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Live Earth is promoting green to save the planet - what planet are they on?

As Madonna bounds on to the huge Wembley stage to save the planet, how the assembled Greenies will cheer.

The superstar is today fronting the massive Live Earth event, with nine concerts played over 24 hours across seven continents before an audience of two billion.

The much-hyped bid to save the world is being masterminded by former U.S. vice president Al Gore - who helped focus attention on the environmental movement with his Oscar-winning film, *An Inconvenient Truth* - and features artists including The Police, Red Hot Chili Peppers, UB40 and Metallica.

No doubt to rapturous applause, Madonna will call for mass global change to reduce carbon emissions and to tackle 'climate crisis'.

Watching the veteran star lap up the adoration, her entourage could, however, be forgiven for exchanging slightly jaded glances - having witnessed her jet in for the concert from New York.

For her 2006 World Tour, she flew by private jet, transporting a team of up to 100 technicians and dancers around the globe. Waiting in the garage at home, she has a Mercedes Maybach, two Range Rovers, an Audi A8 and a Mini Cooper S.

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Indeed, Madonna's carbon footprint is dwarfed only by her ego - she has vowed that she will 'speak to the planet' at Wembley. In fact, an apology might be in order - for the superstar's energy consumption is only the tip of the iceberg in this epic vanity-fest.

The Live Earth event is, in the words of one commentator: "a massive, hypocritical fraud".

For while the organisers' commitment to save the planet is genuine, the very process of putting on such a vast event, with more than 150 performers jetting around the world to appear in concerts from Tokyo to Hamburg, is surely an exercise in hypocrisy on a grand scale.

Matt Bellamy, front man of the rock band Muse, has dubbed it 'private jets for climate change'.

A Daily Mail investigation has revealed that far from saving the planet, the extravaganza will generate a huge fuel bill, acres of garbage, thousands of tonnes of carbon emissions, and a mileage total equal to the movement of an army.

The most conservative assessment of the flights being taken by its superstars is that they are flying an extraordinary 222,623.63 miles between them to get to the various concerts - nearly nine times the circumference of the world. The true environmental cost, as they transport their technicians, dancers and support staff, is likely to be far higher.

The total carbon footprint of the event, taking into account the artists' and spectators' travel to the concert, and the energy consumption on the day, is likely to be at least 31,500 tonnes of carbon emissions, according to John Buckley of Carbonfootprint.com, who specialises in such calculations.

Throw in the television audience and it comes to a staggering 74,500 tonnes. In comparison, the average Briton produces ten tonnes in a year.

The concert will also generate some 1,025 tonnes of waste at the concert stadiums - much of which will go directly into landfill sites.

Moreover, the pop stars headlining the concerts are the absolute antithesis of the message they promote - with Madonna leading the pack of the worst individual rock star polluters in the world.

Sepermodel Kate Moss, another profligate polluter through her use of private jets, is producing a T-shirt for the event. Yet, Gore is touting the concerts as 'carbon neutral'. So how can that be?

Let us start with some facts. Worldwide, an audience of around 1,268,500 is expected to attend the concerts - making it one of the largest global events in history.

Dr Andrea Collins, an expert in sustainability from Cardiff University, has researched the impact of such mass gatherings on the environment.

"An event of this size at Wembley - which holds 65,000 at a rock concert, will generate around 59 tonnes of waste," she says. "That is largely composed of the rubbish from food and drink consumption."

She found that a Wembley-sized football match generated an 'ecological footprint' of 3,000 global hectares - an area the size of 4,166 football pitches. This is the amount of bioproductive land required to absorb the CO2 emissions produced by such an event.

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Dr Collins estimates that the global audience for Live Earth will generate some 1,025 tonnes of waste. An extraordinary one million people are expected at the free concert at Rio de Janeiro's Copacabana beach, featuring Lenny Kravitz, Macy Gray and Pharrell Williams.

