



Exmouth Town Council –Newsletter

Newsletter 31

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Exmouth Festival Taking Shape

By Chris Woods – Festival Organiser

Creating Opportunity within our Town.

Exmouth Festival has been steadily growing since 1996 and has become a diverse community festival that creates opportunities and inspiration for the arts, from all walks of life. Work is already underway for the 2009 Festival, and the future is bright.

Why a Festival?

Festivals of all shapes and sizes are important. Whether it's a wine festival in the south of France, the famous Glastonbury, or a jazz festival in Halifax - they all play their part in bringing people together through creativity, fun and by providing time out and space to interpret the world in all kinds of different ways.

Of course Exmouth Festival is no different in that it gives people a chance to 'let their hair down' and to demonstrate their special and unique talents. However it does have one very special edge. Exmouth Festival has been created and constructed by and for the local community. The aim is not to pull in fifty thousand people from around the country and to make heaps of money. The aim is to strengthen our sense of community within Exmouth and to build unity of purpose, support and inspire.

Ultimately the popular (and sometimes unpopular!) music and art that we love was not born in festivals the size of Glastonbury. Genuine music and art is created by individuals and groups in communities. This is why Exmouth Festival is so important; it is needed to give the musicians and artists the exposure they deserve and to feed the creative community with new influences. The community helps steer the Festival to this goal, and there is the opportunity for you to contribute your ideas to this, the more ideas we have the closer we become to achieving our aim.

The Structure Behind the Festival

The festival is for the community and run by the community. Groups and individual volunteers, contribute their time, energy and ideas in a variety of different ways. Without their contribution the festival would simply not happen. And this is how it does:-

Firstly there is a large group of volunteers, who contribute in a variety of different ways; some working in subgroups, some helping to link us to the wider community, some offering specific skills and much more. Many act as volunteers during events, and make sure things run smoothly.

The programme group, once again made up of volunteers, is built up of the leaders of subgroups. These subgroups are specific areas of the festival such as; schools, music, art, theatre and vibing. The subgroup leaders bring the ideas from within their areas to meetings to discuss and construct the programme. Once again many act as volunteers during events. Once you get the Festival buzz you are bound to want to do more. The working party, made up of councillors, steers the strategic aims of the festival and manages the budget and contributes to the programming group. Some councilors are active volunteers during the Festival.

The Festival Organiser (me!) acts as a hub for organisation. I co-ordinate ideas and groups, develop the programme, book acts, accommodation and manage the budget.

Over all the structure empowers the community, so the end result is purely to benefit our community. The volunteers work tirelessly and take on many rolls. Without volunteers there would be no Festival and the diversity of the programme is down to there efforts.

Festival 2009 – Here We Come!

Our current group has already started on the Festival 2009. All of us are contributing our thoughts and ideas. It takes the majority of a year to construct and programme the festival - like assembling a giant jigsaw puzzle! The festival volunteers are currently in the later creative ideas stage where we try to develop the festival after evaluating the year before. Ideas are then refined into a practical and achievable programme. A lot of time is also spent making contact with groups and communities in Exmouth, trying to incorporate as much as possible to build a diverse programme.

So many ideas are fantastic and could really change the festival and have a great effect on the town; however one of the many challenges is working with money. The budget restricts us and often pushes us into certain choices we would have originally not wanted to make. We keep the festival as low cost as possible for the audience, and only ticket events when absolutely necessary, and for the majority rely on donations. But it does mean we have to work very hard to make something great happen within the available budget, and a lot of energy has to go into fundraising. Stagecoach was our principal sponsor last year and has pledged support for 2009. Devon Cliffs sponsored our Season of Sundays last year and we are grateful for both companies keen to support community work.

At this stage the task ahead always seems very daunting but the experience and passion within the ranks of all the volunteers helps keep us stay together and focused – and many of the ideas under way are exciting and will once again move the festival forward.

Plans So Far.

Firstly; there is the introduction of the Exmouth Christmas Cracker event. The Festival is working with Exmouth Town management creating the ‘Christmas Cracker’ - it will certainly be a memorable event with; Fireworks, live music, street entertainment, stalls, workshops, Christmas lights switch on, and much more. Be there at **The Strand 28th November and Exeter Road 29th November.**

The introduction of this ‘year round’ theme is a great way for us to help showcase the arts, and give the town a bit of a festival vibe throughout the year. There will of course be a variety of other smaller events planned throughout the year, watch this space...perhaps you might want to run one!?

Many events from last year will be appearing again but often with a few tweaks here and there, to keep things fresh. Notably we also hope to welcome the ‘Exe fest’. ‘Exe Fest’ was a successful event run this august, it features a lot of music that the Exmouth Festival has so far not been able to offer. But this year we will intend to fill the gap with ‘Exe Fest’ working alongside the Festival!

I am also pleased to Welcome Tim Man as the programme designer for this year. Tim is an exciting Graphic designer who has worked across the board for a variety of exciting clients, and will be bringing a fresh visual image to the programme.

Ultimately the aim of the festival is being realized more and more each year, and for Exmouth Festival 2009 I believe we will be closer than ever!

- You will see a festival with a year round presence.
- You will see a festival that has an exciting image.
- You will see an inclusive festival.
- You will see a diverse programme to be proud of!

Your Help.

The Festival is run by the community, and we are lucky to have a wonderful group of very hard working volunteers. However we always need more people to contribute and become involved. to offer a diverse programme, reflect the community, and increase the diversity of contributions!

Perhaps you are a part of, or know of, a local community group that does something creative and wish to make yourself known?

Maybe you feel you would like to help organize or have an idea for an event during the festival?

- Perhaps you have an idea to help us raise some funds?
- Perhaps you wish to make a donation yourself or be a sponsor?
- You might have a skill that you think could be beneficial to the festival?
- You might wish to give your views about the Festival.
- Maybe you are free during some of our events and wish to help?
- Perhaps you don't know what you want to do, but would like to discuss how you might be able to help?

Whatever you are thinking its worth getting in touch. We really need your involvement, even if it is just a suggestion?

Contact Us.

It's really quite simple. You can email me...[chris @exmouthfestival.org.uk](mailto:chris@exmouthfestival.org.uk) or perhaps you might like to join our myspace, facebook, or log onto our website?

If so just log onto facebook.com and search for Exmouth festival, or go to either exmouthfestival.org.uk or myspace.com/exmouthfestival.

Or even just pick up the phone: 01395 276167

At the events we will be running throughout the year we will also endeavor to have a small stand devoted to volunteers, where there will be someone for you to talk to.

The Festival is something for Exmouth to be proud of, get involved and help make it your own.

For more information – contact the Town Clerk on 01395 276167, visit the Town Hall, contact your Local Councillor or visit **www.exmouth.gov.uk**

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