



CITY OF OAKLAND

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OAKLAND

2013 DEC -5 PM 1:36

# AGENDA REPORT

**TO:** DEANNA J. SANTANA  
CITY ADMINISTRATOR

**FROM:** Kelley Kahn

**SUBJECT:** Art & Soul Festival

**DATE:** November 26, 2013

City Administrator

Date

Approval

12/3/13

**COUNCIL DISTRICT:** City-Wide

## RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the City Council accept:

An **Informational Report on the Art & Soul Festival Including a Five-Year Analysis and Preliminary Plans for 2014.**

## BACKGROUND/LEGISLATIVE HISTORY

At its July 23, 2013 meeting, the Life Enrichment Committee directed staff to return with a comprehensive report on the Art & Soul festival to encompass the following:

- Provide a timeline for Art & Soul's planning process. Staff presented the timeline to the Life Enrichment Committee at its September 24, 2013 meeting. It is included again herein as **Attachment A**.
- Provide the organizational structure for decision making to ensure that the festival reflects Oakland, to include:  
How the booking company is selected  
Selection of artists and stages  
Selection of vendors
- How allocation of funding is decided for each stage
- Explain the event date selection – vendors and participants complain about the change from Labor Day (a 3 day weekend) to a two day weekend
- Provide numbers of participation for each day for the last 5 years

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- Provide source of all revenue/funding for the last 5 years (broken out by each year)
- Provide complete copies of all evaluations of Art & Soul for the last 3 years
- Bring back a report on the creation of an Art & Soul Advisory Committee that would provide recommendations on the festival going forward.

### *Brief History of Festival*

Art & Soul Oakland began in 2001 as marketing initiative to establish downtown – and Oakland – as a premier regional destination for art, culture and entertainment. Primary goals included:

- Market Oakland to the broader Bay Area region; generate positive media exposure; draw visitors.
- Generate weekend foot traffic in downtown Oakland to enhance public safety, fuel economic development, and support area businesses.
- Showcase the vast artistry of Oakland through music and art.
- Provide quality cultural enrichment for Oakland residents.
- Enhance the city's image through a world-class annual arts & culture festival that is well managed, produced and largely staffed by local residents.
- Support local vendors, suppliers and event personnel through local purchasing and hiring whenever possible.
- Serve as a catalyst for other large scale public events in downtown Oakland and citywide.

By all accounts, Art & Soul has met or exceeded its stated goals. After 13 years, Art & Soul remains widely regarded among the most popular annual festivals in the Bay Area. It boasts a customer satisfaction rating of over 90% (from 2012 survey; 2013 survey results pending); continues to draw good crowds, especially for a paid admission festival competing with other festivals in Oakland and throughout the region; and generates over \$200,000 in in-kind media sponsorships and \$800,000 in free publicity for Oakland annually.

### ANALYSIS

Staff has conducted a five-year analysis of the festival, incorporating input from key stakeholders, participants, sponsors and supporters. The findings of this analysis are summarized as follows:

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*Programming (2009 – 13)*

Festival programming has centered on music and dance, complemented by an artisan marketplace, art exhibits, interactive art, nonprofit and commercial booths, community murals, and food vendors, in addition to the largest children's activity zone of any festival in the Bay Area.

Over its 13 year run, Art & Soul has featured scores of national recording artists and popular local artists, including a number of emerging artists who performed at the festival on their way to national recognition. Among the notable artists who have performed at the festival are:

Tower of Power  
En Vogue  
MC Hammer  
Tony! Toni! Tone!  
Sheila E.  
Goapele  
Ledisi  
Zendaya & PopLyfe  
Pete Escovedo  
Lyrics Bom  
John Santos  
ConFunkShun  
Me'Shell Ndegeocello  
Los Rakas  
Hieroglyphics  
Wayne Tisdale  
Cake  
Ziggy Marley  
Rickie Lee Jones  
Indigo Girls  
Angle Stone  
Joan Osborne  
Blues Traveler  
Bobby Caldwell  
Matt Nathanson  
Shawn Colvin  
Plain White T's  
Stephanie Mills  
Will Downing  
Kev Choice Ensemble

Performers are selected by staff, with input from a variety of sources over the years including local booking agents, radio station sponsors, key stakeholders and music producers such as D'Wayne

Wiggins from Oakland super group Tony! Toni! Tone! who coordinated the main stage entertainment for the festival's 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration. It is important to note that the City staff person who coordinated booking for the first several years of the festival has since retired and the position eliminated due to budget cuts. Staff suggests that the process of booking artists will be enhanced by the new festival task force that will convene beginning January 2014 (for details, see pages 6-7 of this Agenda report). Funding allocation for each of the stages is determined by staff based on available resources. Funding allocations for the Blues, Gospel and Indie stages are about equal, averaging about \$10,000 each for performance fees (not including staging, sound and hospitality, which are budgeted for separately). Funding allocation to the main stage is now set at approximately \$50,000 each of the two days.

