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MONTEREY WORLD MUSIC FESTIVAL BACKGROUND

ORIGIN

Born with the idea to spread understanding and unity, the **Monterey World Music Festival**, in its 6th season of presenting over a hundred of the highest-caliber World musicians, is a musical celebration of world cultures. David Cloutier, Executive Director for CCMC, Founder and Director of the festival says that the inspiration for the festival came under painful circumstances. Cloutier explains that he first envisioned the Festival in 1991 when rioting had broken out in Los Angeles. Watching the United States Army troops departing on transport planes from Fort Ord [Monterey military base] to restore the peace in Southern California, he wondered, “what can we do in the arts to alleviate the darkness, the shadow parts of the tribal, to celebrate the uniqueness of everyone’s culture.” Cloutier expresses, “It occurred to me that music is something that readily penetrates boundaries, and creates an immediate sense of cultural respect and understanding.” The Cultural Council for Monterey County and Cloutier answered the challenge of cultural violence by bringing forward the Festival message of cultural understanding and unity as ONE people.

1997

After four years of planning, in June 1997, the Festival was realized. “We went deep and looked at all aspects of what we were doing,” states Cloutier. With the support of the community, the Cultural Council for Monterey County staff and board of directors, and a variety of professional, high-quality musicians, the festival strived to create a very important artistic statement as well as strengthen multicultural education and growth in the local economy. The Festival convened a group of people from the community who had expertise in various musical genres, including DJs, swore them to silence and asked them to give us a list of performers for their dream festival. Cloutier remembers, “We had literally hundreds of names.” After much community collaboration and deliberation, the Festival presented a spectacular celebration at the Monterey County Fairgrounds with headliners such as Los Lobos (*Latino*) Conjunto Céspedes (*Afro Cuban*), San Francisco Taiko Dojo (*Japanese*), Klezmatics (*Jewish*), Mari Boine Band (*Saami/Norwegian*), GS Sachdev (*Indian*), Hamza El Din (*Islamic/Arabic*) and Ricardo Lemvo & Macina Loca (*Congolese*).

1998-99

The Cultural Council for Monterey County partnered with the Carmel Performing Arts Festival to present a world musical extravaganza at the Sunset Cultural Center and Forest Theater during September through October. Focused on how to inspire interest in the diversity of culture locally and nationally, the **Monterey World Music Festival** scheduled World Music artists who had a strong cultural root but could also create a dialogue with modern times.

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Cloutier writes, "I'm interested in music that brings people beyond the self, that leads us to break through to other degrees of reality." The Festival introduced innovative blends of traditional and contemporary music with headliners such as Fantcha (*Cape Verdean*), West African Highlife Band (*Afro-pop*), Stellamara (*Balkan/Arabic/Turkish*), Irina Mikhailova (*Middle Eastern/Russian*), Natalie McMaster (*Cape Breton Celtic*), Ali Khan Band (*Sufi/Qawwali*), and Yungchen Lhamo (*Tibetan*).

2000-01

In September 2000 and again in 2001, the Festival was presented in the Center of Monterey proper at the City's Historic Custom House Plaza, to stage a musical and cultural experience that was more accessible to all of Monterey County. The Festival is strongly rooted in promoting diversity on every level by emphasizing how music is a universal language that transcends barriers of all kinds. Some 2000 artists headlining were: Queen Ida and her Zydeco Band (*Cajun*), Hedningarna (*Scandinavian*), Irene Farrera (*Venezuelan*). Due to the September 11 national tragedies, the 2001 Festival was offered to the local and national community as a completely FREE event of personal and creative enlightenment. Cloutier stressed, "This [2001 Festival] weekend is a time for us to come together and celebrate the cultural expressions of humanity. Once again, we have a musical opportunity to dissolve barriers while celebrating our common creative heritage." While many contracted international artists were unable to perform at the Festival because of airline and security complications, other World musicians went to great lengths to attend and present their message of peace. Selected 2001 headlining world artists were: Tarika (*Madagascar*), Kitka (*Women's Ensemble*), Urna Chahar-Tugchi (*Mongolia*), Correo Aereo (*Latin America*), and Khac-Chi (*Vietnam*). The 2001 Festival was described in an Monterey County Herald editorial from John and Joan McCleary, "The **Monterey World Music Festival** was indeed a gathering of community healing...While Tibetan prayer flags flew above performers from many lands, volunteers and guests from all over the world experienced the true message of the festival- unity, healing and respect for our fellow man."

The San Jose Mercury News reports, "Since the Festival began in 1997, it has quickly emerged as a major force on the international music scene, with many groups leveraging a Monterey booking into a West Coast or U.S. Tour. 'This festival characterizes where we are in the world today,' said David Cloutier, Founder and Director of the festival. 'It is a coming together of arts and artistry.'

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