

## Music festivals and youth

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Music festivals have a long and varied history, yet in the popular imagination, outdoor pop and rock events in particular have become strongly associated with the youth counterculture of the late 1960s. The imagery and ideals that emerged from this counterculture found public expression and mediation in large-scale events such as the Monterey International Pop Music Festival of 1967 and the Woodstock Music and Art Fair of 1969, events that provided templates and stereotypes of behaviour and organization that have continued to be important for event organizers, festivalgoers, regulators and the media (Anderton 2008; Clarke 1982; McKay 2000; Laing 2004). These range from psychedelic fashions and the rhetoric of peace and love to iconic performances, youthful audiences, mud baths and community feeling, and to a sense of personal and cultural freedom that includes hedonistic behaviours such as the relatively open use of recreational drugs. Such stereotypes are intimately linked to a nostalgic and romanticized version of the 1960s rock scene as a whole, leading Bennett (2004: 51) to refer to the film of the 1969 Woodstock Festival as reliving and preserving the 1960s dream and reinforcing the idea that the era was a 'golden age' of youth culture (see also Gebhardt 2015; Street 2004).

The contemporary market for pop and rock festivals retains a sense of youth and youthful rebellion that is influenced by these earlier events and their filmed representations,<sup>1</sup> yet the demographic constitution of that market is now much broader, with many events catering to older festivalgoers and families. In addition, the festival sector as a whole has transformed and is now a mainstream part of popular culture and of the tourism strategies of host locations, cities and regions (Anderton 2019; Getz 2010; Rojek 2013), though more eclectic, spiritual and oppositional events continue to be staged (St John 2009). In the first section of the chapter, I provide an historical overview of contemporary music festivals in the UK that contextualizes the analysis that follows by paying attention to both the countercultural and commercial aspects of that history. The remaining sections are framed around four stereotypes – drugs, sex, squalor and disorder – that were identified by the political

historian Michael Clarke (1982) in his formative study of the British rock and pop festival scene of the 1970s. He described these stereotypes as central to media- and state-related moral panics during that decade, and I also regard them as influential to the development of the media and academic discourse I term the ‘countercultural carnivalesque’ (Anderton 2007, 2008, 2019). My own research into the twenty-first century music festival market of the UK is used in these sections to demonstrate how past stereotypes of the music festival experience have changed and adapted as the music festival sector has expanded, diversified, commercialized and professionalized since the mid-1990s.

## A brief history of music festivals in the UK

There are several accounts of the history of music festivals in a British context which provide detailed information about the development of the sector (e.g. McKay 2000, 2004; Stone 2008; Worthington 2004). These accounts typically trace the origins of music festival culture to the 1950s and early 1960s when the first multi-day outdoor events were held in the UK, such as the Beaulieu Jazz Festival (1956–61) and the National Jazz Federation Festival (held since 1961). The latter was staged in several locations throughout the 1960s, where it expanded its genre base to include folk, pop and blues groups, and played host to such well-known names as the Rolling Stones, the Yardbirds, the Who and the Pink Floyd, alongside predominantly American jazz performers. In 1967 British promoters staged events such as the 14 Hour Technicolor Dream at London’s Alexandra Palace and the Festival of the Flower Children at Woburn Abbey – events that consciously adopted the psychedelic and countercultural imagery and fashions associated with what was termed the ‘Summer of Love’ (Anderton 2019: 30). Over the following few years, larger-scale events were seen in the UK, including the Isle of Wight Festival (1968–70), the Bath Festival (1969–70) and a number of events in London’s Hyde Park and Hampstead Heath.<sup>2</sup> The majority of these events were commercially run, which led to criticism from the more radical elements of the counterculture who felt that music festivals should be provided for free. This is highlighted in the film of the 1970 Isle of Wight Festival, where protesters broke down fences and encouraged festivalgoers to watch for free from a hill overlooking the arena rather than pay for a ticket. Partially as a result of this, the event was declared free on its final day (Farren 2010; Hinton 1995). This has echoes of both the 1969 Woodstock Festival (where sheer force of numbers led to the event being declared free) and the Canadian Festival Express tour of 1970, which saw the M4M Movement of Toronto’s Rochdale College demand ‘free food, dope, and music for the people there, with no cops’ (cited by Kramer 2007: 150).

