

### Healing the seven seas

The Solution For Dreamers Festival brings local artists and a big name headliner together in support of Mother Ocean

~ By MATTHEW SINGER ~



Michael Franti of Spearhead.



ay back in the 1990s, saving the ocean was a cause celebre among conservationists. The Surfrider Foundation began in the mid-'80s as a loose conglomerate of concerned surfers, before expanding into a full-blown grassroots organization over the course of the decade. And, starting in 1996, the group released

a series of benefit compilations called Music for Our Mother Ocean, featuring several leading alt-rock artists on each disc. Thanks to their efforts and others, the health of the sea replaced the rain forest and the whales as the hip environmental concern du jour.

But with rising concerns over global warming, environmental causes in the mainstream have grown less specific. Surf rider is still around, yes, but the M.O.M. CDs stopped in 1999, and there aren't as many pro-ocean awareness concerts as there used to be.

Living on the coast, however, Mother Ocean is never far from anyone's minds. That's why two environmentally-motivated Santa Barbara-based companies are teaming up for a major fundraising event in honor of Heal the Ocean, a local non-profit dedicated to preserving the nation's beaches.

The Solutions for Dreamers Festival, happening Feb. 24 at the Arlington Theater, coincides with the release of an album of the same name, featuring tracks by Santa Barbara bands such as the Hero & the Victor, the Hoagland Conspiracy and Oso. The album also features informational interludes produced by Jack Johnson backup musician Merlo and Beastie Boys collaborator Money Mark and performed by Garrett Dutton (better known as G. Love from the group G. Love & Special Sauce). The bill for the show includes San Francisco jam scene favorites Animal Liberation Orchestra, the funk-oriented Culver City Dub Collective and local singer-songwriter Matthew McAvene and is headlined by politically-charged hip-hop artist Michael Franti and his band, Spearhead. All proceeds from both ticket and CD sales go toward Heal the Ocean.

“The reason we like [Heal the Ocean] is because they are all about policy change,” says Jacob Tell, the producer of the festival and co-owner of Oniric Records, the label putting out the compilation. “They're making a difference at a cause level rather than an effect level. They go into the political legal system and really change policy ... rather than just doing things like beach cleanups.”

Tell became aware of Heal the Ocean through years of working alongside UC Santa Barbara graduate turned pro-surfer and mega-popular singer-songwriter Jack Johnson, who is a major supporter of the organization. Oniric's first Solutions for Dreamers compilation was designed to simply get their artists' music out to the public and did not have a beneficiary attached to it, Tell says. But when the label began to develop a second compilation, Tell felt the need to give back to the community. And since Santa Barbara is known as a beach town, Heal the Ocean made the perfect vehicle to do just that.

“One of the big reasons Heal the Ocean makes sense is [the ocean] is right here,” he says. “It’s part of our day-to-day lives, it’s part of our day-to-day environment. It’s important we respect it and give back. We’re living here and we’re living with it.”

Tell thought a benefit concert would help in getting the message across. “CDs are being phased out and replaced with digital music and iPods. I don’t think live entertainment will ever be phased out in our society. It’s something people will remember and have ingrained in their heads a lot more than just a CD,” says Tell.

Partnering with sponsor Simple Shoes, whose footwear is made of green materials such as hemp, organic cotton, cork, bamboo linings and even recycled car tires, Tell set out to make it happen. All the acts on the lower half of the bill appear on the album. Tell had worked with Spearhead at Johnson’s Kakua Festival in Hawaii in 2004 and was his first choice for a headliner. Along with the music, there will also be multimedia video presentations, booths and art displays — including full-size ocean-themed puppets designed by Oniric artist Matthew McAvene — giving the entire event a true festival atmosphere.

But Tell promises the speechifying will be kept to a minimum. After all, Santa Barbarans — and Ventura County residents, for that matter — don’t need to be told how important it is to protect the ocean. It’s right there in front of our faces, every day.

“It’s not going to be too political. We’ll let the booths and the people out front do the speaking,” he says. “We really want to let people enjoy the music. That’s what the day’s all about.” ★

*The Solutions for Dreamers Festival happens Feb. 24 at the Arlington Theater, 1317 State St., Santa Barbara, 963-9503. Visit [www.solutionsfordreamersfestival.com](http://www.solutionsfordreamersfestival.com) for more information.*

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