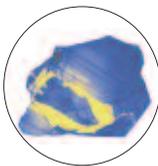


The Rock Concert: A CELEBRATION OF DEEP TIME



Bringing the attention of the general public to our scientific discoveries is challenging, as anyone doing outreach can attest. Here is Joe Skulan's success story. Between 500 and 1000 persons visited a one-day display of the oldest known object from Earth on April 9 at the University of Wisconsin at Madison. They stood in line to peer into a petrographic microscope, toured the new WiscSIMS Ion Microprobe Lab, and discussed exhibits about geochronology and the age of the Earth. A public talk by Simon Wilde (Curtin University) preceded the displays. The main attraction was a microscopic crystal of zircon. In 1999, this zircon was dated at 4.4 billion years by Wilde and along with others from the Jack Hills metaconglomerate (Australia) was analyzed for oxygen isotope ratio and trace elements by John Valley and



Looking at the 4.4 Ga zircon. PHOTO BY NEAL LORD

Aaron Cavosie (UW-Madison); William Peck (Colgate University); and Colin Graham and John Craven (University of Edinburgh). These results, first published in 2001, startled researchers around the world. High values of $\delta^{18}\text{O}$ in



PHOTO BY MATT KUCHTA

pre-4 Ga zircons suggest that early Earth, instead of being a turbulent ocean of magma, was cool enough to have oceans and possibly continents (see: www.geology.wisc.edu/zircon). To create a buzz about an otherwise arcane subject, Skulan planned a daylong celebration, capped with "The Rock Concert" when The Jazz Passengers played music composed by Roy Nathanson to answer the question, "What does 4.4 billion years old sound like?" We all seek new metaphors for geologic time. More than 400 persons attended the concert. Over 200 newspapers worldwide ran the Associated

Press story. "Apart from that, we were on BBC live twice, on ABC and CNN Broadcast News, on NPR's Morning Edition, and were mentioned on the Tonight Show. Composer Roy Nathanson did a live interview on Good Morning Tokyo, and we did a half dozen other radio interviews on local stations and for Wisconsin Public Radio," concluded Skulan, a vertebrate paleontologist/isotope geochemist at the UW-Madison. A recording of the concert will be available (see: www.therockconcert.org).



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