

ENRICH YOUR

Second annual Blue Sky Fest celebrates Mammoth's spirit

By Kirkner

"If the sight of the blue skies fills you with joy, if a blade of grass springing up in the fields has power to move you, if the simple things in nature have a message you understand, Rejoice, for your soul is alive." Eleanora Duse (Italian Actress 1858-1924)

Bursting colors fill the High Sierra as landscapes emerge from the many months of colorless, white winter. Blue skies, rich brown mountains, and deep green grass fill sights and other senses. These things of beauty that make up the heart and soul of the Eastern Sierra and its communities should be celebrated, and that's just what this year's Blue Sky Festival aims to do. Taking place Aug. 12-15, this event, now in its second year, is growing to accommodate the true meaning of Mammoth.

"We're sitting here in Mammoth surrounded by these great components, so we should be a different type of event," co-producer Jim Moon Presents partners things

doing
said festival
Vanko of Harvest
in regard to why the
decided to step
up from the simple
music festival the event
was previously.
"Last year we had a day-long music festival, but people are here for other reasons," Vanko said.
Like taking off their shoes after a long hike

to feel the grass beneath their feet alongside a cool mountain stream, feeling the wind in their faces on a scenic mountain or road bike ride, or enjoying the taste of a cold, locally-brewed beer as they drop a line or cast a reel into a local fishing hole. The Eastern Sierra is a culture of outdoor activity, so Vanko, co-producer Sarah Mason and their partners Mammoth Brewing Company and Vallitix have gathered local businesses to put on outdoor activities throughout the four-day event and really celebrate the soul of the Sierra. Guided mountain bike rides, yoga sessions, bootcamp fitness sessions, kayaking demos, healthy cooking and gardening demonstrations are all in the lineup with more events being added every day. Most of the activities are free, unless otherwise stated at the vendor locations.

"It's a great opportunity to co-sponsor, and be involved with a music event," said Tony Colasardo, co-owner of Footloose Sports, one of the local businesses involved this year.

"Special events are the lifeblood of this community and we try to sponsor as many summer events as possible," Colasardo went on to say.

Look for sponsored mountain and road bike rides, including family rides at Shady Rest, as well as hikes and more put on by Footloose during the event.

Also new to this year's Blue Sky Fest is a film festival, featuring thought-provoking documentary films on a variety of topics. The film festival portion of the event is free and will be held at the Blue Sky Theatre in the Sierra Nevada Lodge.

"The Sierra Nevada Lodge really stepped up and is sponsoring Thursday's portion of the festival," Vanko said. "We would not have been able to make that portion happen without them."

One of the most provocative films in the line up is the story of Sierra Leone's Refugee All Stars, the headlining band for Thursday's World Beat Dance Party, a free concert kicking off the Blue Sky Festival at the Sierra Nevada Lodge parking lot.

BODY AND SOUL

An extremely special band with an amazing story to tell, Sierra Leone's Refugee All Stars started playing music together in West Africa refugee camps while their homeland was being torn apart by warfare. According to their website, they formed a band to "keep their spirits up and their hopes alive." Festival producers caught a lucky break and were able to book the band here in Mammoth as they make their way to The Outside Lands Festival in San Francisco. The film chronicles the band over three years from Guinean refugee camps back to war-ravaged Sierra Leone where members of the group realized the dream of recording their first studio album.

"To be able to see this remarkable film and then the actual band perform is an extraordinary opportunity," said Rhonda Duggan, General Manager of the Sierra Nevada Lodge. "We are very excited to be able to bring this to Mammoth and kick off the Blue Sky Fest."

As you've probably ascertained, music is still a huge component of



OZOMATLI

the festival. Funk 'n Fusion Friday and Rock 'n Reggae Saturday will have you tapping your toes from 3-10 p.m. for only \$35 each day or \$55 for a two-day pass. Friday's lineup includes Ozomatli, Karl Denison's Tiny Universe, Soulive, and My Peoples. Saturday showcases Toad the Wet Sprocket, Iration, Top Shelf, and The Holdup. Between the bands, the films and the activities, the Blue Sky Festival hopes to fill an eclectic niche in Mammoth.

"We are hoping to be a little more avant garde in showcasing the spirit of Mammoth," Vanko said. "The event is an opportunity to go beyond just a music festival, and turn it into a lifestyle celebration."

Buy your tickets locally at Mammoth Brewing Company's Tasting Room on Berner Street and save yourself the service fees. Also, by mentioning the phrase, "Nothin' but Blue Sky," you can receive \$5 off your ticket price.

For updates on all things related to the Blue Sky Festival, visit www.BlueSkyFest.com. Also look for more stories about the Festival in upcoming issues of The Sheet.

Photos Courtesy Harvest Moon Presents

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