

Feature:: Snowbombing 2008

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Snowbombing 2008

Mayrhofen, Austria

Back for a 9th year and hosted in the Austrian village of Mayrhofen; Snowbombing truly is bigger and better than ever before this time around. New venues, bigger acts and the good people in the sky were even kind enough to provide us with some of the best spring snow you could imagine. By day you throw yourself down a mountain into beautiful crisp snow, by night you throw some Jagermesiter down yourself to beautiful crisp beats. Sounds good? It bloody well is...

The main action at Snowbombing takes place at the Europhaus, which over the course of the week sees sets from Dirty Pretty Things, Calvin Harris, The Pigeon Detectives, Foals and The Whip. Highlights include a raucous and very well received performance from Dirty Pretty Things who despite not having a tremendous amount of new material on offer are tight enough, rocky enough and committed enough to have the whole place off the floor for the duration.

Credit indeed too, to Snowbombing's organizers, who this year have installed a shit hot sounds system that does justice to just how tight Carl Barat and his band of brothers always are as a live act. The Whip provide a fleeting glimpse of what New Order might sound like if they'd listened to Britney Spears • an interesting group and great for a party which, conveniently, is exactly what everyone has come here for. Lowlight at The Europhaus over the festival is clearly Calvin Harris, who is now trying to be a rock star in his own right. Appearing with a live band and singing himself, Harris is clearly a man believing too much in his own hype. He's doing nothing Mylo wasn't doing 4 years ago, and the sooner he and everyone else wakes up to this fact, the better.

More intimate venues play host to some great up and coming acts such as Lightspeed Champion • formerly Mr Devonte Hynes (formerly of Test Icicles) who plays a really enjoyable set of modern folk for a packed Sportsbar...pretty weird choice of venue for him though this may sound.

Snowbombing, however, brands itself as 'Piste by day and beats by night' and over the course of the week DJs are very much the biggest pull at the festival. The Europhaus sees absolutely blinding sets by the Freestylers and the Stanton Warriors with breaks, breakbeat and techno that threaten to seriously damage the wonderful new sound system the organizers had brought in, to say nothing of the floor. Special mention must go to Annie Nightingale though, who at the grand old age of 50 something plays one of the most diverse and challenging sets of electro of the whole weekend. Outstanding stuff from the grand dame of British music.

Some of the real treats at Snowbombing though are in the less obvious venues a little way out of town. Madness played a set full of their golden greats in a forest clearing, ably supported by the Cuban Brothers and the Country twangs of Boss Hoss. Madness • the British Institution • can do no wrong when they slam the hits like 'Our House', 'My Girl' and 'One Step Beyond' and a well lubricated crowd at Snowbombing is more than appreciative of Suggs and the boys • the only worry with their set is that the constant bouncing up and down in the floor of the valley could cause an avalanche. The Cuban Brothers as usual show plenty of sweat, moustaches and genitalia and inevitably finish with Lionel Ritchie's 'All Night Long'...it's such a hackneyed and clichéd routine now it really, really should have got boring a long time ago. But it still hasn't once you've had the wrong side of 5 beers and a couple of the ubiquitous 'jagerbombs' [a chilling concoction of jagermeister and red bull].

The other venue deserving of very special mention is the Arctic Disco. Some 800 metres up a mountain and made entirely of snow, the Arctic Disco was the biggest it's ever been this year. 3 ice cool rooms (a bar, a chillout area and a main dancefloor) playing host to Krafty Kuts and Joe Ransom would sound pretty good wherever you are in the world • but when it's on top of the Austrian alps that experience really is lifted. Krafty Kuts played a belting party set, and when you're drunk and on top of a mountain, it's impossible not to party along with him.

So again it's hard to view Snowbombing as anything other than a roaring success: look anywhere in the village at any one time (or in particular at the street party on the Saturday afternoon) and you'll see hoards of people, many in fancy dress, smiling from ear to ear. Deep powder skiing by the day, bands AND beats by night and one of the friendliest crowds of locals and partygoers at any festival in Europe. As a journalist reviewing a festival you genuinely want to have things to criticise, but at Snowbombing it's bloody difficult to find fault. The bands still don't go down as well as the DJs, but the addition of bigger names this time around certainly helped, and it's fair to say that on the whole it's a very minor criticism. Snowbombing is 10 next year, and I assure you that is one Birthday party that you really, really don't want to miss.