

A Concert That Cares

By [Matt Kettmann](#), February 22, 2007

Michael Franti Headlines The First Annual Solutions For Dreamers

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Michael Franti and Spearhead

Making big things happen in a small town like Santa Barbara is all about connections. And this Saturday, February 24 at the Arlington, the Solutions for Dreamers eco-festival represents one of the highest levels of S.B. connectivity ever.

The ball began rolling back in 2001 when Jacob Tell, Sean Campos, and Mike Wald founded Oniracom as a Web development company. They hooked up with an emerging musician named Jack Johnson, whose wife, Kim, was Tell's cousin, and who took off internationally in part due to his Web presence. Oniracom began working for other art-

ists, and by 2004, the trio had enough momentum to start the Oniric Records label. In 2005, the compilation album *Solutions for Dreamers* was released, sponsored by Simple Shoes, another S.B. mainstay. “Solutions for dreamers” is Oniracom’s motto. Explained Tell, “It basically means that we provide solutions for artists and people with a vision, people with a dream. And definitely environmental organizations fit into that, so it was a perfect fit when we linked with Heal the Ocean.” That nonprofit is now the beneficiary of Oniracom’s work, including this Saturday’s full-day festival, which will feature eco-friendly booths for the general public in front of the Arlington from 1 p.m. until the concert starts around 6 p.m. For ticket holders, the Arlington’s interior will be decked out with underwater sea creatures courtesy of Paul McAvene Designs, and the courtyard will have a drinking area for all, but a special one with food for VIPs.

The concert is timed to coincide with the release of *Solutions for Dreamers: Season Two*, another compilation from Oniric Records featuring the bands that Oniracom has worked with over the years. The collection includes songs by ALO, Matthew McAvene, and the Culver City Dub Collective — bands that will also be playing the concert this weekend — as well as The Hero and the Victor, Oso, The Hoagland Conspiracy, and G Love, who provides the CD’s ocean-related interludes. The CD is free to everyone who comes to the concert, which is sure to become a welcome annual affair for those who care about the environment and love good music. And with so many connections, we might just be surprised by who shows up.

What follows is a short interview with concert headliner Michael Franti of Spearhead. A longer version of this interview can be found online at independent.com.

I've always considered you to be the voice of the revolution.

Does the government think so too? Are you scared that they're watching you? A couple of years ago, I took a trip to Iraq where I played music on the street for people. When I returned, I spent about an hour being questioned about why I was there. I kept saying that I was there to play music for people, but I guess there's not a code in the computer for that. But I think that in this time — it's openly being spoken about on the front page of the daily news that the government keeps track of phone conversations — I wouldn't be surprised. But I don't live in fear of that and I don't allow it to stop me.

Speaking of Iraq, is the challenge of war there bringing about any explosion of creativity? Definitely. I see in Iraq a whole new sense of freedom people have never felt before. I interviewed a band called Black Scorpions, a heavy metal group. They were able to make music for the first time without surveillance from the government. There's the first Iraqi radio station we visited. So there's a new openness. But there's also a vacuum created that now has led to more fundamentalism. So things today are more difficult for women on the street than they were during Saddam's time.

What did you learn from visiting both sides of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict? No one likes to live under occupation — that's one thing I discovered on this trip. At the same time, no one wants to live in fear that when they walk into a theater in Tel Aviv, they're going to be blown up. And that fear leads people on both sides to extremism.

So is good or evil prevailing in the world right now? I don't really like to look at things in terms of good people and bad people. I try to look at it like we're all on our way to becoming right eventually. We're all gonna get there. When I look at what's happening in the

Middle East today, I feel like the way that solutions are going to come is not by me proving my opinion is right and your opinion is wrong. The solutions are going to come when people on all sides are going to listen to one another and consider solutions that consider the other side. That's what needs to happen today.

Regarding the Solutions for Dreamers concert, how can the music industry do its part to help out the environment? I

think that the first thing is just to bring light to issues taking place, kind of being an advocate for sustainability. I think that the best way for a musician to do that is by doing it ourselves. That's one of the things we've been doing over the last year. We're trying to green what we do as much as possible. We're using hemp paper for our CDs, we're creating a recycling program just on our bus so that everything gets recycled. And we have someone working right now to get our bus onto biodiesel.

And what are your thoughts on Santa Barbara? I love Santa Barbara. I love being at the water there and if I don't swim, I try to go rent a kayak to paddle around for an hour before the show. I really love being on the water and Santa Barbara has a culture of people who are connected to the sea. That's why I want to be a part of this concert. There are people there who believe that we could do better in terms of taking care of the ocean and finding solutions for that.

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The Solutions for Dreamers festival is Saturday, February 24, at the Arlington Theatre. The eco-fest, which is free to all, begins at 1 p.m., and the concert starts at 6 p.m. See solutionsfordreamers.com for tickets and more info.