



## ROC City Jazz

Don't look now, but a major music festival has blossomed just down the Thruway

By Jordan Clifford

Newport, New Orleans — and Rochester? Now in its 11th year, the Xerox Rochester International Jazz Festival seems intent on rivaling the top jazz festivals. From June 22-30, Rochester's East End will transform. Streets will shut down, parking lots will turn into amphitheaters, and practically every concert hall and bar in town will play host to nightly sold-out headliner shows and free concerts featuring more than 1,200 musicians. Last year, total attendance pushed 180,000.

Like its better-known forerunners, Rochester's jazz festival extends far beyond jazz. This year's big names are Esperanza Spalding, the 2011 Grammy Awards winner for Best New Artist, Norah Jones, Diana Krall, and Trombone Shorty. Other shows include bluegrass act Steve Martin with the Steep Canyon Rangers, rock groups Zappa Play Zappa and The Outlaws, and the obligatory jam band courtesy of Gov't Mule — it is a summer festival, after all.

The event's founder, artistic director and co-producer, John Nugent, learned his trade producing concert tours across Europe since 1995 and running Sweden's Stockholm Jazz Festival as its co-owner in 2000. He calls Rochester's evolution gratifying. "I had a long-term vision," he says. "And people have finally caught on to what I believed was possible." 🐼

Check it out for yourself: [rochesterjazz.com](http://rochesterjazz.com)

**Esperanza Spalding**  
plays Kodak Hall at Eastman  
Theatre on June 23 at 8 p.m.

Photo by Carlos Pericas, Courtesy of Montuno