The countercultural history of pop and rock festivals provided by the authors noted above then largely focuses on the emergence of the 'free festivals' movement in the UK, spearheaded in part by the Glastonbury Fayre of 1971 and in part by the People's Free Festivals, which were held, without permission from the authorities, in Windsor Great Park from 1972 to 1974. The Glastonbury Fayre was free to attend, with the event recorded and filmed for later release as a triple-album and cinema feature. The booklet accompanying the album described it variously as a medieval-style fair, a 'gathering of the acid gypsies' and 'an ancient revel to the midsummer sun' (*Glastonbury Fayre* [album] 1972: 11). It also connected the site of the festival with a wide variety of myths and legends, including King Arthur, Avalon and St Joseph of Arimathea, as well as raising concerns about environmental pollution and offering support for alternative belief systems such as ley lines, dowsing and astrology (see also Sandford and Reid 1974). The film presented similar views but was criticized by a reviewer in the British weekly music newspaper *Melody Maker* as 'a cheapo action replay of all your favourite scenes from Woodstock [the film] ... naked hippies communing with Mother Nature by wallowing in the mud? ... The free food tent? The dope smokers? All the clichés are rolled out once again' (Partridge 1973: 53). It also depicted attendees of the event as seeking spiritual or religious meaning, whether through the established Christian church, sun worship or the Hare Krishnas (*Glastonbury Fayre* [film] 1972). This portrayal of audiences as on a spiritual search is also to be found in the People's Free Festivals, with some of the organizers of the 1972 event giving credit to the Church of Aphrodite Pandemos (the Ancient Greek goddess of sensual pleasures). A strong police presence at all three festivals held in Windsor Great Park led to scuffles with attendees and accusations of police brutality and arbitrary arrests (McKay 1996; Worthington 2004). A fourth People's Free Festival was staged at Watchfield in 1975 with support from the government, but by this time many more free festivals were beginning to be staged around the UK, with the Stonehenge Free Festival (1974–84) eventually becoming the largest and longest-running (Worthington 2004).

The free festivals were associated with a post-hippie counterculture of young people pursuing a variety of alternative lifestyles. During the mid-1970s, they began converting trucks, buses and other vehicles into mobile homes and became known as 'acid gypsies' or 'new age travellers'. They were often responsible for finding the rural sites that became associated with the free festivals and would travel from one to the next over the summer months, creating or supporting a circuit of events that were also attractive to those whom Clarke (1982) referred to as 'weekend hippies' – predominantly young people temporarily escaping education or work life to attend the events. At the same time a number of more organized events, known as Albion Fairs, began to be staged in East Anglia and further afield, which Andrew Blake has described as performing an 'alternative capitalism, one which takes ecological values as seriously as it does innovation, customer satisfaction and profit' (1997: 191).

Organized by volunteer committees and often donating any revenues to charity, these events offered a range of games, theatre, music, dance and crafts in a programme that would not look out of place at many contemporary boutique festivals (Robinson 2015) and were also frequented by the new age travellers. In the early 1980s, the number of travellers had grown considerably as mass unemployment and inner-city housing crises encouraged disaffected and politicized urban youth to join the nomadic lifestyle (Collin with Godfrey 1997; McKay 1996).

The travellers became aligned with various political causes in the 1980s, including the miners' strikes, anti-Falkland War demonstrations and anti-nuclear protests at the Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp. A 'Peace Convoy', as the press dubbed it, of hundreds of converted buses and vans that travelled from event to event across the summer months, sparked outrage amongst the media and government. Police action to prevent the 1985 Stonehenge Free Festival, an event which had attracted over twenty thousand people the year before, became known as the 'Battle of the Beanfield'. Travellers were arrested and their transportation/homes destroyed during the police operation, which became a catalyst for the introduction of amendments to the 1986 Public Order Act (Worthington 2005). The Act included measures that clearly targeted the travellers and free festivals, making it difficult for large-scale events to continue and leading many travellers to abandon their nomadic lifestyle. The remains of the free festival circuit gained a boost in the late 1980s when a new youth subculture of acid house moved out of the cities and into the countryside, thus fostering a new moral panic in media and government regarding unregulated (though often commercially run) outdoor raves and their association with drug use and health and safety fears. The more radical elements of the acid house movement, including the sound systems Spiral Tribe and Bedlam, soon joined forces with the remaining travellers, drawing on their knowledge and experience to create what became known as 'free parties' (Collin with Godfrey 1997; Reynolds 2013). Police operations were launched to control both commercial and non-commercial events, which eventually led to anti-free festival/party provisions being introduced to the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 – changes that were strongly opposed by street protests in London during 1993 and 1994 (Anderton 2019: 17–18). Since the mid-1990s, the festival and rave sectors have become increasingly commercial in the UK, though small-scale unlicensed raves, known as teknivals, still occur each year, and larger events can be found in other countries, alongside a growing commercial sector (2019: 71–2; St John 2017).

