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Science rocks

In Denmark last month, scientists tried to fix a pipeline with an amplifier. Across Western Europe, the past decade has seen a decline in the number of young people going into scientific fields, and the Danes are no exception. Many are suspicious of technology, associating high-energy physics with nuclear power, chemistry with pollution, and biology with genetically modified foods.

So when the city of Roskilde approached Jens-Peter Lynov, director of the department of optics and fluid dynamics at Risø National Laboratory, to bring some of his lab's work to Europe's largest music festival, he accepted. Under the auspices of 'Musicon Valley', a riff on the region's Medicon Valley moniker, Risø applied some of its technologies to the festival. These included fibre-composite materials for stage construction, plasma treatment of materials to make them water-repellent, and biodegradable tents.

Between sets, Risø also drew a steady stream of festival-goers to a booth that highlighted these technologies, provided some basic science education, and exhibited the lab's work. "We can maybe attract some bright young people to work at our lab," says Lynov. After Roskilde, Risø will take its show on the road to other large music festivals in Scandinavia.

But it seems short-sighted to limit this alliance of rock and science to Scandinavia. The model could easily be applied to other music festivals. Lollapalooza could emphasize alternative careers, Ozzfest could garner sponsorship from alcohol and drug institutes, and Glastonbury could spotlight research on materials — especially ones involving hemp and mud. And when parents chastise their tattooed and pierced offspring en route to a festival, telling them to get a job, the kids can respond that they are on their way.

Paul Smaglik
Naturejobs editor



Contents

POSTDOCS AND STUDENTS

Getting your skills
up to speed

p234

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Career centre
Information on the
scientific job market

FOCUS

SPOTLIGHT

RECRUITMENT

ANNOUNCEMENTS

EVENTS