Also since its inception, Art & Soul has featured three stages programmed by community groups – making Oakland one of the only major music festivals in the Bay Area to advance community stages in lieu of 100% centralized booking. These include:

- Blues Showcase – produced by Ronnie and Paula Stewart, Bay Area Blues Society. This stage celebrates Oakland as the birthplace of the West Coast Blues and features mostly Oakland blues legends. With the closure of the famed San Francisco Blues Festival, the Blues showcase at Art & Soul is thought to be one of the two largest in Northern California, the other being the Russell City Blues Festival in Hayward, also produced by the Bay Area Blues Society.
- Gospel Showcase – produced by Edwin Hawkins, Community of Unity, Oakland (Terrance Kelly from Oakland Interfaith Gospel Choir filled in for Mr. Hawkins in 2013). The Gospel showcase at Art & Soul is thought to be the only one of its kind in Northern California.
- World Dance - produced by Carla Service, Dance-A-Vision, Oakland. This stage celebrates the rich history and plethora of ethnic and urban dance troupes in Oakland. It is thought to be the only stage of its kind to be included in a Northern California festival.

In 2012, a Turf Dance competition was added to the festival, produced by “Yak to the Bay,” the organization that originated turf dance at Youth Uprising in East Oakland and went on to receive international status (the program was featured on ABC's *Nightline*, and other regional and national media). Plans are underway for the return of the Turf Dance competition to the 2014 festival after a hiatus in 2013 due to a scheduling conflict on the part of the producers.

#### *Vendors*

Over the years, staff has employed various methods to attract and reach out to crafters and other vendors for the popular artisan global marketplace. Hundreds of postcards are mailed annually to individual artists and organizations, galleries and other venues to solicit interest. Staff has sent invitations and made individual contact with artists at other festivals in Oakland and throughout Northern California, including the annual Holiday Crafts Fair at The Cmcible. Advertisements

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have been placed in arts and crafts publications, and on Craig's List. Staff also provides a 24-hour hotline and festival email address, from which contact information from interested vendors is culled and entered into the vendor outreach system. In 2011, staff transitioned to an online vendor application system, which streamlined the process and eliminated the need for mass mailing of paper applications.

The festival's excellent reputation and well-organized vendor management program have combined to attract more vendors than can typically be accommodated in a given year, with the exception of artisan booths, which has declined slightly over the past three years. Staff suggests that this slight decline is due to a combination of lower attendance and the festival going from free to paid admission. In an effort to generate additional foot traffic to support the vendors, a new night market was added in 2012 designed to complement the festival's first-ever evening dance party on Saturday. The extended hours did not generate sufficient numbers to support night vending so it was not continued after that one year. In a show of good faith, staff remitted the participating vendors a partial refund and offered each improved booth locations for 2013. It is important to note that despite the fluctuation in attendance, staff has not received any requests for refunds or written complaints from booth vendors. That said, staff is committed to improving the festival experience for all vendors and is a primary objective for 2014 and beyond.

*Attendance (2009 – 13)*

Annual festival attendance appears to have leveled out to between 15,000 – 17,000 paid attendees after a precipitous drop the year following the festival's big 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration in 2010. A decline in attendance following a major milestone is fairly common – especially when that milestone carries a strong theme that resonates with a broad audience. The theme for Art & Soul's 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary was a celebration of Oakland's rich musical heritage spanning nearly 90 years through jazz, blues, gospel, R&B, funk, Neo-Soul, Latin, folk, rock and hip hop. The 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary festival featured all Oakland artists on every stage, which was hugely popular with attendees and generated positive press. An Oakland showcase, local artists have represented approximately 80% of the festival lineup since its inception in 2000 (excluding 2010 when it was 100% Oakland).

A summary of festival paid attendance from 2009 – 2013 is included in **Attachment B**.

Staff suggests that the following factors have contributed to declining attendance in recent years:

The field of annual festivals has grown significantly in Oakland. Art & Soul was the only downtown festival when it started in 2000 and among only a handful citywide. Today, there are more than 30 major festivals citywide, including several in downtown alone that did not previously exist. These include: Eat Real Festival, First Fridays/Art Murmur Gallery Stroll, Mission Creek Oakland Festival, Oakland Pride and Sundays in the Redwoods, among others. In addition, most of Oakland's neighborhood street fairs bubbled after Art & Soul began – all of which are presented free of admission. These include: Temescal Street Fest, Laurel Street Fair and

Dimond Oaktoberfest. The venerable Chinatown Street Fest and Dia De los Muertos in the Fmitvale – both of which pre-dated Art & Soul – continue to draw large crowds.

