

Snowbombing

MAYRHOFEN, AUSTRIA 31/03/08-06/04/08

* The lift grinds to a halt at the summit of the Ahorn mountain, high above the Austrian town of Mayrhofen. A guide steps up to address the gathered throng. It's dark, and unsurprisingly, chilly. A few rowdy noises made by a complement of beer boys at the back interrupt his address. "You are not going to a nightclub," says our man in the gloves, after some remonstrations from the over-eager revellers. "You are at the top of a mountain. This is going to be unlike anything you have ever experienced before."

He's not wrong - while **idj** has been treated to some peculiar sights over the last few days, nothing compares to this. Flaming candles lead the way up the snowy slope, used by skiers and boarders during the day. It looks not unlike some unearthly pagan funeral procession. What meets us over the brow of the hill is as spectacular as it is dumbfounding.

An igloo. A real life, made-of-ice-and-snow Inuit-style house thumps out sick breaks from within. A bonfire rages outside, and later threatens to become a deadly flaming game of Jenga. Inside, it's surprisingly warm, with 200 punters rammed in, fired up on beer and Jaegermeister. By the time Krafty Kuts takes to the decks, whoever's playing is purely academic

- Basshunter could be on (perhaps that's stretching it) and it would still be one of the most brilliant, indescribably barmy experiences this side of Kowloon.

And that, friends, is just the tip of the iceberg. Seeing Madness knock out a surprisingly decent greatest hits set in a forest clearing after being directed inwards by a oompah band playing disco standards was one thing. Erol Alkan rolling out a set with more acid than a barrel of really sharp lemons was another. Lindstrom, Ewan Pearson and Todd Teije were off the scale. And that's before the on-piste

antics, made possible by some truly excellent snow, during the daytime are even taken into account.

Sure, Snowbombing may be a bit pricey, and there's an occasional, minor whiff of Nathan Barley on Ice. But not even the serial blundering of British Airways at Terminal 5 (which **idj** became all too familiar with over the weekend) could have stopped this being one of the strangest, loudest and gleefully received events of the year. Summer's going to have to pull something seriously heavy out of the bag to top this.

Kristian Dando

