

Talk of the town

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Showdown at the hoedown as bluegrass meets metal

This weekend's Hardly Strictly Blue-grass festival features 70 artists across five stages and three days, but an uninvited heavy metal performer is about to strike a loud and discordant note from above.

For the first time ever, the bluegrass hoedown and the annual visit of the **U.S. Navy's** famed Blue Angels aviation troupe are scheduled to collide.

Hardly Strictly Bluegrass will play to an expected 300,000 in Golden Gate Park on the afternoons of Oct. 6, 7 and 8 -- precisely when the Blue Angels strut their ear-splitting aerobatic stuff around the Bay and above the city as part of Fleet Week. So banjos and fiddles will be going up against a squadron of Navy top guns in F/A-18 Hornets. In terms of decibels, it isn't shaping up as much of a contest.

"One event promotes war machines, while the other promotes peace," said a glum Warren Hellman, Hardly Strictly's founder and funder, who learned of the un-fortunate confluence a couple weeks ago.

The prospect of Hardly Strictly mainstays like Earl Scruggs, Gillian Welch and Ricky Skaggs being drowned out by the deafening roar of military jets has Hellman bummed enough that he's talking of moving the event next year.

"I'm very high on most of what's happening at the festival," said Hellman, who has arranged his estate to keep the music playing after he's gone. "The festival is a central part of my life."

At least the scheduling conflict is likely to help meet one of Hellman's goals: Trimming the crowd at Hardly Strictly, now a victim of its runaway success.

It isn't, however, likely to satisfy the goals of thousands of others who look forward to both Bluegrass and the Blue Angels -- each an awesome spectacle in its own special way -- as among the high points of the Bay Area autumn. This year, you have to choose between them.

Seeing as Fleet Week is chaired by another San Francisco financial bigwig -- Edward M. Leonard of **Seven Hills Group** -- an appeal from a humble columnist: Can you guys check dates with each other before next year?

Together again

What goes around comes around.

Nearly 30 years ago, a working-class kid in Washington, D.C., went looking for an entry-level job on Capitol Hill. A Bay Area congressman gave him a break.

Fast forward to today: The kid, Don Peebles, is now 46 and a tough self-made builder whose **Peebles Development Corp.** put up luxury condos in Miami, Las Vegas and his hometown

before shifting its focus to West Coast projects in Pacifica and San Francisco. The now-former congressman, Ron Dellums, is about to become mayor of Oakland. And the relationship looks set to be rekindled.

For Peebles isn't buying into fears that Dellums will scare developers and institutional money out of the resurgent East Bay city.

Peebles said he expects Dellums' approach to affordable housing to be "reasonable," and he, for one, will do his part to add to his old boss' tax base.

"I owe it to Ron to invest in Oakland," said Peebles. "I believe in helping people who help me. The least I can do is have the courage to invest in the city he is going to lead."

-- *Compiled by Jim Gardner. Contributors: Mark Calvey, J.K. Dineen.*