getting to see my teacher Matt Jenson lay down some awesome reggae grooves. I also got tons of free stuff, including an awesome blue lion tattoo.”

Milan Beker, a freshman at Berklee, loved Christian Scott’s performance. “I mainly came to see him perform. I also thought the band’s drummer was absolutely amazing.”

Berklee’s neighbors at Northeastern University enjoyed the festival, too. “The BeanTown Jazz Festival was great! It was nice listening to jazz although it’s not the type of music I normally listen to,” explained Margaret Foley, a Music Industry major. “It was a really nice family atmosphere. Plus the food was amazing!”

Biology major Anthony Khairallah said, “I loved the diversity and how music brought everyone together at the festival.”

The festival took Northeastern student Lucy Hastings by surprise. “I live on Columbus Avenue and looked out my window, where there many people enjoying themselves to the music. I went to see what was going on and had an awesome experience. I loved it!”

Not only were there students and faculty members from colleges around Boston celebrating the joy of music, there were families enjoying themselves at the Natixis Family Park, where there were activities including inflatables, face painting, and an instrument petting zoo. Festival sponsor Natixis Global Asset Management also awarded the Natixis-Berklee City Music Scholarship to Samuel Joseph, who received $5,000 to cover the expenses of attending Berklee’s Five-Week Summer Performance Program.

If you missed this year’s festival, join the crowd next year to celebrate music. In the meantime, check out Berklee’s events calendar for upcoming events.
THE BEAT GOES ON
On Saturday, Sept. 28, the 13th annual Berklee Bean Town Jazz Festival attracted a crowd of 65,000 people to Columbus Avenue in the South End.

Roger H. Brown, John Haller, Samuel Joseph, Misael Martinez, Terri Lyne Carrington and Larry Simpson

Mike Tucker

Lenny Stallworth and the Berklee P-Funk Ensemble performance
The 13th annual Berklee BeanTown Jazz Festival is calling music lovers from across the city.

Boston's biggest block party hosted by Berklee College of Music will take place from noon to 6 p.m. Saturday, Sept. 28 in the South End where several legendary Jazz clubs existed during the genre's peak.

The daylong, free event—on Columbus Avenue between Massachusetts Avenue and Burke Street—will include three stages where attendees can enjoy contemporary jazz, Latin, blues and soul acts from award winning musicians and Berklee alumni, faculty and students and children activities.

Highlights include performances by songwriter, rapper, bassists and vocalist Meshell Ndegeocello; Will Calhoun Trio, lead by the Grammy Award-winning alumnus and drummer of the band Living Colour; and Robin McKelle and the Flytones.

This year the festival celebrates the theme “Jazz: The Next Generation” and will incorporate performances by some of Jazz's most acclaimed up and coming Berklee alumni artists including Grammy-nominated trumpeter Christian Scott; Mike Turner Trio featuring vibraphonist Warren Wolf; and the Matt Savage Quartet featuring sax-great Bobby Watson.

Faculty and students will also perform during the festival.

Berklee College of Music has received a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts to support the festival and its theme.

NEA cited the festival as a celebration of Boston's diversity as reflected in the attendees, music, food and crafts, according to a press release from Berklee.

“The next generation of creative musicians is quite strong and, having stood on the shoulders of their predecessors, are now hopefully prepared for unlimited boundaries. How exciting to witness and be a part of this process,” Berklee professor and festival artistic director Terri Lyne Carrington said.

To further push its theme, presenting sponsor Natixis Global Asset Management will present a $5,000 scholarship to a student musician during the festival.

“Granting the Natixis-Berklee scholarship aligns with our commitment to education and the arts. Supporting the opportunity for young musicians to enhance their talents brings us great pride and helps keep music alive for future generations,” NGAM president and chief executive officer John Hailer said.

In the past, the event has attracted as many as 80,000 music fans of all ages.

Carter Playground on Columbus Avenue will be transformed into a kids zone with activities, inflatables, face painting and an instrument petting zoo staffed by Berklee's Music Education department.

