

LEISURE

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It was a real scorcher in more ways than one

By Karen Goodwin
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A FOUR-DAY independent music and word festival in Pippingford Manor Park proved a major success in fittingly scorching conditions.

Scattered over glorious woodland in Nutley, Uckfield, the Byline Festival saw guest speakers and campers gather to watch headline acts including Pussy Riot, Lowkey and Sussex rock band The Feeling.

But the climbing temperatures were never far from the gig-goers' minds and it seemed apt to be listening to panel discussions on climate change and witnessing Extinction Rebellion's funeral procession as part of the opening ceremony.

Festival Poet Laureate Salena Godden did an amazing job of rousing the apathetic in the audience.

In an intimate set on the Forest Forum Stage, she delivered passionate poems on the burning Amazon rainforest, period poverty and her spoken word rallying cry "can't be bovvered", inciting the listener to action.

With a tagline promising to "dance, discuss, laugh and change the world" the festival did not disappoint.

A discussion on the subversion of democracy hosted by Carole Cadwaladr (investigative journalist/The Great Hack) with Nadya Tolokonnikova (Pussy Riot) and Luke Harding (The Guardian) gave plenty of food for thought.

Comedian and broadcaster Hardeep Singh Kohli was on hand to provoke, doubling as an impromptu late night DJ on the Rebel Rebel stage.

Flashing his kilt as he spun the old skool tunes, it was truly a sight to behold.

The Eighties party scene was well represented with The Blow Monkeys and DJ sets from the founder of The Specials Jerry Dammers and former Dexy's Midnight Runners frontman Kevin Rowland.

The latter, impeccably turned out in a pink beret and stripes, gave the Media Circus tent a blast of The Wag Club nostalgia.

Over in the Speakeasy salon, this



Pussy Riot headlined along with Lowkey, bottom right. Kevin Rowland, top right, led a DJ set

year's themes of save our world, defending democracy and race and representation were upheld by a vibrant line-up of poets and musicians on the LIVEwire stage.

The Repeat Beat Poet entranced the crowd with his stream-of-consciousness political commentary,

while "4 brown girls who write" broke social taboos about sexuality and cultural stereotypes.

Rapper and activist Lowkey's stunning set featured Ghosts Of Grenfell, a song dedicated to the victims of Grenfell Tower.

It was a festival highlight and

caught the mood of simmering discontent and call for justice in the crowd.

But it was the infamous punk feminist collective Pussy Riot that stole the show.

The notorious protest group from Russia were arrested in 2012 after

they staged a performance against Vladimir Putin in Moscow's Cathedral of Christ the Saviour.

Bursting on stage in their signature balaclavas and neon outfits in a riot of noise, it was a curious happening for a fledgling festival in the Sussex countryside.

The Secret Garden

Brighton Open Air Theatre, Dyke Road Park, August 27

★★★★★

THIS production, from Chapterhouse Theatre, lent itself well to alfresco performing.

Based on the book set in 1911, orphaned Mary Lennox, is sent from India to her uncle's house in the English countryside, where she uncovers secrets and mysteries and sets out on a mission to find the key to the secret garden.

With one actor absent, due to injury, the characters of Mr Craven and Ben Weatherstaff had an actor reading the parts.

However, he managed to invigorate each with a distinctive voice, and strong Yorkshire ac-

cent in the case of the gardener Weatherstaff.

There were some moving moments as the hot-tempered Mary befriended Martha the housemaid, Dickon and Colin – the hidden, wheelchair-bound son of her uncle, whom Mary inspires to declare: "I shall get well."

"I shall live for ever; to be in the secret garden."

Some well-executed animal puppets – a robin, lamb, fox and Fritz, the pet cat, also delivered some magical moments.

In fact, every performer found many moments to shine and show their dramatic dexterity. It was a skilful, serious production, with much emotionally-charged dialogue.

However the Yorkshire slang, flute playing, singing and harmonies added a lighter, gentler touch.

Tania Deaville