

Your Chance to Make Out and Rock Out

"This festival is like meeting up with family again, only it keeps on giving and you get to make out with some of them," says musician Martine Locke, and given the audience I saw last year, it's not just the performers who feel this way about the National Women's Music Festival. Maybe Locke was kidding about getting laid but hey, it could happen, especially since you get to stay in a comfortable hotel and attend concerts in a nice theater setting. No pine needles in my hair?

ers forged ahead and held the festival with women's rock bands, folk singers and string bands.

In the years since that awkward beginning, the festival has featured speakers and performers like Tracy Chapman, Angela Davis, Melissa Ferrick, Ferron, God-Des and She, Janis Ian, Laura Love, Sweet Honey in the Rock, Tribe 8, Cris Williamson, All The King's Men and hundreds more. The audience members come from all walks of life, cutting

across ethnic, racial, sexual, age and ability boundaries. In an email statement from God-Des and She, the hip-hop duo said, "National is an amazing festival that welcomes everyone and has incredible music."

Drag king performer Leighsa Burgin of All The Kings Men says, "It was meaningful and exciting to be part of a monumental and historically significant event

put on by, and for, women." Go, be meaningful—or just to get laid.

This year's festival is July 2–5 in Madison, Wis., at the Marriott Madison West Hotel and Conference Center. [Jamie Anderson]



Ubaka Hill (left) and Lisa Koch

Where do I sign up? (www.wiaonline.org)

This long-running festival is no musty folk-singer jam-fest. Sure, if folk music is your thing, you can hear Lucie Blue Tremblay and Zöe Lewis, but the lineup also includes Sarah Bettens, Erin McKeown and Patrice Pike. You can also laugh your ass off with comics Lisa Koch, Vickie Shaw and Roxanna Ward.

If that's not enough, get energized with poet Alix Olson. Or go to one of the many other activities—they offer workshops, crafts, open mics, dances and theater presentations. Even fundraising is a scream at the festival's annual auction, where you can bid on trips and other prizes, with festival performers playing the role of Vanna White.

Who's the nun? That would be singer-songwriter-comic extraordinaire Lisa Koch as Sister Mary Agnes. And if you're lucky, you'll catch her with her puppet Sister Mary Mike Tyson.

The National Women's Music Festival started back in 1974 when a group of women in Champaign-Urbana, Ill., got angry that their local music festival featured mostly men. Getting nowhere with the organizers, they decided to have their own event and hired a producer. The producer made big promises about bringing in Roberta Flack and Yoko Ono, but instead, she skipped town. Undaunted, organiz-



SWEETER DREAMS FOR HOMELESS KIDS

A 2009 report by the Williams Institute showed that poverty rates are twice as high for children of lesbian and gay couples than for children of married heterosexual couples. In an effort to make a difference in the lives of children touched by poverty, Project Night Night delivers packages of "childhood essentials" to 25,000 homeless children each year. A security blanket, a stuffed animal and a storybook complete the gift, which is designed to improve emotional and cognitive well-being.

(www.projectnightnight.org) [Yana Tallon-Hicks]

Fashion and Function Ride Off Into the Sunset

Tied on by cowboys, break dancers, bank robbers, leather-dykes and more, there are few accessories as versatile as the humble bandanna. *The Bandanna Book* (Cider Mill Press) illustrates 103 ways this calico critter can be used to make your life better—from

an emergency feminine napkin to do-it-yourself throw pillows. The book also contains a humorous, whirlwind history of neckwear (which, sadly, fails to mention the hanky code) and even a bright red bandanna to get you started. The book is bound to get your creative juices flowing—which you can then wipe up with your bandanna. (www.cidermillpress.com) [Heather Robinson]