Children can also participate in KidsJam, an interactive music program led by Berklee's education department.

For updates and a full schedule of events visit beantownjazz.org and to listen tracks by many of the festival performers check out the Berklee's BeanTown Jazz Festival 2013 Sampler at BerkleeCollegeofMusic.bandcamp.com.

Berklee BeanTown Jazz Festival also presents ticketed concerts during the weekend of the event.

On Friday, Sept. 27 and Saturday Sept. 28, Gary Burton's 70th Birthday Tour stops at Sculler Jazz Club with performances at 8 and 10 p.m. each night.

For more information, visit ScullerJazz.com.

Instrumental jazz, funk and work music collective Snarky Puppy will stop by the Berklee Performance Center Sept. 29 at 8 p.m.

Visit Berklee.edu/bpc for more information on Snarky Puppy's performance.
Jazz pianist Matt Savage, 21, recorded his first album when he was 7. He graduated from Berklee College of Music last year and has played all over the world.

“Child prodigy” can be a tough handle for any musician to deal with. Sure, you get the early liftoff, but when do you stop being a novelty act? And from the audience point of view: How would you feel about a kid's playing if you didn’t know he was 6 years old? Would you still be as dazzled? Or interested?

It’s something that’s been faced by pianist/composer Matt Savage, now 21, from the beginning. Savage — who plays the Berklee BeanTown Jazz Festival on Saturday — recorded his first album when he was 7. And there was an added bit of novelty — Savage, a Sudbury native who grew up in Francestown, N.H., was diagnosed with autism at age 3, and couldn't even listen to music for the first years of his life because he found it harsh and disturbing.

But Savage's parents found therapy that allowed him to integrate sounds, and from then on he was demonstrating his stunning ability to absorb music and invent his own. In addition to performing regularly in Boston at Scullers and the Regattabar, Savage, who graduated last year with honors from Berklee College of Music, has played festivals around the world, made network TV appearances (including David Letterman and Conan O’Brien's shows)
and won several ASCAP Young Jazz Composer awards.

On Sept. 17, Savage released his 10th album, “A Bigger Celebration,” on his own Savage Records. He'll share the stage at the BeanTown event with saxophonist Bobby Watson, a distinguished former member of Art Blakey Jazz Messengers, as well as with longtime Savage trio bandmates John Funkhouser on bass and drummer Steve Silverstein. Then, on Oct. 16, he plays the Regattabar with the band from the album: saxophonists Jerry Bergonzi and Mark Zaleski, bassist Bruce Gertz, and drummer Richie Barshay.

Savage took to the virtuoso demands of bebop almost immediately — Funkhouser remembers him writing strong bebop tunes at 9. Since then, Savage's albums have been filled with predominantly original compositions. In those “early” years, he stuck mostly to straightforward verse-chorus song forms. But on “A Bigger Celebration,” as with 2010’s “Welcome Home,” he's working in more complicated forms and rhythms, extending his ideas over multi-part pieces, like the nearly 11-minute “Howler Monkey” and the three-part suite “A Fast Car in Summer.”

Savage's older cohorts are not surprised by his growth. Watson first played with Savage in Watson's hometown of Kansas City when the younger player was 11. “It's not so much that he was a virtuoso,” says Watson. “He had chops, but he also had direction the real thing, and he'd be in music for the rest of his life.”

Bandleader Mark Harvey enlisted Savage to play with the Aardvark Jazz Orchestra at the Regattabar in 2008 at the urging of Funkhouser, who is also the Aardvark bass player (see “Noisy Neighbors”). Harvey was taken with Savage's authority both as writer and improviser. But he was especially impressed with the then 16-year-old's on-stage musical savvy, especially when the band, with scant rehearsal, started to get lost on a tricky line Savage had written for the bass and trombones. “His left hand immediately went to the bass end of the piano, played the line, and linked us up,” says Harvey. “Everybody smiled.”

