

Roskilde Festival will be safer, organizers say

By Jan M. Olsen
The Associated Press

COPENHAGEN, Denmark — The stage will be higher so fans at the back can see better. Fences and open spaces will keep crowds from packing too tightly in front of Guns N' Roses, Bob Dylan and other rock stars.

Organizers of this year's Roskilde Festival, which opens Thursday, say they have improved security since nine fans were trampled to death last year while Pearl Jam was performing.

The victims — all men in their 20s from Australia, the Netherlands, Germany, Sweden and Denmark — slipped in mud in front of the festival's main stage when some 50,000 fans surged toward it last June 30. In all, 43 people were injured.

"We wish for the festival to recreate faith in safety and care," said manager Leif Skov. The four-day event, now in its 31st year, is northern Europe's largest. This year's performers also include Neil Young, Robbie Williams and Patti Smith.

Nearly all 70,000 tickets have been sold for the outdoor event, modeled on the 1969 Woodstock Festival in upstate New York.

An initial police report concluded that last year's disaster was a freak accident, caused mainly by the crowd and by poor sound quality in the back, which caused fans to surge closer to the stage. A second investigation, ordered by the government, is under way.

Police reviewed the new security measures and gave permission

for the event to be held on a large field outside Roskilde, 25 miles west of Copenhagen.

"Considering what happened last year, the festival had to do something radical," Roskilde Deputy Police Chief Bendt Rungstroem said.

No more than 60,000 fans will be allowed in front of the main stage, and they will be separated into groups by four-foot-high fences with security guards in the corridors between.

The stage will be about a foot and a half higher than last year; if fans in back can see better, officials said, they may not try to push closer.

Rungstroem said the measures are about as far as authorities can go. "If you tighten security too much, then a subculture will emerge," he said. "Young people will start organizing concerts in parks without permission, and that can be even more dangerous because there is no security."

Bach Festival

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Last Saturday featured two short "kid-length" musicals by Dr. Seuss, and there are still many workshops to enjoy throughout the duration of the festival.

With magnificent classical works being performed to sold-out venues, Lowen said that this year's

festival is going beautifully.

"Success from the Bach Festival isn't only due to the amount of tickets sold, but rather how everyone is able to share the beautiful festival experience," Lowen said.

Even though the festival is almost half over, the public can still catch a number of major events. For more ticket information on events or workshops, visit oregonbachfestival.com or call 682-5000.

The 32nd annual Oregon Bach Festival continues this week through July 8.

Tickets for Bobby McFerrin's concert are sold out,

but tickets for many other performances and workshops are still available.

Visit oregonbachfestival.com or call 682-5000 for ticket information.

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