



THE NIMBIN GOODTIMES

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Kicking off the New Year with love

by Cath Smith

Woodford Folk Festival is so much more than folk music: apart from the plethora of musical genres, there are dance performances, singing circles, comedy, circus, vaudeville, burlesque, film, talks, street theatre, installations-the list could go on...

Nimbin residents form a big contingent every year, and part of the delight of the Woodford experience is the serendipity of running into familiar faces. The camping experience is convivial: festival-goers at Woodford maintain a chilled-out, friendly ambience that is inspiring. It seems that the world could operate like this; being kind to one another and smiling a lot!

This year a pop-up concert of 'Musicians against Adani' inspired the audience to continue the campaign against this major evil, and a Stop Adani stall, provided free by the festival, distributed information and sold eye-catching T-shirts to spread the word.

The traditional Woodford custom of three minutes' silence is unknown to any other festival. Small birthday candles are distributed on New Year's Eve, and at 11.30 pm the huge village bell tolls, lights shut off, and over 100,000 merry-makers light their candles from each others', spreading the light until all are lit and tiny flickering flames are the only illumination.

Then all fall silent, reflecting on the year just passed, and contemplating the year ahead. Not a sound can be heard throughout the whole festival: the hushed silence connects both friends and strangers in a magical accord: yes, humanity can be inspirational, creative and constructive.

It isn't onerous or long: we are in still meditative mode when the bell tolls again, and cheers sound out across the whole festival village.

And then the party resumes, reinvigorated by the uplifting therapy of the silence. Bands pick up their dancing rhythms and the punters joyfully dance in the New Year.

Another unique feature of the Woodford experience is the dawn ceremony, held on New Year's Day on a hilltop overlooking the Glasshouse Mountains. Haunting spiritual music rings out over the darkened landscape as the dawn breaks.

Those who make the effort to trudge up the hill, blankets shrouding their bodies, now throw off their coverings and traipse down to the lure of coffee and breakfast.

The natural amphitheatre, which hosts some of the biggest name bands also presents the Fire Event, held on the last night of the festival, 1st January.

Each year an entrance structure beckons folk up the steep winding path and through to the 'Amphi' space. This year, the beautiful heart-shaped portal delighted and enticed all who came through its threshold.



Woodford's Amphi portal
Photos: Lachie Douglas for Woodford Folk Festival

Another year, another heart-warming Woodford: what a grand way to begin a New Year.



Dawn ceremony



Sand mandala

SPECIAL ASTROLOGICAL FEATURE

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