

Summer Guide



Steve Earle, Jackson Browne, Keb Mo'

If your chairs don't conform to size, you'll be told right away, before you haul them all the way to the gate (6-inch legs or shorter). You'll be asked then and there to return your videocamera to your car. (No recording equipment allowed.) You'll be directed where to go for the box office and entrance gates.

That box office has been moved much closer to most of the parking areas. Before, according to Loigman, it was "lost in the crowd," but it will now be "within the line of sight where folks walk over from the Autzen area."

Next, a huge change: Instead of two entrance gates, there will be eight. The process of moving through security will be four times as fast, as well as more fun.

"One of the issues we discovered last year was that folks wanted our security staff to be friendlier," says Loigman. This year, they've been trained to "ask nicely" to inspect bags for alcohol and weapons.

"Things will be very mellow," says Loigman. "We expect a terrific crowd."

Putting on a Show

Of course, there wouldn't be any expectation of crowds if there was nothing worth seeing, as has been the case before.

While it's a beautiful setting for shows from the audience's perspective, the

Cuthbert has a few strikes against it from a promoter's perspective. In the late '90s, promoters Double T and Showman both pulled out, leaving Eugeneans with a dearth of outdoor acts.

The promoters pointed to three problems. First, the venue is small, holding only 4,500 people. Multiply that by what can be reasonably charged per ticket, and it's not enough to pay many bands' fees. Second, Eugene audiences are notoriously weird about buying concert tickets. While shows such as Santana (now too big to play the venue) were consistent sellouts, others couldn't break even. Third, because the Hult/Cuthbert stageworkers are union (I.A.T.S.E.), they dare to earn a living wage, which makes the cost of using the venue prohibitive to some promoters.

Those were the reasons given back in 1997, and "all of those things are still true," says Hagedorn. But this year, thanks to House of Blues's Tim McGrath, who booked five of the seven shows currently



Tori Amos



Crosby, Stills & Nash

committed to perform, the lineup exceeds anything in recent memory: Moody Blues, Crosby, Stills and Nash, Jackson Browne, Keb Mo' and Steve Earle, Tori Amos and James Taylor (sold out).

In addition, OFAM will present Sunny Side of the Street with Rita Moreno, and the Hult produces the affordable Drummers of West Africa.

The reason more acts are booked at the 'Bert this year is because the House of Bluesmeister is also working with another venue in Seattle, the Concerts at Marymoor Park, and that combined with the Cuthbert gives the bands two play dates instead of one, making their deal more attractive.

But another hopeful glimmer, says McGrath, is that there "seems to be a robustness in the Northwest market this summer." As for Eugene, McGrath calls it "a viable market" and says "business is strong." Case in point: James Taylor sold out in two days. "We all kind of looked at each other" when that happened, he says.

As for the traditional reasons of promoters not booking at Cuthbert, McGrath waves them aside. "If we had any real issues with anything, we wouldn't be working with them." He adds, "I intend to work with them next year, too. We love doing shows there." ☀

The Season

June 12
House of Blues presents
Moody Blues

July 21
House of Blues presents
Crosby, Stills and Nash

July 22
House of Blues presents
**Jackson Browne,
Keb Mo', Steve Earle**

July 27
House of Blues presents
Tori Amos

Aug. 16
OFAM presents
**Sunny Side of the Street
with Rita Moreno**

Sept. 24
Hult Center presents
Drummers of West Africa

Sept 30
House of Blues presents
James Taylor
(sold out)

The Rules
No glass, no weapons, no alcohol.
No chairs with taller than 6-inch legs,
no camera or recording equipment. No cans.

The Legend of the Millrace Mermaid

Alright, so – you're all set: You've got your shows to see, your gear and your tickets. But wait, what will the new and improved Cuthbert mean to those floating freeloaders who raft in backstage?

You can still launch your own dingy, putting in anywhere along the Millrace and setting out toward Cuthbert's hindquarters. Mark Loigman, who heads up Cuthbert operations, says, "We're not going to wade in and yank anybody out," but security guards are in position and a fence has been installed to keep fans from entering the backstage area.

Outside the Cuthbert proper, police will patrol the park to watch out for illegal activities, such as drinking alcohol and smoking anything other than cigarettes.

"We're not concerned with what happens outside," says Loigman, "But people really do need to be respectful and mellow and not get into trouble with the police – that's not under our control. If they do illegal things, that's their trip."

He adds that Cuthbert staff will "do what we need to do to protect the safety of our patrons and paying people." And, he points out, while there will always be a few people who want to see things for free, "there are plenty of good reasons to pay." Like supporting the Cuthbert, the city, the promoter and the artists.

But another good reason to pay for a ticket to enter the venue may be the Millrace Mermaid, who was sighted during last summer's Moody Blues concert. According to one eyewitness who had actually hoped to be named, the backstage raft area was pretty cool for most of the show, until one woman became filled with the spirit.

She'd been listening and enjoying the show – and most likely drinking or something – with friends, when she suddenly jumped to her feet, arched her body into perfect Olympic form and dove into the Millrace, swimming under water until she reached the small island in the middle of the water.

Our Esther Williams then crawled onto the island, threw her arms back into glorious supplication to the free music gods and flung off her top. Still in her cut-offs, she then dove back into the water, and tried to reach the backstage bank. Each time she emerged, a security guard would gently walk toward her, forcing her back into the water to try another avenue for backstage hopping.

"All the security guards were just laughing," says the eyewitness.

Mermaid Esther dove back into the water and remained submerged for some time, causing Eyewitness to become concerned about her welfare. But he got over it and concentrated instead on his chicken sandwich. Just then she emerged right next to him, popping up out of the water like a slimy green sea monster, spewing Millrace water out of her mouth into the air now like a whale.

Eyewitness was "freaked out" but not as much as he would be next. During the show, a raft bearing "six drunken yahoos with lots of cheap beer and a large Weber grill" floated up to the anchor area. One doused the coals with lighter fluid and a conflagration filled the air with heat and fumes. They then untied large plastic garbage bags filled with chicken and began barbecuing.

Attracted by either the food, the fire or the malt liquor, the sea monster swam through the water and tried to board their boat. The guest was unwelcome. One of the yahoos fisted up and socked her in the kisser.

Eyewitness, stunned by the violence, reached down, gently untied his canoe, and broke away.

"The show had gone on for 20 minutes and was a little wild, but there were six drunken yahoos with lots more cheap beer in the driftboat next to me, there I was in my canoe with my mellow hippie friends, and when one of those yahoos punched her, I thought it was totally out of control." The mellow canoe hippies drifted back to Alton Baker Park and disembarked.

Green-slime-covered Nessie apparently felt no pain and casually waded away. Her whereabouts to this day are unknown. Will Nessie be back this year? Only the freeloaders will know. Those who pay just might be a little safer. – *Aria Seligmann*