

**ALICE NOW AND ZEN FESTIVAL**  
**SHARON MEADOWS IN GOLDEN GATE PARK**  
**SEPTEMBER 17, 2006**

The Social Calendar Coordinator arranged for Tix to the annual Alice Now and Zen Festival at the evocatively named Sharon Meadows in Golden Gate Park. Alice Radio, hereabouts 97.3 on the FM dial, is a quirky addition to the airwaves here, providing real alternative music that is not constricted by testosterone-driven thrashing that bangs itself senseless in seconds, nor is pandering to the Top 100 lists enforced by that Other Pop Station dominated by middle-aged hipsters who never tire of hearing yet another Beatles track ad nauseum.

In fact, tuning to Alice can be quite a refreshing bathe in stuff that we call music. Needless to say, Alice has no money, no reach, no pull and tends to get conservative in its playlist, while remaining horribly and badly disorganized when it comes to marketing, to promotion, and to getting the word out as regards events such as this festival. We found virtually no mention on any free listing of the festival and virtually no reference material indicating house rules, directions, vendors, locality map, seating, parking, or any set list info at all. Basically, you bought your tickets blind and were not given the most elemental information -- including the stipulation of "no in or out" privileges -- which we find to be pretty damn lame. Once inside the enclosed and normally wide open meadow, we

found that the sole vendor of water had sold all 4,000 bottles of the stuff some time previously. None of the other vendors appeared to provide any fluids of any kind in this sun-baked space. We found the porta-potties after two hours of wandering. Nobody official seemed to know where anything was. In the City That Knows How this is called Being A Basic F---up.

Organizationally, we would have to say this aspect earns the Festival a solid D- in our book for organization. Only the Voodoo Festival earned a lower ranking, and that ranking was due to potentially physically dangerous conditions. Had some lame dumbass posted a free notice in any of the free weeklies about this festival, the attendance could easily have tripled, causing a logistics nightmare. As it stood, a brief search of all databases on use of the meadow in Golden Gate Park brought up "stage dark" for the event. Must have frustrated a lot of planned birthday events.

That said, Sunday bloomed blue and cloudless for Indian Summer in SF and not a cloud interrupted the days proceedings, including the notorious afternoon fog invasion that terminates so many late summer picnics in Babylon.

We got in late, but a mention needs to be made of precessors that day.

### **AUGUSTANA**

[www.augustanamusic.com](http://www.augustanamusic.com)



Augustana is an alt-rock originally met and formed at Greenville College in Greenville, IL. After locally releasing their Mayfield EP, the band decided to quit school and head to Los Angeles in search of a label. After losing and replacing their bass player, Augustana officially formed in California in 2004. Their first major-label album, Augustana - All the Stars and Boulevards, was produced by Epic Records and catapulted them into the spotlight. The band is perhaps best known for its single, “Augustana – Boston”, whose music video features the lead singer on a beach full of pianos and was featured on the WB show "One Tree Hill". IslandLife reviewed their live performance opening for The Counting Crows a few weeks ago at the Concord Pavilion.

### **BLUE OCTOBER**

[www.blueoctober.com](http://www.blueoctober.com)

Blue October isn't just your average, everyday rock band from Texas. The group was formed in Houston in the late '90s by lead singer/songwriter/guitarist Justin Furstenfeld, his brother, drummer Jeremy, multi-instrumentalist Ryan

Delahoussaye, later joined by guitarist/vocalist CB Hudson and bassist Matt Noveskey. The group's epic live shows and exploration of subjects like mental depression, drug use, love, betrayal, forgiveness and cathartic transcendence have helped them amass a strong, loyal following through five albums, three of which have been released by Universal Records.

### **CARBON LEAF**

[www.carbonleaf.com](http://www.carbonleaf.com)

Carbon Leaf blasted into the national spotlight two years ago with their major label debut, *Indian Summer*. But while they kept busy working as support on major national tours (Dave Matthews Band, Counting Crows, John Mayer, etc.) and headlining their own, these Virginia-based self-starters kept moving forward musically as well as professionally. That point rings clear throughout their new CD, *Love, Loss, Hope, Repeat*, a collection of songs whose sound is the richest, whose grooves are the most infectious, and whose messages run the deepest of anything they've yet put to disc.

With *Love, Loss, Hope, Repeat* Carbon Leaf defines itself as a tight instrumental unit, capable of cranking up the heat even with scaled-down arrangements based on acoustic guitar, in perfect complement to a vocal sound that can't be mistaken for anyone else's. Barry Privett has mastered the art of singing with a compelling detachment; his voice, whether on its own or woven into two- and three-part harmony, beckons the listener into the lyric as it opens within the heart of these songs. They've come a long way from their decision, as students at Randolph-Macon College, to try their luck at forming a band. But for

all they've accomplished, Love, Loss, Hope, Repeat is something different. It is a turning point: accessible yet poetically elusive, rhythmically irresistible yet understated, a harbinger of what will come and the sum of what had gone before. The scuttlebutt coming from the underground is that this is the band to pay attention to for further developments.

