

THE MUSIC LIVES ON

Coachella Music & Arts Festival has lasting impact on the brave souls who attended

STORY BY MICHAEL TITTINGER PAGE 10



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ELECTRIC SHOCK: A tesla coil situated at the center of the Empire Polo Field during the last weekend's Coachella Valley Music & Arts Festival created a light show every few minutes.



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PACKING 'EM IN: A massive crowd watches The Roots perform on the main stage of the Coachella Valley Music & Arts Festival last weekend. This was one of many stages set up on the grounds.

It's not the heat, it's the humanity

Dealing with the headaches a part of Coachella Festival

BY MICHAEL J. TITTINGER | Daily Press Staff Writer

INDIO Sometimes you just have to go with the flow.

Reflect on Arcade Fire's rousing performance amid the setting desert sun? Forget it. That's precisely when the surge begins. No sooner did Win Butler and Régine Chassagne lay down their guitar and hurdy-gurdy than the push of thousands toward the main stage to see the Red Hot Chili Peppers begins. You can't stand pat. You can go against the grain in an attempt to reach the beer garden, go up and let the

crowd pass you backwards atop their hands or just roll with it.

RIGHT TO CHOOSE

Welcome to the Coachella Valley Music & Arts festival, where making memories is all about making choices.

The annual indie rock festival, which marked its eighth year this past weekend, showcases bands on five separate stages at the Empire Polo Grounds, regularly pitting novel acts against one another and forcing the sweaty throngs to make some hard decisions. Schedules in hand, none of the approximately 60,000 daily attendees wants to miss that seminal breakout performance of the festival. Then again, everyone likely had their own — The Black Keys; Amy Winehouse; the Kings of Leon; the Good, the Bad and the Queen; Rodrigo y Gabriela ...

The list is endless, which may be part of the problem as Coachella experiences some growing pains. What began as a quirky desert music fest intended to showcase unheralded alternative rockers has simply outgrown its roots. All three of this year's

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SHADOW PUPPETS: A unique installation entertained fans in one of the many tents strewn across the Empire Polo Field during the Coachella Valley Music & Arts Festival last weekend.

headliners — Bjork, the Chili Peppers and the reunited Rage Against the Machine — have done the desert in years past. At the same time, organizers are bringing in acts such as Madonna last year and Willie Nelson on Sunday who appeal to a much more mainstream, and lucrative demographic.

The evolution of the festival was inevitable as more patrons with more cash began taking the three-hour ride into the sweltering Coachella Valley to rock out. The popularity of the festival — staged over three days rather than the traditional two — has presented organizers with some tough choices of their own. Do they stay true to their roots as a showcase for the alternative and below-the-radar acts, or do they embrace the festival's sudden star power that includes a celebrity laden VIP tent, complete with Paris Hilton and Lindsay Lohan?

That said, Coachella 2007 included all the elements that made it such a success in years past — expansive grounds, innovative art installations, a chill crowd and kick-ass music.

It's a tried-and-true formula that entertained 180,000 fans over the course of the weekend and resulted in just under 100 arrests, mostly drug- and alcohol-related. About the biggest brouhaha amid the partying came Saturday night in the adjacent campground, where fans couldn't stop the beat and refused to disband their impromptu drum circle until a police helicopter flew onto the scene.

There are basically two ways to do Coachella. You can pitch a tent and get your Woodstock on, waiting in line for showers and port-o-potties, but partying on the cheap.

Or you can rent out a hotel room or house in the Palm Springs area. Kicking it poolside in between sweating on the polo fields is a sweet respite, but may leave fans feeling somewhat removed from the rock 'n' roll revelry.

Decisions, decisions.

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