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Talking Animals Festival promises beastly good time

Staff file photo (2007)



Commentator Duncan Strauss of WMNF's "Talking Animals" show is the man behind this weekend's animal-themed festival in Tampa.

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By **CURTIS ROSS** | The Tampa Tribune

Published: April 8, 2010

When **Duncan Strauss** was picking acts for the first Talking Animals Festival, some local acts just seemed like naturals:

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The Chicken Chasers. Large Mammal. The Equines. Andy Feldman (of Pulling Birds).

Music, animal related and otherwise, will be just part of the event, says Strauss, host of the show that airs the first two Wednesdays of each month at 11:30 a.m. on listener-supported radio station WMNF, 88.5 FM.

"I wanted to create an event that's loosely in the mold of the show itself," Strauss says.

The show mixes interviews with animal-themed music and comedy, as well as a "name that animal tune" contest.

The festival won't quite follow that format but will feature vendors and animal-interest groups, bands playing animal songs, [pet adoption](#) opportunities, food and drink as well as "smart animal tricks" and Project Pet Walk, "animals parading across the [band shell stage](#),"

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Strauss says. Pets on leashes are welcome.

Much like the show, the festival will address serious issues but won't take itself that seriously.

"It's family-friendly and free," Strauss says.

Strauss, who also has worked as a [music journalist](#) and managed comedians, began the show in 2003 on KUCI at the University of California-Irvine. After he moved to Florida, it began airing on WMNF in late 2005.

His guests have included anthropologist and chimpanzee expert Jane Goodall, officials from PETA and [animal rescue organizations](#) as well as veterinarians, biologists and animal trainers.

The show also has featured interviews with animal-loving celebrities such as Chrissie Hynde, Kinky Friedman, [Margaret Cho](#) and Joan Jett.

He credits his ability to land big-name guests mostly to "dogged if not crazy persistence."

"Jane Goodall took years," he says. "But now when I'm contacting someone trying to set up an interview, I can say, 'I've interviewed Jane Goodall,' which certainly suggests credibility."

Credibility and persistence aren't enough in some cases, though.

"A few years ago I pursued an interview with Ted Nugent," the rock guitarist who's as known for his hunting as his music.

Nugent said no.

"I thought our guests shouldn't always be the expected people. There should be a mix," Strauss says, "even if I wasn't sure what I was getting myself into."

IF YOU GO

Talking Animals Festival

WITH: Ronny Elliott, The Equines, Andy Feldman of Pulling Birds, Large Mammal, The Chicken Chasers, Parson Brown, Sunset Bridge and Pete Gallagher

PLUS: Vendors, animal adoption, smart animal tricks, advocacy groups, Project Pet Walk and more

WHEN: Noon Sunday

WHERE: Lowry Park Band Shell, 7530 N. Boulevard, Tampa

COST: Free

Pop music writer Curtis Ross can be reached at (813) 259-7568.

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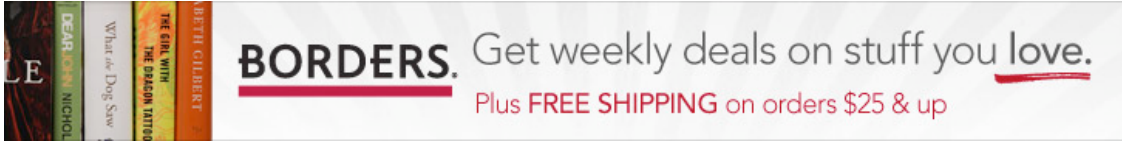


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