Other factors included moving the event to a new weekend, shifts in the formats and audience draw of festival radio partners and overcrowding in 2009 that left some festival-goers feeling that the event has grown too congested. Another factor was the move from free to paid admission and then gradually raising the admission price from \$5 to \$10 to \$15 at the gate.

Beyond that, staff and key stakeholders have observed that the economy and fluctuation in public concerns may have also played a role.

#### *Festival Dates*

In 2008, the festival was moved from Labor Day Weekend to mid-August. This resulted in a savings of \$300,000 in expenses related to entertainment, operations, event staffing/crew, union stagehands, private security and police personnel. In addition, moving off Labor Day weekend made it possible to recruit artisans otherwise occupied with the Sausalito Art & Wine Festival and San Jose's Tapestry Arts, which are two of the largest and most prestigious fine and handcrafted arts festivals. The move also made it possible for staff to work with local artists who regularly participate in Burning Man on that weekend. Staff does not recommend a return to Labor Day due to the higher associated costs and the fact that Oakland Pride is held that weekend.

#### *Finances (2009-13)*

Despite the high cost of producing a major music and arts festival, Art & Soul has broken even financially in 11 of its 13 years, with 2011 and 2012 ending in deficits. Reserves generated from the 2009 and 2010 festival were applied to cover losses in 2011 and 2012. To avert projected losses in 2013, the festival budget has been reduced by approximately \$100,000, resulting in a net gain of \$19,168. This enabled the festival to create a small reserve heading in to the 2014 festival. A five-year summary of festival expenses and revenue for 2009-13 is included as *Attachment C*.

#### *Positive Press Coverage*

In the past five years, Art & Soul has garnered numerous accolades and generated extensive positive publicity for Oakland valued at more than \$3 million. Examples of key press clippings are included in *Attachment D*. It is by all accounts the most widely publicized festival in Oakland and among the most widely publicized in Northern California. Art & Soul has been named best festival 12 times in *Oakland Magazine* and *East Bay Express* Annual Readers Poll. The festival was also named among the nation's top 10 summer festivals in *Essence Magazine* (June 2012).

#### *Festival Task Force*

Beginning January 2014, a festival task force of up to 15 participants will be convened to augment staff efforts. The group will meet monthly. Primary functions will include:

1. Programming  
Suggest ideas and resources for programming including performers/booking, arts

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activities and exhibits, artisans and vendors, and themed elements such as a car show, restaurant showcase, other interactive activities. The idea is for the task force to serve as the eyes and ears of the festival to research ideas, opportunities and resources that emanate from the Oakland community.

2. Sponsorships/Fundraising

Research and suggest ideas and contacts for cash and in-kind sponsorships, grant and foundation support and fundraising events.

3. Marketing & Publicity

Research and suggest media partnerships and resources for low-cost, high impact marketing and advertising tools and activities to complement current efforts. Staff notes that marketing efforts to date have been very successful, albeit at times expensive, so the thrust will be on generating additional resources, both cash and in-kind. The task force would also work with staff to enhance editorial coverage of the festival.

Staff is currently reaching out to individuals from the following fields to assess interest in participation with a goal convening the first task force meeting in January 2014:

Event producers

Entertainment promoters

Entertainment booking specialists

Musicians and music producers

Local tourism representatives

BID managers

Managers of local venues, attraction and cultural organizations

Individual artists, artisans and arts leaders

Community and neighborhood leaders

Business leaders

Local publicists and marketing professionals

Local media

Festival sponsors

Staff welcomes and encourages input from members of the City Council pertaining to individuals and organizations for the festival task force.

*Plans for the 2014 Festival*

Given that the festival takes place the first weekend in August, FY 13-14 funds appropriated by Council to the festival have already been expended for the 2013 festival. For FY 14-15, Council appropriated \$95,930 for the 2014 festival.

