

St John, Graham. 2012. *Global Tribe: Technology, Spirituality and Psytrance*. Sheffield: Equinox.

Sunset Festival. 2014. <http://www.sunsetcollective.org>. Accessed 26 August 2014.

Taylor, Timothy D. 2001. *Strange Sounds: Music, Technology and Culture*. London: Routledge.

Triplicity 2014. Triplicity: the Psychedelic Playground. <http://triplicitybiz.ipage.com>. Accessed 26 August 2014.

The Pop Festival: History, Music,
Media, Culture - Ed.
George McKay.

New York:

CHAPTER ELEVEN Bloomsbury
Academic
2015.

No Spectators! The art of participation, from Burning Man to boutique festivals in Britain

Roxy Robinson

By examining the American event Burning Man and a selection of festivals that have drawn influence from its approach to production, this chapter shows how British festivals have adapted and integrated a 'No Spectators' ethos. I discuss a wider scene of participatory music festivals in Britain, though I draw upon interviews and ethnographies centred on two in particular, which are both staged in the south of England. These festivals are BoomTown Fair (Hampshire) and Secret Garden Party (Cambridgeshire) and they offer the most significant UK-based examples of systemic audience integration in creative programming. Through this, the British sector is shown to be developing new and hybridized alternatives to concert-style festivals, which primarily award performative emphasis to musical line-ups. Though the festivals examined draw some influences from the Burning Man, relinquished is a decisively articulated ethical code. They are not politically forthright, nor do they present their ethos as a compulsory doctrine. Instead, a DIY ethic is reconfigured into something new, and, perhaps, something quintessentially British. This cross-pollination of ideas has, however, led to the construction of environments similarly focused on delivering audience members from the role of spectators, by providing them with opportunities for autonomy in the process of consumption. In the project of defining the roles that regulate the media, scholars in the fields of cultural studies and social theory have criticized the concept of spectatorship, and indeed,

essentialist couplings like production/consumption, activity/passivity (Levy and Windahl 1985, 110; Biocca 1988, 51; Gottdiener 2001, 6). I argue that, while such terms are not without flaws, they are crucial to understanding the constructs meaningful to 'boutique' festival culture. The events examined intentionally promote audience activity in a raft of ways, many of which have adopted a principle of physical involvement that, outside of festival, similarly guides immersive theatre and art towards co-authorship (Bishop 2006, 11; Bourriaud 2002). Their commercial success, and the broader shift towards themed environments and popular theatricality, illustrates a desire on the part of audiences to perform, collaborate and change their consumption practices: this change is key to understanding how and why festivals are a meaningful way to understand larger movements in the economies of pleasure.

Burning Man and the art of participation

There is a rapid exchange of ideas accelerating the development of British music festivals, particularly with regard to their visual and participatory milieu. By this, I mean complex décor, concept staging,¹ installation artworks, novel games and encampments and the theatrical clothing worn by performance artists and ordinary festival-goers. The emergence of surrealist and scenographic spaces also embodies an aesthetic allied to the guiding principles of Nevada's Burning Man, a 50,000-strong gathering first held in 1986. There, a 'No Spectators' ethos is heavily reinforced by festival publicity and spatial arrangements. The fusion of practices based around this ideal obligates festival-goers to contribute to such an extent, that perceptible differences between the producers and consumers of the event are largely eliminated. Despite an abundance of music there is a meaningful absence of advertised artist billings, which is a purposive adjustment, intended to level the performative playing field. The anonymity has an equalizing effect, temporarily immunizing participants from the divisions inherent in line-up-focused festivals that require celebrity, and virtuosity, to perform.

In fact, the relationship between allied festivals and the politics of Burning Man stems from, among other things, mutually experienced perplexities regarding line-up-focused, 'concert-model' festivals. There is a sense that by focusing mostly on the main stage and its reception, such festivals present an allegory of the world outside; mimicking its flaws, instead of subverting them, limiting the potential of audiences and reinforcing an entrenched and spatially reinforced separation between them and the performers on stage. As a response, a codified doctrine enshrines systemic participation as a remedy to these ills while the notion of spectatorship, on the contrary, is denigrated as the symbol of an outside dystopia. At Burning Man, festival-goers are themselves invited to build and animate the event

space. In the idealizing discourses relating to the festival, spectatorship is replaced with the idea of 'prosumption' (Chen 2011, 570–95). The festival attempts to maximize the potential for the audience's self-determination, and tangible action, in the process of consumption. The importance of audience agency is made explicit: event publicity describes Burning Man as 'more of a city than a festival, wherein almost everything that happens is created entirely by its citizens' (Burning Man website). With a singularity almost religious, the spatial, organizational and aesthetic arrangements of the celebration each resonates with this position. A monolithic main stage is conspicuously absent; instead, there is a semi-circular configuration of small tents, stages and geodesic structures, which are littered in close proximity across the sand (Figure 44). Teams of virgin and veteran 'Burners' build themed encampments, which are the result of their written proposals to the festival, and often, many months of advance planning. Symbolically placed at the centre is the wooden effigy – the Man. During the charged bacchanal on the Saturday night of the festival, he is ceremoniously burnt to the ground.