**GNARLS BARKLEY**

[www.gnarlsbarkley.com](http://www.gnarlsbarkley.com)

Hot on the heels of two sold-out shows at the Fillmore, the soul, electro, alternative sounds of Gnarl Barkley fulfilled all promise made by their ballyhooed review in the recent Rolling Stones.

Band members Cee-Lo and Danger Mouse released their first album, *St Elsewhere* in April, 2006. The duo made their debut performance at the Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival on April 30, 2006 after their first single, "Crazy" became the first ever UK number one single based on download sales alone.

The band is notorious for dressing in outlandish costume; during their performance at the 2006 MTV Movie Awards, where the band performed in *Star Wars* costumes -- including the garb of Rebel Alliance pilots, Imperial officers, Stormtroopers, Chewbacca, Jango Fett, Obi-Wan, with Cee-Lo singing as an unmasked Darth Vader.

So much for the promo stuff. This is what Island-Life has to say. We heard that we were getting this DJ rapper type bonded with a gangsta rapper and we were not hopeful, no we were not. Well, good music is a surprise -- practically by definition -- and we found this Gnarls Barkley to be a most pleasant surprise of astonishing weight. Instead of mono-beat pounding with purile lyrics about "smackin' da bitch up" we got sophisticated, well coordinated ensemble work with vocals the rival of anything Motown ever put out at its finest and lyrics that soared head and shoulders above the rest. In delivery, we are talking about Marvin Gaye and Martha Reed and the Vandellas, people. We are talking about a four piece string section with violins and violacello providing suddenly lush sound in the Meadow easily the level of any octet jazz band out there doing Coltrane, while this modestly named Cee-Lo. Backing this section, the duo also supplied a three voice vocal harmony section that also supplied hand-held percussion.

With a lead guitar, bassist, keyboards/backup guitar, and turntable, you cannot say the band was lean in sound.

Ranging from solid rock, through trip-hop, rap, motown, blues, jazz and everything in between, the band solidly proved its credentials and turned us into true believers. Cee-Lo's rich voice seemed most at home with the old Motown flavors, where the range and depth was allowed to really expand. The boy sure can rock with the best of them, and his rendition of "Transformer" brought the hairs up on the back of the neck with his wail, but he is best at his warmest. In spite of all the costumes, it is for the voice the man will be remembered and you can mark your calendar on that. Sensing the mood of the crowd as being less than boiling, the man really worked them like a trooper until he had them all clapping and shouting by the end of their all too short set.

### **THE B52'S**



It has been said that the B-52's are as quintessentially American as the Beach Boys. And twenty-five years and over twenty million albums into a career that began as a low-rent lark in Athens, Georgia, the B-52's remain the most unlikely rock stars ever. The first band to glorify pop culture with an almost Warholian sense of purpose, the B-52's purveyed their absurd B-movie style and off-kilter sound celebrating the weirdness lurking just beneath the surface of Americana ... not exactly a recipe for chart success but way ahead of its time, nonetheless. Any mystery concerning the longevity and ongoing appeal of the B-52's is immediately solved when exposed to the B-52's unique concert experience. From the timeless gems of "Rock Lobster," "Planet Claire" and "Private Idaho" to the more recent classics of "Channel Z," "Love Shack" and "Roam", the B-52's unforgettable dance-rock tunes start a party every time the music begins.





Okay, that's the promo stuff. Let it be known that the B52's are like that fly you read about in Science 101, embedded in gel for the last 100 years, with songs and sounds that remain persistent past the time that created them to the point they enter popular culture as pop icons. On the one hand the B52s were the intelligent antidote to the mind-numbing repetition of disco, and on the other, they joyfully enthused about life without the blandness of Disney and The Monkeys. And they were musically adept, as opposed to the Ted Nugent crowd. Their music represented the joy that could be, if it only were not for the assholes.



Their music arose from a time prior to the obnoxious "Reagan Revolution" of the Conservatives, most of whom really never understood Ronald Reagan or what he was about. That was a time of unbridled joy, before the Plague of AIDS,

before Gingrich, before everything began to descend so horribly into atavistic snarling and violence. Before sour attitude overwhelmed honest pleasure.

No wonder that so many stand up and cheer when the old songs come on the air. But in a sense, the B52s are more throwbacks to a particular time than the Deadheads ever will be. The one moment that broke through this fossil-process came when the group performed an uncharacteristically political song that savaged the current leadership -- and the song really worked musically and in every which way. Thousands in the crowd clapped and cheered. This is now and that was then.



If the B52s manage to pursue that avenue, they will manage to avoid the stigma of becoming museum pieces to a particular time and enter into that far more dangerous arena of "music for all time".

Still, this is one band that still manages to pump out significant energy that can still motivate a large crowd with all the old hits, a crowd that just wanted to forget their troubles for a while, put their heads on the shelf and simply enjoy. No small accomplishment.