Staff is suggesting that Council retain 100% of the \$95,930 FY 14-15 appropriation and apply it to enhancing the City's flagship festival at a new location – Lake Merritt/Lakeside Park – to

hopefully be held in conjunction with one of the Oaklavia/Sunday Streets events. General admission would be free to the public, with individual fees charged for participation in select activities, i.e. music concerts, wine and food tastings, etc. Moving to Lake Merritt/Lakeside Park would enable staff to lower overall production costs; invest more in programming, including top-tier local and national recording artists; incorporate a broader range of activities that celebrate a wider cross-section of Oakland art, culture, commerce and community; and build upon the eco-friendly, sustainable practices that have become the hallmark of the City's flagship festival. It would also build on the public's affinity for the lake in general, as well as the June 2013 Love our Lake Day – Oaklavia/Sunday Streets and the former Festival-at-the-Lake. Because there would be no fencing around the lake/park – and walking, bicycling and use of public transit a key focus – staff believes the issues that plagued the popular Festival-at-the-Lake in its later years would be mitigated. This approach would also enable all existing Lake/Merritt Lakeside Park facilities to remain open for regular and enhanced use during the festival.

### COORDINATION

The City Attorney's Office, Budget Office and OPD Special Events Unit have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

### COST SUMMARY/IMPLICATIONS

1. COST OF PROGRAM:

FY 13-14 Program Costs – Measure C – Parades, Runs & Street Festivals Fund \$95,930

FY 13-14 Program Costs – General Fund – Cultural Arts & Marketing \$54,786

FY 14-15 Program Costs – Measure C – Parades, Runs & Street Festivals Fund (Projected)  
\$95,930

FY 14-15 Program Costs – General Fund – Cultural Arts & Marketing (Projected)  
\$50,000

2. SOURCE OF FUNDING/FISCAL IMPACT:

Measure C – PRSF

FY 13-14 \$95,930

FY 14-15 \$95,930

Funding has been budgeted in Fund 2419, Organization 02991, P391870

General Fund – Cultural Arts & Marketing

FY.13-14 \$54,786



FY 14-15 \$50,000  
General Fund funding has been budgeted as follows:  
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### SUSTAINABLE OPPORTUNITIES

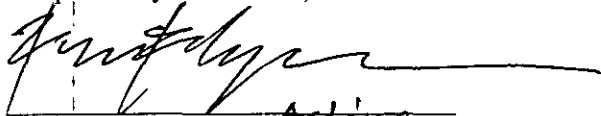
**Economic:** Art & Soul bolsters the cultural identity of Oakland and its downtown; establishes the city as a destination; attracts foot traffic; generates positive media exposure; and helps fuel economic development and community revitalization.

**Environmental:** There are some environmental opportunities and benefits that could result from action outlined in this report. These include: zero-waste initiatives; emphasis on public transit, walking and bicycling to the festival, and promoting sustainability through informational booths and activities at the event.

**Social Equity:** The community organizations that participate in the festival add to existing cultural, economic and enrichment opportunities, thereby increasing the quality of life for Oakland residents and visitors. The community organizations and events reflect the broad cultural, ethnic and socio-economic diversity of Oakland. In addition, whenever possible, Oakland residents are hired for festival crew, and goods and services procured through Oakland businesses.

For questions regarding this report, please contact Samee Roberts, Marketing Manager, Department of Economic & Workforce Development, at 510-238-2136.

Respectfully submitted,

  
*RACHEL FLYNN* ~~KELLEY KAHN, Director~~ *Acting*  
Department of Economic & Workforce Development

Prepared by:  
Samee Roberts, Marketing Manager  
Cultural Arts & Marketing

Attachments:

- Attachment A: 2014 Festival Planning Timeline***
- Attachment B: 2009-13 Festival Paid Admission***
- Attachment C: 2009-13 Summary of Festival Finances***
- Attachment D: Sampling of Key Press Clippings***

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## **ATTACHMENT A**

### **Art + Soul 2014 General Timeline**

#### **August 2013:**

Debrief with staff and crew/prepare performance summary outline

Prepare 2014 festival timeline for Life Enrichment Committee

#### **September/October 2013:**

Survey vendors & artisans on vendor performance/experience

Settle finances/prepare final budget spreadsheet

Prepare/distribute sponsor evaluations

Prepare five-year Art + Soul analysis for 12/10/13 Life Enrichment Committee to include the eight items from Councilmember Desley Brooks as detailed at the 7/23/13 Life Enrichment Committee meeting

#### **October/November 2013:**

Prepare 2014 festival budget to include in Agenda Report for 12/10/13 Life Enrichment Committee

Finalize five-year analysis for 12/10/13 Life Enrichment Committee to include the eight items from Councilmember Desley Brooks

#### **December 2013:**

Present Agenda report with five-year analysis and possible approaches for Art + Soul in 2014 and beyond to the 12/10/13 Life Enrichment Committee.

