



Musicians from Burkina Faso's Farafina



The Heinekabana at night



Putting the complex mix of feelings and escapades that makes Heineken partners Rainforest World Music Festival (RWMF) an experience as much as an event can be a difficult task. The festival, which took place over a long and heady weekend from July 9th to 11th at the Sarawak Cultural Village in Santubong, Sarawak, has always been best summed up by the people who come back for more, year after year.

"I came over from Australia to volunteer as an interpreter," explained Melbourne resident Linda Drew. "I love the Rainforest Festival. I'm a promoter and some of my bands have played here a couple of times and we wanted to do something this year. We weren't able to sort it out but I didn't want to miss the festival. It's amazing: it's so well-organized yet most of the people who work on the event are volunteers and the list to join is massive."

Since its beginnings 13 years ago Heineken partners Rainforest World Music Festival has developed an audience that is as eclectic and international as its musical line up. But at its heart the festival's flavour is truly Malaysian and a sense of ease and friendliness floats through the air of Borneo's leading musical and cultural event.

For many of the festivalgoers it's a place for meeting old friends and making new ones. As you wander across the festival site in the late afternoon and early evening, before the main stage kicks the energy levels up a gear, you'll find groups of people relaxing in the shade of the bars and around the communal dining tables, the line-up constantly shifting and new introductions constantly being made.

Heineken's own photographers and bloggers spent the weekend capturing the action and sending it back to the fans at home. If you want to check yourself in action log onto www.heineken.com.my, and check out festival updates at the Heineken Malaysia Facebook page at www.facebook.com/HeinekenMalaysia.

"My wife and I have been coming for the last five years," explained KL regular Bharat. "We love the music and the whole experience. We've met people from many different countries and it's so easy to just sit down and talk to someone."

And of course, there were plenty of special touches for Heineken Music members. For the onsite comfort of members and invited guests, the Heinekebana was created this year, a unique longhouse experience with a laidback Sarawakian vibe where they could come to freshen up with a cold beer and snacks, shelter from the sun and the very occasional rain and charge up those smartphones depleted from facebooking and tweeting throughout the weekend.

For those who needed a cold drink, Heineken Brand Ambassadors were on-hand to help them find their way to pit-stops like the lush Bamboo Bar, surrounded by greenery, where they could sit and chill and watch the main stage action on the big screens at the main food garden. And not forgetting

that Heineken partners Rainforest World Music Festival is about more than music, food and beer, there was also a range of exclusive limited edition merchandise – including T-shirts, sarongs and rattan beer buckets - from Heineken utilizing traditional Sarawakian designs, and highlighting how the state's traditional cultural is adapting and evolving today.

For the people who eventually tired of chilling and hanging out there was always that fusion menu of music and workshops that Heineken partners Rainforest World Music Festival is so famous for. "We haven't done anything like this before, it's an incredible experience for a British ceilidh band," enthused Monster Ceilidh Band's Amy. "Just to be around so many amazing bands. It's an incredible experience for us – it's just something we had to do."

But the strength of the Festival is always in the music. Friday night always sees a low-key start to Heineken partners Rainforest World Music Festival with the best action saved for the Saturday night headliners. But regulars know it's often the best night of the weekend. The Cultural Village is less crowded and the atmosphere is electric, as the hardcore Rainforest followers get ready for a full-tilt weekend.

And it wouldn't be a rainforest without rain, so it was no surprise that the festival opened with a cloudburst. But the Heinekebana kept Heineken ID holders warm and dry and well supplied with chilled Heineken. And as soon as it dried up the vibes immediately returned to the site.

The night is crowned by what turns out the performance of this Heineken presents RWMF weekend by Colombia's Watussi whose spirited Afro-rock harks back to the seventies hey-day of artists like Fela Kuti and even Latin-rock legend Santana. They have the audience bouncing with a call and response set that runs through rock, funk, cumbia, reggae and a handful of other choppy percussive music styles, provoking some of the craziest dancing – in the mud – that the festival has ever seen. And it's not just fans of the band – Wen, from Chinese act Yerboli happily announces that he lost his shoes to the viscous mud while dancing to Watussi.

With an especially strong workshop line up at this year's festival, Saturday gets underway with a healthy crowd on the ground, lured by early attractions like the 2pm Electro Groove session, a rare opportunity to see the noisier electric and electronic instruments on show at this rootsy weekend. But the big star is the late afternoon Striking Performers featuring some of the top drummers and percussionists from Heineken partners Rainforest World Music Festival's line up.

After a long and languorous sunset at the Heineken bars around the lake, the crowds begin to build for RWMF's big Saturday night. Minuit Guibolles are an unexpected twilit highlight: like many French outfits they've ripped up the world music rulebook to combine such unlikely instruments as steel drums and accordions and deliver a set worthy of a much later time slot.

Which sets the pace perfectly for tonight's headliners Farafina, the West

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