

SUNDAY NOW

DAILY NEWS MAY 6, 2007

THE HIGH LINE Festival

David Bowie brings
a wild mix of music
and art to New York

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Laurie
Anderson



Polyphonic
Spree



Arcade
Fire



David
Bowie



Ricky
Gervais

FIELD OPERATIONS AND
GALLERY SCOUTING BY
SEAN BULLOCK FOR
THE CITY OF NEW YORK

SOUND

David Bowie (below l.) is curator of the High Line Festival, named for elevated West Side tracks. Photos by AP, Richard Corkery/Daily News



& VISION

David Bowie and the High Line Festival help elevate New York **BY MICHAEL GILTS**

New York is bursting with arts festivals, including events from BAM and Lincoln Center to the Tribeca Film Festival. But theater producer David Binder and nightlife impresario Josh Wood wanted to create an event that answered one simple question.

"There's too much information in the world — and how do you sort through that?" asks Binder. "But ... if you could spend 10 days with one amazing icon in New York, what would that person take you to see?"

Their answer to that question is the High Line Festival, running May 9-19. The icon they speak of is the Thin White Duke himself, David Bowie, who, in his role as the High Line fest's debut "curator," was asked to select the lineup. As you'd expect, it's an eclectic list: Bowie's choices range from the U.S. standup debut of brilliant Brit comic Ricky Gervais ("The Office," "Extras") to the French electronic-pop duo Air, an exhibition of works by photographer/artist Claude Cahun, a Latin and Spanish film festival, the unclassifiable performance-artist Meow Meow, and more. (Bowie will stay partnered with the

festival in years to come, helping to choose a guest curator among other duties.)

New Yorkers Binder and Wood are clearly taking a page from the UK Meltdown Festival, which celebrates its 14th year in June. It, too, uses a guest curator (this year, musician Jarvis Cocker of Pulp oversaw Meltdown) to choose the lineup.

"Absolutely," says Binder about using Meltdown as a starting-off point. "And David, as you know, curated that. We're inspired by Meltdown, but we want to be more multidisciplinary.

"We're interested in not just David Bowie's favorite music, but also his favor-

ite comics and movies and artists."

Binder and Wood met about seven years ago in the headphone section of a Circuit City, and they've been looking for something to collaborate on ever since. Wood has organized political concert events, and has been a notable nightlife fixture who hosts weekly parties. Binder is a theatrical producer whose credits include the current "Frost/Nixon" and "Legally Blonde," as well as "De La Guarda," the recent "A Raisin in the Sun" and the original "Hedwig and the Angry Inch."

Both men live near the High Line, the 1.45 mile-long West Side elevated train track that runs from Gansevoort St. north to W. 32nd St., parallel to 11th Ave. Out of service since 1980, the structure, first built in 1929, was almost demolished several times but is now being turned into a unique park, set to open next year.

"With any festival, you want to centralize it," says Binder, who mentions that a portion of the proceeds will go to the nonprofit group Friends of the High Line.

"The area that High Line runs through is really exciting because you have the gal-

eries and the nightclubs. You have theaters and the waterfront to do outdoor things. It's really growing and changing and it's great to be a part of it."

The purpose of the festival is to reflect the particular tastes of the artist curating it and to introduce people to new art. Even though Binder is overseeing it, High Line will be doing that for him: He's especially looking forward to Ken Nordine, 87-year-old "word jazz" innovator who will be performing his beatnik-style spoken word pieces at the Kitchen May 16-17.

Next year, they hope to do a lot more events outdoors, which is one reason they chose the mid-May dates for the festival. Besides, for producer-entrepreneurs, an annual event they can depend on would be a nice change of pace.

"We aspire to be part of the New York City calendar every spring," says Binder. "Picking some names he'd love to see involved, he says, 'Imagine what Jay Z festival would look like compared to Pedro Almodóvar's festival, or compared to Björk's festival. We'll get to start anew and have a whole new festival.' ♦

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DAILY NEWS

Sunday, May 6, 2007

LET'S DANCE

Even at 60, David Bowie keeps his good taste intact — and his Rolodex up to date. Or his BlackBerry, to be more current. For proof, scan the list of musicians he chose to perform at the inaugural High Line Festival. Below, we offer the 411 on the event's six headlining musical acts.

► AIR

Performs: Thursday, May 10, at The Theater at Madison Square Garden

Hails from: Paris. **Formed:** 1995

Sounds like: The score of a '60s French film wedded to the '70s sounds of synth acts Tomita and Deodato. Call it "retro-futurism."

Most recent release: "Pocket Symphony," though the best release remains the 1998 debut, "Moon Safari."

Fast fact: The duo has written a real-life movie score, for Sofia Coppola's "The Virgin Suicides."



DEERHOOF

Performs: Tuesday, May 15, at Irving Plaza

Hails from: San Francisco

Formed: 1994

Sounds like: The revenge of a No Wave noise band from New York, with lots of melodic flourishes tossed in just to show they actually hail from the other coast.

