

McDowell Mountain Music Festival moving

by Philip Haldiman - Feb. 26, 2010 04:00 PM
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In an ailing economy, music and the arts are usually the first to take hits. But one Scottsdale resident is trying to keep music alive in the Northeast Valley.

John Largay has long been a champion of in the Valley. He opened the Compound Grill late last year, featuring Southwestern cuisine and live music seven days a week. He also is the creator of the McDowell Mountain .

The festival has been a mainstay at Scottsdale's WestWorld every spring. But this year Largay is downsizing, moving the festival to the the Compound Grill's grounds off 68th Street and Mayo Boulevard, near the Scottsdale/Phoenix limits.

"The decision was strictly economics," Largay said. "WestWorld has been great, but festivals are expensive to underwrite and our mission is raising money for family-based charities. We didn't want to risk our donation so we reduced our cost."

Since its creation six years ago, the festival has raised more than \$500,000. It usually draws about 8,000 fans over two days. This year the festival will be held over three days, with Largay expecting to draw 6,000 and raise \$100,000.

It will benefit Phoenix Day, a child-care facility in south Phoenix, and Ear Candy, a non-profit devoted to providing children access to .

"In this economy we are grateful to keep it

going and I think people will have a great time participating," Largay said. "We have had a pretty good reputation on entertaining. I hope people come because I think they are going to be really fun acts to watch."

This year might not have as much name recognition as past acts, but making the Compound Grill part of the festival will add a new element, he said.

"The infrastructure of the Compound reduces the cost significantly, plus it adds the whole facility to the festival," Largay said. "If people want to come in and use the restaurant or the restrooms it's great. Our acoustical stage will be inside and so will the . Plus we can play an after-hours show from 11 p.m. to 2 a.m. inside, where at WestWorld we had to shut down at 11."

The festival and the Compound Grill are strands in the fabric of Scottsdale that Largay considers very important - culture, community and music. He said the festival serves its purpose, but the Compound Grille takes it to the next step.

"I knew when I started the festival that to

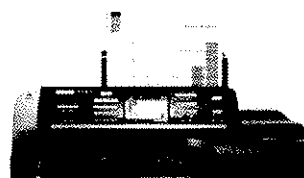
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