#### **January 2014:**

Convene music advisory group and begin gathering input for potential musical acts

Initiate sponsorship strategy/recruitment

Review vendor history and develop outreach strategy for 2014 festival

continued next page

**Art + Soul 2014 Timeline**

**Page 2**

**February 2014:**

Initiate booking of musical acts based on input from advisory group

Track corporate/media sponsorship strategy/recruitment

Solicit applications for handcrafted and imported vendors and non-profits through online registration system

**March/April 2014:**

Finalize bookings – main and other stages

Send out food booth applications

Distribute advance calendar release announcing **2014** dates

**May 2014:**

Lineups due from community stage producers (blues, gospel, etc.)

Create final music lineups

Finalize corporate/media sponsorships

Finalize marketing plan

**June 2014:**

Issue press release announcing dates and lineup

Commence marketing\*

**July 2014:**

Confirm artisan, commercial, non profit and food vendors

Implement operations plan\*

\* *specific marketing and operations functions are too detailed to include in this general timeline*

**Prepared by: Samee Roberts, Marketing Manager, Department of Economic & Workforce Development**

## ATTACHMENT B

**Art & Soul - paid attendance  
2009 - 2013**

		Saturday	Sunday	TOTAL paid attendance	
2009	\$10/adult, \$5 youth	8897	14510	23407	no advance web sales
2010	\$10/\$5 adv., \$15/\$8 door	9115	16542	25657	includes advance web sales
2011	\$10/\$5 adv., \$15/\$8 door	5743	10063	15806	includes advance web sales
2012	\$10/\$5 adv., \$15/\$8 door	8676	8397	17073	includes advance web sales
2013	\$10/\$5 adv., \$15/\$8 door	6014	8361	14375	includes advance web sales

**Does not include ages 12 & under (admitted free of charge), plus Vendors, sponsors, VIP guest tickets**

## Art & Soul 2009 to 2012 Summary of Expenses and Revenue

Art & Soul Budget - Expenses and Revenue 2009 - 2013				<b>ATTACHMENT C</b>	
<b>Event Expenses</b>	<b>Expenses 2009</b>	<b>Expenses 2010</b>	<b>Expenses 2011</b>	<b>Expenses 2012</b>	<b>Expenses 2013</b>
Operations	343,414	405,206	414,919	441,252	332,362
Marketing	104,260	137,159	84,288	75,912	86,378
Entertainment	172,239	226,852	233,755	215,697	158,728
<b>Total</b>	<b>619,914</b>	<b>769,217</b>	<b>732,962</b>	<b>732,861</b>	<b>577,469</b>
<b>Event Revenue</b>	<b>Revenue 2009</b>	<b>Revenue 2010</b>	<b>Revenue 2011</b>	<b>Revenue 2012</b>	<b>Revenue 2013</b>
City - Redevelopment	25,395	-	55,497	-	-
City - Marketing	65,000	58,315	65,000	106,685	54,786
Measure C - TOT	94,392	121,205	127,211	115,510	95,930
Ticket Sales	208,607	328,413	192,554	209,492	179,780
Sponsors	80,665	164,500	90,600	73,825	132,495
Booth Fees	118,148	100,751	104,958	93,786	80,677
Concessions	54,888	74,999	57,478	53,160	52,969
<b>Total</b>	<b>647,095</b>	<b>848,182</b>	<b>693,298</b>	<b>652,458</b>	<b>596,637</b>
<b>Revenue Minus Expenses</b>	<b>27,182</b>	<b>78,966</b>	<b>(39,683)</b>	<b>(80,403)</b>	<b>19,168</b>
<p>Operations: Expenses include Backline, Beverage Operation, Booth/Tent rentals, Radios, Trash/Compost - Zero Waste operations; Event Staff; Admin Expenses; First Aid; Equipment rentals; IATSE Labor; Portable Toilets, Minimal Lighting for Plaza Stage; Signs; Sound Systems; Stages and Bleachers; Tables and Chairs; Storage containers; Fences; Ticket booths and supplies, t-shirts; Event Management; Insurance; Police, Fire, and Public Works expenses; Security Guards</p>					
<p>Entertainment: Expenses includes Performer fees for all stages, ASCAP/BMI fees; Hotels and Airfare; Catering and Hospitality; Mural project; Family Fun Zone; Entertainment Support, etc.</p>					

## Attachment D

### Sample Festival Publicity Clippings

“Art Festival Pack Positive Vibe”  
*San Francisco Chronicle*  
August 5, 2013

“Art, Soul and More Art on Tap”  
*Oakland Tribune*  
August 4, 2013

“Best Summer Top 10”  
*Essence Magazine*  
June 2012

# San Francisco Chronicle

August 5, 2013

## OAKLAND

### Art festival packs a positive vibe

By Carolyn Jones

With a hum, a howl and a heartrending whoop, Oakland's downtown soared to life Sunday, as the city's arts scene continued its spiral upward.