On “A Bigger Celebration,” Savage the pianist combines erudition and finesse with unfettered exuberance. You can hear it in the melodic ideas bursting out of his solo on the anthemic title tune, the fleet single-note lines, and his shouting chords. When Bergonzi comes in to solo, Savage is right there with him, fully engaged in dialogue.

“It was the first time we played together,” Savage says about Bergonzi, on the phone from New York, where he is now pursuing a master's degree at the Manhattan School of Music. “I had listened to a lot of his records. It was kind of a dream to play with him.”

Savage often talks about his life and work in terms of a dream come true — whether it's playing with Bergonzi or getting to tour the world. The breadth of compositions — like the evocative “The Dream of the East” (about his trip to Japan) or multi-hued “Howler Monkey” (Costa Rica) — show what Savage has called a more “complicated” and exciting adult life. It's not as though there are no misfires. A rock melody like “Power Pop” (inspired by Green Day) is probably way more simple than it has to be. But it's more than made up for by a piece like “12:03 A.M.,” Savage's reharmonization of Thelonious Monk’s ‘Round Midnight.”

“He's always had this way of writing from the heart,” says Funkhouser, “especially on ballads.” The reflective beauty of “12:03 A.M.” offers more proof that Savage is the real thing.
More than a dozen acts will join Matt Savage at Saturday’s Berklee BeanTown Jazz Festival. Among the three stage's highlights are singer-songwriter-bassist Meshell Ndegeocello, forming Living Colour drummer Will Calhoun, trumpeter Christian Scott, and the Mike Tucker Trio with vibes star Warren Wolf. That’s from noon to 6 p.m. on Columbus Avenue between Burke Street and Mass. Avenue, and it’s all free. . . . Also coming up, the New Gary Burton Quartet plays Scullers Friday and Saturday, avant-garde jazz-rock quintet Kneebody play Café 939 Sept. 30, pianist Stanley Sagov and his exuberant Remembering the Future Jazz Band play the Regattabar Oct. 5, the spellbinding Aardvark Jazz Orchestra plays a program of “Blues and Other Hues” at Scullers Oct. 9, and Charlie Kohlhase reassembles his all-star Saxophone Support Group at Outpost 186 on Oct. 17.
FALLING FOR JAZZ

Saturday > September 28

Three stages’ worth of jazz, blues, Latin, and groove are the main attraction at the annual Berklee BeanTown Jazz Festival from noon to 6 p.m. Saturday on Columbus Avenue between Mass. Ave. and Burke Street in Boston’s South End. Meshell Ndegeocello, the Will Calhoun Trio, and the Matt Savage Quartet are among the performers at this free event. beantownjazz.org
A year ago, the state's jazz scene took a beating.
WGBH dramatically reduced its jazz programming and Tanglewood canceled its annual jazz festival in favor of gigs by pop artists like Train and Evanescence. But by fall 2012, the Berklee Beantown Jazz Festival reminded the city that jazz remains a vital part of Boston's sonic landscape.

Today, the 13th annual Beantown Fest steps forward — the theme is "Jazz: the Next Generation."

With a new crop of freshmen settling in at Berklee, today's free event, on Columbus Avenue (from noon to 6 p.m. between Massachusetts Avenue and Burke Street in Boston's South End) highlights young ions.

While the headliners have impressive resumes, they're not the same old jazz warhorses trotted out by every festival. Berklee professor and master drummer Terri Lynne Carrington has booked under-appreciated artists across a range of genres.

Meshem Ndegeocello can do a torch song with the hushed soul of Sade or explode into otherworldly experimentation, finding common ground between Jimi Hendrix and Frank Ocean.

The Wil Calhoun Trio, led by alum and Living Colour drummer, owes its sound to both Miles Davis and Led Zeppelin. Robin McKelle has worked with the Boston Pops, but she also rocks and roots with the same swagger as maximum R&B queens Amy Winehouse and Sharon Jones.

And those are only the obvious names.

On three stages, dozens of young talents and recent alumni will show off their chops — highlights include the Berklee Global Jazz Ambassadors, Berklee P-Funk Ensemble and the high school up-and-coming in Berklee City Music All-Stars, Big Band Jazz.

