

SONGLINES
MAGAZINE

TOP 10
UK SUMMER
FESTIVALS

2011

Key to symbols

- ① Come and see us at the *Songlines* stand!
- # Festival Profile in the issue indicated and online at www.songlines.co.uk/festprofiles

NORFOLK & NORWICH FESTIVAL

May 6-21, various venues, Norwich, England
nnf11.nnfestival.org.uk

IN ESSENCE: The fourth biggest city arts festival in the UK.

BIG HITTERS: Staff Benda Bilili, Mariza, Sierra Maestra, Syriona, Penguin Café.
ODDITIES: Andy Sheppard's Saxophone Massive brings together over 200 saxophonists of all ages and abilities from across Norfolk; the ever trusty Spiegeltent presents everything from post-modern showgirl Meow Meow to ballroom dancing extravaganzas and Aussie new circus troupe Cantina with their acts of anatomical unlikelihood; The Voice Project Choir sing an especially commissioned paean to Norwich Cathedral from inside the cathedral itself.

DELVING DEEPER: Founded almost 240 years ago, NNF is the international arts festival for the East of England: a world-class celebration of music, dance, theatre and visual art – not to mention children's events and free outdoor spectacles – held over a staggering 16 day period. A bold, sophisticated event that has long earned its reputation as the jewel in the region's crown.



RAPHAEL HELLE

HAY FESTIVAL OF LITERATURE AND THE ARTS

May 26-June 5, Hay-on-Wye, Wales
www.hayfestival.com/wales

IN ESSENCE: Like minds come together in a town devoted to books.

BIG HITTERS: Afro Celt Sound System, Ladysmith Black Mambazo, Ojos de Brujo, Cerys Matthews.

ODDITIES: Chicago's Hypnotic Brass Ensemble will blast punters out of their folding canvas chairs; maestro pianist Alfred Brendel delivers a lecture titled 'Does classical music have to be entirely serious?'; Bob Geldof, fronting the Hay house band, plays at the final night party.

DELVING DEEPER: Set in the Welsh border town of Hay-on-Wye in the glorious Brecon Beacons National Park, the original Hay Festival (there are now nine international Hays) continues to entertain and stimulate. All involved – from politicians, comics and filmmakers to musical giants and literature's great and good – share its ambitious aims: to change lives, present new world visions and renew people's sense of wonder. Who's gonna argue with that?



One of Kasai Masai's dancers, at the 2009 Africa Oyé festival

AFRICA OYÉ

June 18-19, Sefton Park, Liverpool
www.africaoye.com

IN ESSENCE: The UK's largest celebration of African music, culture and food.

BIG HITTERS: Bonga, Mariem Hassan, Abdou Diop.
ODDITIES: Erstwhile actor and dancer Fatoumata Diawara from Mali sings her own Wassoulou-pop compositions; wild-haired guitarist Damily delivers south-east Madagascar's compelling *tsapiky* music.

DELVING DEEPER: This big, beautiful, formerly free shindig becomes a ticketed event in 2011 – although at a fiver in advance and £7.00 on the day it's hardly going to break the bank (children under 12 are still free). A testament to the ever-increasing popularity of African music in the UK, Oyé was established in 1992 as an attempt to redress negative representations of Africa – it has done all that and more.



PIETER HUGO

The sounds of Congotronics will reverberate in East London

BLAZE

June 19-July 27, various venues in East London, including Barbican
www.barbican.org.uk/blaze/about-blaze

IN ESSENCE: East London's contemporary summer music festival, programmed by the Barbican.

BIG HITTERS: Hugh Masekela, Congotronics vs Rockers, Taraf de Haidouks, Angélique Kidjo.

ODDITIES: Kooky crew The Tiger Lillies and their chums revisit Tom Waits' classic 1985 album *Rain Dogs*; the Taraf join forces with Kočani Orkestar to create a dream Gypsy big band.

DELVING DEEPER: Major international artists, commissions and new works mark this third Blaze festival, a branch of the larger CREATE Festival that is set to ignite a host of East London venues including Hackney Empire, Gillett Square, Rich Mix, Wilton's Music Hall and of course, the labyrinthine Barbican itself.



JASON BRYANT

Release the inner hippy in you on Glasto's Green Fields

GLASTONBURY FESTIVAL

June 22-26, Worthy Farm, Pilton, Somerset
www.glastonburyfestivals.co.uk

IN ESSENCE: The mother of them all. Sold out. It's Glasto: it always does.

BIG HITTERS: U2, Coldplay, Beyoncé, BB King, Cee Lo Green, Foo's Gold.

ODDITIES: Head to the Field of Avalon for a cup of mead in a purpose-built old English pub; colonise a new world in Shangri-La's dystopian wonderland; check out a host of big-thinking minds in

LARMER TREE FESTIVAL

July 13-17, Larmer Tree Gardens, near Salisbury, Wiltshire/Dorset
www.larmerreefestival.co.uk

IN ESSENCE: Magical goings-on in leafy, family-friendly musicland.

BIG HITTERS: Seasick Steve, Seth Lakeman, Ozomatli, Asian Dub Foundation, Bellowhead.