Most recent release: 2007's "Friend Opportunity"

Fast fact: Along with its own albums, Deerhoof has branched out by collaborating on a soundtrack for the Justin Theroux film "Dedication," starring Billy Crudup.

DANIEL JOHNSTON

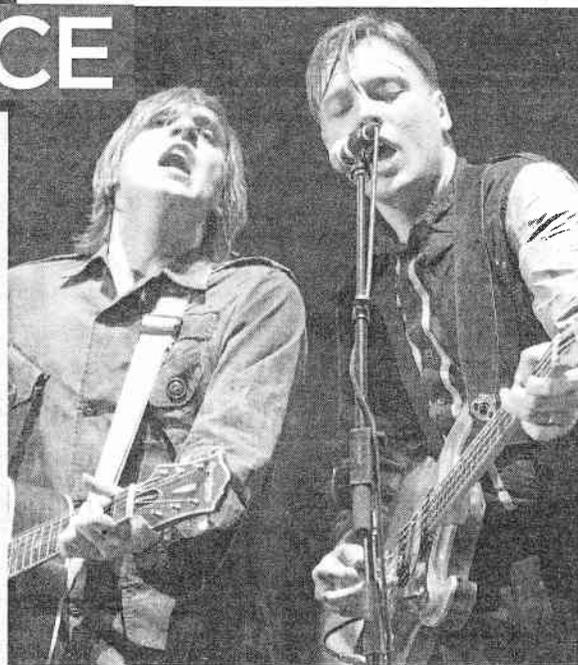
Performs: Wednesday, May 16, at HighLine Ballroom

Hails from: Sacramento

Formed: Johnston started putting out records back in 1980. **Sounds like:** Childlike pop songs, full of eeriness and wonder.

Most recent release: 2006's compilation "Lost and Found."

Fast fact: Johnston is a paranoid schizophrenic, which has made his life both troubled and rare. He's also a well-regarded "outsider" visual artist and the subject of the riveting documentary "The Devil and Daniel Johnston."



▲ THE ARCADE FIRE

Performs: Wednesday, May 9, at Radio City Music Hall

Hails from: Montreal. **Formed:** 2003

Sounds like: Panicky and grand indie rock. The group, led by jumpy lead singer Win Butler, delivers apocalyptic lyrics yelped over orchestrally huge rock chords. Some pieces feature a pipe organ for maximum goth effect.

Most recent release: "Neon Bible," the band's second CD.

Fast fact (or a slow rumor, in this case): Bowie himself may show up to sing a song with the band.

OTHER EVENTS

☼ LAURIE MCLEOD WATERHAVEN UNDERWATER

FILMS May 9-19, sunset to midnight, projected onto a water tower at the corner of 14th St. and Washington St.

☼ PANEL DISCUSSION ON CLAUDE CAHUN

May 11, 6:30 p.m., Aperture Gallery, 547 W. 27th St., 4th floor

☼ DAVID BOWIE'S 10 FAVORITE LATIN

AMERICAN AND SPANISH FILMS May 11-17

Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th St.

☼ KEN NORDINE

May 16 and 17, 8 p.m., The Kitchen, 512 W. 19th St.

☼ DANIEL JOHNSTON, BANG ON A CAN ALL-STARS, LEGENDARY STARDUST COWBOY

May 16, 8 p.m. HighLine Ballroom, 431 W. 16th St.

☼ LAURIE ANDERSON (above), May 17 and 18, 8 p.m., HighLine Ballroom

☼ RICKY GERVAIS (right) May 17 and 18, 8 p.m. Tribeca Performing Arts Center, 199 Chambers St.; May 19, 8 p.m., Theater at Madison Square Garden

☼ CLAUDE CAHUN ART EXHIBITION May 17-20, dusk to midnight, General Theological Seminary of the Episcopal Church, 175 Ninth Ave.

☼ MEOW MEOW, INCITED BY JOHN CAMERON MITCHELL

May 18, 7:30 p.m., Hiro Ballroom, 371 W. 16th St.



▲ THE POLYPHONIC SPREE

Performs: Friday, May 11, at Hammerstein Ballroom

Hails from: Dallas. **Formed:** 1999

Sounds like: "Up With People" singing the "Hair" score.

Most recent release: 2004's "Together We're Heavy"

Fast fact: They look like a gigantic doomsday cult, all decked out in robes. But they're actually as harmless as hippies.

THE SECRET MACHINES

Performs: Saturday, May 19, at HighLine Ballroom

Hails from: Dallas, but they now call New York home. **Formed:** 2000

Sounds like: Pink Floyd for a new generation. Terrifically trippy, while also being as terse as today's scene requires.

Most recent release: 2006's "Ten Silver Drops"

Fast fact: The band likes to play in the round as often as possible. Why? It's trippier that way.