Nicknamed Black Rock City, Burning Man creates a 'para-urban' context and civic infrastructure, intentionally conferring onto festival-goers' social responsibilities associated with the status of *citizen* (Gilmore 2008, 216). The event's emphasis on citizenship has coincided with the development of a highly unusual organizational structure. There is a massive volunteer workforce that, for the most part, comprised ticket buyers. Most of them pay between \$300 and \$400 for entry, plus the cost of travel that can run into thousands of dollars, and undertake tasks that elsewhere would be shouldered by workers paid with a monetary fee and/or free entry into the event. Burning Man is unconventional in its ability to motivate.



FIGURE 44 *Burning Man, 2012: 'A semi-circular configuration of small tents, stages and geodesic structures'.*

ticket buyers to labour. The effects of the policy are twofold: by resisting an economically based divide between volunteers and ticket buyers, it prevents attendees from enjoying an easy purchase – or, in Burner-speak, a right to passivity. While there is no penalty for behaviours that could pass for passivity, the fact that ticket buyers are encouraged to volunteer means that buying a ticket does not come with immunity from the call to participate – and, in any case, many attend to experience this ethos in action. And, the policy also allows Black Rock City LLC, the festival’s organizing entity, to democratize creative production without forfeiting organizational income. It would not be difficult to cast this as exploitative profiteering on the part of Burning Man’s owners, as was implied by the original co-founder John Law while attempting to sue the festival in 2007.² P. J. Rey has also pointed out, in a piece titled ‘Burning Man is the new capitalism’, that ‘the Burning Man experience is the product of tens (or even hundreds) of millions of dollars flowing into the consumer economy and is inextricably linked to disposable incomes of Silicon Valley’s digerati’ (Rey 2013). However, my view is that these interpretations of affairs do not alter the fact that ultimately, the arrangement is essential to the practical realization of a large-scale, participant-produced festival within a financially sustainable framework. With the bulk of creative minutiae left within the remit of participants, the organization focuses instead on finance and administration, legal duties, basic infrastructure build, recruitment and the safety and quality controls required to stage the event. Volunteers can also get involved with these areas if they have a particular skill set, and the workforce includes some highly specialized workers labouring for free. Donated labour is common and supported through the repetition and reinforcement, via various media, of values conducive to collective productivity. The decree ‘No Spectators’ is aligned with a broader repertoire of principles that amplify a sense of duty as well as social freedoms and experimentation: ‘Civic Responsibility’, ‘Communal Effort’, ‘Decommodification’, ‘Radical Self-Reliance’, ‘Radical Inclusion’, ‘Radical Self-Expression’ and ‘Gifting’ are statements found in festival literature. They help cultivate the attitudes necessary to building what is cast as a parallel society with redemptive qualities. The principles also respond to a perceived social malaise, supporting a Mannheimian critique of American culture and society as problematically conducive to wastefulness, passivity, anonymity and isolation (Fortunati 2005, 153).

Set against the featureless desert, elaborate costumes, art installations, theme camps and decorated vehicles known as art cars each contributes to form a uniquely spectacular landscape (see Figure 45). A synthesis of functionality and aesthetics, as the art cars in particular exemplify, marks out an inclusive interpretation of art by confusing its norms of qualification and authenticity. In the spirit of ‘Radical Inclusion’, a challenge to the remote position of ‘the artist’ is made in the attempt to transform festival-goers into the theme camp, installation and art car creators. This confluence

