

GREEN TEAM

OCF strives for sustainability BY SHANNON FINNELL

The Oregon Country Fair: What a bunch of hippies! OCF's approach to being green is an example of how that can be a really positive thing — although *EW* totally supports the peace and love and freedom of mind stuff, too. Operations manager Charlie Ruff says it's important to keep in mind that festivals like OCF are fighting an uphill battle when they try to turn green. "I have a firm belief that events by nature are not sustainable," Ruff says, though he also thinks that dealing with the temporary peak in usage of an area is all about improving and minimizing impact on the environment.

Since 2000, OCF has strived to bring its waste output closer and closer to zero. The Fair uses 300,000 of its own durable steel forks and spoons to cut down on waste, and will continue a pilot project to expand that use. The amount of compost produced at Fair continues to grow year after year.

Ruff also says that sustainability at the Fair works because it's not afraid to experiment and fail. When OCF tried corn-based water bottles a few years ago, it disrupted composting and recycling processes. "Some of our best successes have come from learning how not to do something," Ruff says.

Ruff says that while the efforts in waste and compost are some of the coolest sustainability initiatives, he's crunched the numbers from a carbon standpoint and come to realize that there's another place the Fair must focus. "The biggest significant impact is moving all the people here and then getting them back," he says of transporting 45,000 people over a three-day period.

OCF reduces that impact by partnering with LTD to cut down on cars and increase gas efficiency, allowing all ticket and voucher holders to travel from any location in Lane County to the fair for free on public transit. "Our mobile split just went through the roof a few years back," Ruff says, "and now a solid third to a half come on the bus."

At the Fair site, the organization has electric carts to help move the elderly population and people with disabilities, and its other internal shuttles run on biodiesel. Ruff says the transportation system has been dubbed Fair Area Rapid Transit, or F.A.R.T.

On top of recycling, OCF tries to provide green entertainment, too. Stages are powered by a mix of sources, including bike power and solar.

Such a large event is bound to have an impact on the land it occupies, and that impact has the potential to be disastrous. But when the revelry is over and OCF packs up to leave, they take measures to make sure the site is improved. Delicate and especially important habitats are designated green zones that remain undisturbed, and other areas are actually improved through the creation of a seed bank, an organic produce garden and Fern Ridge Public Library's bioswale project (a plan for runoff water).

Anna Scott, an OCF board member, says that while it's vital to OCF that its sustainability projects be long term, it's also important from an educational standpoint that its efforts be visible during Fair itself. "Having those direct offsets is really important," Scott says.

In 2007, OCF started moving beyond the simple yet crucial mantra of "reduce, reuse, recycle," and getting scientific by estimating the carbon footprint of Fair. The board devised a GreenTicket plan to allow eco-minded attendees to opt into a conservation strategy. Ultimately, concerns about carbon offsets led the board to put GreenTicket funds into OCF's own sustainability programs, and they decided to involve the Fair's audience by letting purchasers pick which programs their tickets fund.

Whether it's energy, waste or transportation that holds a special place in a fairgoer's heart, she can pick one to promote with her ticket at this year's Fair. *ew*



SOLANO COUNTY FAIRGROUNDS, Vallejo, CA
Sept 23, 24, 25

Ziggy Marley, Ghostland Observatory,
Brett Dennen, Balkan Beat Box, Beats Antique,
Ivan Neville's Dumpstaphunk, Midnite
Les Nubians, Eoto, Sean Hayes,
Rootz Underground, The Coup,
See-I (from Thievery Corporation),
Kevens, Faun, Delhi 2 Dublin, Fort Knox Five,
Karsh Kale (live band), Trevor Hall, Jamie Janover,
Vagabond Opera, Indubious, Shimshai,
Sasha 'Butterfly' Rose, Dginn, Lo Cura, Oka,
Fannah Fi Allah, Todd Boston, Ma Muse
Comedy Show Hosted by: Wavy Gravy
and many, many more...

THE TEMPLE OF ELECTRONICA

By far our best lineup ever. Here is a sample of what is in store...

Tipper, Mimosa, Gaudi, Opiuo
David Starfire, Sub Swara
Emanipator, Nasty Nasty, Desert Dwellers
Invisible Allies (Bluetech & Kilowatts), ChrisB
Sticky Buds, Love & Light, Russ Liquid
Jupit3r, Gladkill, Goldrush, Sugarpill, Ill Esha,
Dragonfly, Bird of Prey, Stephan Jacobs
and many more...

New Amazing Site featuring...

Spacious meadow camping, onsite 'festival hotel' offering discount hotel packages, late night indoor venues (at no extra cost), expanded kids village, daytime poolside parties w/ special guest DJ's, Playa art promenade, easy access to the Bay and beyond, catch the ferry from SF - leave your car at home, workshops and panels, yoga temple, indigenous elders wisdom council and much more...

3 Day ticket includes Camping & night shows

- Early Summer Tix \$180 (until July 28th) - Presale: \$195

- Single day and weekend only tickets also available -

For ticket and festival info please visit:

www.earthdancelive.com