The history outlined above is replicated across numerous publications and demonstrates narratives of freedom and people power, and of recuperation – of festivals being co-opted by commercial concerns or becoming over-regulated and controlled, thus losing the spontaneity and freedoms of 'true' festival culture. For instance, George McKay (2000: ix) writes unfavourably about the 'dull, homogenized mass events' of the contemporary sector in comparison to the countercultural,

alternative and radical 'tribal gatherings' of the past. For McKay and others writing in the early 2000s, festivals are characterized by 'a young or youthful audience, open-air performance, popular music, the development of a lifestyle, camping, local opposition, police distrust, and even the odd rural riot' (ix). These narratives and characterizations serve to conflate the meanings and beliefs of the hippie counterculture with Mikhail Bakhtin's (1984) concept of the carnivalesque, which he developed from his analysis of literary representations of the medieval carnival. For Bakhtin, the carnival period acted as a short-term release from contemporary restrictions and hierarchies, in which social norms were inverted and representatives of authority (the church and aristocracy) were mocked. It was a playful time of role-playing, masking and excessive consumption that could be found in many other celebrations and events of the time and was 'invested with exclusively positive values' (Flanigan 1990: 56). This has been translated into the festival culture of the late twentieth century as an experience which temporarily overturns everyday life and morality, offering the possibility of transcendence and an idealized, utopian vision of a different world. As Harvey Cox (1969: 82) noted of the hippie festivals of the late 1960s, these events allowed people to imagine and enact 'new forms of social existence'. Yet this interpretation of festivals as a subversive form of carnival is only one way to view them. There is no necessity to view festivals in this way; in fact, there is a long history of classical, folk and pop music festivals in the UK which does not fit comfortably within this discourse (Anderton 2019). Furthermore, the past twenty years have seen the emergence of family-friendly music festivals, such as Camp Bestival and Nozstock, and events aimed even more directly at youngsters, such as the Gloworm Family Festival, which targets families with children aged under thirteen. There is even a 'Festival Goer' badge for Girl Guides aged fourteen to twenty-five, which can be earned by planning cheap healthy meals to eat at an event, and undertaking such activities as making flower headbands, decorating wellington boots and designing a fancy-dress outfit (Girlguiding 2018).

Nevertheless, the imagery and behaviours which became associated with the countercultural carnivalesque in the past have continued to be important to the marketing and mediation of events aimed at adults. They represent youthful exuberance, fun and freedom and are, to varying extents across different forms of event, part of what makes the outdoor music festival experience so appealing to festivalgoers (Anderton 2008, 2015; Flinn and Frew 2013). Festivals are sold on the expectation of such experiences, and festivalgoers are complicit in this by performatively enacting and reinforcing these behaviours while on-site or discussing festivals online (Morey et al. 2014). I refer to this as an event's meta-sociality: the particular set of behavioural and symbolic associations which guide how festivalgoers think about and experience an event, and which typically become stronger through both repeat attendance and ongoing mediation (Anderton 2019). Glastonbury Festival is a good example of this since it continues to promote itself online using

its countercultural heritage (a Glastonbury 'ethos'), while also downplaying the commercial sponsorships that it, like other major festivals, relies on. The overall image and behavioural expectations of an event may be generally agreed upon by most festivalgoers attending, but this still allows individuals and groups of attendees to develop their own relationship with a site and the event within it. This is similar to George McKay's (2000: ix) notion of a festival acting as a gathering of the tribes and to Graham St John's (2001) characterization of festivals as 'alternative cultural heterotopia' but is not reliant on an alternative or countercultural understanding of the social groups present on site. Instead, festivals are often focal points for families and groups of friends who may use them as annual meeting places, or as celebrations of significant life events such as finishing exams or leaving college. This is reflected in the contemporary variety of outdoor music festivals that are available in the UK, with around five hundred events a year catering to different demographic, psychographic and genre tastes, and expectations regarding them changing significantly as the market has become more commercial, more professional, more regulated and more mainstream (Anderton 2019). The following sections of the chapter now examine the twenty-first-century music festival market through the four stereotypes identified by Clarke (1982) in order to demonstrate how festival culture and its relationship with youth culture has changed in the UK since the 1970s.

