

SONSHINE 2003 RECAP

Another Sonshine is history. An awesome year, we saw some fabulous performances by great bands and artists, endured some unbelievable heat, and mixed it up with some wild crowds. Sonshine 2003 smashed the attendance record of 15,500 by drawing 19,150 - more than the ENTIRE population of Willmar (18,000). The security crew of 102, also the largest ever, was 25 more than last year. Sonshine 2003 also saw 5 new Supervisors, Assistants, or Crew Leaders. We were certainly pleased by the tremendous crew of rookies that worked security this year, a rookie class I consider the best ever, even better than 1998 or 2000. I only wish I could list every one of you by name. You filled in admirably for many 2002 crew that were unable to return this year, most notably Keith Voller, who is serving his country in Iraq. I thought I might get everyone up to speed on what all happened at Sonshine 2003. All stories and notes are based on fact, while some fiction may be included for flavor. No names have been changed. Some inside jokes have been added and you may only find the truth in asking the people involved. Without further ado, here's your guided tour of Sonshine 2003:

Sonshine got off to an exciting start Wednesday evening when the tornado warning sirens sounded while we were busy checking in the crew and handing out wristbands and t-shirts. We lost power, leaving us in the dark and scrambling to get out of the tin, death trap, HM building. While a tornado actually touched down 5 miles from Willmar, all we got was a torrent of rain that left many tents literally swimming to safety. We heard of a few turkey farms taken out nearby, but we were back on track by 6 pm getting the crew ready to work.

After another dull and endless security meeting, the crew gathered against the inside wall of the HM building for the group picture. What a fine looking (and smelling) group it was, albeit for the last time. The vets knew it would be all downhill from here when it came to "hug ability". Andrew Webster, who took the group photos, would serve as Sonshine Security photographer and video guy for Sonshine.

The first real event of the night was around midnight when a young camper collapsed from not taking his heart medication. Al Bergman, Dana Tlougan and Charlie Bowen, basically patrolling for free food, happened on him and came to his aid. After the young man passed out, Charlie revived him using painful stimuli (translation: he hurt the kid to wake him up). My biggest concern following the incident was the possibility of a lawsuit stemming from the lifelong trauma of seeing Charlie's face first when he finally opened his eyes!

Thursday was a just a little quiet at the signing table, with pairs of crew spending two-hour shifts taking turns napping and people watching. Things finally picked up when Toby Mac drew a huge line that extended well past the Whopper wagon into the Main Stage crowd. Dave Nelson had a blast organizing a line that began forming hours before he even performed. Sam Jerome, asked to fill in this year as Artist Driver for Jen Oftelie (Jen WHO?), under Chuck Hinkley's guidance as new Artist Crew Supervisor, took the "same route" as last year and promptly brought Toby and his road manager to the Perkins in town. OK, maybe it just seemed like that since she missed the gate and went to the far side of the Civic Center. Toby happily signed for 1-½ hours before making a perfect getaway in the van. Toby Mac's performance at Main Stage had been awesome, and the SR guys assigned to work the crowd did a superb job! The SR rookies first real taste of battle went surprisingly well since all survived.

I heard Greg White saved Leigh Olson from big trouble by pulling down surfers during the set of We3Kings at Stage 3 while most of the SR guys prepared for Toby Mac.

Aaron Livingston and Jeff Pappas, the recently married (not to each other) dynamic duo, better known as the quarter-ton-o-fun, arrived Friday at 2 am and wasted little time finding action. Responding together at 3 am with Jon Ness to a tent site said to have alcohol, the three of them found the alcohol and called for the police. One young man opted to take off running and the chase was on. Jon was in the early lead, but Aaron, being ever so light of foot, overtook Jon and knocked him down in the process, sending him tumbling to the ground. Aaron caught up to the kid and tackled him from behind, as gently as you can imagine a 295 lb man doing so, firmly planting him several inches into the muddy ground. After picking the kid up out of the mud by his neck the kid says, "You're lucky, I almost got away". Aaron smartly replied, "You should be embarrassed that a fat guy like me caught a skinny kid like you!!" The site ended up having 2 kids arrested for drinking and 1 that had to come back in the morning to finish packing up the tents. All told, some 85 bottles or cans were found in their camp!

Wendy Biddle and her sister, Christa Biddle, apparently missed their calling as reporters for Access Hollywood working the red carpet at the Emmy's. They "worked" tent city for the Sonshine video, getting tenters talking, laughing, and most importantly, giving them free food. I am glad, however, they chose NOT to enter the Motor home from Oklahoma for a tour! (See the video!)

