

Tess Christian (And Charles Sharr Murray) (599 words)

## THE 1234 (SHOREDITCH MUSIC) FESTIVAL

All I'd set out to do was hold a free music festival. And what I delivered was fast becoming a logistical nightmare for the police, a noise nuisance for the neighbouring properties and an environmental health hazard as thousands of people urinated wherever in the area they could.

By mid-morning of Sunday 4th July 2007, the sun was already ablaze and the first few thousand fans started to arrive to a unknown park in Shoreditch to attend a free indie music festival. At 3pm a police helicopter hovered above and radioed down to the ground police to inform the festival organisers that around 17,000 people were now packed into the park with more still coming in from the surrounding streets.

Panic, elation and a guilty conscience filled my brain. I was responsible for this. As one of the organisers, I hadn't expected this turnout. "Play on and be damned," I said to Sean McClusk, my partner in crime. With two dance tents, one main stage and one new bands stage all packed beyond capacity with happily pissed-up reveller, stopping this merry mayhem would have caused a riot. "It's better to play out peacefully, then bring it to a premature end" Sean advised the police. They agreed that attempting to disperse this amount of people would be an impossibility, as no-one on site had any radios or maps, and security was minimal. We had no crowd control. I wasn't expecting thousands of people: a couple of hundred was all I had anticipated. But a hot sunny day, free entry and an exceptional band line-up was all it took to turn this into a modern-day Woodstock.

I was marooned in a corner of the park in a outdoor camp that served as the production area. If you wanted someone, you had to send a runner who inevitably returned an hour later if they returned at all. Unprofessional? Yes, it was, that was what made us so unique. That's why the bands and fans loved us and the police hated us: we, 'The 1234', were inaccessible (no office, no lanyards or steward t-shirts for identification) and useless. Bands arriving on tour buses were told to park where they could on the street and find their own way to whatever stage they were playing on. Band riders were non-existent. Tour managers were stunned by the lack of hospitality and facilities. The bands themselves didn't give a shit. They were eager to play,

buoyed by the vast crowds and fantastic party atmosphere. Bands such as Florence & The Machine inched and dragged their equipment to their stages without complaint. Our headliner, Har Mar Superstar from New York, brought his mate with him to play drums. “Whats your name?” I asked “Fabrizio Moretti,” he replied. “Blimey you sound like an exotic flavoured ice cream” I said and sent them both on on their way with a crate of lager that I insisted Moretti carried for the main stage crew who were dying of thirst. Later I found out that Har Mar’s mate was the drummer out of The Strokes and had never been likened to an ice cream before.

“How the fuck did YOU get to put this shit on?” asked former Clash manager Bernie Rhodes, who’d queued for over an hour to get into the park and was pissed off because I couldn’t provide a chair or park bench for him to sit on.

“Coz I’m stupid” I replied.