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NYC Guide



An Alternate Altar

by Silke Tudor

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Rock and Roll Overload

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Wednesday, March 15

SXSW 2006: Day 1, or 'Are You Going to SXSW?'

For years publicists would ask me that question, and I've always heard it like the regretful chorus to Scott McKenzie's "Are You Going to San Francisco?" (well, as a history-fucked Gen Xer, I'm supposed to hear that song as regretful). But some academic stars collided (and hey—I wrote a strong "I am Gen X, hear me roar!" statement of purpose) and I wound up at the University of Texas—Austin.

Of course, that's only a quarter of the battle. Just existing in Austin doesn't guarantee you entry to even C-list bands at the piggiest music (biz) festival in the world. You need some sort of institution to sponsor you for the coveted badge (thax vermillion, *Voice/Chuck Eddy!*). Then it helps if said institution pays for travel/hotel (cough! Cough!). But even the badge won't get you into the A-plus shows (witness the many movie stars who failed to wait through the two hours of lesser acts that was necessary to see MIA last year).

One rung down are those with wristbands. At \$150-\$175 (or more; one chap tells me that they're going for as much as \$250 on eBay), a wristband will definitely give you primo blog fodder. But you are second priority after badge holders at any venue. Outside hot tickets, you are placed into

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First Choice



another line—the have lesses to the badges/haves.

And in the sludge, there are the walkups who pay for each show. None of these shows can have any bees buzzing around them because you just will not get in. If you any voice, however, you can become an early adopter of next year's Franz Ferdinand or Arctic Monkeys.

Clearly, not a place for socialism to flourish. But why do so many people want to take part in SXSW. Because Austin during Spring Break actually does feel like Haight & Asbury c.1967 (I should know; I wasn't there).

I came late to one panel—a crash course on internet resources for musicians. Moderator Scott Ambrose Reilly, of eMusic, averred that there are greater risks for online record stores in underreporting sales figures and that a cdbaby.com keeps better business accounts than the entire music biz of the 1970s. Panos Panay, CEO of Sonicbirds, sat too far back from his microphone.

The touchingest moment of the day came from an earnest fella waiting in line to purchase a wristband. Actually, at this point, I hear that only badge holders can purchase a wristband so he may have been milling about to get someone to buy him one. My wristband purchase option was reserved for a high school buddy but the fella chatted me up anyway. Straight off the farm (or maybe merely feigning farm), he had that "aw shucks" kind of demeanor that made you just want to buy him a Grand Slam breakfast at Denny's. He asked me which acts he should catch and I told him Lady Sovereign. I explained her appeal quite earnestly myself. He listened and after a beat said "I just want to hear something that's going to make me dance." I know that reads trite here on the *Voice* website. But I wanted to melt. I half expected him to start spinning a loom (if that's what you do with looms). Or

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at least use a dial-up modem.

In any event, Lady Sovereign, fella.



Above is a convention center's eye pic of the "Canadian Blast BBQ Shindig" showcasing bands from that greatest of all nations. Brought to you by The Canadian Consulate General in Dallas (now I know where to exchange all my leftover loonies and twonies). Notice (duh) the logo for Vancouver hip-hop crew Swollen Members on the tour bus. If you are Canadian, you know their name as well as you do Mariah Carey's. Due to Canadian content laws, they're jammed onto radio/video playlists.

Posted by Kevin John at 08:30 PM, March 15, 2006

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