

Pics: MARK DRAPER



Dub Pistols live on stage

BAD BOYS DONE GOOD

Notorious outfit the Dub Pistols have pulled themselves together and put on a brilliant boutique fest in the English countryside

It takes guts, money and hard work to put on a festival. A decade ago the Dub Pistols were a bit of a walking disaster-zone. Renowned for getting trashed before going onstage and causing cataclysmic calamities, anyone not familiar with how they've pulled themselves together over the past few years might've scoffed at the thought of them hosting their own festival. Visions of collapsing stages and soundsystems packing up might've haunted a potential attendee.

But the Dubs have had a word with themselves in recent years and are now a slick, well-oiled operation. That's not to say these festival faves aren't still raw and ass-kicking — they defiantly are — but they're also highly professional these days, and enough people have put their faith in Barry and his merry gang of reprobates to sell out this first Mucky in advance.

Your hack arrives at the farm in deepest Sussex, a short cab-ride from Polegate station, on Friday afternoon and main man Barry Ashworth is there at the gate to greet us. With just two music areas, some food stalls and well-organised camping zones, it's a tad easier to walk around than, say, Glastonbury. Soon we're bopping to the wicked hip-hop fiesta thrown down by Terry Hooligan in the Crazy Diamonds dance tent, the breakbeat stalwart scratching behind his back and doing all sorts of

showboating before chucking on some drum & bass and making way for Barry Ashworth himself to lay down one of his mean hip-hop DJ sets. JFB — another expert turntablist who doesn't forget about the dancefloor — follows and whips the crowd up nicely with some Prodigy, as we joke about the sheep in the next field and gawp at the moon.

The weather gods have shined on the event; it's warm even after dark, and we decide to leave the Stanton Warriors in the dance tent as we've already seen 'em a couple of times this year. Besides, Jon Carter is following The Nextmen on the main stage, and the former Monkey Mafia man — after a slightly shaky start — continues his comeback with aplomb, easing through the Soulwax overhaul of Marie Davidson's 'Work It' and culminating with Underworld's iconic 'Rez' via an exclusive new remix of The Chems 'Hey Boy, Hey Girl'. After-party sessions back at tents beckon...

Waking comparatively early on Saturday into gorgeous sunshine, we shake off our fragility with a yummy smoothie and some brekkie. Doghouse Derelicts ease us into the day with some mighty fine surf blues numbers, then it's your hack's turn to drop some tunes in the dance tent following Queen Bee's disco bonanza. Next up, hardcore legend Zero B kicks up a storm with some breakbeat berserkers, including his euphoric evergreen game changer 'Lock



Skitz & Rodney P

Up'. Sophie Lloyd and then Guy Williams boss it with assorted feelgood disco-house, and then it's time for the Dub Pistols live show on the main stage. The crowd is truly celebratory as the Dubs bust through live faves like the junglist 'Alive' and ska-beat ditty 'Problem Is', before eminent UK hip-hop MC Rodney P joins them for 'Mucky Weekender', the event's undeniable live-for-the-moment anthem. By the time the Ragga Twins have joined them onstage too and everyone's said an emotional farewell to Dubs drummer Jack who's leaving after a decade, the festival feeling is complete. The vibe is wicked. Darren Emerson plays some brilliant trippy techno tracks back in the dance tent, mainly his own new productions he tells us afterwards, and then headliners Leftfield finish everyone off. It's been a super-friendly boutique fest that's surely the first of many. **CARL LOBEN**

