



Young voters register at a HeadCount table.

ACTIVISM BY THOM DUFFY

Artists Unite

HeadCount's Goal Is 200,000 New Voters For '08

Supported by dozens of acts, including Dave Matthews Band, Santana and Maroon 5, the nonpartisan group HeadCount plans to register up to 200,000 new voters via street teams deployed at more than 500 concerts in the coming year.

The organization announced its plans Nov. 6, Election Day, building on its success in signing up 50,000 new voters at concerts in 2004.

HeadCount is believed to be the only national organization planning voter registration at concerts on a large scale in the coming election year. A full list of the artists supporting HeadCount is available at HeadCount.org, where volunteers also can sign up to join registration efforts.

HeadCount volunteers are currently registering voters during stops on the fall tour by former Grateful Dead bassist Phil Lesh.

The group recruits volunteers locally and also sends its volunteers on the road with artists. The latter strategy resulted in some 12,000 new voter registrations during Dave Matthews Band's 2004 tour.

HeadCount plans to register voters via state-of-the-art software on its Web site and to stage a "get out the vote" drive to encourage registered voters to go to the polls next Election Day.

The nonprofit group has close ties to the music industry. Its board of directors include former Grateful Dead guitarist Bob Weir, Jonathan Levine of Monterey Peninsula Artists and Richard Goodstone of Superfly Presents, which, along with A.C. Entertainment, co-produces the Bonnaroo Festival. HeadCount has partnered with Bonnaroo, Lollapalooza and Farm Aid to stage voter registration drives at those events.

"We firmly believe that every person should take part in democracy if we are to accomplish real change," Goodstone tells *Billboard*, explaining his company's support for the organization. "HeadCount is doing incredible work registering voters throughout the country at a grass roots level and getting people to really think. We hope to see the benefits in the '08 election."

Additional reporting by Ray Waddell.