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# How 20-year-old FuncheapSF stays relevant



Megan Rose Dickey



Johnny "Funcheap" Hayes at the Stern Grove Festival this year. Photo: Courtesy of Johnny "Funcheap" Hayes

FuncheapSF, an events guide for the city, has been a staple in San Francisco for the past 20 years and has continued to thrive amid the rise of social media and the pandemic-related lockdown.

- The listings are a mix of new, unique events in the city plus some annual staples like Hardly Strictly Bluegrass.

**Why it matters:** Whether someone has just moved to San Francisco or has lived here for decades, there's an endless amount of things to do and discover.

**Flashback:** FuncheapSF launched in 2003 in the aftermath of the dot-com crash.

- Hayes had recently moved to San Francisco, where he struggled to find work and found himself "with nothing to do, no money [and] lonely," he said.
- After perusing event flyers on street poles and scouring listings in the San Francisco Bay Guardian and SF Weekly, he would post a list online of some cool events he found, asking if anyone wanted to join him.
- Hayes' posts gained traction and "then people started sending me suggestions of things to add to the list," he said. "That's kind of the genesis of how it started."

**The intrigue:** FuncheapSF has never been inherently profit-driven, which helps the site stay focused on what readers want, Hayes said.

- During the pandemic, FuncheapSF shifted to being more of a community resource, where people could find information about food banks, parks in the city with great views and more.
- "It reminded me how important being a great resource is to people when they need it, whether it's in bad times or good times," he said.

**Between the lines:** Over the years the city has done a better job of bringing events to a variety of neighborhoods, in part due to the [negative press cycle](#) around San Francisco, Hayes said.

- "San Francisco's got so many awesome little pockets to discover and you just need that little impetus to get out of your little comfort zone," Hayes said.

**What to watch:** FuncheapSF has about 150,000 newsletter subscribers and around 400,000 unique visitors on its site per month.

- Hayes envisions growing his audience and expanding the site to highlight more events in the Bay Area, outside of San Francisco, potentially with the help of city-specific Funcheap ambassadors.
- "Anybody who just sits back and says, 'Let me stay on the treadmill and not change it up,' is doomed to irrelevancy at some point," he said.



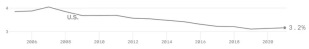
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