

HEADLINERS

Good, Clean Fun

The UK's only underage music festival (strictly for 14-18 year olds) may be seen to the older generations as a breeding ground for sordid teenage antics. Young Reporters from Headliners report back from the festival and explain how this couldn't be further from the truth with nothing but good, clean fun and a strong anti-bullying message.

Whilst it may not be at the top of every music fan's list, the Underage Festival, held in Victoria Park, Hackney, last week, is undoubtedly one of the most up and coming events of the indie calendar. A lot of the bands were indie and it attracted a decidedly indie crowd. However, this year saw Dizzee Rascal and Gallows headlining an unusual mix of hardcore punk and hip hop, providing a twist to the guitar-pop feel of last year. Even though it rained on the day, this didn't dampen the mood of the 10,000 strong crowd, who were more than happy to dance at the feet of some of the British music scene's hottest new talent.



Wildcard of the festival Dizzee Rascal knew how to please the crowd as fans waved their arms and sang along to his set in pure unadulterated enjoyment. He was full of praise for the event and his audience: 'It's good to be able to do something for the kids in the holidays - they don't have to get drunk and drugged up to have a good time.' The 2003 Mercury Prize winner was all for the idea of an underage gig, and was keen to return to his east London roots and give back to the events that helped make him what he is today. In support of the anti-bullying message, Dizzee gave his own advice: 'Stand up for yourself. Never be silent about it.'

Although the artists at the [Underage Festival](#) drew the most amount of attention from the teens, the three anti-bullying films shown on the big screen certainly stirred up some opinions on the issue: 'It's a good opportunity to heighten people's knowledge of how bad bullying is. It's an important subject,' said 17-year-old Clare. The films were part of the [_CUT-it-Out_ campaign](#) launched last year by former X-Factor winner, Shayne Ward, Vodafone UK and Beatbullying who asked teenagers to submit their ideas for a short film to reduce bullying.



However, not everyone agreed that it was the best time and place to be raising such issues, as some felt the films weren't able to compete with the loud music and jovial atmosphere, Mark, 14, agreed: 'I wonder how interested people really are. People aren't here to learn about bullying.' But, the general consensus was that the campaign messages were positive, and the films which were all made by young people were a great idea and a great way of getting across the anti-bullying message. Many believed they gave a fresh perspective on the problem: 'When adults try to show something the way they think it is, it's not the same' said Carl, 16.

We thought the films really showed what bullying is like from a young person's perspective; one of the films was shot in the toilets of a school, which is a common place for bullying to happen. If they have films on at next year's festival we think they should stop the music to allow people to hear them properly and give them more focus, as it was the music that everyone came for.

Another popular band on the day were Scottish five-piece The Dykeemans, who lost none of their enthusiasm and spirit despite performing on one of the smallest of the festival's six stages. Another favourite were Foals, who set the crowd alight with their 45-minute set. They were able to relate to the teenage fans saying, 'This is the kind of thing we wish we'd had when we were 14.' Guitarist Felix from The Maccabees agreed: 'When we were 15, it would have been the best thing in the world to have something like this - everyone seems much less held back and the enthusiasm is so clear.' New band Florence and the Machine also saw the value of an underage festival: 'The young people always know what's happening first, so it makes sense to have a festival just for them.'





And it wasn't only the young people who were having a good time, as Foals front man Yannis Philippakis said, 'There's just unbridled energy here there's a real enthusiasm that's very genuine and very youthful.' Most of the young people at the festival agreed that the atmosphere surpassed their expectations, 'It's really crazy here!' said 15 year old Chisom. This year's festival saw even more candy floss, neon footless tights and glow sticks than last year, resulting in a crazy clash of colour, music and good vibes all over the place.

Unfortunately one of the only problems was the timetable of the bands which caused clashes as some of the biggest bands were on at the same time on different stages; however, this didn't

detract from the positive atmosphere, which many youngsters said had improved since last year. The last minute cancellation by the Mystery Jets also caused some disappointment, but the general sense of frivolity and fun could be felt by everyone, as 17-year-old Keith so perfectly summed up: 'It's been really great, bigger and better than before. I know I'll be back next year! And we will too.'



About this Story

This story was produced by Charlotte Lytton, 16, Chika Ekemezie, 17, Jason McLeod, 17, and Tajha Myer-Ferreira, 17.

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playboy should be stoped its just incoraging kids to want to be a playboy bunny in a playboy manchan it should STOP!
jssica dobinson (age 10) from colburn, 01 December 2008 12:08

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