

impact of music festivals on fashion

By Erin Renzi

As my friend lifted me up onto his shoulders, I rose above the entire crowd at the 2021 Governor's Ball Music Festival. The beginning of Post Malone's song "Motley Crew" started playing, and the mash of people screamed. The lights on the stage glowed orange and red, illuminating the sheer amount of people surrounding me dressed in unique festival outfits and covered in glitter. When the beat dropped, the entire crowd began jumping in unison and — for lack of better words — I felt like I was on top of the world.


The height of the COVID-19 pandemic temporarily put one of life's biggest joys on hold: live music. As the world adjusted to its "new normal," the music industry adjusted with it, and some artists held virtual concerts. These events temporarily filled a void most people felt while being confined to the four walls of their homes, but nothing compares to the adrenaline rush achieved by attending a live music performance. The elaborate lights on stage, the sensation of the music in your chest and feeling connected to a group of strangers because you share the same love for a collection of songs is unmatched. As someone who loves fashion, one of my favorite things to do at a concert is to look at the different outfits, hairstyles and makeup looks attendees are sporting. Music festivals create even greater grounds for creatively expressing oneself through personal style.

Whether it be Rolling Loud, Lollapalooza or The Governor's Ball, a popular way of dress for music festivals today is the "rave girl" aesthetic, which includes crop tops, neon colors and lots of glitter. Jenny Fern, a third year journalism major at Emerson College, attended the 2021 Governors Ball and emulated this aesthetic on the first day of the festival. She wore black flowy linen pants and a bright orange cowl neck top with an open back, accessorizing with a chain belt,

chain necklaces and orange lipstick. "I had glitter all over because it's a festival, I feel like that's a given. In my head rave is associated with very bright colors and minimal clothing, so I was trying to do that a little bit," Fern said.

Taking inspiration from rave fashion is a popular choice for music festivals today, but this wasn't always the case. At Woodstock — a cultural reset of the 1960s — women freed the nipple, and people wore tie dye, tiny crocheted tops and denim on denim. According to "A Look back At Each Decade Of Festival Fashion, From The '60s To Today," an article from Refinery29, "left-leaning youth were disillusioned and looking for an alternative to the status quo" when Woodstock occurred. This mindset can account for the clothing worn to the festival being "provocative" along with bare feet and nudity. At Glastonbury in the 1970s, Doc Martens became popular and a symbol of punk. Festivals held in the 1980s showcased iconic trends from the decade on and off stage:





T-shirts with slogans, leather jackets, square Ray Bans and layered jewelry. Festival fashion of the 1990s reflected grunge and angst.

More recently, music festival fashion is a blend of festival fashion from previous decades. If you go to a festival in 2021, you'll see people wearing as little clothes as possible, the freeing of the nipple, colorful graphic T's, funky pants, glitter and ripped denim pieces. Many of these trends are also popular for everyday wear. Music festivals are a commentary on contemporary trends, many of which we have stolen from previous decades.

The most freeing aspect when picking an outfit for a music festival is the lack of pressure to adhere to current fashion trends. At The Governors Ball many festival goers had elements of Y2K fashion trends incorporated into their outfits (picture butterfly clips and lowrise pants) and unsurprisingly so, since late 90s and early 2000s fashion has come back around in the trend cycle. Even if Y2K styles weren't on trend currently, a music festival is a place where almost any fashion choice is viable. You can choose to align with current trends or make your own statement.

Performers express themselves through music, and the audience members express themselves through personal style. Ferm participated in the rave girl aesthetic for one of the Governors Ball, but she used the two other days to experiment with self-expression. For the second day, Ferm and her friends dressed in emo fashion and for the third day, they all wore cow-boy-inspired outfits. While none of the days aligned with her everyday style, the festival gave Ferm a chance to experiment with clothing.

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“I enjoyed dressing up because I don't usually dress in that kind of attire when I'm going to concerts in Boston,” Ferm said. “It was a great way to express a completely different fashion side that I don't usually do.”

As we come out of the pandemic, dressing up for a music festival becomes all the more exciting, especially if you have never attended one before. Emma Tigerman, a fourth year Northeastern University student attended the Governors Ball for the first time this year. She wore a bright pink cropped shirt with a zipper down the front and a metallic purple skirt. “The lack of live music and festivals due to COVID definitely made me more excited for Gov Ball itself, but the fact that I had never been to a music festival at all was what made me the most excited to dress up.”