## Drugs

In the late 1960s, the hippie counterculture was associated with the use of marijuana and LSD, with festival films vividly documenting their open use by both festival attendees and artists (*Gimme Shelter* 1970; *Woodstock* 1970; *Glastonbury Fayre* [film] 1972). At Woodstock, the crowd was warned from the stage about the 'poorly manufactured' acid (LSD) that was circulating on-site, while at the Isle of Wight Festival in 1970, compere Ricky Farr announced that the police were offering an amnesty from arrest for young people who voluntarily handed in their drugs, though no festivalgoers actually did so (*Message to Love* 1996). Drug use can be regarded as an explicit rebellion against authority, or as a way for attendees to commune with each other and celebrate/participate with their subculture. It can also be characterized as enabling festivalgoers to achieve transcendent or spiritual states, or simply as part of a hedonistic, free and carnivalesque experience.<sup>3</sup> In any case, as Clarke (1982: 27–8) notes, the open-air festivals of the late 1960s to the early 1980s were places 'where it was possible openly to consume, and even to deal in drugs, without fear of police harassment despite their presence'. Nevertheless, festivalgoers were sometimes arrested and charged, and in the UK it was not uncommon to find the legal advice charity Release attending the free festivals, alongside the Samaritans (offering mental health guidance) and the St John Ambulance (providing medical care). Rallies to

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legalize cannabis were also held at festivals, including the 1973 People's Free Festival in Windsor Great Park, while the relaunched Glastonbury Festival of 1979 reportedly hosted a 'Legalize Cannabis' tent (Brazier 1979: 9).

The late 1980s and early 1990s was a period when acid house raves and free parties predominated, with the new subculture of ravers using the drug MDMA (Ecstasy), which was initially regarded as a safe alternative to cocaine. It was described as the 'hug drug', because it was said to promote feelings of empathy and a breaking down of personal inhibitions, while at the same time allowing users to dance for extended periods of time (Russell 1993). In the press it became a youth phenomenon similar to LSD in the 1960s, and the acid house parties and outdoor raves of 1988 and 1989 were discussed as a second 'Summer of Love' (Melechi 1993). This was due to apparent similarities with the 1967 hippie 'Summer of Love' in the United States, including the development of a youth-oriented drug subculture, the use of psychedelic imagery by rave promoters and the emerging ethos of peace, love, unity and respect (PLUR – a term that gained popular usage in the early 1990s). Yet, as Matthew Collin argues, this was merely a 'reconstruction of received myths about the Sixties' and 'an attempt to put the Ecstasy experience in some kind of context' (Collin with Godfrey 1997: 197). The outdoor rave culture was characterized as tribal and hedonistic, but also as politically charged, as the result of young people expressing dissatisfaction with capitalist society (McKay 1996; Russell 1993). This politicization expanded as the free party sound systems of the early 1990s began to displace commercially motivated (though also unlicensed) promoters, and the police and government took action (as noted earlier) to suppress them both.

The enhanced provisions of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994 led to growth in the numbers of commercial promoters staging licensed events and to a general corporatization and mainstreaming of the market over the following decades. This has led to market domination of large-scale events by international promoters such as Live Nation Entertainment, though there are still many hundreds of smaller, independent events promoted by commercial and not-for-profit organizations (Anderton 2019: 33–5). The market is no longer as dominated by subcultures as it was in the past, yet drug use persists at contemporary events. For instance, in 2012 the *Guardian* newspaper collected drug seizure data from UK police forces, finding that the majority were made at large-scale mainstream pop music festivals such as Glastonbury, V Festival, Isle of Wight Festival and Bestival, all of which offer a mixed genre programme (Quinn and Burn-Murdoch 2012). The most commonly found drugs were cannabis, cocaine and ecstasy, though ketamine and BZP were also identified. A range of other drugs, such as nitrous oxide and so-called legal highs, were not specifically noted in the data set, but this area saw considerable expansion in the 2000s, with many large-scale events allowing the sale of these products in their market areas in the early- to mid-2000s (Anderton 2008: 45). The UK government has since taken action against the sale of these drugs through the

Psychoactive Substances Act 2016, which targets those who produce or supply them. It follows high-profile campaigns against the use of such drugs by the Association of Independent Festivals (AIF), as well as media reporting of drug-related deaths at festivals each summer (Anderton 2019: 66). The lack of any particular subcultural bias within these festivals, and the open marketing and sale of 'herbal highs' at such events in the 2000s, reflects the shifting position of 'recreational' drug use within society in general: it is now regarded as endemic to youth culture in general, rather than to any specific subcultural group (Parker, Aldridge and Measham 1998).