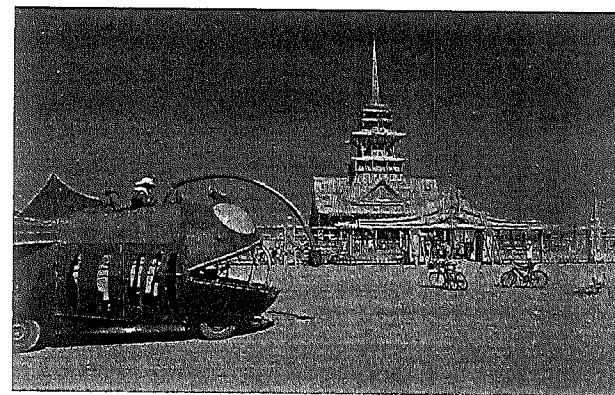


FIGURE 45 *An art car and the Temple of Burning Man, 2012.*

of ideals and practice suggests a critique of how art is both judged and co-opted by commercial forces in American society (Clupper 2007, 229; Doherty 2004, 176). It is also implicitly tied to the politics of the festival’s founder, Larry Harvey. His vision for the festival is stated as ‘redefining and expanding the notion of who “artists” are, and what their social role could be in the psychological and institutional context amidst which they and others work and live’ (Fortunati 2005, 163). Extending the concept of the artist to all participants, Harvey asserts an egalitarian principle that stems from his own critical perception of a compartmentalized and spectator-inducing external world. It is significant that Burning Man’s publicity intentionally avoids using the term ‘festival’, as if the word has come to denote the very principles Harvey seeks to reject. ‘Burning Man is’, as stated on its website (2014), ‘not like usual festivals where big acts perform on massive stages’. The critical tone of these assertions points to the founder’s attempt to reclaim what he sees as *true* participation – a form that destroys the very concept of an audience by placing it, hypothetically, on centre stage. As the festival has grown over the years, its potential mixture of civic assembly and idealized participation has prompted speculation that knowledge of its success will instigate changes in the ‘way people organise’ (Chen 2005, 126). Online imagery and videos have also globalized this once-obscure gathering, contributing to its vanguard status among event enthusiasts around the world. As a result, it has developed into a celebration with international reaches and partner events: the Burning Man Network represents over fifty offshoot regional burns in locations as far afield as South Africa, Israel and China. These are festivals that follow the blueprint established by Burning Man and signal the establishment of Burner communities across the globe. The continued growth of the Network suggests that Burning Man should not be defined by the parameters of its secluded desert location, but rather, as a growing and international diaspora.

Co-production and British boutique festivals

The first available reference to British *boutique* music festivals was made by Knight et al. in the *Observer* newspaper, in June 2003. The article described them as 'compact, stylish and intimate' (Knight 2003). Featured events, which included the Big Chill, Green Man and a concert on the grounds of Somerset House in London, appeared to be chosen on the basis that, while hosting notable line-ups of live bands and DJs, they were small, 'arty' and relatively unknown.³ After 'boutique festivals' proliferated in the media's parlance, industry analysts defined them in another way: Mintel claimed that they represented a counter-trend to the growing commercialism found elsewhere in the festival's industry (Mintel 2008). This definition is at odds with the way that 'boutique' today signifies premium options, such as luxury camping, yet the emergence of these so-called boutique festivals did seem to herald a new, utopian zeitgeist within the sector. Within this social milieu, a format of collective production is growing in ways that both draw on, and depart from, the practice and politics of participation at Burning Man.

With a collective capacity of approximately 160,000, Secret Garden Party, Bestival, Beatherder, BoomTown Fair ('BoomTown' hereafter) and Shambala are among those that form an assemblage of UK events cultivating a 'No Spectators' ethos. Their event designs have taken a civic and surrealist turn: embellished venue facades, ambitiously scaled art and stylized infrastructure animate themes and invite festival-goers into scenographic shantytowns. For some, this has sidelined the centrality of line-ups, which now form the soundtrack to more integrated, theatrical productions. In the task of understanding these developments, it is worth pointing out that the experimentalism that Burning Man's break with line-up convention affords, together with its ticket-selling power, is a seductive prospect for British promoters. They have struggled to overcome challenges presented by dependency on big name artistes, such as soaring fees, the imposition of artist exclusivities by competing festivals and the general shortfall of ticket-selling artists able to play their stages. Yet this US anomaly interests them not only for economic reasons, but also because of the ideals embedded in its participative system of production. Though Secret Garden Party and BoomTown are nuanced in music focus, branding and style, there is an affinity in how their founders value this aspect of Burning Man. Co-founded by Freddie Fellowes, and hosted on the land of his father, Secret Garden Party was first staged with 1,000 guests in 2004 and subsequently followed a steep trajectory of growth. By the start of the global financial crisis in 2008 it was attracting 6,000 attendees. Seemingly immune to the economic instability which had begun to affect the market elsewhere, the festival doubled its capacity during 2009 to 12,000. Throughout this time, a participatory ethos was central to the development of Secret Garden Party's position in the marketplace, and in many ways this was directly inspired

by the format of Burning Man. As Fellowes put it to me in an interview, 'Burning Man has shown you all the things you can do when you're not bound by a preconception of what a festival is' (personal interview, 2009). For nine consecutive years, he took a team of volunteers to the Nevada desert to create a theme camp, complete with a free bar and disco. His aim was, in his own words, to bring a touch of 'British tomfoolery' to Burning Man's proceedings. Another interviewee, who organized performance art at Secret Garden Party, described the outcome of the 2005 trip:

The bulk of the Garden Party went. It was a real eye-opener for most of them, it's such a completely different format and they came back with loads of ideas. The Garden Party's really changed as a shift towards that. (Personal interview, 2009)

