

Pitchfork Digs In to Minimize Waste



GZA; photo by Jen Reel

ON CLOSING DAY of Pitchfork Music Festival last year, event coordinator Dave Rempis recalls hearing over his radio that much of the crowd stuck around after bands wrapped their sets to pick up cups and bottles, and properly place them in recycling bins scattered throughout the festival's grounds at Union Park.

The efforts of those who remained after the show, and participants throughout the weekend, seemed to have paid off. According to Pitchfork, 13 tons of waste—about 40 percent of the total waste—was recycled after last year's festival. This year, they're hoping to increase that number to 50 percent and are encouraging attendees to help recycle, and do their part in helping the environment—all while enjoying some of indie-rock's best talent.

For the past four years, festival organizers have been working to make the festival environmentally friendly, but have remained tight-lipped about calling their event completely green until they get their system fully worked out. This year, the festival is on track.

More than 80 single-stream recycling bins will be placed throughout the grounds and vendors will recycle. A team of recycling staff will roam the grounds while bands rock out, emptying full recycling containers, changing bags and making sure items are placed in the proper bins. Rempis says by weight, about 90 percent of what they end up recycling is cardboard from vendors, all of whom are participating in the recycling program this year.

Vendors like the Chicago Diner, Herb Garden, an Iowa-based restaurant and others will offer vegetarian and vegan fare. Half of the menu offerings at the festival will be vegetarian, says Rempis.

The cups used this year are made from No. 6 plastic, which will be collected by Michigan-based company East Jordan Plastics after the event and turned into eco-friendly planters and flower pots. Attendees can also turn in cups and other recyclable items at the Recycling Store for goods like T-shirts, laptop cases, posters and other cool schwag.

The sounds of The Flaming Lips, Matt & Kim, Waaves, and many more will blast through amps driven by bio-diesel powered generators. In fact, the whole festival is powered by these generators.

Rempis says Pitchfork expects about 50,000 people to fill Union Park from July 17-19. All attendees are encouraged to take public transit or bike rather than drive—free bike parking is available at the grounds.

Keeping in style with the environment, bands will be escorted back and forth in hybrid vehicles provided by Zipcar.

Rempis says he often doesn't tout Pitchfork's efforts like other festivals do. Instead, he says, he'd rather get it right first.

For more information and to view the three-day lineup, visit PitchforkMusicFestival.com.

—BRETT MARLOW