

**QX FEATURE**

**BY MATT NEWBURY**



# GLASTONBURY

CAMPING may not be anything unusual for many gay boys (and tents may form in our trousers with the slightest stimulation), but the closest many of us ever come to spending an actual weekend in a field is sitting in Soho Square, safe in the knowledge that everything we need is within a matter of metres from us. It's for this reason that I received so many bewildered, bemused and incredulous looks from friends when I told them I was going to Glastonbury for the weekend. Then again, fair play. These are the same people that moaned about having to walk to Hackney Marshes when they got off the tube at last year's Mardi Gras, so they were never going to risk life and immaculately moisturised limb making an expedition to the deepest darkest wilds of Somerset.

Armed with the best from Millets, one change of clothes and enough alcopops to avoid drinking any Scrumpy for at least the first 24 hours, I took the National Express straight to the festival. On the journey, I had plenty of time to ponder why gay people have suddenly become so adverse to the sort of music festivals we once played such a huge part in the formation of. The first Glastonbury Festival of Pop, Folk and Blues was held over two days in September 1970, with the likes of T-Rex entertaining 1,500 festival go-ers, who paid just £1 to enter, with unlimited milk from the cows thrown in for good measure. There certainly would have been many gay men and women present, (just like there would have been back at Woodstock) enjoying the freedom, diversity and sexual expression that such an event offers. The first Pyramid Stage was built to align with the alleged Stonehenge/Glastonbury leyline, which, according to drug-hazed folk law, caused a shimmering fairy to hover above the stage during the proceedings.

Once our coach has driven past several miles of men with Liverpudlian accents selling tickets at grossly inflated, I find myself

wandering through an early evening heat haze, past smiling faces, all impossibly excited about another lost weekend in a truly idyllic setting. For a minority who pride themselves on celebrating our diversity, suddenly Soho seems especially clinical, uniformed and, dare I say, tepid, while the fields of Avalon radiate a warmth I haven't felt since taking mushrooms ten years ago in University. Oh god, I'm turning into a hippy!

With the tent set up (and thanks to Millets for not providing instructions) it was time to explore the 600 acres of space, a mind-expanding concept when you live in London and can't even throw a Frisbee for fear of hitting a line of people in a bus queue. Contrary to the popular belief amongst most of my friends, the place is not just about beardy-weirdies living in tee-pees and skipping around the hillside singing about pixies, although there's plenty of those around. It's certainly one of the largest and most well organised events of its kind in Europe, with enough distractions to fill two weeks of aimless wandering.

The Brigadoon-style town that appears for just one long weekend a year, perfectly walks the fine line between the commercial and the uniquely independent. The skyline of the Greenfields, an area about ideas, innovations, colourful crafts and fair trade ideals, is filled with so many rainbow peace flags I feel like I have suddenly stumbled into the largest open-air gay pride event ever. Meanwhile, the Field of Lost Vagueness precociously puts two fingers up (in a peace symbol direction of course) at those who think the festival is just about mud and inadequate toilet facilities. This 'lavishly decorated vaudevillian metropolis' features a champagne and cocktails arena, tea dances, a casino, and a sit-down a la carte restaurant boasting world-class chefs with chandeliers, fountains and a strict dress code for an evening of decadence without a lentil burger in sight.



*"lose it with the music"*

# SUMMER JAM

## POOL PARTY 20.07.03

**LET THE SUMMER FUN BEGIN**

**POOL.BBQ.ICECREAM.BAR.DANCE.DJ'S.CLUB.**

**AN OUTDOOR/INDOOR SUNDAY PARTY FOR ALL, 12 NOON - 12 MIDNIGHT SUNDAY 20.07.03**

£10 ENTRY/£8 WITH THIS FLYER/£6 ADVANCE TICKET PRICE

JAM HOTLINE: 020 79359116

@ **EGG**

**EGG 200 YORK WAY KING CROSS, LONDON (5 MINS FROM KINGS X ST)**



Of course, this is just the tip of a meticulously handcrafted iceberg of entertainment. There are the Healing Fields for those who fancy a massage that doesn't cost £50 an hour, also a Circus & Theatre Field and a Cabaret Stage. There are also miles of retail opportunities, although stand in one spot for long enough and you'll be offered everything you could possibly ever want in life from jelly shots to hash cakes to wax-flares. Of course, music is the reason many still come and with at least eight stages, offering everything from stadium-sized crowd pullers to the best in new talent, there's something for everyone and then some.

