Time Out New York

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Electric Zoo

An electronic-music megafest hits NYC. By Bruce Tantum



POWER PLAYERS De Palma, left, and Bindra are Electric Zoo's motivating forces.
Photograph: Peter Drier for Made-Event.com

"We're doing okay, just a *little* stressed out," Made Event's Mike Bindra calmly states only a short while before the inaugural Electric Zoo festival hits Gotham over Labor Day weekend. "After we get through this week, it will just be about execution. And then there's the weather." His Made partner, Laura De Palma, chimes in: "We're really not too worried about that, either; three out of the four arenas are tented, so we're ready." That Bindra and De Palma can seem so matter-of-fact just before what will be (if everything goes even remotely according to plan) New York's biggest electronic-dance-music hoedown in...well, forever, is a wonder. The event features a huge lineup of DJs and artists, and must have been an absolute bitch to organize, what with agents, managers, city officials, vendors and everything else that had to be dealt with for an event this size. "We got into this knowing that it would be a task-filled number of months," De Palma says. "We just looked back at the biggest events Made had done in the past and multiplied that by three or four times, and just told ourselves, 'Well, this is what has to be done, so this is what we have to do.'?"

What they've done is bring together more than 50 local, national and worldwide players—many of them among the scene's biggest house and techno superstars, and *all* of them members of nightlife's premier league—to play over two days on Randalls Island. Much of the list will be well known to even the most casual of clubbers, with arena-trance titan Armin van Buuren, pop-house doyen David Guetta, former Everything but the Girl maestro (and current Buzzin' Fly boss) Ben Watt, cosmic-disco kings Lindstrøm and Prins Thomas, and local faves like Basic NYC's Sleepy & Boo, as well as Fixed's JDH and Dave P, among the talent on hand. But there are a number of acts that may be a bit less familiar to the general public, and while almost the entire lineup is well worth checking out, here are a few absolute musts.



Martin Buttrich
He hasn't *quite* achieved the same level of fame as, say, Richie Hawtin, Steve Bug and Luciano (all of whom are also playing Electric Zoo), but Buttrich has made some of the most interesting techno of this millennium, for labels including Carl Craig's Planet E and Bug's Poker Flat. It's the latter that put out 2006's chugging, almost bluesy "Cloudy Bay," one of the best dance tracks of the decade.



Heidi
The sole female on top German electronic-house label Get Physical, the Canadian-born Heidi is also in the minority at Electric Zoo; Boo is the only other female playing at the festival. But Heidi will be more than able to take on those punk-ass boys—it's not for nothing that she hosts BBC Radio 1's *In New DJs We Trust* and spins her tech-funk rhythms at clubs like Berlin's Watergate and London's Fabric.

Mark Ernestus
One of the most innovative artists in a lineup full of them, Ernestus has worked with his usual partner Moritz von Oswald (among a handful of other producers) to introduce the concept of dub technique to techno, via their Basic Channel and Maurizio projects. The pair's Rhythm & Sound productions moved deeper into reggae territory, an area Ernestus (sans Von Oswald for the day) will be exploring at Electric Zoo with vocal assistance from veteran Milton Henry.



Château Flight
If you think Paris is all about buzzing electro à la Kitsuné or Ed Banger, then Château Flight—the decade-plus pairing of Gilb'r and I:Cube—will be a revelation. The duo's music vaguely fits into the shelf marked "deep house," but, in the words of Gilb'r, "Château Flight is a pure playground project"—meaning we should be ready for some weird and wonderful beats.

Electric Zoo is on Randalls Island Sat 5 and Sun 6.