Fellowes later introduced schemes at Secret Garden Party to democratize production that bore close resemblance to the Nevada gathering. With his team he launched volunteer-led theme camps, renamed 'action camps', which are today publicized as central to the ethos of the festival. They offer a conspicuous avenue towards working as part of the production team, and they are open to anyone to apply. Advertised prominently on the festival's website, a central tab labelled 'participate' allows users to access an online application form which requires applicants to mastermind unique proposals for the festival – a novel game, perhaps, or an interactive performance piece related to that year's particular theme. As the 2014 application form stated:

The Action Camps are the lifeblood of Secret Garden Party. They are created by you, for you. We have had a record amount of applications in 2013; some bold, some understated, but all of them dreamed up and designed by your fellow gardeners. (Secret Garden Party website 2014)

As can be seen, with its festival-goers called 'gardeners', Secret Garden Party has even drawn on Burning Man for its citizenship naming. The sorts of action camp proposals that are selected are usually hair-brained and tantamount to high levels of interactivity on site. In the past, these have included numerous fancy dress and make-up boutiques (Wot's a Curling/Banjax Banditos), concept stages and performance spaces (Dance-Off/Bearded Kitten), and the various art installations scattered across the site. Pictured in Figure 46, the Dance-Off exemplifies the way in which the action camps erode the distinctions between producers and consumers in two ways. The first of these is systemic: fans of the festival are able to become producers of distinct features (the Dance-Off is run by a group of friends who started out as litter pickers). Secondly, the creative outputs of fans are often aligned with the principles of participatory art in promoting audience agency – distributing



FIGURE 46 *The Dance-Off at Secret Garden Party, 2014.*

the means of suggestion, among the many (Haggren et al. 2005, 5). Dance-Off performers include some professional dancers, though they are mostly ordinary festival-goers.

Some action camp producers are motivated by improved career or portfolio prospects, though many are simply rewarded with pleasure and a sense of community. As acknowledged by Fred Turner in his discussion of participants at Burning Man, they also enjoy a form of status in seeing creative projects *visibly* realized in front of their peers (Turner 2009, 76). The introduction of similar schemes at other festivals indicates that Fellowes was not alone in the view that a 'No Spectators' ethos should be championed in the United Kingdom. BoomTown's founder Lak Mitchell, soon after staging his own first festival, also travelled to the Nevada desert. During my interview with him, he acknowledged that Burning Man 'blew [him] away'. This was evidently a pivotal experience with emotional gravitas: 'I got a little upset actually', he remarked, 'because I thought we'd never get there in the UK' (personal interview, 2014). These words imply a perspective of Burning Man as some kind of achieved utopia, an ideal model that other festivals are gradually evolving towards. BoomTown has also implemented bursary schemes, though it has taken a different approach to achieving the goals of escapism and participant ownership. The division of the site into nine 'Districts' awards occupants with citizen status and an intra-festival identity. These zones are styled in ways that echo districts found in contemporary cities: there are areas characterized by immigration, with vaguely exotic themes implied by the Districts of Barrio Loco and ChinaTown; the Old Town simulates an historic area, and a high-class, gentrified zone can be found at Mayfair Avenue. These areas constitute invitations to tribalize and contribute in ways aligned to these thematic titles.

For both festivals, the process of deploying fan contributions has been made possible through the formalization and transparency of recruitment. Online application forms can be accessed from anywhere in the world, and many other music festivals have developed similar application procedures that assist in the democratization of production. To take a broader perspective, there are several core congruencies in the relationship between the organizers of Secret Garden Party and BoomTown, and their experience at Burning Man. They each attended during the early years of staging their own events, awarding it a vanguard status. They came to place great importance on audience participation, and as a practical extension of this view, diversified their arts programme and introduced public-facing bursary schemes. 'No Spectators', though only semi-articulated in their own promotional texts, is an idiom that guided the tangible development of their events. It should be noted that music billings remained, however, paramount to press coverage and ticket sales: they integrated only those elements that would *add value*, re-modelling the 'No Spectators' ethos to fit within their own economic frameworks.

Theming the festival

In the United Kingdom, the promotion of festival themes has become increasingly popular. Hence it has transpired that popular theatricality – that is, a theatrical *audience* – is today a noticeable feature of contemporary British festival culture. British festivals reconfigure what is an enshrined and symbolically loaded practice at Burning Man into a more casual mode of play. From *Desert Island Disco* (Bestival) to *Fact or Fiction* (Secret Garden Party), themes form aesthetic umbrellas under which the makers of costume, art and décor find unity and stimulus. Festivals that engineer richly themed environments do so by saturating their virtual and physical spaces with symbols that allow them to masquerade in chosen forms. In stylized settings, festival fashion and full-blown costumes constitute the co-production of spectacle and, like carnival's inversion, the event becomes a stage on which festival-goers perform. Many also invent their own themes. Figure 47 shows festival-goers in space-style costume at Secret Garden Party 2014, which was themed *Goodbye Yellow Brick Road*.

