

A Check List: ACL



Photo by: Halley Claire Bass

As you may know by now, although I love music, the Austin City Limits festival is not my favorite way to enjoy live music. Crowds and outdoor festivals aren't for everyone. Yet, at least 26,000 music-lovers travel from near and far every year to band together with friends to hear some of their favorite bands at the world-reknowned ACL. And this year's ACL, held last weekend (October 2-4, 2009), was no different, despite the downpour.

****Note:** This is not another blog post recapping the bands and tunes that were heard last weekend in the Zilker mud pit. As with any TheRebeccammendations post, it addresses the topic of entertaining--in this case, ACL...an entertaining music event, with recommendations for how to be prepared and live it up to the fullest. And there is no one better qualified to recap the weekend and be your guide for future ACLs, than the lovely, the talented, the smiley, and the first guest blogger on TheRebeccammendations...Halley Claire Bass.

While I can't exactly make a ?Rebeccammendation?, I'd like to share what I learned from my first Austin City Limits (ACL) Festival experience this past weekend and make recommendations to help you be prepared if you attend in the future so you can:

- enjoy the company of good friends
- consume some delicious live music
- eat, drink, and be merry , and
- avoid the many pitfalls that may occur at this three day outdoor extravaganza.

ACL is about one thing first, the great live music! The festival brings approximately 65,000 people to Zilker Park for a full weekend of listening to many well-known bands. That's A LOT of people in one place for this city! The lineup includes a good mix of both mainstream music and new up-and-coming artists, and if you play your cards well, you can catch some of both. Some of the bands I got to see this past weekend (in order) included: John Legend, Dem Crooked Vultures, Kings of Leon, Citizen Cope, Bon Iver (this band was just perfect in the rain), Mos Def, Sound Tribe Sector 9, Dave Matthews Band, Passion Pit, The Dead Weather, and last but definitely not least ? Michael Franti & Spearhead. I missed the last headliner, Pearl Jam, but that's because the crowd getting home is crazy if you don't beat it. This is one of the pitfalls you can avoid ? and I'm about to tell you how.

The number one problem at this year's ACL ? MUD! Because it rained this weekend, the festival was just pure mudness! It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, but a little mud ain't going to stop these hard core music-lovers from jamming out to Dave Grohl's beats or Eddie Vedder's die-hard vocal chords. People were covered in mud, I was wearing my Chacos, which I thought would be a good solution, but to no avail ? my feet were covered in stinking, sloshy, brown, wet? MUD. I just kept pretending it was chocolate. Want to know how to avoid the mud? Get yourself a pair of galoshes or rainboots. Not your style? No worries ? ladies, you can just sport them with a cute dress and earrings. Girls and guys were rockin' these things ? and I was quite jealous of their foresight to own a pair of them and wear them in these filthy conditions. You never know when a pair of galoshes will come in handy, but one thing is for sure ? your investment will be well worth it since you might need them for another rainy ACL!

Here's a list of what you might want to have in your ACL toolbox:

For rain:



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Galoshes, rain boots ? these will protect your feet from the messy mudness

A tarp ? Mud or no mud, you can sit on one of these if your feet get tired. Better than a blanket, because if it does get wet out there, your pants, backpacks, and belongings won't get wet when you sit down.

A couple small plastic Zip-loc bags: One for your phone, and one for your ACL map/schedule. If it rains ? both of these can't-do-without items will get soaked.

A poncho/umbrella ?Usually, nobody wants to expect rain, so we leave our raingear at home. But if you have a small umbrella and a foldable poncho, just put it in your pack to be safe.

For sunshine:

Remember, most likely you'll be spending 6 or more hours in the sun on a typical ACL day?for a few days.

- Hat
- Sunglasses
- Water
- Sunscreen
- Camelback ? It keeps your water cool all day, keeps you hydrated, and you can carry your necessities in it.
- Fan ? Paper fans were handed out on the walk to the entrance. Just grab one ?you won't be sorry.
- Small Spray bottle ? If you're in a crowd by the stage and you whip out one of these in the hot sun and press the lever? you will make lots of friends. It's fun and simple. I picked up this tool from my many years of festivaling.

Rain or shine:

Ride a bike! I was envious of my friends who beat the crowd coming to, and leaving, the festival on their bikes. Especially when thousands of people are leaving the festival after a long, tiring day, you can swiftly escape the crowd with one of these! Austin is a bike-friendly city ? and there are many places to lock it up in front of Zilker Park.

Take the shuttle -- If you don't have a bike, the shuttle lines moved quickly, both to and from the festival. You can catch it at 4th and Guadalupe, and take a bus or your car home from downtown to avoid traffic.

A flag and long pole- Meeting up with friends in the vast crowd is one of the most difficult things at ACL. We barely get cell phone reception with all the people around. Bring a unique flag and a long pole to carry it on so your friends can find you. Chances are, you'll get split up from your friends if you wander off to hear a familiar tune. If you're one for holding down forts, you can also be the flag bearer. Festivals are more fun when you can find your friends.



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4. Collapsible chair ? If you don't like standing, the festival has designated chair areas by each stage. You can sit and stand as you please to see the show ? and when your approaching the tenth hour of standing, a chair is simply a luxury. You can even plant it somewhere if you know friends will be there for a while.

I hope you have found my Austin City Limits Festival recommendations useful! Find a full recap of my experience on my personal blog [here](#).