



A "mellow, terrific" crowd fills the Cuthbert Amphitheatre.

HUGH BARTON



## Legends and Lore

Story by Aria Seligmann

### Cuthbert Amphitheatre upgrades amenities and programming, but retains its mellifluous note.

**U**sed to be you could hop on your bike, cruise across the Ferry Street Bridge, alight upon a nice patch of grass in Alton Baker Park's verdant fields, reach into your backpack, pull out your blanket, your six-pack of Corona, your pocket knife, your lime, and watch the moon rise as you listened to tunes floating over from Cuthbert Amphitheatre — for free.

Then one year, the city, which owns the Cuthbert, wised up. Suddenly, freeloaders — on bike, foot or rollerblade — were confronted with loud orange fences blocking the within-earshot acreage, forcing them to buy a ticket to Cuthbert shows (except those who floated along the Millrace into the backstage area by raft or canoe).

At the same time, inside the amphitheatre, the "no outside food/no outside drink rule" was instituted, forcing said mooches to buy onsite vendor vittles.

Remember the brouhaha over baby bottles?

And the ensuing rules: OK with the Evenflo and Evian, but only if the water bottle seal was unbroken. Backpacks got checked. Confiscated were that pocket knife and illegal lime.

Today's airline security could take a lesson.

"Would you please mention that rule lasted for only *one* show?"

Reverie interruptus.

That's Karm Hagedorn, events manager for the city's Cultural Services Division, which oversees the Hult and Cuthbert. "I still have people call and ask about bringing food in," she says.

In fact, yes, you can bring your homemade pasta salad — as long as it's not in glass — along with your Carmen's and Toby's. No homebrews though — only alcohol purchased on site is allowed. (Outside alcohol has never been allowed in Cuthbert Amphitheatre or anywhere in

Alton Baker Park.)

And backpacks will still get checked, so you still have to leave your wine coolers and those pocketknives at home, along with steak knives, butcher knives and box cutters.

But the security process for checking your contraband cutlery will be much faster and smoother this summer than in the past, thanks to a year-long effort by Hult staff to "enhance the Cuthbert experience" by making everything about the venue more "patron-friendly."

"After last year and during last season when looking at the way crowds lined up and entered and the way we managed crowds and the facility, we thought about new ways to make things more efficient," says Mark Loigman, director of operations for the city of Eugene Cultural Services Division.

All of the changes instituted are meant to "keep folks happy and having a good time," he says.

#### The New Cuthbert

First, it's going to be easier to find the place.

Three large directional signs have been erected to get audiences into Cuthbert from the Autzen side on Centennial Blvd.

Once in, patrons will find two parking changes. It will be easier to park, but it will also cost. More staff will be in place to help direct people to parking spaces in the Alton Baker Park lot and across the street at Autzen Stadium. Staff will collect the \$5 entrance fee (mandated by the city, not the Hult) as soon as motorists turn onto Leo Harris Pkwy. For those who wish to avoid that fee, the bicycle parking will be expanded.

OK, so you've found the place, you've paid to park, and you're walking in, schlepping your cooler, your blanket, your lawn chairs, your videocamera, your kids. You've got a long haul over the bridge to the venue and your arms are already tired. Good news: A new horde of volunteers will now greet you as you go.