The 13th annual Art + Soul festival brought thousands of music fans, dozens of performers and an infinite reservoir of Oakland love to five square blocks around City Hall for the weekend. Many of the performers hailed from Oakland. The others wished they did.

"The art scene here is jump-

**"The art scene here is jumping. It's powerful. Energized. It's cool for the heavy cats that love to play. Which I do."**

*Amikeayla, Washington, D.C., jazz singer*

ing. It's powerful. Energized. It's cool for the heavy cats that love to play. Which I do," said

jazz singer Amikeayla, a Washington, D.C., native who now spends half her time in Oakland and was among the Art + Soul performers Sunday. "Oakland has huge, fabulous crowds who are excited to hear different kinds of music. It's a spectacular scene."

Oakland's downtown and Uptown districts are buzzing with new nightclubs, bars, restaurants, galleries and other venues, attracting thousands from throughout the Bay Area in search of relatively inexpen-

*Art + Soul continues on C4*



Brant Ward / The Chronicle

The dance group Dance-A-Vision rehearses at the Jefferson Street stage for the Art + Soul street party in Oakland.



Frank Jensen plays trombone in the Big O band, which is made up of music teachers in Oakland.

# Art, music, food energize in Oakland

Art + Soul from page C7

sive, high-quality nightlife. Art + Soul is a key part of that revival; festivalgoers said Sunday.

"I really, really love where this city is going," said Tamara Copes, who, with her father, was selling "I Found My Soul in Oakland" T-shirts at the festival. "This city has been underestimated and undervalued for so long. ... Art + Soul is a way of saying welcome to our great city. Come share it with us."

Art + Soul replaced the

old Festival at the Lake, a popular music and art event that the city axed in 1997 due to increasing crime and debt. Art + Soul so far has shown none of the problems that dogged Festival at the Lake; in part because of heavy security and a cover charge, but also because the city has changed, as well.

"Crime remains a problem throughout the city, but improving schools, floods of newcomers from San Francisco, a thriving art scene and a heavy dollop of civic pride have



Photos by Brant Ward / The Chronicle

Crowds pack the 13th annual Art + Soul festival in five square blocks around City Hall in Oakland.

shifted the city's mood from one of marginal despair to pervasive optimism.

Jim Copes, Tamara's father, was feeling it Sunday.

"The culture, the neighborhoods, the people of all colors, the lake, the hills, the sports teams. ... Now is our time," said the West Oakland native. "People come here because they want to feel connected. They want a sense of community. Oakland gives them

that."

Art + Soul offered one service not often seen at street fairs: sign language interpreters on stage. Shawn Merriman-Roberts, a dancer and artist-in-residence at Santa Clara University, was among those providing sign language accompaniments over the weekend.

"I love Art + Soul. This weekend's been amazing," he said. "I used to go to the old Festival at the Lake — early — so I'm thrilled the city is doing

something like this again."

Although the festival featured headliners like Lisa Loeb, Vintage Trouble and Leela James, lesser-known acts also packed the house.

Among Sunday's lineup was Big O, a collection of music teachers from Oakland Unified School District. The 19-piece orchestra livened up the main stage with big band and jazz standards.

Despite near-endless budget cuts, Oakland's

school music program is thriving, said Michael Turner, who teaches music at three Oakland elementary schools.

"We have a lot of kids interested," he said. "And here, we see a lot of kids just enjoying the music. It's a very positive scene. You can't get any better than that."

Carolyn Jones is a San Francisco Chronicle staff writer. E-mail: carolynjones@sfgchronicle.com



August 4, 2013

## Art, soul and more art on tap



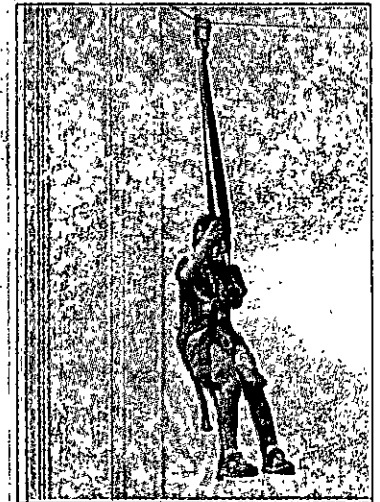
**ABOVE:** Singer Mara Hruby, of Oakland, performs during the 13th Annual Art and Soul Festival in Oakland on Saturday.

**UPPER RIGHT:** Marissa Glick, right, and Amanda Drexler, both 16 and of Oakland, participate in a public mural, "Oakland's Heart and Soul: What is it for You?" during the festival.



