



Avery Hardy

Extravaganza 2011

Extravaganza Draws Thousands for Annual UCSB Music Bash

Cee Lo Green, The Expendables, Rusko, and Talib Kweli Perform at Harder Stadium

Wednesday, May 18, 2011

by **EVERY HARDY** (CONTACT)

UCSB's Harder Stadium rocked with noise on Saturday as thousands of university students packed in for Extravaganza, the school's annual music festival.



Sprout, Extravaganza 2011

Area band Sprout kicked off the afternoon’s festivities, having won their place at the Battle of the Bands earlier this year. For the “blues rock jam funk” ensemble — consisting of eight members, including singers, drummers, guitarists, and even an organist — this was a career milestone: Up until now, they’ve mostly been playing smaller area venues like SOhO and Muddy Waters. They brought along the first copies of their three-song demo, which will be available to fans at future gigs.



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Geoff Weers of The Expendables, Extravaganza 2011

Next up on the stage were The Expendables — Santa Cruz reggae-rockers who first came on the scene in the late '90s. Now, more than a decade later, the quartet is still playing to young audiences. “We’re always stoked to play college

shows,” said guitarist and singer Geoff Weers backstage before the show. “We’ve been playing awhile, so it’s always a good feeling to know that we can still play in front of [young] people and they still like our music.” Bass player Ryan DeMars brought up how The Expendables essentially got their start playing in Santa Barbara, saying that from 2000-2004, they would come down and play in Isla Vista on the weekend.

Talib Kweli, the Brooklyn-based rapper and emcee, played next. During his performance, he paused to disparage Fox News and Sarah Palin for criticizing fellow rapper Common, drawing hoots and hollers of approval from the crowd.



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Rusko, Extravaganza 2011

Crowd-favorite Rusko, an English dubstep musician and deejay, followed Kweli. Dubstep, a fairly new genre that combines a booming baseline with a slower tempo, recently made its way over to the U.S. and has become a dance-floor staple since. In his tent before the show, Rusko talked about this being a kind of “homecoming” performance for him, since he’s called SoCal home for the last two years. This is also the last show of his tour, and he said he had friends and family in the audience at Harder on Sunday.

For Rusko, part of the challenge in playing live shows comes from dubstep’s electronic foundations, which give the music fewer elements adaptable to live shows. To make up for that, Rusko said he makes his shows “... all about

performance. I'm on the microphone every song, talking to the crowd, telling them when I've got new tracks," he said. "It's all about communicating with the crowd and making everyone feel involved, and giving a performance ... You've got to give it 100 percent."



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Cee Lo Green, Extravaganza 2011

As the sun started to dip behind Harder's bleachers, headliner Cee Lo Green took the stage as the day's last performer. He played a set that included classic covers like "I Wanna Be Your Dog" by The Stooges and "Don't Stop Believing" by Journey, as well as tracks off his most recent release, *The Lady Killer*. With an all-girl band backing him up, Green's hour-long performance saw the biggest crowd of the day.

Reflecting on the performance after the show, Green said that "all things considered, this was a great show," adding that he liked it because "Santa Barbara's a very cool place." He talked about how reading the crowd's musical tastes is crucial to giving a good performance, and that "after I got the energy of the audience, and after I came on after [Rusko], I kind of knew that this was a dubstep kind of audience, that this was a young group. I get it. I knew what I was in for today."

"[But] I still like to do the music I just like doing," he continued. "And if they don't know about it, maybe I can introduce them to it. If they don't know Iggy

Pop [& The Stooges], maybe I can introduce them to Iggy Pop.”

This year's Extravaganza was the first to allow only the UCSB community to attend, preventing locals from joining in the festivities. Last year's crowd, according to both organizers and attendees, was out of control, with more than 12,000 people attending. With a smaller crowd this year, the experience was different, but several organizers commented that the entire experience was simply under more control.