Other venues including the Coca-Cola Dome in Johannesburg - where Joss Stone is performing - will cater for audiences of tens of thousands.

Live Earth say that they will recycle much of the waste generated. Fine talk, but in fact some of the concert venues are struggling to keep up with their commitments.

A spokesman for Wembley says they only have the capacity to recycle around a third of waste produced - the rest will go into landfill sites.

Travel forms the vast majority of the 'carbon footprint' talked of by ecological campaigners - contributing up to 90 per cent of the environmental 'cost'.

Collins says: "It is patently absurd to claim that travel of this nature doesn't have an impact. Each person attending the event will have to make a return journey to the venue, be it by air, rail, bus or car. This burns fossil fuel - precisely what we are trying to reduce.

"There is also the environmental cost of these artists flying around the world - that is absolutely huge."

Indeed, an audit of the lifestyles of the A-list performers appearing at Live Earth, reveals that they are among the worst individual polluters in the world, as their world tours and private jets billow thousands of tons of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere every year. One hour in a Gulfstream jet burns as much fuel as driving a family car for a year.

The Daily Mail has found that five of the top performing acts together have an annual output of almost 2,000 carbon tonnes. Madonna alone has an annual carbon footprint of 1,018 tonnes, according to John Buckley.

Remember, the average Briton produces just ten tonnes.

The veteran pop singer's Confessions tour last year produced 440 tonnes of carbon pollution in just four months, simply in flights between venues. This does not include the trucks required to transport equipment, the power needed to stage each show, or the transport for fans travelling to each concert.

Rock group Genesis re-formed last year and are in the middle of their European tour. The three-man band will fit their Live Earth performance into a tour of at least 47 locations across the world. Their carbon footprint last year totalled 195 tonnes.

James Blunt, another Wembley performer, completed his world tour of the U.S. last year, racking up a carbon footprint of 195 tonnes.

American band Red Hot Chili Peppers have, like Madonna, flown in to Wembley from the U.S.. They have produced 220 tonnes of carbon dioxide with their private jet alone over the last six months.

Meanwhile, the Daily Mail has learnt that Bon Jovi left the UK this week to travel back by private jet to the U.S. to perform at the New York stadium for the American leg of Live Earth.

Music impresario Andrew Lloyd Webber's ex-wife Sarah Brightman is being flown out to sing at the Shanghai concert in China. This is a distance of 5,679.95 miles, producing one tonne of carbon dioxide pollution.

Two other acts have already been criticised for being paid to promote fuel-guzzling cars. John Legend is featured in a Lexus advert, while Sheryl Crow's hit Everyday Is A Winding Road is used to sell Subaru 4WDs.

Razorlight frontman Johnny Borrell has been criticised for urging people to drive electric eco-scooters - but buying a 1,000cc Moto Guzzi bike - described as 'a monster-revving beast'.

Such is the level of disquiet felt about Live Earth in New Zealand, that a pressure group called the Climaction Coalition, is urging people to protest against it on July 7. Radiohead, who are pioneers in eco-friendly performing, have refused to appear. Of course, Live Earth is doing its utmost to ensure the event is 'green' in appearance at least - stars will be ferried between the stage and dressing room by energy-efficient Smart Cars and biodiesel fuelled Mercedes.

A proposal for Gore to appear at concerts in Britain and America on the same day - something that Phil Collins, the Genesis drummer and singer, was able to do at the original Live Aid in 1985, courtesy of Concorde - has been dropped because of the anger that the 'gas-guzzling' flight would provoke.

Andrea Robinson, Live Earth's green manager, says her message to celebrities is: "Leave the Learjet at home - fly commercial."

Wembley Stadium will be lit using low energy fluorescent lightbulbs, while the backdrop is composed of recycled tyres and oil drums. The organisers tried to introduce re-usable cups for interval refreshments, but found that - like many green strategies - this was not practical on such a huge scale.

