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THE MIX

THEY SAID IT

GEORG CHRISTOPH LICHTENBERG:
"Nothing is more conducive to peace of mind than not having any opinions at all."

3 Rivers makes its return



FILE PHOTO BY AARON HARRK/THE GAMECOCK

Andre 3000, left, and Big Boi, the duo known as Outkast, performed on the main stage at this past year's 3 Rivers Music Festival.

BY MEG MOORE
THE GAMECOCK

Music fans, listen up — the first weekend in April marks not only the arrival of warmer temperatures, but also the return of the annual 3 Rivers Music Festival to the streets of the Congaree Vista.

Featuring a variety of artists, vendors and family-oriented events, 2003's festival will feature food, fun and, most importantly, foot-tappin' good music.

This year's festival will feature more than 80 musical acts, from the legendary B.B. King to hard rock's explosive Queens of the Stone Age.

The annual event draws thousands over its three-day duration, inundating the Midlands with an influx of both storied performers and local standouts.

Put on by the nonprofit Three Rivers Music and Heritage Foundation, festival proceeds are either reinvested into next year's festival or added to the organization's Rainy Day fund. Helping to ensure that the festival is an annual Columbia fixture, the fund provides the festival with reserve finances in the event that weather conditions keep the festival from earning its requisite amount of revenue.

Organized for the benefit of area music lovers, the 3 Rivers Music Festival is not only expansive, but affordable.

If purchased before 6 p.m. Friday, a three-day ticket to the shows costs a mere \$30. Area sponsors including WOLO-TV and the South Carolina Education Lottery aid in allowing the foundation to keep event prices low.

A bona-fide musical bang for the buck, this year's festival will play host to a wide range of artists that appeal to an equally wide range of ages. Constructed as a family affair, the event has been swamped in controversy this year in response to rapper Ludacris' inclusion among the scheduled performers.

Blacklisted by Fox News personality Bill O'Reilly and dropped as a spokesperson for Pepsi, Ludacris has been criticized for his expletive-ridden lyrics. Festival sponsor BlueCross BlueShield threatened to withdraw its support if the rapper remained on the bill.

Ludacris, however, will still be performing — and BlueCross BlueShield is still a main sponsor. Fellow rapper Bubba Sparxxx will precede him on the Coors Light

stage Friday evening, when Ludacris is the opening-night headlining act.

Saturday promises attendees a day-long lineup of local and national acts as the first act takes the stage at 12:45 in the afternoon. Eclectic alt-rock artist Moe — once named one of Rolling Stone's "Top 10 Underground Bands" — is scheduled to play on the Coors Light stage Saturday evening. The sounds of New Orleans will also seep into the evening's soundscape, powered by a parade of bayou-based performers, including Davell Crawford, the Piano Prince of New Orleans, and Dr. John the Night Tripper. They are included in the night's special Louisiana-laced lineup on the festival's State Farm Insurance stage — "New Orleans Comes to 3 Rivers." Seasoned artists Peter Frampton

and the Atlanta Rhythm Section will be performing as well Saturday night, headlining the BellSouth and WOLO-TV stage.

Appropriately, gospel music will be the pre-eminent sound on the BlueCross BlueShield stage Sunday afternoon. The final day of the festival promises yet another assortment of established talent and underground successes. Living legend B.B. King will rock the BellSouth and WOLO-TV stage Sunday evening as the last act on a bluesy bill that also includes Keb Mo' and the Bobby Blue Band. Competing for concert-goers, of-the-moment rock acts the Donnas and Queens of the Stone Age can both be seen on the Coors Light stage, closing the three-day extravaganza with an encore of edgy guitar riffs.

Easily accessible and impres-

sively well stocked with solid acts, the 3 Rivers Music Festival will scatter its stages between Gervais and Laurel streets. Gates will be on both Lincoln and Assembly streets. 3 Rivers concert-goers will be able to park in the city garages along Assembly and are not allowed to bring coolers, backpacks, recording devices or pets.

Bringing a bevy of great acts to downtown Columbia, this year's festival will undoubtedly draw a large crowd of area music fans. Costing only \$30 in advance for a three-day pass — single-day admission will be \$20 — the event promises an incomparable amount of talent for the price of a relatively cheap arena concert ticket.

Comments on this story? E-mail gamecockmixeditor@hotmail.com

International Festival to display many cultures

BY ELEANOR SIBAL
THE GAMECOCK

South Carolinians can experience the world this weekend at the eighth annual Columbia International Festival, to be held at the State Fairgrounds.

The festival, which has maintained an average attendance of around 20,000 people since its debut in 1996, will showcase various cultures, races and ethnicities.

Raj Aluri, festival director and founder and president of International Friendship Ministries, thinks the event is the "most colorful one anybody can go to in South Carolina."