If you're worried the music will be too odd or esoteric, don't be. Surrounding more avant-garde acts will be sets of traditional jazz, Latin, blues and soul.

For the aspiring musician in your family, Carter Playground on Columbus Avenue will become a kid's carnival, with games, instrument tutorials and a Berklee-style petting zoo — drums, brass and reeds stand in for goats, sheep and chickens. Past festivals have attracted as many as 80,000 people.

Throughout the city's biggest block party, vendors from around with world will have food and crafts for sale. Join the crowd and help Berklee power the city's jazz renaissance.

— jessie@bostonherald.com

Go to beantownjazz.org for the full schedule.
Sept. 22, 2013: 13th Annual Berklee Beantown Jazz Festival

It’s that time of the year to get jazzed up with CityLine for the Berklee Beantown Jazz Festival. Visitors are sure to be drawn in by the sights and sounds of the city’s biggest block party!

Jazz: The Next Generation is the theme of this year’s Berklee Beantown Jazz Festival and it’s all about the musical genres rising stars. French musician Simon Moullier discusses his passion for Jazz and the improbable assembly of the Simon Moullier Quartet comprising of a highly talented group of international performers.

The Berklee Music Program is credited with nurturing talent and providing students with opportunities to showcase their skills. Berklee professor and Big Band Director Bobby Gallegos, expresses his enthusiasm for assisting students to embark on their musical journeys while he provides expert guidance along the way.

Commemorating the celebration of the fifty year anniversary of the march on Washington and Dr. Martin Luther King’s legacy is Larry Watson and the Workforce.

CityLine is joined in the studio for a live performance by Berklee Beantown Jazz Festival special guest Karen Bell of the Bell Affair.

In theaters on September 27, 2013, is Baggage Claim, features Paula Patton as a flight attendant who is determined to get engaged before her youngest sister’s wedding.

Visit CityLine’s Facebook Page to obtain a pair of complimentary passes to catch the film before it hits theaters.
A picture-perfect autumn day with brilliant sunshine and a cool breeze set the stage perfectly for an afternoon of music at the Berklee BeanTown Jazz Festival on Columbus Avenue Saturday, September 28. The festival, whose theme this year was Jazz: the Next Generation, generously showcased Berklee's student, alumni and faculty talent. Prominent Berklee graduates such as drummer Will Calhoun, who rose to prominence with the rock band Living Colour and Grammy nominee Christian Scott joined faculty members Larry Watson and Rick DiMuzio on the festival’s program.

At the Berklee Stage near Northampton Street, The Bell Affair featuring Karen Bell shook up the crowd with funk and soul dance favorites. The Bell Affair was followed by saxman Mike Tucker’s Trio, featuring up-and-coming vibraphonist Warren Wolf and organist Jake Sherman lending warmth with his Hammond B-3 to a mix of originals and gems from Thelonius Monk.

A shoulder to shoulder crowd filled the Carter Playground to greet vocalist/bassist Meshell Ndegeocello when she took to the stage at 3:30 p.m. backed by a band of Berklee student musicians. Ndegeocello's loose, jam-driven set mixed originals and covers saluting Nina Simone and Leonard Cohen, and spanned genres from hip-hop to reggae and tribal world rhythms. Despite technical difficulties with her bass on the last song, Ndegeocello kept her audience riveted throughout her set.

In a late-afternoon set on the Aramark/Coca-Cola stage near Burke Street, Calhoun put a distance between himself and his rock past by spotlighting pieces from his new jazz album, Life In This World.

The energy and primal rhythms of returning Beantown Jazz favorites Bloco AfroBrazil drew a huge crowd that marched, danced and clapped with the hand-drumming ensemble. Bloco AfroBrazil, founded by Brazilian percussionist and educator Marcus Santos, comprises members of all ages and ethnicities who perform at outdoor events and community centers such as Cambridge's Riverfest, the Allston Village Street Fair, Honk and this year's Outside the Box city-wide arts showcase. The charismatic Santos, clad in the colors of the Brazilian flag including a green and yellow wig, engaged the audience, encouraging onlookers to follow the movements of the band.