Some bio-produced plastic, made from corn, will be used, and artists' changing rooms will be fitted with energy-saving lightbulbs - all rather a drop in the ocean compared to the pollution generated by fans traveling across the UK to the concert or using the stadium's 2,618 toilets. Plans to ask the British public to turn off their electrical appliances during the Live Earth broadcast were scuppered when the National Grid pointed out that as everyone switched on again, a giant power surge could cripple the country.

Some stadiums are greener than others. The Aussie Stadium in Sydney will run the event on 100 per cent green energy supply. Each Australian Live Earth ticket comes with a free public transport voucher, while all the bathrooms will be waterless with waste being composted into fertiliser.

Conversely, in New York's Giants Stadium, trade unions have blocked Live Earth's attempts to recycle, and the 52,000-seater arena is not situated near public transport. The smallest - and least polluting - concert will be held at the British Antarctic Survey's base in Rothera.

Bizarrely, the concerts are also being 'independently audited' by consultants PricewaterhouseCoopers over the next seven weeks, to assess the level of pollution they will have generated.

It is unclear what benefit this exercise will have, although the Live Earth organisers talk in terms of providing a 'legacy' for future events, showing how recycling and low-impact travel can be encouraged, and carbon-offsetting used. But the fact remains - massive rock concerts are hardly eco-friendly.

So just how does Gore claim that Live Earth will be carbon neutral? He does so by convenient use of 'carbon offsetting' - a trendy new method of absolving yourself of guilt.

Carbon offsetting involves 'neutralising' the emissions you are responsible for by buying 'credits'.

A spokesperson for Live Earth says: "This might involve buying environmentally sound lightbulbs for a Third World school, planting trees, or installing solar panels in a developing country."

A huge industry has sprung up to provide corporations with carbon credits.

However, critics say that the practice is simply a way for consumerist industries and nations to export their responsibility to developing countries. Others say it simply does not work.

Carbon-offsetting is, it turns out, how celebrities square green issues with their extravagant lifestyles and use of private jets.

Jon Bon Jovi has said: "We wrote a cheque, we took care of our footprint and raised awareness, blah blah blah."

When Gore - who himself spent eight years flying on Air Force Two - was asked if he had persuaded Madonna to stop using private jets, he said: 'Well, I appreciate and respect her as an artist and as a person, and there are many artists who are offsetting their role in contributing to the CO2 build-up, and I understand that.' A rather longwinded way of saying 'no'.

Madonna has, however, been given an instruction handbook on climate crisis by Live Earth.

John Rego, the environmental director of Live Earth, says he expects to purchase at least 3,000 tonnes of carbon credits to off-set the event. It is believed the organisers will spend in excess of £1million on carbon offsetting to counter criticism.

Rego explains: "All the events are carbon neutral. We have chosen a reforestation and reagricultural project in Mozambique. It is a credible certifiable carbon-diffused project. We are in the process of purchasing a carbon offset."

Dr Collins says: "Taking a flight and planting a tree does not add up. It does not make it all right. It is having your cake and eating it."

Dr John Barrett, from the Stockholm Environment Institute at the University of York, says: "There is a huge irony in flying halfway across the globe in a private jet, eating up fossil fuel.

"The idea that you can offset the pollution you cause is just ridiculous. What these people at Live Earth have done is defined their boundaries to suit themselves, but there is no sense in which this concert is carbon neutral.

"Planting trees or investing in renewable energy does not reverse the damage of releasing huge quantities of carbon dioxide into the environment.

"It is far better not to pollute in the first place. Carbon offsetting can be a removal of guilt, but it is not an effective one."

Live Earth is encouraging 'citizens of the world' to take small steps: share a car, plant a shrub, turn off a light or hang out washing rather than use a dryer.

But Dr Barrett says: "It would be far better for these celebrities to stay at home. Holding large concerts to highlight environmental concerns and cut carbon emissions just seems ridiculous. What planet do these people live on?"

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