

## The Efficiency of Live Earth

Live Earth, a worldwide concert held on July 7, 2007, initiated a three year campaign to battle the issues of climate change and global warming. The concert hosted over 150 musical acts in eleven locations around the world, with all the concerts broadcasted through the television, radio, and internet. The concert was run by Save Our Selves, Al Gore, the Alliance for Climate Protection, Earthlab, MSN, and Control Room. Based on the success of Live 8, these organizations expected Live Earth to be successful in educating the world about the issues of global warming. However, other organizations question the effectiveness of the concert after four months.

### **Background:**

It is remarkable how fast the organizers took to announce, advertise, and implement the concert. Gore only announced the concert at a media event in Los Angeles on February 15, 2007. Inspiration came from events such as the 1985 Live Aid concerts and the 2005 Live 8 concerts, but this show was to be the longest yet. Also, the event was supposed to follow the momentum of environmental issues, especially global warming.<sup>1</sup>

On June 28, Gore revealed that Live Earth was to launch *Live Earth Call to Action*. People who partook in the concert's events or believed in the concert's cause were asked to support the following 7-point pledge.<sup>2</sup>

1. To demand that my country join an international treaty within the next 2 years that cuts global warming pollution by 90% in developed countries and by more than half worldwide in time for the next generation to inherit a healthy earth
2. To take personal action to help solve the climate crisis by reducing my own carbon dioxide pollution as much as I can and offsetting the rest to become 'carbon neutral'
3. To fight for a moratorium on the construction of any new generating facility that burns coal without the capacity to safely trap and store carbon dioxide
4. To work for a dramatic increase in the energy efficiency of my home, workplace, school, place of worship, and means of transportation
5. To fight for laws and policies that expands the use of renewable energy sources and reduces dependence on oil and coal
6. To plant new trees and to join with others in preserving and protecting forests

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<sup>1</sup> SOS. "Who We Are." Live Earth. [http://www.liveearth.org/who\\_we\\_are.php](http://www.liveearth.org/who_we_are.php). November 14, 2007.

<sup>2</sup> Al Gore, Kevin Wall issue far-reaching Live Earth Call To Action, *Live Earth*, published 2007-06-28. <http://liveearth.org/?p=101>

7. To buy from businesses and support leaders who share my commitment to solving the climate crisis and building a sustainable, just, and prosperous world for 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The pledge was to educate people on the key 7 issues that individuals can partake on an individual level. Signing a pledge forces people to read the issues before signing it. Also, people should try to make a stronger effort when they sign their name compared to if they are just instructed.

Following the announcement of the 7-point pledge, Gore announced the concert was to serve as the “beginning of a three-year campaign worldwide to deliver information about how we solve the climate crisis” and that “the prospects for every future generation depend on us understanding, hearing and acting up this information.”<sup>3</sup> The intention of Live Earth was clearly to educate and bring awareness to listeners and viewers. Also, to have the concert hosted all over the world meant its intention was to be global. The locations of the concerts were: Randburg, Africa; East Rutherford, United States; Washington D.C., United States; Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; Chiba, Japan; Kyoto, Japan; Shanghai, China; Sydney, Australia; London, United Kingdom; Hamburg, Germany; Rome, Italy; British Antarctic Territory, British Antarctic Territory.<sup>4</sup> Concerts



The intentions of Live Earth were to educate on a global level, with no racial, economic, or cultural limitations.  
[http://a.abcnews.com/images/International/live\\_earth\\_3\\_070705\\_ms.jpg](http://a.abcnews.com/images/International/live_earth_3_070705_ms.jpg)

were held at all seven continents, which should make the presentation of Live Earth’s message more efficient because each concert could incorporate local culture and values. Nonetheless, results were mixed based on the number of viewers, the analysis of how the concert was run, and the amount of people who are now aware, but did not change their lifestyle.

The concerts were broadcasted in over 130 countries via the television, radio, and internet. In the United States, approximately 19 million viewers watched the concerts, while 41% of households in Canada, 37% of all households in Brazil, and 20% in Germany.<sup>5</sup> The event attracted the largest record on-line audience for a single event. Over 8 million people watched over 15 million video streams, while a total of 55 million video streams were watched within the following two weeks. The United Kingdom experienced the biggest disappointment. The concert drew about 900,000 viewers and the night time viewers were around 3.1 million.

<sup>3</sup> SOS. “Going Green: A Live Earth Production Blog.” <http://www.liveearth.org/category-10.php>. November 13, 2007.

<sup>4</sup> SOS “About the Event.” <http://www.liveearth.org/event.php> November 14, 2007.

<sup>5</sup> BBC. “Diana Ratings Dwarf Live Earth.” BBC News. July 9, 2007.