Outside of music festivals, theming has been critically theorized in commercial terms as a function allowing restaurants, amusement parks and shopping centres to simulate more interesting environments. The increased enjoyment resulting from the added layers of meaning have proved to be, for many franchises, conducive to increased consumer expenditure. In his work on Disneyization, Bryman argues that otherwise 'lacklustre' environments are able to introduce 'a veneer of meaning and symbolism' (2004, 15). Walt Disney also cited more practical motivations for his theme parks: he wanted

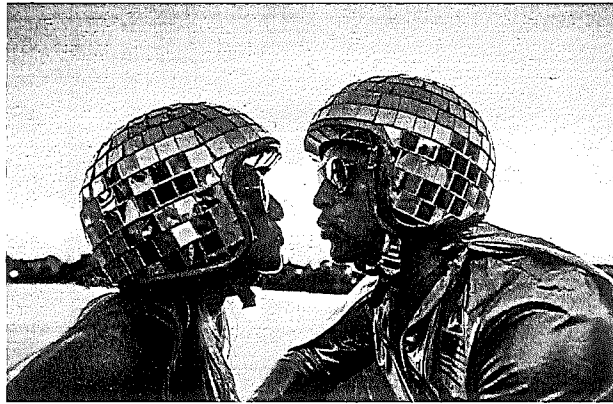


FIGURE 47 Revellers in fancy dress at Secret Garden Party, 2014.

to create clean, less tawdry versions of the amusement parks he visited in his own childhood (2004, 21). Disney's parks pioneered the use of theme, but they constituted a distinctly sanitized form of escapism. By contrast, festivals offer a more spontaneous and bacchanalian thematic milieu. The spontaneous element is a ward of the audience, for they represent an unpredictable aspect of the show. Festival-goers convey considerable enjoyment in becoming part of the fantasy, immersing themselves in the surreal atmosphere by adapting the signifiers of bodily display. That is not to say that there is no connection between festival culture and the sprawling thematic environments of amusement parks. Indeed, the co-founder of BoomTown acknowledged taking inspiration 'straight out of Disneyland' (Lak Mitchell, personal interview, 2014). The festival's title – BoomTown – itself denotes a mythical setting: the township of Boom. In the festival's online presence, a town history mingles fact with fictional events (BoomTown website). This detailed fantasy spans a sequence of chapters, engaging festival-goers in an imagined metropolis long before they reach the fields. The sense of narrative is reinforced by a civic-style site design (see Figure 48). It is not coincidental that the popularity of BoomTown's carnivalized and richly themed environment parallels its growth: at the time of writing, BoomTown is currently the fastest-growing independent festival in the United Kingdom.⁴

It has been claimed that all 'workable' themed environments relate to a limited set of concepts (Gottdiener 2001, 176; Schmitt and Simonson 1997, 138). According to Gottdiener, these include status, tropical paradise, the Wild West, classical civilization, nostalgia, Arabian fantasy, urban motif, modernism and progress (2001, 176–83). The following breakdown demonstrates that although music festivals were not referenced in the formation of his typology, many themes found at music festivals coincide with the spaces that were. Like amusement parks, restaurants and other

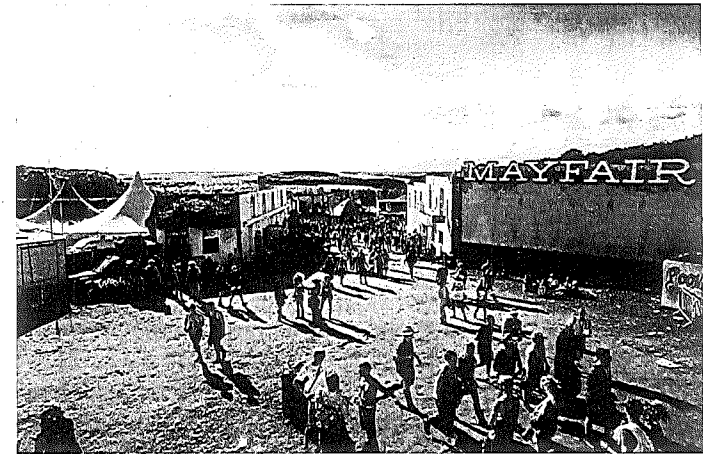


FIGURE 48 'Streets' at BoomTown Fair, 2014.

public contexts, music festivals are recycling the thematic motifs that pre-exist in popular culture.

