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Music, food and fun in Veneta

The Oregon Country Fair returns for its 29th year this weekend in Veneta

By Rob Moseley
Associate Editor

One month short of three years ago, Grateful Dead guitarist and vocalist Jerry Garcia died in a drug rehabilitation facility, leaving scores of music lovers to fend for themselves and accept sustenance in the form of shows by Phish and the Dave Matthews Band.

Each year, just 12 miles west of Eugene, the carefree spirit and festival atmosphere of Garcia's nearly bygone era is recapitulated in the form of the Oregon Country Fair, which reconvenes this weekend for the 29th consecutive year in Veneta.

Like any festival of this type, the focal point of the weekend will be the music.

With no less than 10 stages featuring between five and eleven artists per day, even those with the most eclectic of tastes should find something pleasing to the ears.

Some of the better-known main stage acts include Portland's Calobo on Friday, former Grateful Dead keyboardist Vince Welnick and his Missing Man Formation on Saturday and the Satin Love Orchestra on Sunday.

The smaller venues, which carry monikers like W.C. Fields and the Kesey Stage, will battle for the title of "Weekend's Oddest Name" with performers such as P.K. Dwyer & the Lowdown Payments, Dr. Atomic's Medicine Show, Mildred Hodiddle and Charlie Brown, billed as a "flaming heterosexual."


But while the festival is built around the music, there will be countless activities to occupy the time of those seeking alternative

entertainment.

Among those activities are the Community Village and the Normal Free Zone, "a cluster of booths, meditation pyramid and tepee, workshop yurt, and more," according to the Peach Pit, the fair's official program.

The Community Village will feature booths boasting workshops and demonstrations under titles like Green Earth, Wild Edibles, Little People and 4-A, or Alter Abled Access Advocates. And for those who won't be making it out to the fair in person, fun can still be had in a virtual replica of the Community Village on the World Wide Web at <http://www.efn.org/~combooth>.

Surfing the Web may be the only way to completely relive the hippie experience because one aspect of the Deadhead culture has been outlawed: the fair is a drug- and alcohol-free event.




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Black Lab: Geffen clash


Continued from Page 5

But the record label wants the band to go another direction.

"She Loves Me" is the album's second track, a song Durham says shows snapshots of relationship ambivalence and desperation.

Despite these battles, Durham says the band members are still enjoying themselves.


"We all feel really dedicated to doing whatever it takes to get the music out there," he says. And tonight the music reaches even to Durham's former home, Eugene.



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