The Newsboys took the stage at 9:00 Friday night and we were (??) prepared for a huge crowd that had spent up to 12 hours in the hot sun, not drinking enough water. The front stage crew and SR trench guys did a great job weathering the feverish first several songs, pulling many exhausted and overheated kids over the fence. The front stage crew of Karli Anderson, Nikki Lyman, Marlana Regino, and Calysta Swor, among others pulled in to help, managed an endless stream of people brought to the EMT's or out the side gate. All told, Wendy Biddle and Lucinda Adams, working hard at the side gate, counted 125 people brought out the gate!

Meanwhile, over at the HM stage, Charlie's band of misfits were battling a Spoken crowd that generated the best Mosh Pit he had EVER seen at Sonshine! Charlie Bowen estimated the crowd to be 500+ strong pounding it out and generally abusing each other (with God's love).

Responding to an anonymous tip, INS agents showed up Saturday, flashing badges and asking for Greg Nordin, (a.k.a. Paco) an SR Supervisor. Recently rumored to be Mexican, which was news to me, they demanded to immediately see his green card, which he luckily had.

A big question: Can *Wicked Freddie* be tamed, or is he destined to be the golf cart only Sam Jerome or Korey Siltman can safely drive?

The prospect of Saturday's lineup of 1000 ft Krutch, Skillet, Pillar, and Superchick all playing around the same time at the three stages made many of the Supervisors (and crew) very nervous. To compound the problem, the Krutch was moved to the Main Stage on very short notice to fill in for the absent Zoegirl. The fun-loving kiddies expecting Zoegirl were in for a real treat, especially after seeing the mad rush of hardcore Krutch fans sprinting to the Main Stage following the announcement. The SR crew hit the crowd in full force, hoping to save as many 10-12 yr old girls as possible.

The SR crew gathered backstage and prepared for the pending Relient k show Saturday night, and did what had by now become ritual - lining up against a truck or bus and seeing who would be working to their left and right. They made sure their shoes were tied and even made sure to "go potty" before the show began. What an awesome job they did! (In the crowd, not in the biffy) The weary guys that came back in from the crowd, sporting completely drenched shirts and some nasty stains, said they actually enjoyed the experience! Thanks to all the SR crew! You guys are INSANE!

My admiration goes out to the three couples that got married within months (or weeks) of Sonshine and spent time together working security! Brian and Brianne Friberg, Tiffany and Mitch Swanson, and Amberlie Haak and new hubby (he didn't work security). Sonshine - an awesome place to honeymoon!

I hear Bryan Ludwig decided to teach Jessica Hibma and Marlana Regino the fine art of Tackle Football. Finding that tackling him was near impossible, they decided to return the favor by teaching him the fine art of Watch Repair when they destroyed his watch and spent the next hour finding the pieces by crawling around in the wet grass on hands and knees.

Louis Weaver, Robert Johnson, Adam Miller, Keri Geis, & Mike DeLong herded the crowd like pros from the corner gate to the vehicle gate following the end of Michael W Smith.

Another question: How much more fireworks could Terry Post have confiscated on his overnight hunts if he had not been hampered by a sprained ankle?

A note to those that spent almost every shift banished and suffering in agony at the HM Stage: While I spent VERY LITTLE time at HM, your heroic effort all weekend did not go unnoticed. Charlie reported the crew did outstanding work this year with some very rough crowds. I thank you on his behalf, and know we couldn't do it without you!

I heard little from the Crowd Patrol Crew under Randy Quiggle's leadership, which means they did their job extremely well. The mud made travel interesting, whether on foot or ATV. They endured some very difficult situations and heat out in tent city and patiently helped many frustrated tenters.

I know I need to wrap this thing up, even if it means not mentioning other newsworthy items like the pot bust by the police dog, the bamboo hut, the broken ankle, the snakebite in the tent, or the endless chasing of fireworks every night. Sonshine 2003 was honestly the smoothest run festival in my 17 years of running security. In addition to the great core of Supervisors from previous years, Chuck Hinkley was added to handle Artist Security, Jason Lowe and Tony Larson led SR float teams Alpha and Bravo, and Andrea White admirably assisted Randy Quiggle with Communications. Another big reason for this year's success, as well as my voice and sanity not being lost, was the addition of Sam Jerome as both my Personal Assistant and Artist Driver. She found delegating tasks to other people like Shane Thorson, Korey Siltman, and Doug Nelson came quite easily (even though she will insist she's not a bossy person). Sam, you did great!!!

It was great to see some old faces, Steve McKay and the Hastings - crew from many years ago.

Lastly, **ROOKIE OF THE YEAR - HANDS DOWN - Matt Cooper**, who displayed the amazing ability to knife through the thickest and roughest of crowds and put down any uncool behavior.