RAY CHAVEZ/STAFF PHOTOS

**LOWER RIGHT:** Visitors to the Fremont Festival of the Arts line Capitol Avenue in Fremont, on Saturday. This year's weekend-long festival, now in its 30th year, offers more than 700 artisan booths, a wine bar, beer stands and more.



**ABOVE:** Clayton Paxton, 7, of Fremont, rides a zip line at the Fremont festival. The festival also offers music stages and food ranging from gourmet dishes to traditional guilty pleasures.

ANDA CHU/STAFF PHOTOS

HOT TO

NS RES

MRS. OBAMA'S ROOTS

# News & Culture

**WAVE YOUR FLAG** at Scotiabank Caribbean Carnival (formerly Caribana) in Toronto. Festivities start in July, but the 45th annual parade winds down the road on August 4; [torontocaribbean.carnival.com](http://torontocaribbean.carnival.com).

## BEST SUMMER TOP TEN

Whether you're in Chicago, New Orleans or New York City, we direct you to the free festivals, beach parties and summer concerts that'll keep you dancing in the streets.

BY CORI MURRAY AND LIZ WOODSON

[www.essence.com](http://www.essence.com)

ESSENCE

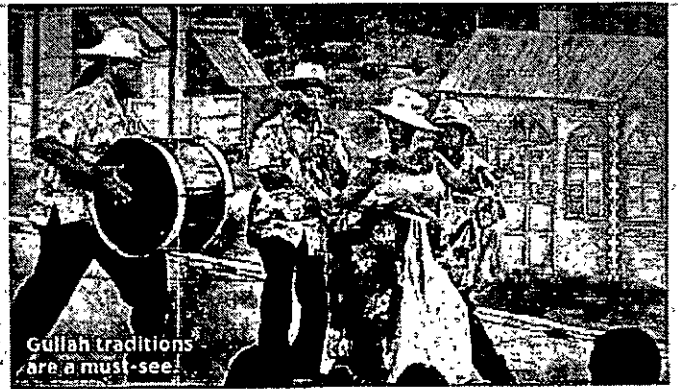
JUNE 20

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## NEWS & CULTURE | SUMMER PICKS

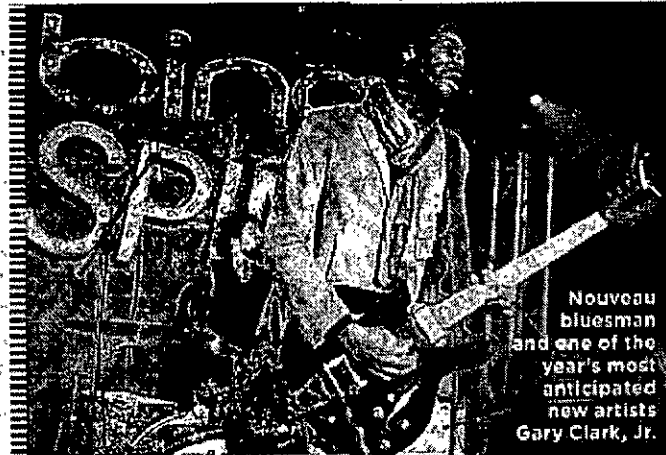
**CHEER RIHANNA ON** as she attacks supernatural alien forces on the high seas in her big-screen debut as a Navy weapons specialist in *Battleship* (Universal); in theaters on May 18.

**ROCK WITH THE ROOTS** at their fifth annual Roots Picnic in Philadelphia. Hip-hop's reigning band performs with De La Soul, Wale, Kid Cudi and more on June 2 and 3; for tickets, 800-745-3000.

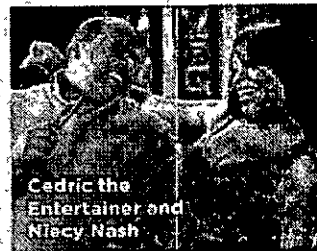


Gullah traditions are a must-see!

**GET GEECHEE WITH IT** at the Original Gullah Festival in Beaufort, South Carolina. Taste, hear and experience African traditions thriving in the Gullah communities in South Carolina's and Georgia's low country; May 25-27, [gullahfestival.org](http://gullahfestival.org).



Nouveau bluesman and one of the year's most anticipated new artists Gary Clark, Jr.

