

# Arts Mud, sweat and cheers

It rained, of course, but the show always goes on. And **Ian Burrell** found plenty of silver linings in the clouds drenching Glastonbury 2007

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EXTRA 15

If ever there's rain during the summer solstice weekend, comparisons are inevitably made between the terrain at the Glastonbury festival and the battlefields of the Great War. So, with apologies to Rupert Brooke, it might be said that this year at around 4.15pm each afternoon during the world's most famous music fest, some corner of the Circus Field was forever England.

Here, in possibly the most boot-wrenching gluepot of the entire festival site, an extraordinary group of musicians in turquoise shirts, waistcoats, hats or turquoise-dyed hair danced around in their Wellington boots and hammered out an intoxicating rhythm from saxophones, trumpets and all manner of percussive instruments. "Just don't call us a salsa band," said the Carnival Collective, who, despite their Latin American-style massed ranks and hip-swinging dancers, come from the Sussex coast - their sound not so much Batucada as live drum'n'bass.

The spirit of the Carnival Collective summed up what Glastonbury does best when the rain comes. In the face of conditions that would defy any other form of communal activity, the music at Worthy Farm goes on, preferably performed in fancy dress. So it was entirely appropriate

that Shirley Bassey should strut onto the Pyramid Stage late Sunday afternoon, dripping pink diamanté and belting out the most materialistic of anthems ("Goldfinger", "Diamonds Are Forever") to a crowd slowly sinking into a brown morass that even the local Somerset cattle would hesitate to call home.

Some might say that odes to glitzy jewellery are wholly appropriate to modern Glastonbury, with its many corporate sponsors, celebrity punters, record number of camper vans and newly won place in the English "season". Certainly there were Kate and Pete wannabes all over: aviator sunglasses for her, jaunty black trilby for him.

Yet though Babyshambles drew a large crowd to the Other Stage early on Saturday evening (with Moss appearing to say her line in "La Belle et La Bête"), the true spirit of the festival was to be found elsewhere. Later that night, up in the new Park area, musicians from Africa were collaborating with British indie rockers and grime rappers, just for the fun of it. "Something a bit spontaneous is about to happen," the crowd was told, as surprise artist after surprise artist took to a stage that was set between two Roman columns, each topped with a flame.

The Tuareg group Tinariwen, in their long white robes and

black headscarfs, provided the backing musicianship to Beta Band offshoot The Aliens. "It's an E... and an A7", the Malian guitarists were told, given barely a couple of seconds' rehearsal time. During an evening of cross-cultural jamming entitled "Africa Express", Billy Bragg, Hard-Fi, Baaba Maal, Fatboy Slim, Kano, Damon Albarn, Tony Allen, The Magic Numbers and Amadou &

The Specials' "Message to You Rudy", accompanied by Albarn and beatboxer Shlomo.

Down on the Pyramid Stage, things were not going quite so smoothly for The Killers. Having performed brilliantly in the New Bands tent in 2004, they returned to Glastonbury in 2005, and on Saturday night completed a hat-trick as headliners on the main stage. But something

held aloft by his friends - helped to build a sense of occasion, but you couldn't help but think that singer Brandon Flowers would have been less than happy. Sure enough, the following day festival organiser Michael Eavis was apologising for the Pyramid Stage's new PA system. "We tried it at the (Glastonbury) Abbey but it's not quite strong enough for us here. I'm slightly disappointed with that. I think it's too quiet."

Some of those who abandoned The Killers' set headed to the Other Stage, where Iggy and The Stooges were giving one of the best performances of the festival. Here the cry was not "Turn it up" but "Let 'em up", shouted by Iggy himself as he encouraged scores of fans to join him on stage.

On Friday, the London singer, Kate Nash, won new friends with a well-received set at the Park Stage, where fans waved flags saying "Leave The Tent, Come and Find Kate Nash". That same evening, Montreal's Arcade Fire, mixing violin, accordion and rock'n'roll, performed memorably against a glowing sunset on the Other Stage.

Sadly, the red sky did nothing to halt the relentless rain, which reduced the festival to a test of physical endurance. Festival-goers were better prepared than in years past, and the newly installed drainage system helped keep the number of flooded tents

to a minimum. But a plentiful supply of rubber boots, combined with a lack of grass on which to sit, meant that the record-sized army of punters remained almost permanently on the move, ploughing up the site even more.

By Sunday night, the sound for Manic Street Preachers at the Pyramid Stage appeared to have been turned up, suggesting that the low volume might have been down to neighbour-pleasing rather than the new PA itself. Kaiser Chiefs appeared to enjoy themselves, too. Singer Ricky Wilson encouraged crowd participation. "So Glastonbury is quite good at singin' along - you want to sing along some more?" he asked, before the band launched into "Na Na Na Na Naa".

The Who arrived to close the show, though by then thousands had already slopped off to the car parks and train stations (or to casualty, for the 14 unfortunates who broke ankles after falling victim to "gluefoot" in the mud). But the sight of Pete Townshend's windmilling right arm, chopping through classics such as "I Can't Explain", "Won't Get Fooled Again" and "Baba O'Riley", was what many had come for. They stood in the sheets of rain and sang along with Roger Daltrey, who was reportedly nursing a cold. Under the weather, Roger soldiered on - rather like Glastonbury 2007 itself.



MATT CARDY/GETTY IMAGES

Mariam all appeared to make their contributions.

The remarkable evening culminated with a mass rendition of the Algerian singer Rachid Taha's hit Arabic version of The Clash's "Rock the Casbah", led by Taha and Albarn. Another highlight was Terry Hall and Lynval Golding reuniting to sing

wasn't quite right. The crowds had turned out in huge numbers, but some were quickly picking their boots up out of the mud and heading off, as a spontaneous chant of "Turn it up, turn it up" went up. Impressive pyrotechnics - aided during the performance of "Mr Brightside" by one punter wielding a red flare and