The policing of illegal drug use is difficult for festival organizers, who must be seen to be taking action and meeting their licensing commitments and corporate social responsibilities, but are aware that festivals are historically associated with the relatively open use of drugs, and that drugs are part of the expected event experience for many. In addition, the practicality and costs involved in attempting to find and arrest all drug-users at a festival would not only be prohibitive but also adversely affect the overall event experience for festivalgoers in general (Robinson 2015: 81). Instead, organizers and police employ a variety of strategies aimed directly at drug-dealers, making use of on-site CCTV operators, pre-event letter campaigns and automatic number plate recognition to target known offenders (Anderton 2008: 46). Police operations on-site include random vehicle searches, undercover officers, the promotion of the anonymous Crimestoppers service and close cooperation with festival security staff. In addition, festival organizers publish legal information about drug use, drug law and relevant support charities on their official websites. The police presence on-site is, as Roxy Robinson (2015: 81) points out, often as much symbolic as it is practical, with their visibility acting as a reminder to festivalgoers 'not to consume drugs too openly'. More recently, debates have emerged regarding the provision of on-site drug-testing facilities such as those arranged by The Loop, which allow festivalgoers to confidentially check the strength and content of their drugs. Fiona Measham (2016), co-founder of The Loop, says there are various benefits to the service, from educating festivalgoers about what they are taking, to using the data collected to give social media warnings to other festivalgoers about specific tablets, to offering timely information to the emergency services. Others fear that the service will continue to normalize the use of drugs among young people at festivals and send the wrong message about enforcement and criminality (Evans 2017).

## Sex and nudity

A strong stereotype derived from the youth counterculture of the late 1960s is that of 'free love', of permissive sexual attitudes and behaviours and of nudity as a celebration of life rather than something to be ashamed of. As with drug use, these are explicitly represented in the films of the 1969 Woodstock Festival and of the 1971 Glastonbury



Fayre. The earlier film tends to present the stereotypes in naive and innocent terms, with a scene of skinny-dippers discussing how they feel freed from everyday social constraints and expectations, and a young couple stripping in the long grass to make love, even though there are many people walking nearby and they are aware of the camera filming them (*Woodstock* 1970). There is a sense in which the festival is being cast as a Garden of Eden, a utopian site representing countercultural freedom and the development and enactment of an alternative community, a new way to live (Bennett 2004: 49). This is also to be found in the Glastonbury film, though here it feels somewhat more voyeuristic. For instance, the film captures an improvised 'song' by Magic Michael, who performed on the Pyramid stage naked from the waist down, and there is long-range footage of naked couples appearing to have sex in one of the nearby fields. Furthermore, there is an extended section that captures a group of naked hippies of both sexes rolling around and covering themselves in mud while being watched by a large crowd. This scene is immediately followed by an interview with a cleric who had witnessed the event and felt that there was nothing indecent or pornographic about the performance: that it was all 'perfectly natural' (*Glastonbury Fayre* [film] 1972). This further reinforces the Edenic impression found in the film of the Woodstock Festival, of people and landscape living in harmony together.

Today, the stereotype of the young, attractive and naked hippie/festivalgoer can still be found, though it is much more likely to be demarcated to particular areas of an event, and out of sight of the remainder. Examples include Sam's Magic Hat Sauna and the Lost Horizon Sauna and Solar Stage, which can be found at events ranging from Glastonbury Festival to Reading Festival. The rise in family-friendly festivals over the past twenty years perhaps militates against open nudity, but it can still be found at more carnivalesque events such as the Secret Garden Party which has encouraged festivalgoers to get involved in, amongst other things, mud-wrestling (naked or otherwise) in its Colo-silly-um area. The expansion of festival marketing through online galleries and brand sponsor tie-ins demonstrates how events continue to sell themselves on the image of attractive young people, though much less on the image of the naked hippie. It is common, for instance, to see photographs of young women in wellington boots, cut-down shorts and bikini tops with painted faces and flowers in their hair – imagery that harks back to the late 1960s and sells the event and event-related products using sex appeal, without resorting to nudity.

In contrast to the heritage of 'free love', contemporary music festivals demonstrate the changing attitudes of organizers and festivalgoers towards issues of sexual activity, sexually transmitted diseases and sexual assault. The increasing commercialization and regulation of the events sector has made corporate social responsibility more important for organizers. For instance, major festivals typically include welfare tents where sexual health advice can be sought and some have, in conjunction with charities or sponsors, given out free condoms or facilitated teenage pregnancy campaigns. It is important to do this because festivals are often sold on images of attractive young