Three times as many viewers watched the Concert for Diana six days earlier and the 9.6 million viewers that watched Live 8 concert two years earlier.<sup>6</sup>

### **Issues of Criticism:**

Live Earth is criticized for five reasons, which affect how well the concert educated participants; they are the political motives and campaigning, environmental impact, Bob Geldorf and Live 8, BBC coverage of the London venue, and financial lack of transparency. The first criticism, political motives and campaigning, may arise from political bias or other such factors. However, some republicans have criticized Al Gore reasons for organizing the event. Some believe Gore was trying to promote himself for the 2008 U.S Presidential election or other prestigious offices. Although Gore has said that he “had fallen out of love with politics”<sup>7</sup>, he remains a strong political voice to many people. Nonetheless, many individuals fail to listen when they feel a politician is not performing an act for the sake of the act, but for personal increase. Also, there is a stubborn tendency among some Americans to not pay attention to a message if it is not from a candidate of their political party.

The second issue, the environmental impact, has attracted to the most controversy and taken away the most validation for the concert. Many blogs across the internet question how such a worldwide concert can educate people about the issues of global warming and increase of carbon when the concert itself produces tons of carbon, especially all activities are added up, such as each artist flying his own jet to the concert venue, the amount of electricity required for each concert, and the amount of electricity used by the online viewers during and after the concert. Some performers traveled with a green conscious, but most did not. The UK band Razorlight ferried to an airport in a large tour bus with police escort to catch a private jet to Scotland after the concert. From the airport in Scotland, they traveled by helicopter to Balado to perform at another concert.<sup>8</sup> Also, American songwriter John Mayer did not sign Gore’s seven-point Live Earth pledge. He stated, “If you want to peg me as not being entirely eco-friendly, you’ll win...We’re just getting together saying ‘We want to be healthier’.”<sup>9</sup> When the bands fail

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<sup>6</sup> BBC, July 9, 2007

<sup>7</sup> CNN. “Gore: I’ve ‘fallen out of love with politics’.”

<http://www.cnn.com/2007/POLITICS/07/05/gore.office/index.html#cnnSTCText>  
November 18, 2007.

<sup>8</sup> Smith, David. “Rockin’ All Over the World (but just watch your carbon footprint).” The Observer. July 8, 2007. [http://observer.guardian.co.uk/uk\\_news/story/0,,2121489,00.htm](http://observer.guardian.co.uk/uk_news/story/0,,2121489,00.htm)

<sup>9</sup> Live at Yahoo! TV. “Earth Gets Rocked.” [http://tv.yahoo.com/john-mayer/contributor/695505/news/urn:newsml:tv.eonline.com:20070708:c64c8d738000\\_48e7\\_991c\\_03d4fb312ad9\\_\\_ER:84729](http://tv.yahoo.com/john-mayer/contributor/695505/news/urn:newsml:tv.eonline.com:20070708:c64c8d738000_48e7_991c_03d4fb312ad9__ER:84729)

to take part in the ultimate cause, it decreases the effectiveness of the campaign and fails to address the seriousness of the issues. The leadership of many of the bands during Live Earth failed to educate viewers.

Furthermore, there is a disagreement between outside sources and Live Earth's Carbon Footprint Assessment. For example, John Buckley of CarbonFootPrint.com states that the event's total carbon footprint, including the artists' and spectators' travel and energy consumption, was approximately 74,500 tons.<sup>10</sup> If this number is fact, about 100,000 planted trees are required to offset total carbon emission produced. However, Live Earth's Assessment states that each concert only emitted 300 tons, and if the audiences and artists traveling accounted for an additional 900 – 4,500 tons.<sup>11</sup> Therefore, Live Earth would argue that a maximum of 42,000 tons were produced, which differs by almost 50%. Even though Live Earth



A political cartoon that questions the true carbon footprint that Live Earth leaves behind.

[http://www.sos.com/Env/blog/LiveEarthFootprint\\_2007\\_0700.jpg](http://www.sos.com/Env/blog/LiveEarthFootprint_2007_0700.jpg)

considers all activities that offset emissions, such as recycling and reusing material, mass transit, and the use of carbon credits, which may make its data more accurate, it took Live Earth almost four months to provide the follow-up data. Furthermore, many of the high numbers were published within a week to two weeks after the event, when people were still interested. An individual has to read a 28 page document to follow its reasoning and understand its complicated calculations. Also, Live Earth has still failed to publicly announce where the proceeds have gone. Therefore, the public will most likely not follow Live Earth's data, but will read the data in shortened articles

Bryan Walsh in a Time's article wrote, "Live earth's success will be measured not by the number of trees the initiative plants or the number of energy-efficient light-bulbs sold as a result, but by whether it motivate concertgoers to make climate-change their generation's political priority, and press their leader to act on it."<sup>12</sup> Yet, there has not be a strong follow threw, promoting the affect of the concert or event the three year campaign it launched. Also, television networks such as CNN and Fox News are beginning to question why global warming has not be one of the major issues of the presidential election. If a candidate made a commitment to address

<sup>10</sup>Smith

<sup>11</sup> Live Earth and SOS. "Live Earth Carbon Assessment & Footprint Report." 2007.

