

NO REGGAE FOR YOU: County Fair wags hypocritical finger



After some stoners decided to light up at a Ziggy Marley concert last August on the Del Mar Fairgrounds, parents in attendance complained to officials who later took action to ensure a more family-friendly environment.

The fairgrounds board [imposed new rules on prospective reggae acts, and apparently has not-so-silently blackballed them from the San Diego County Fair this year](#). As a [New York Times op-ed pointed out](#) last week, the people who tend to shout about family values the loudest are also the ones who turn out to be the biggest hypocrites. The fairgrounds management is no different.

As the lineup for this year's musical offerings in Del Mar demonstrates, this is a clear-cut case of music-genre profiling. Reggae bands were blindly rejected, while rock and blues bands that reference drugs were welcomed with open arms and given top billing.

The [grandstand series at this year's fair](#) opened with "The Heroes of Woodstock" show. If that title doesn't say "drug-o-rama" enough, the bill included the '60s psychedelic stalwarts Big Brother and the Holding Company (best known for backing up drug-overdose victim Janis Joplin) and Canned Heat (guitarist Henry "Sunflower" Vestine was accepted into the band after being kicked out of Frank Zappa's group for excessive drug use).

Coming up, the fairgrounds will [host Dave Mathews Band and The Doors tribute bands](#), whose song catalogs contain numerous drug references including this gem of tolerance from DMB's "Recently": "Some people like to smoke a bowl and some don't. Some people do it and some people don't, but it's OK cause it's meant to be that way."

After the county fair is over, reggae bands such as The Wailers and Steel Pulse are [scheduled to perform at the fairgrounds](#). However, they will presumably have to adhere to the new policies exclusively for reggae acts adopted by the fairgrounds board last October after the Ziggy Marley show. Reggae shows are restricted to those 21 and older and require strict security measures that could include pat-down searches. Also, reggae performers have to sign a contract prohibiting them from using or promoting illegal drugs while on the property of the fairgrounds. The new rules do not apply to bands of any other musical style.

As the manager of Steel Pulse, Rich Nesin, told the *Union-Tribune*, it's commendable if the coordinators want to create and nurture a wholesome, family-friendly environment, but they should do it in a thoughtful manner that does not carry the smoky stench of arbitrary prejudice.

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