people having fun, while meeting new people is an important part of attending events (UK Festival Awards 2017) – so much so that an ancillary market for festival fashion, hair, make-up and personal grooming products and other accessories has emerged, alongside numerous articles in fashion and lifestyle magazines and websites. Worryingly, recent research has suggested that there has been a rise in the number of reported sexual assaults at music festivals (Sanghani 2015) and that 43 per cent of women under forty had experienced some form of ‘unwanted sexual behaviour’ while attending an event (Prescott-Smith 2018). This unwanted behaviour ranged from ‘forceful dancing’ and the use of sexualized language to flashing, sexual assault, sexualized photography and rape. Similar findings have also been reported in a small-scale survey of festivalgoers undertaken by *Teen Vogue* at the US festival Coachella (Papisova 2018). The heritage of ‘free love’ and the expectation of freedom from constraints and social norms could, for some male attendees in particular, help to validate sexual behaviours that disrespect women’s rights and safety. In recent years, the prevalence of social media reporting, together with the emergence of the #metoo movement, has led to significant pressure on the festival and live events industries to take action. British initiatives include the AIF’s ‘Safer Spaces’ campaign – a Charter of Best Practice that commits signatories to a zero tolerance approach to all forms of sexual harassment, and the provision of confidential welfare services and staff/volunteer training (AIF 2017) – and the introduction of the Voyeurism (Offences) Bill 2017–19 – a Private Members Bill that seeks to make ‘upskirting’ (sexualized photographs made without consent) a criminal offence in the UK.

## Disorder

Gatherings of large numbers of young people, whether or not under the influence of alcohol or drugs, have long been a source of anxiety for broader society and government, and have generated the fear that events may get out of hand and threaten not only those attending a festival but also the surrounding locality and population (Clarke 1982: 31). In addition to the issues already discussed in the previous two sections, festivals may also be sites of crimes such as pickpocketing, tent thefts, physical assault and arson, as well as non-ticketholders attempting to gain access illegally, as occurred, for example, at the Wireless Festival in London’s Finsbury Park in 2015. However, an AIF report suggests that crime levels are relatively low in comparison to those found in the wider population (Webster 2014: 34), and the festival industry works together to share information and combat crime through initiatives such as the AIF Security Task Force and the annual Crime at Major Music Festivals Conference. As noted in the section on drugs above, visible and proactive policing and surveillance activities such as on-site CCTV are useful in monitoring and controlling festival audiences, as are strategies such as an increased security

presence in campsites and changes to programming. The latter includes staggered finishing times for different stages and late-night entertainments such as film tents, silent discos and late-night markets, in order to avoid a single rush of people at any one time. In the British context disorder is nothing new, since there have been small-scale public order disturbances and riots at festivals since the early 1960s, when traditional and modern jazz fans clashed at the Beaulieu Jazz Festival (McKay 2004). More often, though, it has been the fears of host localities that have caused issues for festival organizers. For instance, the Great Western Festival, funded in part by Lord Harlech and the actor Stanley Baker, was forced to move site three times in 1972 when local people, fearing the potential disruption caused by thousands of young festivalgoers, raised complaints against plans to stage it near their villages (Anderton 2019: 58–9). Local authority powers related to planning, public health, pollution and public nuisance continue to be used to prevent festivals from being staged, with specific nationwide legislation to control outdoor music festivals only coming into force in the early and mid-1980s when, as noted earlier, the free festivals (and in the 1990s, the free parties) became increasingly politicized and subsequently targeted by both right-wing media and government (Worthington 2004, 2005).

In twenty-first century Britain, event-wide public order issues typically stem from the continued staging of illegal teknivals/free parties. The police refer to these as unlicensed music events (UMEs) because permission is not sought from relevant local authorities or landowners. During the summer months, such events can be found in both rural and urban areas, where organizers try to avoid attracting the attention of the local police who can use a variety of legal means to close events down and seize equipment. The number of UMEs has risen over the past few years, as planning and licensing rules have been used to close legally run nightclubs or have forced them to extend their security searches and raise alcohol and entry prices to achieve commercial viability. The London Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) reports that 70 UMEs were planned in 2016, rising to 133 in 2017 (Crisp 2018), though this data may reflect a shift in police tactics. Since 2015, the MPS has instigated proactive surveillance of suspected organizers and uses a criminal intelligence system to collate and analyse data in an effort to stop events before they start. This strategy was introduced after a high-profile incident in which the police closed down an event called ‘Scumoween: A Nightmare on Scum Street’ in the London Borough of Lambeth (publicized on Facebook by rave organizers Scumtek). The *Evening Standard* claimed that the ‘crowd ranged from fourteen-year-olds dressed up as witches to people who “wanted to take drugs freely” and ravers in their sixties’ (Butter 2015). The police action led to the crowd throwing bottles and chairs, with riot police then moving in to stop the event and disperse the crowd. Violence escalated, with rubbish set on fire and numerous arrests made. The illicit and carnivalesque atmosphere of UMEs is part of their attraction for many young people, as well as those in ‘middle youth’<sup>4</sup> who experienced and remember the raves of the 1990s. UMEs stand in stark contrast

to the ever-more expensive and licensed commercial sector for dance music events and pop and rock festivals, which is much more highly regulated and policed. This is particularly the case in the aftermath of Islamist terror attacks on Westminster Bridge and Manchester Arena in 2017 and of the sniper attack on the Route 91 Harvest Festival in Las Vegas that same year. Large-scale events in the UK subsequently deployed armed police in and around their sites and significantly enhanced their perimeter and car/baggage searches.