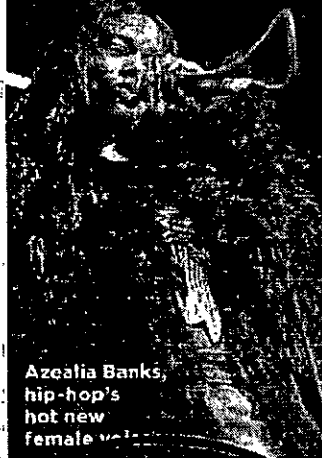


Cedric the Entertainer and Niecy Nash

**LAUGH AT NIECY NASH** and Cedric the Entertainer in TV Land's new series *The Soul Man*. Cedric stars as a has-been R&B singer returning home to lead his father's St. Louis church; Nash plays Cedric's big-city-loving bride; premieres June 13.

### 4 TURN UP THE MUSIC

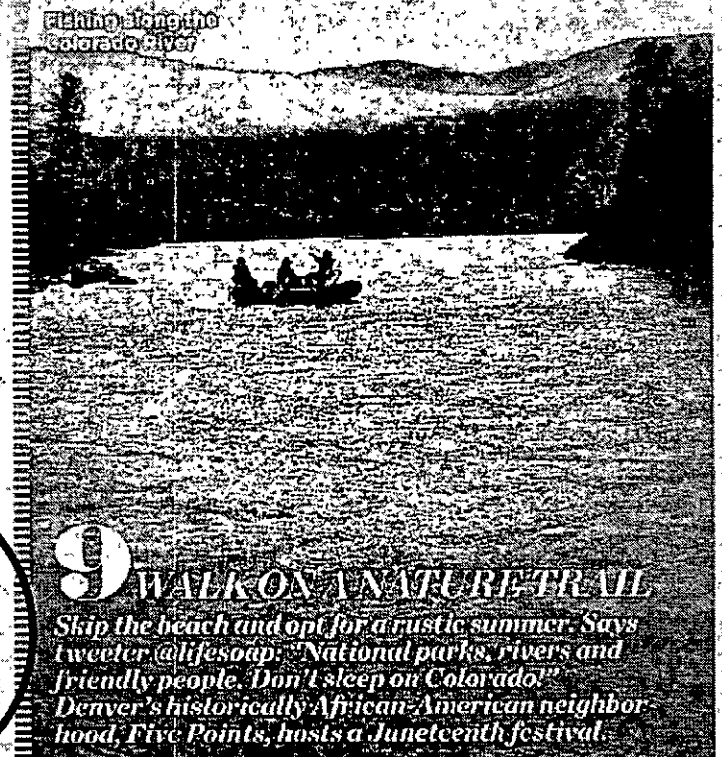
Jam to these songs all summer: Azealia Banks's naughty rhyme fest "212," Gary Clark, Jr.'s blues-rock "Itright Lights," Rebecca Ferguson's Motown-inspired "Diamond to Stone" and Alex Boyd's blue-eyed soul "Wish I Knew."



Azealia Banks, hip-hop's hot new female voice

**SOAK UP THE SUN** and sand in Oak Bluffs Martha's Vineyard; return to "Black Eden" and enjoy the Idlewild Music Fest in Idlewild, Michigan; or visit Atlantic Beach, South Carolina—the only Black-owned beach town in the country.

**FEEL THE VIBE** at Oakland's Art & Soul festival, suggests reader @MamaCoCo6. Last year, more than 60,000 attendees revelled in live jazz, gospel and R&B, art and food, and wine from northern California vineyards; [artandsouloakland.com](http://artandsouloakland.com).



Floating along the Colorado River

### 9 WALK ON A NATURE TRAIL

Skip the beach and opt for a rustic summer. Says tweeter @lifesoup: "National parks, rivers and friendly people. Don't sleep on Colorado!" Denver's historically African-American neighborhood, Five Points, hosts a Juneteenth festival.

## MORE READER-RECOMMENDED ACTIVITIES

**ON TWITTER AND FACEBOOK**, YOU TOLD US where you like to spend your best summer: "Jamaica is a must for me—food, culture and sun," @Yasminbarracks • "Juneteenth celebration in Brownwood, Texas," Krystal K. Kendle-Anderson, via Facebook • "10 weeks in Belize," @a\_price1 • "Taste of Chicago and the Gilroy Garlic Festival in Gilroy, California," @Vette99 • "Free concerts in Fountain Square in Cincinnati," Kim Brown, via Facebook

**10 ATTEND THE ESSENCE MUSIC FESTIVAL** in New Orleans. Where else can you feel a part of a 400,000-plus family reunion? From July 6 to 8, join the original Party With a Purpose for great performances and spiritual enrichment.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: COURTESY OF GULLAH FESTIVAL.ORG; COURTESY OF TV LAND; JOHN HOOVER/GETTY IMAGES; REBECCA FERGUSON/MICHAEL BOCKHEIM/GETTY IMAGES