Striving to entertain and enlighten all ages, with a family stage that offered musical workshops for small children to explore sound, rhythm and melody, an Instrument Petting Zoo where children could touch and learn about musical instruments as well as face painting, play equipment and free snacks.
Boston’s biggest outdoor jazz event has more of a local focus this year—hardly a problem, given the wealth of talent connected to Berklee, NEC and other institutions.

By J. R. Carroll

This year’s Berklee Beantown Jazz Festival—running from noon to 6 p.m. in the South End—is a bit more locally focused in 2013. This might be a problem in some locales, but not in Boston, with its wealth of native talent and the immense musical resources of Berklee, NEC, and other jazz education programs in the area.

As with all multi-stage festivals, you can’t be everywhere at the same time, so choices—inevitably frustrating—will have to be made by everyone who attends BeanTown. What follows below are my personal suggestions, but you undoubtedly have your own preferences and will arrange your own schedule of what you want to hear when. (Berklee has helpfully provided a sampler of recordings by many of the performers on this year’s BeanTown roster.)

**Simon Moullier Quartet**
12 p.m., Berklee Stage

French vibraphonist Simon Moullier has assembled an international quartet (Panamanian alto saxophonist Simon Batista, Swedish bassist Elin Sandberg, and Japanese drummer Kazuhiro Odagiri) with quite a distinctive sound, especially when Sandberg picks up her bow. Moullier, clearly a guy with open ears, has already developed a recognizable compositional voice of his own, but he and his band members also put a fresh twist on tunes by Radiohead and others.

**Rick DiMuzio Quintet Featuring Lage Lund**
1:15 p.m., BeanTown Stage

Saxophonist Rick DiMuzio is a familiar face on the Boston scene, as a leader and as a sideman with a diverse array of performers. Here you can catch him with his own quintet, consisting of pianist Mark Shilansky, bassist Keala Kaumeheiwa, drummer Austin McMahon, and special guest guitarist Lage Lund.
Mike Tucker Trio +1 Featuring Warren Wolf
2:30 p.m., Berklee Stage

Saxophonist Mike Tucker and his Organ Trio (with organist Jake Sherman and drummer Lee Fish) have teamed with much-in-demand vibraphonist Warren Wolf in an instrumental combination that works surprisingly well.

Will Calhoun Trio
3:45 p.m., BeanTown Stage

Drummer (and Berklee alum) Will Calhoun came to fame as a key member of the still very active hard rock band Living Colour but has been involved in projects ranging from hip hop to ambient world music to straight-up jazz. Calhoun’s trio, with keyboardist Marc Cary (recently heard at Sculler’s in a solo tribute to Abbey Lincoln—see Michael Ullman’s review) and bassist Charnett Moffett, leans toward the latter end of this wide spectrum, but elements from all the preceding find their way into the band’s group explorations.

Christian Scott
5 p.m., BeanTown Stage

Capping off the afternoon, New Orleans-born Christian Scott (saxophonist Donald Harrison is his uncle) is another artist who pulls a wide range of interests and experiences into his music, as well as an acute social consciousness that’s reflected in both the titles and the content of his original compositions.

Saturday is forecast to be a beautiful early autumn day, with temperatures in the upper 60s and plenty of sun. So, no excuses—the Berklee BeanTown Jazz Festival is the place to be.
The Berklee BeanTown Jazz Festival commenced at a club this year, with Scullers playing host to two Friday sets by the New Gary Burton Quartet (two more would follow the next night). It was the second BeanTown appearance in three years by this all-star band—Burton on vibraphone, Julian Lage on guitar, Scott Colley on bass, Antonio Sanchez on drums—but in 2011 they had closed out the festival with a performance at the much larger Berklee Performance Center. This time, as last, they were promoting a new album (Guided Tour is the title of this one), but this visit—touted as part of Burton’s 70th-birthday tour was also a celebration of the leader’s just-published autobiography, Learning to Listen: The Jazz Journey of Gary Burton.

