



Organizers beg, 'Come one, come all!'

But ticket sales lag

By Josh Nichols

Whether people prefer doing the boot-scootin' boogie, groovin' a la Pink Floyd or swingin' in the style of a Vegas show-girl, there's one place they can all hang and leave satisfied.

The Nebraska State Fair. But, according to fair organizers, the crowds who will be leaving satisfied will be markedly smaller this year.

Last year, 60,000 tickets were sold by the end of the fair.

As of the second week of August, Don Romeo, fair director, said, 39,000 tickets had been sold. He said it was a bad sign, considering the State Fair never has had a large number of tickets purchased the days of the shows.

Event organizers said they had worked hard to make sure any and all listeners can find their groove at the fairgrounds.

"Like years' past, we have tried to make it as diverse as we could this year," said Nebraska State Fair general manager John Skold. "It is a good lineup."

Kicking off the 11-day concert series will be Wayne Newton, a man who was wooing audiences in Las Vegas long before most UNL students were born.

The Beach Boys and the Allman Brothers Band will also play, most likely to an older crowd.

The rest of the lineup includes modern-rock bands the Goo Goo Dolls and Tonic and high-energy country acts Sawyer Brown, Lonestar and Clay Walker.

Romeo said the fair offers a great lineup with affordable prices, which is why he is concerned about ticket

sales.

"Out of the many years I have worked the fair, this is the most diverse lineup ever," he said. "We've tried to mix it up for everyone, but sales don't indicate that."

He said the low ticket sales may be a combination of more concerts in the Lincoln and Omaha area and county fairs that bring in better shows every year.

"It used to be that the State Fair was the premiere event in the state," he said. "Now local county fairs are bringing in more people because of the quality of shows they are offering."

For example, pop phenom Christina Aguilera performed in Kearney this summer.

Low ticket sales may also be a result of concert dates' corresponding with school starting, Romeo said.

Skold said he is excited about the lineup and noted that the venue helped persuade the big acts to come to Lincoln.

"The Bob Devaney Sports Center is a great place for shows," he said. "We have as nice a state fair facility as any one out there. Many musicians who play state fairs are used to an open area with a carnival to their left and cattle barns to their right."

Through Aug. 24, a \$10 SuperPass can be purchased that allows admission to grandstand events and attractions throughout the fair along with admission to concerts.

The deal excludes the Goo Goo Dolls and Allman Brothers Band.

After Aug. 24, individual tickets for fair entry, the concerts and grandstand events sell for \$6 each.

A snapshot: Fair boasts of diverse music lineup

Wayne Newton
When: Aug. 25, 8 p.m.

A natural on stage since the age of 6, Newton has performed for more than 30 million people during his long career.

As much a part of the Las Vegas experience as the blackjack tables, he did his 25,000th Vegas show in 1994.

Just recently, he signed one of the largest contracts in entertainment history.

It calls for performances 40 weeks a year, seven days a week—with the Stardust Resort and Casino on the Las Vegas strip.

Those who see his Devaney show will see the man who prides himself as one of the hardest working people in show business.

He sums up his attitude toward performing for an audience in one sentence: "I know what it means to save your money to go see someone perform."

"I'll work as hard as I have to try and make sure they enjoy it."

Dwight Yoakam
When: Aug. 26, 8 p.m.

The first of many country acts on this year's State Fair bill, Yoakam broke into the country music scene 12 years ago. Since then, the Grammy Award winner has released 11 albums, the latest being "A Long Way Home."

He described the latest album as "late 20th century, fastback muscle-car country music."

When fans see Yoakam on stage, they may recognize him from more than just his videos on Country Music Television. He's acted in two movies, "Sling Blade" and "The Newton Boys," where he acted along side Matthew McConaughey, Ethan Hawke and Skeet Ulrich.

Clay Walker
When: Aug. 27, 8 p.m.

Considered one of the top touring acts in the nation throughout the late '90s, Walker started

playing his edgy country music in small Texas bars as an upcoming musician.

The heartthrob's live performance will include many recognizable hits, including "What's It to You," "Dreaming with My Eyes Wide Open" and "If I Could Make a Living."

Styx
When: Aug. 28, 8 p.m.

The rock group broke into the charts in the 1970s with such hits as "Come Sail Away" and "Lady."

The band maintained its appeal into the 1980s with hits like "Mr. Roboto" and "Don't Let it End."

After solo projects and other endeavors by individual members, the group rejoined in 1999 to record "Brave New World," the band's first studio album in 16 years.

Goo Goo Dolls, Tonic
When: Aug. 29, 8 p.m.

The sole MTV/mainstream radio rock group in the State Fair lineup, the Goo Goo Dolls are still reveling in the success of its 1998 double-platinum album "Dizzy Up the Girl." Hit songs off the track include "Iris," "Black Balloon" and "Slide."

Opening for the trio will be Tonic, whose 1997 album "Lemon Parade" produced two No. 1 rock hits in "If You Could Only See" and "Open Up Your Eyes." Another hit, "You Wanted More," could be heard in the teen flick "American Pie."

Allman Brothers Band
When: Aug. 30, 8 p.m.

In 1999, the Allman Brothers Band celebrated its 30th anniversary, which included a sold-out celebration at the Beacon Theater in New York and a nationwide anniversary tour.

A few of the bluesy rockers' many hits include "Ramblin' Man," "Dreams" and "Revival."

Neal McCoy
When: Aug. 31, 8 p.m.

McCoy has been a mainstay in country music throughout the '90s with eight albums to his credit. He was named entertainer of the year at the 1998 TNN/Music City News Country Awards.

He also won a Music City News award for best video in 1997 for the song, "Then You Can Tell Me Goodbye."

Tracy Lawrence
When: Sept. 1, 8 p.m.

Lawrence, raised in Foreman, Ark., was influenced by country artists George Strait and Merle Haggard, as well as rock artists Lynyrd Skynyrd and ZZ Top. He's won numerous awards, platinum albums and No. 1 singles throughout the '90s.

Please see **SNAPSHOT** on B7

MELANIE FALK/DN