[http://www.liveearth.org/docs/Live\\_Earth\\_Carbon\\_Report.pdf](http://www.liveearth.org/docs/Live_Earth_Carbon_Report.pdf).

<sup>12</sup> Walsh, Bryan. "What Live Earth Really Meant." Time. July, 08, 2007.

<http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1641046,00.html>

the issue, it is something that he is at least considering to address in the future. Furthermore, his research staff would discover if it is an important issue to the scope of voters they are campaigning to. However, it seems that voters and politicians are not prioritizing the issue, even after the public attention of Live Earth. In order to further increase the effectiveness of education, Live Earth must continue to push its summer agenda. However, organizers like Gore drifted into their own specific direction, not educating viewers through the works of Live Earth. Education needs reinforcement.

Finally, the event was plagued with negative publication. For example, in an interview, Bob Geldof, the organizer of Live Aid and Live 8, he stated that concerts are a waste of time because “Everybody’s known about [global warming] for years.”<sup>13</sup> He continued to say the only way to validate the concert was if a president or Congress announced concrete environmental measures. Also, concerts are good to raise money, not awareness. Interviews like these take away the acceptance political savvy individuals may have. Furthermore, Live Earth based itself on Live 8. It weakens the message Live Earth is trying to spread when the organizer of Live 8 will not support it.

Live Earth received additional complaints, especially on part of BBC. BBC received 413 complaints because coverage of Metallica’s live set was cut short and another 143 for swearing.<sup>14</sup> Although these complaints are not associated with green, they are risks that events like Live Earth must take in order to try to educate people. If these risks are intense enough, they could cloud the front page rather than a story of the success of the event with a summarization of the issues of which the event wanted to educate.

### **Positive Notes:**

Although Live Earth is criticized for not gaining as large of an audience compared to other concerts like Live Aid, it reached people in different way. Live Earth was carried across 100 television channels, 20 of the world’s leading networks, radio in 130 countries, film festivals, and the internet. It broke the record for attracting the most people to watch an event on the internet with over 15 million video streams.<sup>15</sup> MSN had its most successful day ever in its history. Throughout the world, 132 countries were touched by Live Earth, with events ranging

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<sup>13</sup> “Geldof Criticizes Gore’s Live Earth.” The Huffington Post. May 12, 2007.  
<http://www.huffingtonpost.com/huff-wires/20070512/people-geldof-gore/>  
 November 15, 2007.

<sup>14</sup> BBC

<sup>15</sup> Live Earth and SOS, pg. 2

from gatherings in private homes to public screenings in town centers. Millions of people made a personal commitments and signed the “Live Earth Pledge”, which should prevent millions of tons of carbon to be produced if the people follow through and change.

What people fail to see are the small changes Live Earth did compared to other concerts that change the environment. In its Carbon Assessment and Footprint Report, the writers describe these changes as “an accumulation of individual impact-reducing actions by thousands of Live Earth employees and contractors, artists and their staff members, concessionaires and vendors, and fans.”<sup>16</sup> Although they state these are some of the changes of which they tried to educate, these were the issues not pushed enough. Many of these issues were left to be addressed amateur videos made by people who competed among each to have their video aired during the airing of the concert. The producers of these videos conducted much of their own research and portrayed what they believed could be some of the efficient changes to the average citizen, such as the use of Energy Star light bulbs, traveling smarter, or recycling.

Live Earth also serves to raise the bar for future global events, like the Super Bowl, the Olympics, and the World Cup. Although Live Earth occurred only in one day, it took place on all seven continents. It faced many of the traveling and construction issues that other large events do. For example, Live Earth proudly stated that hosting most of the event during the day, when naturally sunlight can be used, will decrease carbon emission dramatically. Future sport events and large concerts can follow some of the changes Live Earth made to reduce the amount of carbon emissions.

It is too soon to make the distinction of whether Live Earth really made an impact on environmental education. Even though there is a lot of negative attention, the statement still lives on that “All press is good press”. Live Earth caused many people to speak about the issues of global warming, whether they agree with Live Earth’s platform or not. The true measure will be if people change their lifestyles. For now, Live Earth must continue with its campaign and try to push for the simple changes that individuals can perform.

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<sup>16</sup> Live Earth and SOS, pg. 8