

NEIL YOUNG TURNS UP THE VOLUME ON THE BIG ISSUES

Singer brings 'Global Village' with him on his summer tour

Neil Young is no stranger to speaking out when he sees something is wrong.

Throughout his career the Canadian rocker – who is amongst only a few who have been inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of fame twice¹ – has used his music and fame to shine a light on political and environmental issues that are close to his heart.

He's protested the tar sands projects in Canada, stood up for the rights of indigenous peoples in Canada, and initiated a boycott of Starbucks until they stop supporting Monsanto's bid to block GMO labelling.

His song 'Ohio' – written during his time with Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young – is a blunt and devastating condemnation of the massacre by police of four students at Ohio State University in 1970, and is widely regarded as one of the greatest rock protest songs of all time.²

To promote his latest album *The Monsanto Years* Young is about to embark on an EU-wide tour which kicks off with dates around the UK/Republic of Ireland. The album has a strong anti-corporate theme running through it and features songs exploring global hunger, pesticides, GMOs, seeds and ecology. Young will also be promoting another new album *Earth* – a series of live recordings from his concerts in the US.

To underscore the campaigning themes in the album Neil will be bringing a "Global Village" on tour with him, giving a diverse group of NGOs an opportunity to reach out to the public with their message and materials.

He has also recently launched a website, GoEarth.org³, based around the Global Village activities, and intended as a resource site for helping people 'go green'.

The Global Village, which has already toured the US with Young, and proved extremely popular, comprises a series of themed tents focussing on GMOs, Earth Ecology, Energy & Climate, Global Justice, Future of Farming, and News You Can Trust.

Neil is providing this platform for a diverse group of respected national and local organisations in each country so they can reach out to a much larger audience and hopefully inspire others to get more involved with these important issues.

Of all the issues explored on the album, the theme of sustainable farming and GMOs is the one that surfaces the most often. Arguably, as a co-founder (with singers Willie Nelson, John Mellencamp and Dave Matthews) of the US charity Farm Aid,⁴ which supports small and family farmers, it is the one closest to his heart.

UK group Beyond GM⁵ has been chosen to organise the GMO and Future of Farming tents in the Global Villages throughout the UK and also on the EU leg of the tour.

The group, which also participated in the East Coast Leg of the US tour, is responsible for a huge digital billboard at Waterloo station,⁶ and high profile actions such as The Letter from America,⁷ GM Free Me⁸ and the new kids video project Our Food Our Future.⁹ These activities combine good information and creative public campaigning to ensure that the scientific uncertainty, and the serious concerns the majority of us have about GMOs in the food supply, are kept in front of our regulators, politicians, scientists and the media.

Beyond GM director Pat Thomas, whose career has straddled both music journalism and activism, has this to say:

"Music by itself doesn't change anything. But delivered, as it so often is, by charismatic, committed and creative artists, it has a unique ability to turn up the volume on social and political issues to the point where they are impossible to ignore. Activist musicians like Neil Young are plugged in to the current desire, and urgent need, for cultural change. They can bypass a corporate media, that is fearful of challenging the status quo, and put important issues like agricultural GMOs in front of the public and encourage them to turn the message into action. We are immensely grateful to Neil for the opportunity to be included on this unique public platform and the journey it is making across the UK and the rest of Europe."

Of the UK GMO situation Thomas adds: "The majority of people want to be GM free and believe the UK is somehow 'safe'. Few realise that the meat and dairy they are eating is GM-fed or that the UK government is stealthily - and undemocratically - pushing ahead with plans to plant GMOs on our soil by 2017. New field trials have just been given the go ahead for GM camelina and GM potatoes and we are on track to start living the GMO nightmare that people in the Americas are so desperately trying to escape. Big public forums like *The Monsanto Years* tour and its Global Village are an important opportunity to open people's eyes to what's really going on."

-- ENDS

MORE INFORMATION

The Letter from America (www.theletterfromamerica.org), is an open letter from citizens of the US to citizens of the UK and the rest of Europe warning of the risks of GMOs. It was signed by groups and individuals – and celebrities- representing more than 60 million Americans and has been translated into 8 languages.

More media resources: <http://beyond-gm.org/neil-young-eu-tour-media-resources>

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NOTES FOR EDITORS

1 Neil Young was inducted into the Rock & roll Hall of fame in 1995 for his work as a solo performer and in 1997 for his work in the group Buffalo Springfield. See:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Rock_and_Roll_Hall_of_Fame_inductees

2 See *Guardian* article: <http://www.theguardian.com/music/2010/may/06/ohio-neil-young-kent-state-shootings>

3 See <http://goearth.org/>

4 See: <https://www.farmaid.org>

5 See www.beyond-gm.org. Beyond GM which also participated in East Coast leg of the US tour with colleagues GMO Free USA, see <http://beyond-gm.org/beyond-gm-hits-the-road-with-neil-young>

6 See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fHZTjHL2gzg>

7 See www.theletterfromamerica.org.

8 See www.gmfreeme.org. GM free me is a visual petition which has the support of many high profile individuals including Jane Goodall, Vivienne Westwood Jo Wood, Daddy G (Massive Attack), Bez (Happy Mondays), Alys Fowler Mary McCartney, Don Letts, dancer Anwar Russel, 2014 Mr Universe Barney Du Plessis, celebrity chefs Jasmine & Melissa Hemsley, Valentine Warner and Arthur Potts Dawson and MPs Caroline Lucas and Zac Goldsmith and MEP Molly Scott Cato.

9 See: <http://beyond-gm.org/our-food-our-future> and <http://beyond-gm.org/listening-to-the-voices-of-the-future> and <http://beyond-gm.org/new-video-project-gives-kids-a-voice-in-the-gmo-debate>