



## Live: Electric Zoo Brings PLUR (And Snoop Dogg's DJ Alter Ego) To New York City

By Puja Patel Tue., Sep. 6 2011

**Better than:** Did someone already reference the Labor Day shootings? Eesh.

Electric Zoo—the dance music festival that's parts techno, house, trance, disco, bass, "electro," and any other somewhat popular genre of music with a beat—is something that you have to mentally prepare for. The crowds make up one of the mental barricades, if only because an island rave called "Electric Zoo" makes real the thought of being sandwiched between thousands of furry boots and glowing fingernails clawing euphorically at the air or, even worse, your hair. But if there's one thing that was made clear from our time there, it's that your pre-festival meditation routines aren't necessary. While it certainly is a spectacle, Electric Zoo was probably the happiest place on earth last weekend.

Traditionally Detroit's Movement festival and Miami's Ultra—a.k.a. "the new WMC"—have held the market with regards to curated dance festivals, but Electric Zoo has a free-spirited air that makes it a little more accessible to the masses. The trees held hundreds of disco balls and already-glowing strings of lights, giving festivalgoers who had decided to take a break a festive respite. A huge wrought-iron raindrop art installation encouraged users to climb inside and meditate; booths gave out free water bottles to anyone who picked up discarded plastic from the fields for recycling; and there was a station where workers painted animal faces on each other. There was plenty of glitter involved.

That said, Electric Zoo wasn't a hippie rave. The unabashed embrace of crossover genres and inclusion of huge trance/pop/celeb DJs makes the festival something like the Coachella of dance music. It's a place where college students discovering David Guetta by way of Chris Brown (ugh) can party with members of Skrillex's cult and longtime Luciano fans. (Having a twenty-one year-old brother in tow will give you some perspective.) The four stages are cross-curated by genre and chronology, it seems.

There was the Sunday School, a tent where techno and house legends like Carl Cox, Danny Tenaglia, and Carl Craig headlined sets over newer acts like Nicolas Jarr. The Riverside tent hosted the electro and bass contingent with Ed Banger's Busy P and Sebastian, party ravers Crookers and Hardwell, and live performances by Kid Sister and Egyptrixx, among others. The Hilltop Arena was the new-wave dance blogger's dream with performances by MSTRKRFT, Dirty South, Fake Blood, Jack Beats, and Datsik. And the main stage served as a reminder that the crossover between trance, house and the radio is realer than ever: Tiësto, Moby, Benny Benassi, David Guetta, Calvin Harris, and DJ Snoopadelic all made appearances.

Yes, Snoop Dogg is now a DJ. No, we didn't have the pleasure of seeing him. We did, however, see "Look At Me Now" collaborators Afrojack and Diplo go head-to-head on neighboring stages. Afrojack played a set that was made up largely of his own productions and fist-pumping crowd pleasers—his Pitbull/Ne-Yo collab "Give Me Everything" and "Rolling in the Deep" vs. his own "Replica" included. Diplo, on the other hand, cross-promoted his label Mad Decent by bringing out Maluca to perform over moombahton. (Rumor had it that Usher was supposed to appear as well—Diplo just finished a track for his upcoming album—but the RnB crooner was a no-show.) Elsewhere, Infected Mushroom brought their live trance-meets-terror dance act to life with a mosh-inducing stage show that included two glowing evil mushrooms floating on stage to "Becoming Insane."

The festival ended with huge closing performances by Richie Hawtin and Armin van Buuren. While Hawtin's Plastikman performance was canceled thanks to residual Irene issues, his DJ set was a nonstop groove of techno and tech-house. A teenager in a panda hat walked aimlessly through the dark tent giving out high-fives; a neon-clad couple did acrobatics on the dance floor; and the more focused Hawtin fans sprung to life at the onset of even the most minor shifts in his hypnotic set.

The scene by the main stage was something else entirely. Armin van Buuren, in front of ten thousand or so revelers, played hypeman to the end of summer. Proclamations of love for New York and bomb blasts of confetti rained over the island as he led the masses in a remixed chorus of Depeche Mode's "Personal Jesus." Flags from Brazil, Israel, Canada, and (of course) the United States flew from the backs of more patriotic revelers in the crowd while we spotted a kid spinning in circles in his wheelchair on the outskirts. And while plenty of inadvertent punches were thrown via fist-pumping, at Electric Zoo, they came with easy apologies and offers to buy the victim a drink.

#### **Critical bias:** PLUR

**Overheard:** [As "Armin van Buuren" flashes on the main stage screen.] "Isn't that the guy I talked about *Glee* with at that bar?" "No, that was Armand van Helden."

**Random notebook dump:** Faux fur boots are for people to pet while they're on drugs. Right?