Music festivals as themed environments

'Status'

- Superheroes (Y-Not Festival, 2013)
- Rock Stars, Pop Stars and Divas (Bestival, 2011)
- TV Shows and DVD Box Sets (2000 Trees, 2014)
- Kendal Calling goes to the Movies (Kendal Calling, 2013)

'Modernism and progress'

- Kendal Calling goes Beyond the Stars (Kendal Calling, 2014)
- BoomTown Fair goes to Outer Space (BoomTown, 2012)
- Frontiers of the Future (Beacons Festival, 2013)

'Nostalgia'

- Decades (Blissfields, 2010)
- Thrift Shop and Vintage (Rockness, 2013)
- Empires (Beacons Festival, 2014)
- 80s Movies (2000 Trees, 2013)

'Tropical'

- Desert Island Disco (Bestival, 2014)
- 30,000 Freaks Under the Sea (Bestival, 2008)
- The Seas of Shambala (Shambala, 2014).

Some themes overlap and relate to more than one overarching concept, and a few do not relate to this typology at all. However, the majority do convey a sense of place, in space or time, enhancing the symbolic, immersive and hyperreal qualities of festival space. Gottdiener disparaged what he saw as an inevitable corporate preference for themes that speak to the 'lowest common denominator' (2001 176, 178). It is true that from the perspective of promoters, the choice of themes is necessarily limited because it is bound by the criteria that determine levels of engagement: they must be broad enough to suggest multiple avenues to creative participation, but clear enough to be of interest to the majority of their festival's clientele. That is why festival themes invite imitation, and numerous iterations of the same concept are reconstructed as organizers try to avoid obvious plagiarism or repetition. In this crowded scene, theme *names* are also important. A clever turn of phrase (like *Desert Island Disco*, Bestival, as opposed to *TV Shows and DVD Box Sets*, 2000 Trees) increases the likelihood a theme will be remembered, and thus, the likelihood of audience response. They are also connotative, triggering mental associations that allude to imagined settings. For example, *Desert Island Disco* connotes sunshine, sand, Hawaiian shirts, grass skirts, disco balls and multicoloured parrots. These material associations are first introduced with brand imagery, before physical realization on the festival site (which happens to be a resonant festival island, the Isle of Wight). Theme *type* is also becoming a mark of distinction. For example, themes like *Beyond Belief* (2003) and *Evolution* (2009) at Burning Man challenge participants to consider loftier, more conceptual associations. Testament to its allegiance to the festival, Secret Garden Party's themes are similarly abstract, with theme titles such as *Superstition* (2013) and *Standing on Ceremony* (2012) poised to appeal to a well-heeled, intellectual and bohemian demographic. Like pop stars that continually reinvent themselves through adopting new assemblages of sounds, style and dress, this tactic allows festivals to preserve their novelty through continuous renewal. Audience involvement is a key component in this process, providing animation for scenery that is primed for action with stylized décor. The approach generates colourful imagery that is posted online, guiding the expectations of newcomers and becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy for next year's event. As we have seen, the core architects of the UK festivals most conducive to popular theatricality via theming have each attended Burning Man and expressed affection for the model of systemic democratization it exemplifies. Their work must be regarded, however, as

the manifestation of an ideal that also offers a practical solution to the pressures of the marketplace. Promoters are cultivating their own version of the 'No Spectators' ethos for it supplements event content with the creative imaginings of participants. With such an increased quantity of boutique festivals jostling for notice among festival-goers, and limited means for securing top artist billings, the engagement that theming promotes has become crucial to achieving industry status and a loyal relationship between festivals and their fans.

Conclusion

This chapter evidences a surrealist turn in the production of festival space. Participative arts, audience theatricality and themed environments are increasingly popular within what may be described as the 'boutique' festival sector. In addition to raising the overall levels of visual stimulation on site, this is likely because the status of audiences is raised through the open legitimization of their contributions. Much like differing carnival traditions, these festivals also show that certain presentations of virtual and physical space promote 'patterns of theatricality' (Cremona 2004, 74). Of course, not every festival-goer finds enjoyment in costumes, 'dance-off' competitions or creating themed encampments, and there will always be a strong market for 'concert-model' festivals. Yet activities like this are becoming more common, and as well as the events discussed in detail in this chapter, the trend towards immersive event design is increasingly perceptible within large swathes of Glastonbury (in particular, Shangri-La) and at other independent music festivals, including Kendal Calling, Bestival, Standon Calling, Y-Not and 2000 Trees. They are owned by conventionally structured companies, with a very small nucleus of full-time organizers, though it is clear that the mobilization of fans to create content has become (for Secret Garden Party and BoomTown in particular) crucial to their success in the marketplace. Outside the United Kingdom, the ways in which Fusion festival (Germany) and Tomorrowland (Belgium, Brazil and the United States) have incorporated contrasting expressions of immersive design shows that this phenomenon is not specific to the United Kingdom or United States and is now found within both overtly commercial and 'anti-commercial' frameworks.

