

Snowbombing 2008

By Ross Purdie || 07 Apr 08

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Dressing up at festivals may be as novel an idea as BA blaming cancelled flights on snow, but when you're watching the likes of Batman, Ghostbusters and Incredible Hulk skiing badly down a red run you know you're at something special.

Back for its ninth year, **Snowbombing** combines the thrill of skiing and snowboarding by day with the biggest apres ski parties you'll encounter anywhere in the world. It takes over the Austrian town of Mayrhofen for an entire week and is quite simply the best fun you can have with your ski suit still on, although that's not even mandatory here.

The fact some revellers choose to ski naked on the final day of the festival is indicative of the fun enjoyed at Snowbombing, and of the event's carefree spirit. That's not to say the 3,000 people present, almost all from the UK, ever threaten to spoil the postcard town of **Mayrhofen** with their debauched antics. This is no **Reading Festival**. The carving is left up the mountains, the carnage reserved for the clubs, and there's a long-standing respect between locals and visitors which has allowed the week-long event to flourish and grow from year to year.

Still, from the minute of arriving punters are pointed down the proverbial black run and thrust into a wild whiteout that is entirely unique to a festival held in the lofty heights of the Alps. Around 75 DJs and 20 odd bands keep the glowsticks waving and the Jaegermeisters flowing into the early hours each night, with the relatively new 1,500-capacity **Europahaus**, boasting a sound system to rival the O2 Arena, providing the festival's focal point. It's here where the likes of **Dirty Pretty Things**, **The Whip**, **Foals** and **Pigeon Detectives** bring a more indie vibe to the festival, which until last year consisted of just DJs. Performances by **Lightspeed Champion**, **Boy Kill Boy** and **Royworld** pack out smaller venues around the compact resort.

The live highlight of the week though is **Madness'** Friday night set in the **Forest Clearing**, a new outdoor arena which has been tailor-made for Snowbombing and gives the knees-up a true festival feel. Located at the foot of the mountain, a stage, surrounding bars and even some benches for the piste-weary have been constructed using wood from the dense forests surrounding the site. German country cover band **Boss Hoss** kick off proceedings, before festival legends **The Cuban Brothers** provide their inimitable rib-tickling cabaret. **Madness** steal the show, though, with a greatest hits set featuring all their favourites like 'My Girl's Mad At Me' and 'One Step Beyond'.

But the true nature of **Snowbombing** is all about beats, and the real parties are led by those behind the decks. **Filthy Dukes**, **Freestylers**, **Annie Nightingale** and **DJ Yoda** are just a few of the tune-spinning highs from the week, all managing to keep worn muscles moving long into the night. The late afterparties, led by **Lost Souls** and **Dave Beer** among others, held down in a dingy converted car-park known as **The Garage**, ensure the true hardcore have a place to hide their faces until 7am, when its time to head back up the mountain or, more inevitably, crash out for a few hours.

The slopes host their own set of sonic delights as well. Restaurants and bars on the pistes are transformed into funky communes for merry snow dancing, with complimentary apple strudel dished out to keep those stomachs lined. But the best venue is the **Arctic Disco**, a massive igloo where the more adventurous Snowbombers are invited to witness sets by **Krafty Kuts** and **Joe Ransom** as day turns into starry night.

The now legendary street party, this year hosted by cheese revivalists **Guilty Pleasures**, takes over the town for the final night of the festival as thousands of worn out but happy Snowbombers paint the town white one final time, all decked in fancy dress and vowing to return. It's a spectacular end to an incredible event which channels the natural energy of the merging rivers of Mayrhofen with that of thousands of like-minded, party mad ski buffs. And, fortunately for him, Batman dances better than he skis.

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