## Squalor

Outdoor music festivals involve the coming together of many thousands of people in one place – to live, sleep and enjoy themselves in a carnivalesque atmosphere that may overturn or suspend everyday social norms. As festival sites are locations that have typically been repurposed from their usual day-to-day activities, a range of issues relating to land degradation, waste disposal and sanitation come to the fore. If the weather is wet, the ground can be churned into mud, and campsites and arenas become waterlogged. Indeed, there is little that the press likes more than images of muddy festivalgoers, lost wellington boots, overflowing toilets and tents submerged in water, perhaps recalling scenes from the 1969 Woodstock Festival film where festivalgoers shelter from intense rainstorms or hurtle down mudslides to the sound of tribal drumming. Survival of the potential deprivations of festival accommodation and toilets is in some ways a rite of passage for many young people, but contemporary festivalgoers, young and not-so-young, are now demanding higher quality facilities. This has fostered two main trends. First, there has been growth in the overall number of mid- to large-scale single-day or non-camping events, with one-day events rising by 82 per cent between 2005 and 2014 (Anderton 2019: 40). However, camping-based events increased even more rapidly over that same time period, which links to the second trend: an influx of specialist companies offering a wide variety of products and services aimed at enhancing and commercializing various aspects of the festival experience, something which heightens further the perception of outdoor music festivals as becoming more sanitized and mainstream over time.

Festivals are viewed by entrepreneurs and marketers as sites where young and influential trendsetters may be found, where new ideas and concepts may be trialled in an inclusive, welcoming and playful atmosphere. The so-called millennial generation (those born in the 1980s and 1990s) are typically described as the first generation of young people to grow up with the internet, to seek experiences and play through customization and to be influenced more by social media recommendation than traditional advertising (Lammiman and Syrett 2004; Tapscott 2009). They are looking for something new from the festival experience, including higher quality facilities and a broader range of activities. The festival sector has also seen growth in the number

of wealthier 'middle youth' consumers, sometimes with families, who no longer wish to put up with poor quality tents and toilets as part of their festival experience. This perhaps more mature or discerning festival audience seeks higher quality food, more comfortable accommodation and quieter campsites with better toilet facilities. Pizza and burger vans may still be found on festival sites, but the range of available cuisine now encompasses Mexican, Chinese, Indian, Caribbean and much more, with attractively designed food trailers and 'experiential areas' such as those provided by the well-known restaurant chains Wagamama and Nando's. Some festivals have gone a step further by hybridizing the food and the music festival sectors into one. One such is the Big Feastival, established in 2011 by celebrity chef Jamie Oliver in collaboration with the company Taste Festivals, and now staged annually on Blur bassist Alex James's farm in Oxfordshire. In 2018 the Big Feastival not only had performances from more than forty music artists, including Craig David, Basement Jaxx, Paloma Faith and Clean Bandit, but also had cookery workshops and demonstrations from top chefs such as Marco Pierre White, Raymond Blanc and Pierre Koffman. Festival accommodation has also seen a transformation for those who can afford it, ranging from a relatively basic offering of pre-erected tents with inflatable mattresses through to fully furnished yurts, podpads, beach huts, camper vans and converted buses. The companies offering this accommodation also sell camping accessories and even offer dedicated camping areas with their own toilets, showers and on-site security. 'Luxury' toilet facilities, such as those provided by the Seat of Luxury at Download Festival, are now available at many festivals, with festivalgoers charged to access flushing toilets, warm water washing facilities, hair dryers and mirrors, all managed by toilet attendants and regularly cleaned throughout the day. Festival organizers and sponsors have also seen the benefit in such 'upgrading' of the event experience, offering their own higher-priced 'VIP' tickets and experiences alongside their regular camping options.

Nevertheless, despite the available luxuries, festival campsites continue to be much the same as they always were and notions of 'squalor' are perhaps best seen in the poor state of the portaloos by the end of a weekend, or by the sheer quantity of rubbish left behind when the festival ends, including tents, sleeping bags and other items that festivalgoers decide to abandon rather than take home. Commercial clean-up and disposal of this rubbish in landfill is expensive, so festival organizers and environmental campaigners share an interest in taking action. Recycling schemes are now common and various attempts have been made to increase festivalgoers' awareness of the issues, such as the Love Your Tent campaign, launched by Eco Action Partnership and A Greener Festival in 2012. Love Your Tent runs dedicated campsites at events such as the Isle of Wight and Cornbury festivals and strives to leave the sites in the same state as they were before the festival started. Another example, this time targeting festival organizers, is the 'Drastic on Plastic' campaign launched by the AIF in collaboration with the sustainable development charity RAW Foundation.

