

SUNDAY EXTRA!

Crowds flock to Fest for the love of Money

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TAMPA — Eddie Money's biggest vice these days is an occasional puff on a good pipe. The legal kind, this time.

"I got so high in the '80s, I don't need drugs or alcohol," he confided, as we waited on his bus for the after-concert crowd to disperse Saturday night at Pirate Fest. "I'm still as crazy as ever. You can party and not be stoned.

"I gave up cigarettes January first and it's making me nuts. Arghhhh!" he growled good-naturedly, eyes wide and wild as ever.

Thirty minutes later, fans still hollered outside. He opened the bus door and signed everything thrust at him — from drumsticks to 10-dollar bills — for another 10 minutes. "I just don't do chests or butts," he grinned.

"Except when I met her — I signed her ass," he joked, pointing to his wife. "Best autograph I ever signed."

Wife Laurie, a blonde with model looks, hails from Nashville. They met there at one of Money's shows.

A phenomenally good sport, she even held up their youngest of five, 4-month-old Julian, as Dad signed bits of paper and police tried to hold back the crowd. Julian obliged by opening his eyes for fans. They went crazier than ever.

Laurie raised her eyebrows at folks in the bus and smiled, turning back to the star-struck crowd. Eddie beamed. No has-beens here.

"Tampa's always been really good to me. Maybe I should move here. I have strong following here, stronger than South Florida, Miami."

He opened the door again, waved and thanked the crowd, "I love you guys!"

"I think this is so great, how Tampa's pulled this holiday out of the woodwork — people love to party," Money said, closing the door again. "This whole town is awake and alive. It's better than Mardi Gras in

New Orleans. People in Tampa seem to have more class, and more money."

Obviously, Money missed the topless dancers on the Lady Xanadu bending over to show their thong-clad rears to other Harbour Island boaters during the pirate invasion. And he apparently had forgiven the fools who ran off with his \$150 borrowed microphone when he threw it into the crowd at Curtis Hixon Park.

"Damn, am I gonna have to pay for that?" he asked his manager as he nibbled oatmeal cookies on the bus.

The Money craze hit Tampa around 6:30 p.m. Saturday, as audiences thinned at the seven other stages set up throughout downtown. Left behind were national jazz, Latin, rock and blues acts. Folks flooded to the grassy lawn off Ashley Street for a toe-tapping, two-hour sing-along with the self-proclaimed Money Man.

Money's energetic show — his second Gasparilla appearance — played like a "Greatest Hits" CD. Thousands sang along on "Two Tickets to Paradise," "I Wanna Go Back," "Give Me Some Water," "Baby Hold On," "Think I'm in Love" and "When You Gonna Call?" For the finale, three-year-old Desmond joined Dad on stage to sing Ronnie Spector's "be my little baby" lines in "Take Me Home Tonight."

For an encore, after the crowd chanted "Ed-die! Ed-die!" he gave them what they wanted — '80s smash hit, "Shakin'."

"Don't forget to pick up my new CD so I can feed these kids!" he called out as he left the stage and later as he fought his way through the crowd to his bus with his family. He was hoping to make it to Hyde Park Village in time to see "Dead Man Walking." By the time fans let him be and started wandering away from the bus and back to the other stages, carnival rides and concessions, it was too late.

Pirate Fest was free, but don't let that fool you.

It was all about Money.