"No other event brings out the cosmopolitan aspects of South Carolina like the Columbia International Festival," Aluri said. "The purpose of the festival is to give people in South Carolina and neighboring states the opportunity to enjoy music, culture, food and performing arts from many different countries. This is a wonderful way to travel around the world without ever leaving South Carolina."

The event includes many activities that children and adults can participate in. Today is Global Education Day, in which students from elementary to high school can choose one of three tours and experience exhibits and entertainment from more than 60 countries.

On Saturday, the Parade of Nations will begin at 2 p.m. Participants wear their country's attire and present their flags.

Alex Petrisor, president of the Romanian Student Association at USC, will carry his nation's flag in the parade. "Usually, I wear my traditional 100-year-old garb. I am looking forward to seeing more people interested in our culture



PHOTO SPECIAL TO THE GAMECOCK

German food was among the culinary offerings at this past year's Columbia International Festival.

and experiencing a vivid interest," he said.

Attendees can also engage an assortment of cultures by buying souvenirs and gifts at the international bazaar and business expo as well as sampling foods from 20 nations.

Although the festival is filled with various activities, organizers cite the live cultural entertainment as the highlight of the two-day event.

"I definitely think the cultural entertainment is exciting because Dr. Raj Aluri sees to it that we have tremendous variety and high-energy performances," said Dorothy Henninger, assistant festival director. "To see a dance for 15 minutes immediately followed by Korean dancing is just so exciting. Before you can even catch your breath, you have Russians dancing on the stage. This is a tremendous opportunity to see a mind-boggling array of cultures presented one after another."

The entertainment also includes Pakistani wedding dances,

Thai martial arts, Korean martial arts, a Russian ballet, African entertainers from New York and entertainers from Panama.

Petrisor, who has participated in the past three festivals, is excited about any cultural event that interests the public.

"Even though it was very exhausting, the joy of being able to do something for my country was enough to recompense me," he said. "Yet it wouldn't have been possible without the enthusiasm of the public."

Festival hours are from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. Saturday and from noon to 7 p.m. Sunday. Admission is \$5 for adults and \$1 for children ages 6 to 12. Children under 5 are admitted free. Saturday attendees can get into the festival for free Sunday, and discount tickets are available in advance from the festival office and on the Web site www.cifonline.org. For more information, call (803) 799-3452.

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Actors of the absurd

Student group specializes in improvisational comedic acts

BY KAMILLE BOSTICK
THE GAMECOCK

In the small room called the Benson Theater, members of Toast, the university's only student improvisation group, trade their everyday roles to become actors of the absurd.

Representing a mix of majors, including advertising, chemistry and, naturally, theater, the group's members pull comedy out of chaos and practice for hours, perfecting skits and deciding what exactly their shows will include.

"We always manage to pull it off," said member Andrew DeWitt, a USC English and drama graduate.

The 10 members brainstormed for nearly half an hour about what should fill "a bucket of something" as the suggested focus for an opening gag at Toast's show tomorrow night. Whether it would be water or paint, ping-pong balls or confetti, the group threw out idea after idea — all equally funny. In the end, the gag was eventually abandoned.

It was a theoretical improvisation, where a prompt took on a life of its own, much to the delight of those participating.

Toast director Ben Compton, a third-year English student, said the idea session is integral to the group's success.

"We make sure everything is funny by making sure it is funny to everyone in the group. If everyone in the group thinks it's funny, then it will probably be funny to the audience," Compton said.

And despite the deserted bucket prank idea, assistant director



PHOTO BY TRISHA SHADWELL/THE GAMECOCK

Andrew DeWitt, front, a recent USC graduate with an English and theater degree, throws pillows with fellow actor Ben Compton, a third-year English student, and actress Sarah Venuti, first-year art education student.

Grant McFadden, a fourth-year media-arts student, said the process represents what the group is about.

"We're all real open to each other's ideas," McFadden said. "We trust each other a lot, and we find our humor."

With such a variety of cast members, that humor takes on many forms.

"We're high-energy, hard working people," McFadden, a fourth-year media arts student, said. "And we're all such good friends because we want to put together a great performance. It really is a random mix — there are only three theater majors in the group — but in the end, we are all entertainers."

Compton, a third-year English student, said it is the onstage joy and even a suppressed need for attention that keep the members of Toast performing.

"We do it for the laughs," Compton said. "It's addictive watching an audience, even a

small one, getting a laugh — a good laugh — at what you've done. Even if only two people show up, we're going to give it our all just like there was a full house."

And on most nights, the house is full. Toast members say that at some performances people have had to sit on the floor or stand outside the doors just to catch a glimpse of the skits. Compton said that it has even gotten to the point where some people have been turned away.

"This performance space has been filled more this year than anytime before," Compton said. "We've done little advertising up to this point."

The group began three years ago.

"It's been a real underground kind of thing," Compton said.

But Toast's growing reputation may be changing that.

"What we do is pretty unique," McFadden said. "If any-

♦ TOAST, SEE PAGE 6