The intimacy of the club venue was a treat for those catching the group there. The audience could hear and see Burton’s four-mallet technique up close, as well as Lage’s phenomenal fretwork, Colley putting body English into his energetic bass lines and Sanchez’s rich dynamism at the kit. But a wider audience got the chance to hear the music as well, Friday’s second set being broadcast live on WGBH-FM, hosted by Eric Jackson.

That second set got underway with a cover of Mongo Santamaría’s “Afro Blue,” with stops for Colley’s “Never the Same Way” (from the quartet’s 2011 album, Common Ground), the standard “I Hear a Rhapsody” and Keith Jarrett’s “In Your Quiet Place” following en route to the set-closing cover of Burton’s fellow vibes great Milt Jackson’s “Bag’s Groove.” The ballad-like Jarrett tune, which Burton and Jarrett recorded together for a 1971 album, drew especially appreciative applause from the audience. (“Well, I’ll tell Keith,” Burton responded, before pausing to give his book a quick plug.) But three originals from the new album were also highlights. Burton’s own
“Remembering Tano” was written for nuevo tango great Astor Piazzolla, with whom Burton recorded a live album (The New Tango) and whose music he has revisited on subsequent albums. Sanchez’s “Monk Fish” had a Monkish (as in Thelonious), jazz-standard feel to it, bluesy with slippery shifts in tempo and deft solos by Lage and Sanchez.

Lage’s “The Lookout” had a rock/funk feel to it in places, particularly when he and Burton cut loose on their solos. It seemed at those moments to hint at Burton having helped fuse jazz and rock nearly a half-century ago. And in introducing it, Burton reminded people that he and Lage have a history, too. “He looks very young,” acknowledged Burton of his 25-year-old sideman. “But we made our first record together when he was 15.”

Their history also includes their association with the Berklee College of Music, where Burton, Lage and Sanchez have all studied and taught. (Burton, who retired as a Berklee vice president a few years back, recently began teaching a MOOC—Massive Open Online Course—for the college, which he bragged 39,000 had signed up for.) No wonder, then, that the quartet is a repeat headliner for the Berklee-associated event, many of whose performers at the free, afternoon-long festival on Saturday also had Berklee ties. Three stages were in operation from noon to six on a gloriously sunny and warm autumn afternoon, for what resembled a jumbo-size block party running along the city’s Columbus Avenue from a point a few doors down Massachusetts Avenue from the venerable jazz club Wally’s Cafe. The Berklee Stage devoted to current and/or former Berklee students, Natixis Global Asset Management Stage tossing funk and other elements into the jazz mix, and the Aramark/Coco-Cola Stage working its way through this lineup of jazz pros: Giorgi Mikadze Group, Rick DiMuzio Group featuring Lage Lund, Matt Savage Quartet featuring Bobby Watson, Will Calhoun Trio and trumpet star Christian Scott.

Not that there weren’t impressive jazz pros at the Berklee stage. The 2:30 set brought Mike Tucker and his organ trio, with Jake Sherman on Hammond B3 organ and Lee Fish on drums, augmented (as on their recent live album) by rising-star vibraphonist Warren Wolf. Tucker, a tall tenor saxophonist
in a black suit and tie, whipped the band through the first three tracks on that album—“The Sherminator,” Monk’s “Trinkle Tinkle,” and “Transform”—with his and Wolf’s playing being particularly impressive. The drums kicked off “Trinkle Tinkle,” with Tucker coming in sounding more modern and abstract than on the opener, before Wolf joined in taking Monk’s melody at a furious clip and they took turns soloing. On “Transform” Wolf took an even more blazing solo, which he kept under control while ignoring a tech guy adjusting his microphones mid-solo.

