

Despite Being Kicked Off Christian Fest Bill, Gay Rocker Appears Anyway

Christian music festival Joshua Fest organizers faced an agonizing decision when one of the top acts came out as gay earlier this year.

"Everyday Sunday had played almost every year of the festival for the past decade," owner Aaron Diello tells *Billboard* of Trey Pearson's band.

"We had booked them for tours, hung out on RV rides after shows, even played Halo together back in the day. ... We knew it would be controversial. But we also knew that if we were going to claim to be a festival that proclaims the love of Jesus, to everyone, then our friend needed to be included in that proclamation."

But 11 of his 14-member crew told Diello they would walk if Pearson performed.

"I was hurt. I felt like I was powerless in the situation—like I was just punched in the gut. I was forced to let down a friend, someone that I really wanted to just love and support, the way Jesus tells us to. I was being denied that opportunity, at my own festival. It was a horrible situation," Diello says.

Pearson, the frontman of Everyday Sunday, says he understood the news. Pearson came out as gay in May, and knew his homosexuality ostracized him from much of the Christian community.

Pearson resigned himself to not performing. But a band he admired since his youth called him up.

Person performed the last song with punk-ska band Five Iron Frenzy even though his own set had been cancelled.

After the festival, Pearson shared his heart on Facebook:

I am honored and thankful for the love of one of my favorite bands growing up, Five Iron Frenzy, inviting me to come on stage to perform with them.

I am unbelievably thankful for the owners of Joshua Fest who invited me, and helped make it happen, even when there were people fighting to not let me perform there.

I am humbled and grateful for my friends in Switchfoot and Relient K, who took the time to show me so much love and compassion, as we spent time together there.

And I'm in awe of how much love I received from the fans, rooting me on with their love and support as I was up there. The people who came up to me, who just told me how much they loved me, and how proud of me they were.

I know there were some people there that probably weren't happy I was there. But, for a festival where people come together to celebrate their love of God and their faith in Jesus, it truly felt like the hands and feet of Christ pouring their love out on me. It was an amazing, overwhelming time that I will never forget.

What do you think of Five Iron Frenzy's decision? Sound off!