Over sixty festivals joined this campaign in 2018, committing to the elimination of all single-use plastics across their sites by 2021 (AIF 2018). The basic message is that while a degree of waste is inevitable when hosting thousands of festivalgoers on-site, this waste and its longer-term environmental impacts can and should be dealt with by both organizers and attendees, and that festivals are a good place to help inform and educate young people about the issues involved.

## Conclusion

The late 1990s marked the beginning of a marked shift in popular music festival culture, as organizers and their events were seen to become more commercial, mainstream and family-friendly. This shift was accompanied by a significant increase in both the number of people attending events and the number of events being staged each year (Anderton 2019; Webster 2014). Younger children are increasingly attending festivals with their parents, which helps to introduce them to the idea of festival culture at an early age. It may also, as seen in festivals with a folk music base (such as the Cambridge Folk Festival and Fairport's Cropredy Convention), lead to repeat visits and loyalty amongst youngsters in the future (Anderton 2008, 2019). At the same time, however, does this shift in demographics also serve to lessen the youthful rebellion that was associated with music festival attendance in the past? Do teenagers and young adults really want to party at a festival when their parents or people their parents' age are also there? Is the musical programming of such events able to meet the expectations of such a broad age range, especially in a contemporary music market that has fractured into multiple taste cultures rather than defined youth subcultures? Does the provision of VIP areas, luxury camping and enhanced security control now detract from the 'traditional' festival experience of letting loose and overturning social norms? It may be that the answers to these questions are reflected in the growth of single-day, non-camping events (typically artist-centred in terms of attendee motivation) and the re-emergence of rave culture (particularly unlicensed events).

Furthermore, European festivals have become an increasingly popular choice for young British people, since they offer the kinds of hedonistic and exciting experiences they seek whilst also being safely away from the parent culture. Examples include the Dimensions and Outlook festivals in Croatia and the EXIT Festival in Serbia. The corollary of this is that there are now many more smaller-scale boutique festivals in the market, catering to the older, middle-youth or family demographic, while large-scale camping events are struggling to sell tickets, since the latter rely on a constant influx of new attendees each year, rather than on repeat business, and are no longer as popular as a rite of passage as they once were. In 2020 and 2021, mass gatherings such as music festivals were largely closed down around the world as national governments sought to combat the spread and impact of the Covid-19

coronavirus (Anderton 2022). Festivals have proved to be remarkably resilient with attendees postponing their tickets in support of their favourite events, and festival organizers rebooking their line-ups where possible. Some organizers also launched online versions of their events (such as Bluedot Festival and Tomorrowland), yet it has proven hard to capture the feelings and excitement of festival attendance through such mediated means. Nevertheless, such live-streamed events serve to reinforce what makes festival attendance special, and will help to drive ‘in real life’ participation in the future. Indeed, in 2021, the business analyst PricewaterhouseCoopers predicted that the value of the live music sector will return to pre-pandemic levels by 2025 (Paine 2021). It will be interesting to see whether this growth will be driven by a youth market eager to attend their first outdoor music events, or by the return of older attendees.

## Notes

- 1 Examples include *Monterey Pop* (1967), *Woodstock* (1970), *Gimme Shelter* (1970), *Glastonbury Fayre* (1972) and *Message to Love* (1996).
- 2 The early 1970s also saw the development of outdoor music festivals in many other countries. Examples include (among many others) the Pinkpop Festival in the Netherlands, the Aachen Open Air Festival in Germany, the Roskilde Festival in Denmark, the Ruisrock Festival in Finland and the Sunbury Pop Festival in Australia.
- 3 Paul Willis (1978: 4), who researched the ‘hippie scene’ in Birmingham in the late 1960s/early 1970s, noted a homologous relationship between the hippies’ use of cultural objects and their ‘structure of feeling and characteristic concerns’, including a sense of community, a focus on subjective experience and spirituality, and the use of music, language, appearance (clothing, hair and so on) and drugs. He does not specifically mention music festivals but does argue that drugs were central to the world-view and lives of the hippies, as they provided a locus for community, access to transcendent experiences and the belief that some music (he lists Frank Zappa, Jimi Hendrix and Pink Floyd) could only be comprehended while using drugs (145).
- 4 ‘Middle youth’ refers to people aged in their thirties or forties who want to combine ‘the adrenaline-charged excesses of youth culture with the comforts of middle age’ (Wynne-Jones 1997).

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