

Reprinted from Erie Times-News " Best of Erie " Feature. (08/17/2004)

## **Best Tribute Act**

### **Key West Express**

What a heated category because Erie abounds in talented folks who make their heroes come alive. Lovers of Elvis, Beatles, Billie Holiday, Hank Williams, and Allman Brothers -- for instance -- could get their fare share in 2004.

But Key West Express took its love for Jimmy Buffett beach music and island frivolity a step further by serving up Key West Phest. The free, all-day festival at Liberty Park featured lots of kids activities, booths from nearly a dozen Erie restaurants, lots of tunes, and a fun, friendly atmosphere with kites and streamers flapping about.

The host band, of course, played nearly two hours' worth of good-time Buffett -- nailing the relaxed vibe and sunny feel of his music. Key West also convinced Peter Mayer -- Buffet's guitarist -- to headline the event, a pretty good coup. It was also instrumental in getting the Presque Isle Parrothead Club -- a sanctioned Buffett fan club -- off the ground. The club sponsored the Phest, which will hopefully be an annual event.

## **Best Place for Outdoor Music**

### **Pepsi Amphitheater at the foot of Liberty Street**

Speaking of Key West Phest, it wouldn't have been the same if it was held, say, in Perry Square. Buffett music demands that water vibe, which is what makes this spot so cool. Set on the bay, with sailboats sauntering by, paragliders floating in mid-air, and Presque Isle stretching out before you, it's a breathtaking place to experience live music.

8 Great Tuesdays regularly draws crowds of 3,000 and more for local bands, a testament to the allure of Liberty Park. Key West, too, was phenomenally well attended. All the peripherals only add to the fun: a great playground for kids, volleyball nets, and, uh, the opportunity to have a beer or mixed drink, as well on a hot summer night