There was more to that set, but there was also another group with another ringer to catch at the opposite end of the festival: 21-year-old pianist Matt Savage’s quartet with alto sax veteran Bobby Watson. Savage seemed to split his time between piano and a Fender Rhodes, playing the latter on his tune “Power Pop,” which Watson sat out. But the saxophonist returned to the stage for a couple of additional pieces, closing the set with a ballad and a brisk run-through of “Cherokee.”

There was time for a quick stop at the Natixis stage, where Meshell Ndegeocello played a set mixing vocals and occasional turns on electric bass and hitting a few tunes from her recent Nina Simone tribute album, Pour une me souveraine, starting with “one of my favorites,” the Leonard Cohen-penned “Suzanne.” Julian Lage was spotted watching a couple of former students in her band and scanning the crowd for Sanchez, who was likewise making a busman’s holiday of the afternoon’s offerings before their sets back at Scullers that night.

The Will Calhoun Trio was the surprise of the festival. Best known for his work on drums with the rock band Living Colour, Calhoun returned to his jazz roots on his recent album Life in this World, and it was that sort of material he was joined for on the Aramark/Coca-Cola stage by pianist Marc Cary and bassist Charnett Moffett. They kicked off their set, as Burton’s group had the night before, with a version of “Afro Blue,” and kept things burning throughout, concluding with an especially rousing piece that incorporated synthesized drumbeats from the leader. Cary, whose fine new album For the Love of Abbey celebrates his longtime employer Abbey Lincoln, excelled on both piano and the Fender Rhodes, sometimes simultaneously; Moffett, whose album of solo bass works The Bridge also came out this past spring, was perhaps even more dazzling when he switched to electric bass from his upright for solos, which is saying a lot.

A band lesser than Christian Scott’s might have been intimidated by the Calhoun set. But Scott’s quintet proved more than up to the challenge of following it. The leader alternated stalking the stage throwing out directions and encouragement to his sideman with powerful, well-thought-out solos. Matthews Stevens, Scott’s “partner in crime for over a decade” (including regular work at Wally’s in their Berklee student days), didn’t solo much beyond the set’s opener, but his rocking guitar riff made the set’s second piece and brought to mind the heyday of jazz-rock fusion. Lawrence Fields began that tune on Fender Rhodes, reverting to
piano for his solo, which was followed by solos by Kris Funn on upright bass and Corey Fonville on drums. Scott played a ballad for his new wife on flugelhorn next, the custom-made horn as unique in its design as the trumpet with the built-in mouthpiece and Dizzy Gillespie-style upraised bell he spent the rest of the set playing. Fields' piano solo on the ballad, incidentally, was as impressive as his boss's on flugelhorn. Scott ended the set with his controversially titled tune “K.K.P.D.,” explaining its reference to Scott having been bullied by a group of police officers in his hometown of New Orleans, in a harrowing confrontation that climaxed with one of them threatening Scott that if he didn’t shut up, his mother would be picking him up at the morgue. Scott’s soloing on this tune looked and sounded especially personal, as he bent this way and that, forcing bursts of air into his instrument and, apparently, reliving the incident as he played.

And with that, promptly at 6 o’clock, the festival was over. The Scott set had been too riveting to make the schlep back up Columbus Avenue to the Berklee stage for vocalist Robin McKelle and the Flytones, a pity considering the high quality of their new album, Soul Flower (which features a guest spot from Gregory Porter, who had appeared on The Tonight Show with Jay Leno the night before). Also missed at the Berklee stage on this impressionistic tour of the festival: the Berklee Global Jazz Ambassadors featuring Adam Cruz, the Bell Affair featuring Karen Bell and the Simon Moullier Quartet. At the Natixis stage: Berklee City Music All-Stars Big Band Jazz, Matt Jenson and the Liquid Revolution, Berklee P-Funk Ensemble and Lawrence “Larry” Watson and the Workforce. More music would follow Sunday night from the jazz-funk-world group Snarky Puppy at the Berklee Performance Center and on Monday from the rising eclectic jazz group Kneebody at Berklee’s club-sized 939 Cafe.