It is interesting to observe that, while a 'No Spectators' ethos is shaping UK music festivals, *spectacles* are a presiding characteristic. Complex spectacles, together with challenging notions surrounding spectatorship, are reconciled by the fact that participants help *produce* the spectacle. This is not the first subcultural context to have contested modes of spectatorship: 1990s DJ and rave events were thought to offer a meaningful relief from theatrical spectacle (Huq 1999, 17). DJs, unlike watching live bands, did

not seem to be predicated on watching stylized personalities on stage. Here the very removal of *watching*, and the repositioning of the DJ as the medium, rather than the message, seemed to challenge the spectator-inducing facets perceptible in the performances of live music. If DJ-centred culture offered a replacement of the live music spectacle, the festival cultures discussed in this chapter restore spectacle, though on more democratized grounds. It is important to remember, however, that inter-festival rivalry has helped drive this development. For many years, festival ticket buyers have logically expected loaded programmes of music; on the contrary, features such as art, décor and theming are added values. Because of this, they are areas of rapid evolution. The relationship between Burning Man and UK festivals must be considered within this competitive context, as an allegiance supported by the cultural economics of organizer beliefs as well as incentives (Anderton 2008, 42). This is an important observation because commercial incentives have a habit of transforming appropriated content. The burning of sculptures, for example, with the symbolism that accompanies such ceremonies at Burning Man, is to a certain extent de-radicalized through its co-option in the United Kingdom. Electric Picnic, the former Glade and Secret Garden Party have each created comparable moments of intrigue by burning sculptures down during the celebrations, though they are not framed in the same terms. This is also true in a wider sense: the literature of BoomTown, for example, does not reflect on its own importance as a social experiment, or conjecture as to how its form of social organization might influence the world outside. At Burning Man, its more conscious approach has been described as a self-righteous and forced attempt to increase 'impact and meaning' – which has not always been viewed as positive (Mason, in Doherty 2004, 164–5). The United Kingdom's appropriation has resulted in a dilution of 'earnestness' (164), and through this process, has ushered in a new festival hybrid. The phrase 'No Spectators' is largely absent and perhaps it is the implicit, as opposed to explicit, delivery of its ideal that renders the festivals discussed accessible to a wider audience. This chapter has drawn upon the influences and actions of festival organizers, and it would be easy, though ill advised, to forget that the success of their initiative is fully reliant on meaningfulness to the festival-going community. The shift towards democratized models of production is not an isolated phenomenon: considering contemporary forms of online leisure and sociality, evidence for the ubiquitous popularity of fan-produced content is everywhere. Festivals like Secret Garden Party and BoomTown did not grow into popular events *because of* Burning Man, but because, like Burning Man, they have engaged with the human impulse to connect with the apparatus of cultural production. This may not have the same chaotic force as the 1960s and 1970s counterculture that energized early British festivals, but it does suggest that there is more than a hint of DIY zeal shaping the scene today.

Acknowledgements

Thanks are owed to Lak Mitchell, who was interviewed for this study on 8 February 2014, and to Freddie Fellowes, who was interviewed on 17 January 2014. I also interviewed performance artist Daniel Winch for my doctoral thesis on 20 March 2009, which I have re-quoted in my discussion of Secret Garden Party.

Notes

- 1 Concept staging is a phrase introduced by the author to refer to performance spaces with a highly stylized sculptural form. An early notable example is the Pyramid Stage at Glastonbury. The original was built out of scaffolding and metal sheeting in 1971. As specialized production teams are developing their techniques, concept stages are now emerging as distinct features of smaller British festivals. For example, Lancashire's Beatherder hosts a stage resembling a fortress, while BoomTown has introduced one stage built to represent a gold mine, and another, a Mayan temple. Skills developed in the set design of film and theatre productions are often utilized in the build of concept stages, which add to the repertoire of scenery animating the thematic, festival space.
- 2 This was a lawsuit relating to the festival's ownership, involving its founders John Law, Larry Harvey and Michael Mikel. The case was settled out of court on undisclosed terms, in 2008.
- 3 The only capacity size listed in the article is 2,000 (for Green Man), though the festival reportedly sold just 300 tickets that year. The 2008 *Music Concerts and Festivals* report by Mintel claimed that festivals branded as 'boutique' had an approximate capacity of 5,000. Since the publication of the report, many of the festivals that featured have outgrown this capacity figure. Consequently while 'boutique' still connotes intimacy in the festival sector, this does not always equal small scales in actual terms.
- 4 This is based on a survey of fifty independent outdoor music festivals in the United Kingdom, conducted by Dr Emma Webster for this study. BoomTown has grown at a rate of 660 per cent between 2010 and 2014, from a capacity of 5,000 to almost 40,000. The growth of the festival, when compared with the rest of the market, is unusual in that it has been very rapid, and in the sense that the festival exists outside of both the corporate festival sector (i.e. not owned by Live Nation, Mama Group, etc.) and, to some extent, the independent festival sector (it has never been a member of the Association of Independent Festivals, for example). It has also refrained from participating in the annual UK Festival Awards, rendering its surge in popularity somewhat unrecognized by industry standards.

