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Arts and Action Review: Benefit for HEAL the OCEANS

by Geof Bard

Monday Feb 26th, 2007 2:15 PM

Jack Johnson and Michael Franti Spearhead hot benefit in Santa Barbara. HEAL THE OCEANS and other grassroots organizations earned funds and raised visibility...notes on WHALES/SONAR testing issue, OCEAN POLLUTION etc.



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HEAL THE OCEANS BENEFIT ROCKS SANTA BARBARA

MICHAEL FRANTI SPEARHEADS ALL STAR BILL

DREW ATTENTION TO URGENT SOUTH COAST ISSUES

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Santa Barbara, CA

Michael Franti and his band, Spearhead, headlined a dynamite benefit concert for various environmental organizations lead by Heal the Ocean this weekend. Adding to the festivities was a special guest appearance by Jack Johnson.

Michael is a long time political activist, using his musical talents to support anti-racist, anti-police brutality and anti-war organizing around the country. Other fantastic acts included the Animal Liberation Orchestra and multimedia artist Mathew McAvene, who provided awesome puppets in the form of fish, jellyfish, and assorted creatures of the sea. Opening was the Culver City Dub Collective.

The benefit was organized under the inspiring moniker Solutions for Dreamers. It would be impossible, in a brief news item such as this, to do justice to the many fine performers and outstanding activists who contributed to this event. Please surf the websits and educate yourself on the fine work being done by <http://www.healthocean.org/> and <http://www.edcnet.org>. Then reward yourself by cruising over to the musican websites which are listed at <http://www.solutionsfordreamers.org>.

Heal the Oceans believes that the ocean can no longer be used as a dump. Attacking all sources of ocean pollution, the group has an interesting take on activism: instead of lobbying the government for action on ocean-pollution issues, they study the problem ourselves and recommend practical solutions.

They recently scored a major victory in the campaign to stop the dumping of homeowner waste into the ocean. They succeeded in getting a district of 81 homes to change their method of waste management. This will remove septic systems from seven miles of coastline in the Santa Barbara south coast.

Other organizations represented at the event include the Environmental Defense Center. IMC spoke to Shiva Polefka, EDC Marine Environmental Analyst, who described numerous issues such as the Liquified Natural Gas projects which the energy companies are striving to plant off the southern California coast. According to the EDC website, the proposed Cabrillo Port would be moored off Malibu and Oxnard for at least 40 years and would have no firm expiration date and the floating factory terminal could remain moored offshore for decades longer. This raises serious environmental concerns, as LNG is just a continuation of fossil fuels dependency with commensurate impact on global warming and disruption of marine ecosystems. The LNG factory terminal threatens one of the world's richest and most productive ecosystems -The Channel Islands National Park and Marine Sanctuary. Cabrillo Port would be sited just outside the

sanctuary, resulting in serious impacts which may be irreversible.

Other projects of EDC include work with the Mixtec agricultural worker community - Central Coast Environmental Health Project. These workers, many of whom labor under the spectre of deportation, are often subject to levels of pesticides which are intolerable. Due to their technical immigration status, they are subjected to greater pressure to accept substandard working conditions and heightened risks to their health and well being. EDC has trained trainers who are conversant in both Spanish and Mixtec so that workers will be aware of the risks and in a position to insist on safer workplace practices. Shiva was also aware of recent developments in the ongoing issue of Naval sonar war games and its impact on marine life. Despite efforts via the California Coastal Commission and a coalition of activist organizations, the Navy appears to be prepared to completely disregard the recommended stipulations to reduce the impact of sonar on marine mammals. In other words, the military wants to use sonar round the clock at will, with no mitigation; for whales and dolphins, this means pure hell, disrupting their own natural sonar navigation and possibly endangering the viability of whole tribes of marine mammals. This point was brought home by a Nils Larson documentary, filmed entirely underwater, in which the soundtrack was increased until everyone in the audience was forced to cover their ears. This hellish racket is what Naval sonar sounds like to the whales and dolphins. Despite the serious issues at hand, the festival focused on spirit and light and affinity for the awesome oceans on this planet and the inhabitants therein. As I remarked to my companion, " Soy una criatura del mar, tu es una criatura del mar, todos criaturas del mar." I am a creature of the sea, you are a creature of the sea, we are all creatures of the sea.

As this shared planet grows more crowded, it is inspiring that we can still bond in celebrations such as this one, brought to you by Jacob Tell and Oniric Records, Simple Shoes, and the organizing efforts of Heal the Oceans. Be sure to check out the compilation CD and the websites of these dynamic organizations.

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Heal the Oceans Volunteers

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