3 Days of Peace & Music & Fashion
: A History of Festival Dress from Woodstock to Coachella

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Abstract Since their emergence in the 1960s, music festivals have attracted young people the world over with similar tastes, attitudes and styles. Now a worldwide phenomenon, music festivals such as Glastonbury in England, Primavera Sound in Barcelona, Spain and Pentaport Rock Festival in Incheon, South Korea draw hundreds of thousands of attendees from around the world and have become a major event not only for music fans, but for trend forecasters who now chronicle what has come to be known as “festival fashion”, which has several distinctive style markers. This paper provides a historical background of festival fashion, examines the phenomenon using fashion theory and discusses the controversies facing the music festival and festival fashion, in particular the role that sponsorship from major corporations currently plays as advertisers who want to get their products into the hands of influential festival attendees and allegations of cultural appropriation on the part of attendees. In conclusion, the future of music festivals and festival fashion as a category is examined.

Key words Festival Fashion, Fashion Trends, Music and Fashion, Bohemian, Hippie

Introduction

The History of Music Festivals

The influence of music festivals on mainstream fashion has been a phenomenon since the 1960s, however that influence has become increasingly chronicled by fashion media and commercialized by fashion designers since the early 2000s. Today, what is commonly known as festival fashion or Coachella style (referring to the largest and most significant music festival) has largely entered mainstream fashion for young female consumers. In order to fully comprehend the significance of contemporary music festivals, it is crucial to understand the history of these events, their commercial evolution, and continued draw as a gathering place for young people who embrace what they would consider an alternative viewpoint (to varying degrees) to that of mainstream society.

While rock is the genre of music most closely associated with the music festival, the concept of music festivals began by featuring more conventional forms of music. The first Newport Jazz Festival was held in 1954 (“How Newport”, 2015) and was modeled on the Tanglewood Festival, a classical music festival based in Lennox, Massachusetts that dated back to August 1934 (“The History”, n.d.).

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Following in the path of these more mainstream predecessors, the advent of rock music festivals can be traced back to the summer of 1967, known as the “Summer of Love” for the series of cultural events that started in the San Francisco Bay Area that gave rise to the emerging hippie subculture. The Human Be-In was a major multi-arts event that was another direct precursor to the rock music festivals for which the era became famous. Held in San Francisco’s Golden Gate Park on January 14, 1967, with estimated attendance between 10,000 and 50,000, the Human Be-In combined musical acts such as the Grateful Dead and Jefferson Airplane, speakers including poet Allen Ginsburg and comedian Dick Gregory, protests against the Vietnam War and audience consciousness-raising activities. The San Francisco Be-In also had a Los Angeles counterpart known as the Love-In (Leff, 2007).

Following the Human Be-In, a few seminal music festivals from the years 1967-1969 set the tone for what is now the standard format for a music festival, and established these events as the premiere gathering place for creative, uninhibited young people. What is considered to be the earliest rock music festival is the little-known KFRC Fantasy Fair and Magic Mountain Music Festival, which was held June 10-11, 1967 on Mount Tamalpais in Marin County, California (Newman, 2014). The event drew over 30 musical acts including the Doors, the Byrds, Jefferson Airplane, attracted 30,000 attendees and went on to lay the blueprint for future events like Woodstock. Some of the Magic Mountain organizers went on to have key positions in the planning and logistics of Woodstock (Newman, 2014).

**Monterey International Pop Festival**

Commonly acknowledged as the world’s first major rock festival, the Monterey International Pop Festival was held June 16-18, 1967. Renown for launching the careers of music icons such as Jimmy Hendrix, who gained notoriety for lighting his guitar on fire and Otis Redding in his last live appearance before his tragic death as the result of a plane crash, the festival also featured such luminaries as Janis Joplin as lead singer of Big Brother and the Holding Company and was the first US performance of The Who. In addition to establishing the format for music festivals, another convention – the festival film – was also pioneered in Monterey with director D.A. Pennebaker’s concert film “Monterey Pop” (Harrington, 2006).

**Woodstock**

The most famous of all music festivals, the Woodstock Music and Arts Fair, popularly known as “Woodstock” was held August 15-17 1969, at a six-hundred-acre farm owned by Max Yasgur near the rural community of Bethel, New York. While the organizers anticipated two hundred thousand attendees, ultimately close to half a million people attended the festival. Despite problems such as traffic jams, insufficient food, toilets and medical care, problems with security and drugs, and two rainstorms, Woodstock was a peaceful event with no arrests for violence, and represented the flower power ethos that the hippies espoused. In the years since, Woodstock has come to symbolize the entire hippie era and its association with the peace movement, free love and drug culture before coming to an end at the dawn of the