

# Annual weekend draws fairgoers

By Lia Saliccia  
For the Oregon Daily Emerald

VENETA — Every year for one July weekend, this small town transforms into one of the largest pow wows in the Northwest. Last weekend the 25th annual Oregon Country Fair combined food, crafts, information and entertainment to create what some call the biggest party of the year.

Hundreds of vendors, entertainers and patrons turned out Friday through Saturday. The sun shone upon the crowd, which consisted of children, teens, adults and senior citizens. There were many things one could spend money on, but the entertainment, save for the fair's cover charge, was free.

There was Tom Noddy, a Country Fair veteran who blows bubbles for a living. His specialty is smoke bubbles, aided by cigarettes. He told the crowd at the Circus theater that he tried to quit smoking except when creating smoke bubbles, but "it didn't work; I needed a bubble after every meal."

There were the Rodz sisters, a country duo who sang songs such as "Take us back to the men like the men of Bonanza."

There were the Flying Instruments of Karma marching band whose repertoire included the theme song from *Rocky and Bullwinkle*.

There was Mary Hart, who earnestly sang to the crowd, "You have to have a penis if you want to be a priest."

There were larger bands that performed simultaneously on the many stages. They included Left-over Salmon, Jambay and the Sugar Beets.

There were vaudevillians who juggled everything from clubs to fire. Performer David Lichtenstein rode a unicycle while juggling a broom, an egg and a basketball.

And if patrons didn't want to stay in one place for long, they could be entertained by the parades given twice daily, as well as random musicians and performers. A small parade that consisted of seven individuals carrying huge papier-mache eyes, nose and mouth and that walked through the crowd manipulating their huge puppet to say, "We love you!" was a real crowd pleaser.

If patrons wanted to learn something, there were stations like Energy Park, complete with an electric car, solar panels where food was cooked, and information on everything from the size of the atmosphere to the merits of hemp.

Whitebird Medical Clinic provided first aid and medical assistance for the sick or the overdrugged. The Country Fair staff, which was comprised of hundreds of individuals, were there to troubleshoot whatever problems arose.

That way, the patrons could concentrate on other issues, like the passer-by who looked earnestly at her companion and asked, "I have a question about my crystal. Should I put it on black or purple satin?"



Photo by Thomas Bergstrom  
Tom Noddy, who's been blowing bubbles for 21 years, is an Oregon Country Fair veteran and stage act.

# Oregon Country Fair after hours where the most fun is at

By Lia Saliccia  
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If you live in Oregon, chances are you have gone to the Oregon Country Fair at least once. If you haven't, then you have probably heard others talk about it.

And if you've heard others talking about it, most likely they spoke about the part of the fair not open to the general public — the camping that involves only the staff after everybody without a camping pass goes home. That part, people will tell you, is the most fun part of the fair.

I decided to find out just how fun the after-hours partying really was. I snuck past "the sweep" that weeds out people with only the day passes and camped both nights. This notorious sweep consists of about 50 staffers who hold hands, sing and push everybody out of the exit at 8 p.m. every

night.

In order to protect others who might use the same method, I'm not saying how I did it. I will say that I didn't sneak in by hiding in a tent for two hours. I did it for you, the *Emerald* readers who are dying to find out what exactly the "best part of the fair" is all about.

For one thing, there are far less people. In Country Fair jargon, they are called the "fair family." For another thing, after hours is the time when most of the family decides to embark on psychedelic journeys.

But the main lure of it all, besides the fact that camping is only offered to an elite crowd, is the Midnight Show. On Saturday night, a parade winds through the fairgrounds' figure-eight and lands on the main stage, commencing in a three-hour show. Although many of the performers were the same ones who had been roaming the fair in the daytime, the subject matter of their performances were slightly different.

In other words, it could be con-



Photo by Thomas Bergstrom  
Omar Kemyatta (left) plays the piccolo and Jim Diggs plays the drums at the fair's drum tower Friday.

strued that the show catered mostly to those who had imbibed mind-altering substances.

Tom Noddy, the "Bubble Guy," abandoned his small can of bub-

bles and five-inch bubble blower for a huge wading pool filled with soap and a contraption that allowed him to blow bubbles that were up to six feet long.

The show ended in the way

that it always ends, with the Flying Karamazov Brothers stripping down to their birthday suits and juggling torches. A party consisting of much drumming, howling and laughing ensued.

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