References

- Anderton, Chris. 2008. 'Commercializing the carnivalesque: the V Festival and image/risk management.' *Event Management* 12(1): 39–51.
- Biocca, Frank A. 1988. 'Opposing conceptions of the audience: the active and passive hemispheres of mass communication theory.' *Communication Yearbook* 11: 51–80.
- Bishop, Claire, ed. 2006. *Participation*. London: Whitechapel.
- BoomTown Fair website. Town History. <http://www.boomtownfair.co.uk/tourist-info/town-history>. Accessed 10 April 2014.
- Bourriaud, Nicolas. 2002. *Relational Aesthetics*. Trans. Simon Pleasance and Fronza Woods, with the participation of Mathieu Copeland. [S.I.]: Les Presse Du Reel.
- Bryman, Alan. 2004. *The Disneyization of Society*. London: Sage.
- Burning Man website. Burning Man. <http://www.burningman.com/>. Accessed 4 September 2014.
- Chen, Katherine K. 2011. 'Artistic prosumption: cocreative destruction at Burning Man.' *American Behavioural Scientist* 56(4): 570–95.
- Clupper, Wendy. 2007. 'Burning Man: festival culture in the United States – festival culture in a global perspective.' In Temple Hauptfleisch et al. eds. *Festivalising! Theatrical Events, Politics and Culture*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 222–41.
- Cremona, Vicky-Ann. 2004. 'Carnival as a theatrical event.' In Vicky-Ann Cremona, Peter Eversmann, Hans van Maanen, Willmar Sauter and John Tulloch, eds. *Theatrical Events: Borders, Dynamics, Frames*, New York: Rodopi, 69–90.
- Doherty, Brian. 2004. *This is Burning Man: The Rise of a New American Underground*. New York: Little, Brown.
- Fortunati, Allegra. 2005. 'Utopia, social sculpture, and Burning Man.' In Lee Gilmore, and Mark Van Proyen, eds. *Afterburn: Reflections on Burning Man*. Albuquerque: The University of New Mexico Press, 151–70.
- Gilmore, Lee. 2008. 'Of ordeals and operas: reflexive ritualising at the Burning Man festival.' In Graham St John, ed. *Victor Turner and Contemporary Cultural Performance*. New York: Berghahn Books, 211–26.
- Gottdiener, Mark. 2001. *The Theming of America: Dreams, Media Fantasies, and Themed Environments*. Colorado: Westview Press.
- Haggren, Kristoffer, Elge Larsson, Christoffer Lindahl, Andie Nordgren, Leo Nordwall, and Gabriel Widing. 2005. *Interacting Arts: International Issue*. Vol. 5. <http://issuu.com/interactingarts/docs/ia-international-05>. Accessed 8 May 2013.
- Huq, Rupa. 1999. 'The right to rave: opposition to the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994.' In Tim Jordan, and Adam Lent, eds. *Storming the Millennium: The New Politics of Change*. London: Lawrence & Wishart, 15–33.
- Knight, Robin, Vikki Miller, Dee O'Connell, Lucy Siegle, Ian Tucker and Polly Vernon. 8 June 2003. 'A-Z of Summer (Part One)'. *Observer*. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/lifeandstyle/2003/jun/08/ethicalliving1>. Accessed 20 November 2013.
- Levy, M., and Windahl, S. 1985. 'The concept of audience activity.' In Karl Erik Rosengren, Lawrence A. Wenner and Philip Palmgreen, eds. *Media Gratifications Research: Current Perspectives*. California: Sage, 109–22.
- Mintel Report. 2008. *Music Concerts and Festivals*. <http://reports.mintel.com/display/280413/#>. Accessed 3 September 2014.
- Rey, P. J. 2013. 'Burning Man is the new capitalism.' *The Society Pages* (5 September 2013). <http://thesocietypages.org/cyborgology/2013/09/05/burning-man-is-the-new-capitalism/>. Accessed 3 September 2014.
- Schmitt, Bernd. H., and Simonson, Alex. 1997. *Marketing Aesthetics: the Strategic Management of Branding, Identity, and Image*. London: Free.
- Secret Garden Party website. 2014. Participation Grants Application 2014. http://www.secretgardenparty.com/2014/forms/SGP_Participation_2014.pdf. Accessed 10 May 2014.
- Turner, Fred. 2009. 'Burning Man at Google: a cultural infrastructure for new media production.' *New Media and Society* (February/March 2009) 11(1–2): 73–94.