





Made Event has raised the bar with Electric Zoo

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Photos: Electric Zoo Day 1 and Electric Zoo Day 2 by Simon Beridot.

It happens every year.

First, it's the lineups that get you salivating. Then, after they're over, you jealously check out YouTube clips and online photo galleries. You can download live recordings. But being there yourself? Very difficult.

I'm talking about all those ridiculous European electronic music festivals, the events that take place all over the continent all summer long. Monegros. Awakenings. SW4. DanceValley. Exit Festival. Glastonbury. Huge, powerful sound systems. Massive stages, fully done up. Clublike tents. And performers that read like the cream of the crop of what's happening in dance music right now.

To say that the US is at a disadvantage to Europe when it comes to electronic music would be an understatement. That's not to say that we don't have some great clubs, some lively crowds, and some key performers of our own. But overall, electronic music in America is a niche, urban culture that struggles to get its share of the limelight. Confined primarily to the nightclubs (especially here on the East Coast), the opportunities for dance fans to hear this music in a full-on, festival-like environment are extremely rare.

That's why this weekend's **Electric Zoo festival** in **New York** was such a revelation on so many levels. The **unqualified success of the event** proved that not only could New York stage such a festival, but that it could do it right, thoroughly wowing the crowds, who in turn wowed the performers with their enthusiasm and eagerness to be a part of something big and epic. This is what has been missing from the mix here in New York for so many years: the chance to get wrapped up in something massive; to feel the music and the crowd and the energy all around; to see performers removed from the nocturnal haunts that they can usually be found in.

We arrived at the Festival early on Saturday, a few hours before the gates were open to the public, and it was a breathtaking site. A huge field of emerald green grass lay before us, with the Festival's four areas (three tents and one huge stage), scattered throughout. Staff were everywhere. The vending and food areas were clearly identified. A closer look inside the tents revealed **huge lighting rigs**, **stages loaded with sound gear**, and **sound systems that could clearly pack quite a punch**. Everything was ready to go, and go it did.

As one of the first DJs to go on, we weren't quite sure what to expect. Would it be a late crowd? Would they be skeptical at first? But within minutes of putting our first track on, we knew this was going to be something special. As our sounds filled the tent, the **crowd started streaming in**, **dancing** and **wearing wide smiles** (and sunglasses). Several of our friends and fans took up positions right in front, which energized us. And as we picked up the tempo with the music, the crowd responded in kind - clapping and cheering as the breaks came in, then throwing their hands up and roaring with approval as the beats came back. For being only an hour and a half into the festival, and to be confronted with a **crowd so overwhelmingly enthusiastic**, it was a **powerful realization for us of just how excited the people were to finally have something like Electric Zoo**.

It was only an hour, but it was a set that will stick with us for quite a while. And I have to imagine that this is the reaction that most of the DJs had at Electric Zoo. **DJs are just like clubbers in that they want to be at the best party, they want to have a memorable experience, a night to remember**. And while New Yorkers may be known as a finicky bunch, the crowd at Electric Zoo reinforced something that we've come to realize at our own Basic NYC parties: **put a DJ in the right place, with the right crowd, and you'll still be able to create something very special**. New York used to be known as one of the great clubbing cities in the world, and while the era of the super club seems to be waning, the spirit of the city that made these clubs so special can still be felt.



The rest of our experience at Electric Zoo was spent exploring, checking everything out, hearing great music, catching up with friends and other DJs. Everyone - from the Zoo goers to the DJs - had pretty much the same reaction, a mixture of praise and awe for what they were experiencing. **There was a little something for everyone** to enjoy musically, from the steady diet of tough techno in the Sunday School tent, to the surprising diversity of main stage performers (everything from dub reggae to full-on trance). Even if you stayed mostly on familiar ground, you had no choice but to be exposed to something different simply by walking through the festival grounds.

As performers, the treatment we received at Electric Zoo was unparalleled: it was red carpet, all the way, all the time. We had our own air conditioned dressing room with WiFi and snacks where we could prepare and relax; we had a dedicated hospitality team member who drove us to and from our stage; there was an open bar backstage where the artists and reps could hang out. But overall it was the attitude and demeanor that really impressed us: every staff person we encountered was enthusiastic, super helpful, and ready to take care of your every need. While this may be par for the course for most festivals, the fact that Made Event nailed this so thoroughly on their first try was really impressive.

We've been trying to figure out what exactly it was that made Electric Zoo feel so special to so many people. I think **the key was that Made Event focused on a few things,**

and made all of them the best that they could be. They boiled the festival experience down to what needed to be done right, and nailed it; they didn't get sidetracked by extraneous things. It was all about the logistics and making sure those went smoothly, all about making the sound systems and stages world class. By keeping everything clean and simple, they created an environment where the crowd could focus on having fun. The same principles held for the DJs too.

I wouldn't go as far as to say that Electric Zoo itself could lead to an electronic music renaissance here in New York, but being a part of the event is certainly inspiring stuff. It shows you that there's more to the culture than just what you see in the clubs, and there's a much bigger audience out there than the regular faces you see. There's room to grow. **And when everything is done right, you can still have the kind of experience that would impress even the most veteran clubbers**. If anything, **Made Event has raised the bar with Electric Zoo**, and that can only be good. Now, instead of expecting disappointment, we should all hope for greatness; instead of anticipating a letdown, we can all strive for something spectacular. **Congratulations and thank you to Made Event for creating this festival for us all**.