



10 Minutes for the Planet

Music Local Beer And Dry Toilets. What else? ©

by *Valentine Rinner*

Hello everyone and welcome to this week's episode of 10 Minutes for the Planet. The hot days of June also mean the opening of music festival season around the country, such as: We Love Green, Les Vieilles Charrues, and Cabaret Vert, etc. A growing number of these festivals are also marketing themselves as "eco-festivals."

When one thinks of music festivals, you may imagine vast fields of mud, trashed with plastic cups, plates and beer bottles, long queues in front of chemical toilets, and vast parking lots with old buses. Today, some of them have "transitioned" to dry toilets, eco-materials, local beers, and carpooling – offering an alternative to the high environmental footprint, which is the trademark of such events.

We Love Green - a flagship for eco music festivals - took place on the second weekend of June in Paris' Bois de Vincennes. For this 6th edition, they announced they would be running 100% on renewable energy. Organisers relied on solar energy as well as a recycled food oil-power generator.

One current obstacle to further increasing sustainability is the sponsors. Music festivals are highly dependent on large commercial sponsors who don't necessarily share the same goals towards environmental sustainability. Festivals can only negotiate so much year-after-year to implement new ideas and constraints, while keeping the necessary sponsors in the loop. For example: at Les Vieilles Charrues, the team was able to negotiate with Kronenbourg to allow a local beer stand, instead of Kronenbourg having a 100% exclusivity. With fast-growing demand for sustainable products, it seems like it might become easier to negotiate such small changes. However, at Les Vieilles Charrues there is only so much local beer production to feed the thirsty 250,000 visitors over a couple of days, so Kronenbourg still has a few glorious days ahead of them, but maybe not for long.

At the , which welcomes 100,000 visitors annually, the organisers decided to refuse a partnership with Heineken, choosing instead to make it work with local producers. It does require a lot more work and logistics, but they wish to offer a complete alternative to the low-quality, mainstream products and services, present in large events. On top of reducing the environmental impact of the festival, working locally also has the advantage of insuring maximum economic benefits for the region. Their stance allowed Cabaret Vert to become the first French festival to receive the highly regarded "A Greener Festival"

label. Last year the prize was also awarded to the Parisian We Love Green, as well as Heart of Glass Heart of Gold, in Aveyron.

Participants might not all be environmentally conscious, but all can enjoy good food, good drinks, un-chemical toilets, and cleaner sites. Some eco-festivals even go further by organising discussions or conferences on particular themes. We Love Green has a “Think Tank” stage where they welcome personalities such as micro-credit pioneer, Muhammad Yunus or Cyril Dion, one of the creators of the movie “Demain”.

Because they welcome people for a few days, festivals are a wonderful place to heighten awareness through concrete experimentation as well as discussions. Let’s hope we see more and more festivals make the transition! See you next for a new episode of 10 Minutes for the Planet!