There's many initiatives at Glastonbury that would seem to represent the lost ideals of gay festivals of yore, including a massive political and charity aspect, with a percentage of ticket sales going to Greenpeace, Water Aid, and Oxfam and their Fair Trade campaign fronted by Coldplay's Chris Martin. Free condoms are at hand (well if it rains there's an awful lot of nocturnal fumbings going on in the tents), while warnings about pissing in the rivers and recycling seemed to cover the environmental aspects.

Of course, not all gay people are as blinkered to the possibilities of festivals that haven't been completely cleansed to our liking. In fact, my gaydar was going wild the whole weekend. Unfortunately, there was also an unfeasible amount of cute student types in khaki shorts I couldn't convert. Glastonbury was an escape from the protective gay Utopia we've created in the centre of London, and perhaps that's why I enjoyed myself so much; I'd been chillin' with a diversity of people even more colourful than our rainbow flag. The sun shone and for the first time I got a taste of what those 60's festivals must have been about, but with the added bonus of having cash point machines, wine bars and somewhere to charge up my mobile phone.

**Tempted? Well there's still plenty of festival frivolities to be had, as Glastonbury heralds the start of Summer festivals and most with tickets still available.**

**The Reading Festival  
22nd - 24th August**

Not a special drive to combat illiteracy, but one of Britain's oldest and best rock festivals, perfectly timed to coincide with the August Bank Holiday weekend. Highlights this year include Billy Bragg, Blink 182, Courtney Love, Doves, Linkin Park, Metallica, Placebo, Primal Scream, Sum 41, The Cooper Temple Clause, The Polyphonic Spree, The White Stripes, The Streets and Less Than Jake. Since 1999, it has formed the Southern part of The Carling Weekend, the only three-day dual site music festival in the world, with its younger sister, The Leeds Festival.

**V2003  
Hylands Park, Chelmsford  
16th August - 17th August**

The 60,000 capacity event happening simultaneously in Staffordshire (with acts alternating over the two sites over the two days) abandons the ideologies of other festivals for full-tilt corporate chaos. Arguably a better line-up than this year's Glastonbury (and that's saying something) highlights include Ash, Big Brovaz, Coldplay, David Gray, Feeder, Mis-Teeq, PJ Harvey, Queens Of The Stone Age, Red Hot Chili Peppers, Super Furry Animals, The Cardigans, The Foo Fighters, The Hives, Turin Brakes and Underworld.

**Details of these and other festivals are available at [www.virtualfestivals.com](http://www.virtualfestivals.com)**



**The Comedy**  
BAR CLUB SPORT VIP

**THE WEST END'S BIGGEST PUB VENUE**

**OFFICIAL OPENING  
FRIDAY 18 JULY 2003**

4 floors of entertainment in the heart of London's glittering Piccadilly that'll keep you smiling all night!

- Relax on luxurious leather couches and real beds in our top floor table service lounge
- The latest big screen sports action in our huge sports lounge complete with 2 American pool tables
- Meet friends in our traditional ground floor bar serving a selection of great value food from noon until 8pm
- Get down to our basement club venue from 10pm for music, live entertainment and loads more

CHARITY PRIZE DRAW FOR UK COALITION including

**THE BODY SHOP** **EXPECTATIONS** **Alternative** **prowler**

**THE COMEDY: something for everyone!**

The Comedy, Oxendon St, London SW1Y 4EE (nearest tube Piccadilly) T 020 7839 7261