

AROUND TOWN

FRIDAY, JULY 9, 2010

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Pulling power

School's out, and it's not just the scorching heat that marks the beginning of summer vacation. Teenagers, college students and live music fans are flocking to Fulong Beach (福隆海灘) this weekend for the Ho-Hai-Yan Gung-Liau Rock Festival (台北縣貢寮國際海洋音樂祭).

The free three-day event, now in its 11th year, begins with a performance this afternoon by Sodagreen (蘇打綠).

Attendance at Ho-Hai-Yan continues to grow every year. According to the Taipei County Government, the event's main sponsor, 540,000 people showed up over three days last year, up from the previous year's record of 510,000. Those figures could not be independently verified. By way of comparison, Glastonbury sold 140,000 tickets for its festival last month, according to the BBC.

If you go, be prepared for crowded trains, crowded highways and a crowded beach.

In recent years, the event has grown to accommodate more mainstream pop artists. In 2007, Chinese rock legend Cui Jian (崔健) made a storied appearance. Last year the headliners were R'n'B and hip-hop artist Stanley Huang (黃立行) and A-mei (阿妹). While there are no such heavy hitters this year, there is some celebrity power in the lineup, which includes Hong Kong actress and singer Josie Ho (何超儀) and her band Uni Boys, who appear on Sunday.

Some veteran festivalgoers might long for the earlier days when Ho-Hai-Yan's main stage featured more cutting-edge acts such as Australian noise rockers The Dirty Three and The Jon Spencer Blues Explosion of the US.

But Ho-Hai-Yan still clings to its indie roots. The event remains a magnet for aspiring rock and pop performers, who vie for spots in the festival's annual battle of the bands contest, which takes place tomorrow.

More than 200 groups applied this year, and around 30 were chosen to participate in an elimination round last month. The 10 finalists compete tomorrow on the main stage for a grand prize of NT\$200,000. The second runner-up gets NT\$50,000 and the third a trophy.

In addition to the prize money, the contest helps bands gain visibility and is a fairly good predictor of success on both the indie and mainstream pop circuits. Past winners include energetic garage rockers 88 Balaz (88顆芭樂籽),

The government says more than half a million people turn up for Ho-Hai-Yan. But has the festival forsaken its indie roots?

BY DAVID CHEN
STAFF REPORTER

PERFORMANCE NOTES

WHAT: Ho-Hai-Yan Gung-Liau Rock Festival (台北縣貢寮國際海洋音樂祭)

WHEN: Today, Saturday and Sunday

WHERE: Fulong Beach (福隆海灘), Taipei County

ADMISSION: Free

ON THE NET: www.2010hohaiyan.tw

GETTING THERE

The Taipei County Government recommends using Taiwan Railway Administration (TRA) trains. Additional services have been scheduled between Taipei Main Station and Fulong for the duration of the festival. View or download the full railway schedule (in Chinese only) at www.2010hohaiyan.tw/download.asp

who won the first competition in 2001, indie pop favorites Tizzy Bac and Aboriginal indie band Totem (圖騰樂團). These three bands are scheduled to perform tonight.

But the most commercially successful past competitors never won the grand prize.

Singer-songwriter Cheer Chen (陳綺貞) and Sodagreen won the second place "Critic's Choice" awards (評審團大獎) in 2001 and 2004, respectively, and geek chic rocker Crowd Lu (盧廣仲), now a household name, took third place in 2007.

As for Ho-Hai-Yan's beach party atmosphere, the Taipei County Government caused a minor stir last year when it announced that it would ban onsite alcohol sales and C-strings, a type of thong bikini. This year, however, a government spokesman said that there would be no such bans, but officials will be keeping an eye on underage drinking. Onsite vendors have been instructed to be vigilant about asking for identification when selling alcohol.

In addition to Josie Ho, Sunday's lineup has something for everyone. The program includes Japanese glam-rock band SuG, power pop/alt-rock group Melee of the US and French post-rock outfit Stuck in the Sound.

Perhaps it will be up to Aboriginal musician Kimbo Hu (胡德夫), who also performs on Sunday, to remind revelers of the inspiration for the festival's namesake — Ho-Hai-Yan (吼海洋) is an Aboriginal folk chant that refers to the beauty of the sea.



► Crowd Lu plays tonight at Ho-Hai-Yan Gung-Liau Rock Festival.

► Sodagreen kicks off this year's Ho-Hai-Yan Gung-Liau Rock Festival with a performance this afternoon.



► MC Hot Dog rocks tomorrow night at Ho-Hai-Yan Gung-Liau Rock Festival.



► Hong Kong singer and actress Josie Ho headlines this year's Ho-Hai-Yan Gung-Liau Rock Festival on Sunday.

PHOTOS: TAIPEI TIMES AND COURTESY OF HO-HAI-YAN GUNG-LIAU ROCK FESTIVAL



PERFORMANCE SCHEDULE

TODAY

3pm Sodagreen (蘇打綠)
3:55pm Zenkwun (神經樂團)
4:30pm Mutaker (突變基因樂團)
4:50pm Dizzy Butterfly (旋轉蝴蝶)
5:10pm Pa Pang (怕胖團)
5:45pm Totem (圖騰樂團)
6:25pm 88 Balaz (88顆芭樂籽)
7:10pm Crowd Lu (盧廣仲)
7:40pm Tizzy Bac
8:30pm Monkey Pilot, MC Hot Dog and Chang Chen-yue (張震嶽) and Free 9

TOMORROW (BATTLE OF THE BANDS COMPETITION)

3:05pm La Petit Nurse (小護士, 2009 Star of the Ocean Prize/Runner-Up)
3:35pm Dingding and Xixi (丁丁與西西)
4:05pm The Sound of Silence (沉默之音)
4:35pm Every Planet (美味星球)
5:05pm Silent Toad (歐吉咕咕)
5:35pm Queen Suitcase (皇后皮箱)
6:05pm Neon (2009 Critic's Choice Winner/Runner-Up)
6:35pm Indie Famous
7:05pm Emerging From the Cocoon (破繭而出)
7:35pm The Fen Fens (紛紛樂團)
8:05pm Beright (傲對樂團)

8:35pm Solidor (固定客)
9:05pm Matzka and Di Hot (2009 Grand Prize Winner last year)
9:50pm Encore performance from winner



SUNDAY

4:05pm August (Thailand)
4:40pm The Melody (South Korea)
5:20pm Shourenledui (瘦人樂隊, China)
6:10pm Melee (US)
7pm Kimbo Hu (胡德夫, Taiwan)
7:30pm SuG (Japan)
8:15pm Stuck in the Sound (France)
9:10pm Josie Ho (何超儀) and The Uni Boys (Hong Kong)

► French post-rock group Stuck in the Sound performs Sunday night at Ho-Hai-Yan Gung-Liau Rock Festival.

PHOTO COURTESY OF HO-HAI-YAN GUNG-LIAU ROCK FESTIVAL