ODDITIES: Watch Sandi Shaw go barefoot as the special guest of Jools Holland and his Rhythm & Blues Orchestra; enjoy cutting-edge cinema courtesy of Mark Kermode and his Film Club; submit to the sensory assault that is Sunday's 500-strong Carnival parade; enjoy a Lomi Lomi massage or Hopi Ear Candle treatment among the trees in the blissful Secret Gardens.

DELVING DEEPER: Long acknowledged as one of the best boutique festivals about, the proudly anti-corporate Larmer Tree bestows its cornucopia of delights on just 4,000 golden ticket holders. With six stages, 150 workshops, over 80 diverse artists and more days than it had when it started 21 years ago, this beloved event still manages to retain its original roots and community spirit.

the Pop and Politics tent; have a happy childhood this time around in the Kidzfield.

DELVING DEEPER: Held on the Eavis family farm, Glastonbury might best be thought of as lots of different festivals converging on the same countryside for a weekend. Most of the world acts – including Jah Wobble & the Nippon Dub Ensemble, plus Cambodian psychedelic pop group Dengue Fever – will grace the West Holts stage; expect big names jostling with the new and cutting edge. "Global future roots music" is the remit.



Street entertainers delight the kids in Stornoway

HEBRIDEAN CELTIC FESTIVAL

July 13-16, various venues, Stornoway, Isle of Lewis, Outer Hebrides
www.hebceltfest.com

IN ESSENCE: A celebration of Gaelic music and culture in the most remote outposts of the British Isles.

BIG HITTERS: KT Tunstall, Seth Lakeman, Peatbog Faeries.

ODDITIES: Live music till the wee hours in every pub in Stornoway; treasure hunts for kids; workshops on willow weaving.

DELVING DEEPER: Set mainly in the idyllic grounds of Lews Castle – this year with a new, second stage – but including events around the islands of Lewis and Harris, this popular festival attracts some 17,000 people with both big name acts and local talent. A celebration of island culture of Scotland, it's the smaller events that lend HebCelt its wonderfully intimate feel. Expect sessions ablaze with fiddles, pipes and Gaelic folk songs, all contributing to a sense of the Hebridean people and their compelling, windswept place.

CAMBRIDGE FOLK FESTIVAL

July 28-31, Cherry Hinton Hall, Cambridge, Cambridgeshire
www.cambridgefolkfestival.co.uk

IN ESSENCE: The folkie's favourite.

BIG HITTERS: Chris Wood, Richard Thompson, Laura Marling, Bellowhead, Mary Chapin Carpenter, Raul Malo.

ODDITIES: A kids' *ceilidh* on Friday afternoon; a session featuring some of the weekend's best musicians; a live interview between a headline act and *MOJO* magazine; music workshops before the start of stage performances.

DELVING DEEPER: One of the longest running and most famous folk festivals in the world, Cambridge attracts around 10,000 punters to its famously eclectic collection of folk and world acts and all points in between. Here artists tipped for the top (previous eggs include Seth Lakeman, Cara Dillon and Karine Polwart) jostle with Hall of Fame-style legends and more beards than you can, um, shake a whisker at. A new fourth stage run by emerging British talent promises to fascinate – as does an eclectic range of American artists.

SHREWSBURY FOLK FESTIVAL

August 26-29, West Midlands Showgrounds, Shrewsbury, Shropshire
www.shrewsburyfolkfestival.co.uk

IN ESSENCE: Family friendly four-day event

with an emphasis on folk music and dance and old-fashioned fun.
BIG HITTERS: The Imagined Village, Oysterband, Show of Hands, Bellowhead, Cara Dillon, 17 Hippies.

ODDITIES: A performance of the Cecil Sharp Project, a special commission by the festival and the English Folk Dance and Song Society; all venues have seats so no need to bring your own; the campsite lets you park your vehicle next to your tent or caravan; there's free buses into town.
DELVING DEEPER: Having enjoyed record-breaking crowds in 2010, organisers have pledged to keep this wildly popular festival the same size in 2011; improvements include a bigger dance tent with a bigger dance floor and lots more room for seats, along with bigger marquees for the children's festival and better sight lines – including giant screens – for the main stage.



Turn over for our list of the 25 Best international festivals >>



TREVOR REALES

WOMAD

July 29-31, Charlton Park, Malmesbury, Wiltshire
womad.org/festivals/charlton-park

IN ESSENCE: A world of music, arts and dance – and then some.

BIG HITTERS: Gogol Bordello, Rodrigo y Gabriela, Danyel Waro, Aurelio Martinez, Nomfusi and the Lucky Charms.

ODDITIES: Take a person out on loan in the tolerance-promoting Human Library Project; sample the culinary charms of multi-tasking musicians in the Taste the World tent; get yourself pampered in the frankly luxurious WOMAD Spa.

DELVING DEEPER: Boasting artists from everywhere in the world, WOMAD is the standard-bearer for globally-inclined music festivals. Workshops, children's events and the odd A-list celeb sighting add to the feel-good atmosphere. Events in Abu Dhabi, Cáceres, Las Palmas and Adelaide take their cue from its wildly successful template.

WIN!

We have a pair of weekend tickets to give away. To enter, answer this question: What's the name of the river that runs through Shrewsbury? See p7 for competition rules and address. Closing date June 24 2011