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KICKIN' OUT THE JAMS

Warpaint, Marv Ellis bring it all back home BY ANDY VALENTINE

Come ye! Come all ye hippies, craftsmen, musicians, artists, faeries, potheads, salesmen and other such Eugeneans; this year's Oregon Country Fair has a fabulous music lineup and you definitely want to be in the know before you find your buzz being harshed by something you'd sooner not hear. Of course, the chances of this happening are incredibly low — that is, unless you've managed to procure some of Hunter S. Thompson's mythic, recreationally accessible Adrenochrome — but it might put your mind at ease to have advance warning of what you're in for.

So here we go: Chill out, make a dandelion chain and let this be a guide of six to your awesome musical Country Fair experience.

As always, the Country Fair lineup packs a punch delivered mostly by bluegrass, jam and reggae groups — but what of **Warpaint**? This locally rooted, four-part female powerhouse out of L.A. is about as describable through language as a volatile and heart-pounding LSD trip in the middle of a ticking clock, yet there's something hauntingly familiar about the band's droning, pop-rock sound that makes you want to drop what you're doing and

follow them into the perfectly tuned dreamworld they create. Theorists around here speculate that only alien technology could be responsible for bringing such a foursome together back in '04, but chances are it was just a perfectly harmonized, well-executed conspiracy designed to throw the world into shock and awe.

All levity aside, though, the women in Warpaint have a chemistry that's hard to top, their chops are intense, and the best part is they've found a sound that works. It's their first year playing the Country Fair, but that shouldn't stop them from feeling right at home, and it also shouldn't stop you from feeling like you've found a place to call home when they step on stage. They're sanitary, post-hippie masterminds, and every second of their dense compositional power warrants attention.

Speaking of dense, this year's Country Fair welcomes a group that could be a contender for the most dreadlocks per capita award: Hailing originally from Jamaica, the members of **Rootz Underground** are staunch purveyors of synergistic, revolutionary reggae. They've combined the chilled-out vibe of a modernized Wailers, the soul and consistency of blues and the wild musical chops of modern funk to form the basis for their overlordic reggaelution, and that's just the tip of the iceberg-devil's-lettuce. When Stephen Newland starts pouring out his soul into the microphone, an air of passionate genius seems to float down from the sky like some kind of veiled, rebellious precipitation. Seriously, if these guys were louder they'd sound like Rage Against the Machine any day: "You are the ones who can hold your ground, / the more you listen the more you learn, / romp with fire and your skin gonna burn, / What you gonna do when the tables turn?" So yeah, by the time they're done you're pretty much gonna be on their side, like it or not.

If you're at the Country Fair, scrupulously performed mathematics tell us that you have a 59 percent chance of being a dirty, stinking hippie. With this in mind, a cool majority of you are gonna love **7 Walkers**. Ex-Grateful Dead drummer Bill Kreutzmann has, in recent years, taken his chops down a path of isolation from the other Dead members, and while his new music stays in touch with the bluesy country jams of his hayday, the tunes still stand apart with wicked, beautiful intensity. Lovers of that dusty, tie-dyed, dancing bear, psychedelic-fueled jam band music will find solace in 7 Walkers, but don't be surprised when the ratio of originals-to-Dead songs is weighted more toward the former. That said, you'll probably be trippin' balls, so it doesn't much matter what you're hearing as long as the *Steal Your Face* vibe stands strong.



Warpaint

PHOTO BY TODD COOPER

Before you hit the peak of this long, three-day adventure, by the way, you might want a little pick-me-up to get things started. Enter **Marv Ellis and The Platform**, a locally founded, fully fledged hip hop jazz group with influence that can be credited to acts such as the Roots and Digable Planets. Not only does lead MC Marv Ellis have reasonable flow and cooled-off vocals to offer, he's also been known to throw down a freestyle or two. By the time his first year on the scene had drawn to a close, he'd already gotten more than 100 shows buckled under his belt and been named the Northwest's number one unsigned hip hop and fusion artist. Are we intrigued yet?

At this point, you might be freaking out, thinking there are no string bands to groove on. Have no fear, **Elephant Revival** is here. The members of this neo-acoustic quintet — which hails from Nederland, Colo. — have far more tricks up their flannel sleeves than you might first think. From the moment they began cutting their teeth, they've been pioneers of an emerging genre known as "transcendental folk," and it seems the only way to sum this sound up is by listening to it. Take the eerie, folky string band sound of last year's Country Fair bigwig Black Prairie, add some electrified energy and throw it into a beautiful, wide-echoing well of reverb. The skinny is this: Not only are they beautiful compositionally, they're all fantastic at what they do — fun, poppy-come-mellow folk music. Oh yeah, and they have voices like poppy sirens, so that's a bonus.

If you're still in the mood to get your sweaty, sunny dance on after two full days of Country Fair, then **Cabinessence** is definitely worth checking out. They're opening up for Warpaint and they should set the stage nicely. With a real funky rock 'n' roll feel going on, Cabinessence has a penchant for taking the rock genre and fucking with everything beneath the umbrella. You'll hear funky ass wah-wah guitars side by side with rock 'n' roll twang piano, happy lyrics sidling their way mischievously into minor chord progressions, indie-folk pop vibes dancing for joy behind walls of '50s boogie woogie and whinging dobro falling neatly into place between modernized country emotives. This is where your Sunday night starts to get psychedelic, so don't fret; just chill out and enjoy.

The Oregon Country Fair music scene is something to revel in, and if you don't you're gonna have a bad time. At first glance it'll probably look like a bunch of dirty, stinking hippies jamming out, but trust me, they're so much more than that. **EW**

More information on dates, times, and stages at oregoncountryfair.org