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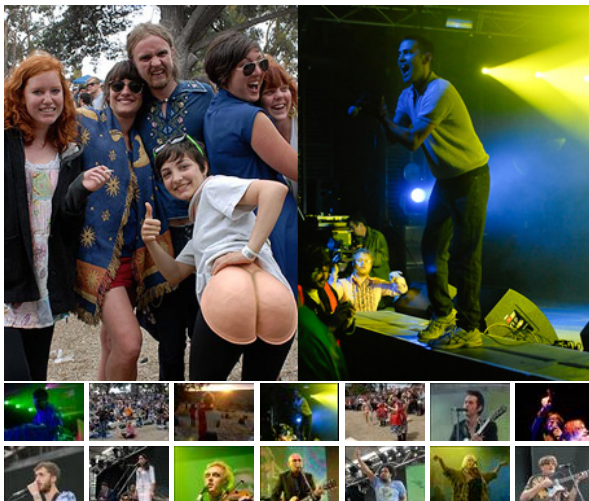
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Meredith Music Festival 2009 - reviews, notes and observations



by [Marcus](#) on Dec 15 2009, 03:00PM

"If there's an improvement on tent pegs the world needs to know" - Observations and musings from the 2009 Meredith Music Festival. Photos [here](#). Festival review proper coming next.

FRIDAY

- Arriving at 10am and feeling relatively smug with a media pass, we're horrified to find there's no long line to drive past. Just right up to the gate like Joe freakin' Public. We roll in to find that 80% of campers are already set up and beer bonging/Tucker tenting/fornicating freely. We find a spot in North Pines and set about discovering our tent is damp from Golden Plains 9 months ago and reeks of ancient breakfast burritos.

- We battle the urge to nap by admiring our full esky and our newly burnt skin, this despite the sky being a blank mass of white clouds. A wander down to the main stage reveals a couple of new additions to the grounds. Green grass, a new building housing the Tucker Tent, and the Pink Flamingo bar having been pushed back up the hill a little to allow for a larger capacity. The main speaker stacks down at the stage have also been pushed a bit further apart to allow better sightlines. They do. We like this newness in our loungeroom.

- It's goddamn hipster central this year. Maybe it's 'cause the cowboy shirted rock dogs traditionally sequester themselves over in Bush Camp, but up here at Top Camp it's exclusively Quicksilver and Cheap Mondays. Several PYT's look like they may snap in the wind. We think we can see gussets.

- By the time we're digesting our energy tubes of barbecued meat and clammy bread, **Regular John** and **Oh Mercy** have been and gone. Such is the vortex of campsite discussions concerning farts in Bunnings, good prices for imported cans and general insults.

TELL US SOMETHING WE DON'T KNOW: "So I did one in Aisle 8. I heard two guys who were packing boxes in the aisle next to me say: 'Mate, you need to stop what you're doing and go straight to hospital'."

- As a last minute ring-in for the cancelled Crocodiles, Melbourne's **Witch Hats** look a little nervous on the main stage. Or drunk, which would be totally

acceptable, since they sound reliably unhinged and clattering. If a cancellation is their "in" to the festival then let's hope they get a return ticket sometime soon at a later, darker timeslot.

- I'm excited for **Akron/Family**. Their 2005 debut has gotten an airing at home every year since its release, and their latest *Set 'Em Wild, Set 'Em Free* has only rekindled the love. So I'm disappointed with their drudgy psych guitar jams. Also, and maybe it's just my pet hate, but turns out they subscribe to that terrible "overly-faux-rockin'/theatrically-knitted-brow" of so many soft American indie bands. (Okkervil River, Death Cab, Cold War Kids = all offenders on recent tours. The band behind Yoni Wolf in Why? are slightly guilty of this later on also). Their constant requests for crowd participation irk too. The music's supposed to make us want to, dudes. Supposedly their sideshow was great. I'll presume it was. The drummer's awesome.

- We head in the twilight back to base for coats and scarves. No rain, the sunset poking under the clouds as it goes down over a roti wrap in the belly. There doesn't seem to be any lines for food this year. Feel nostalgic for lines.

TELL US SOMETHING WE DON'T KNOW: "The sunsets great, but it's too bright."

- We hear **Sia** from the Pink Flamingo bar. She sounds like an AM radio, a bad sign at 9pm on party night. The bar - these days housed in a permanent solid steel frame - is sparsely attended within but pretty full out front, where pristine pink lanterns swing merrily. Feel momentarily nostalgic for a wobbly tent, smashed totem-tennis poles and broken chairs. The first Pink lolly-water slaps me back to reality, and it's still slapping me deliciously while **Patrick Wolf** plays in the distance. A passer-by reliably informs us that he's "shit".

- The dark stage suits the now wizened visages of at least half of **Tumbleweed**. (Three of them still have the long hair from back in the day. Does this mean they've been keeping the dream alive for the last fifteen years? Or is it a 'reunion' thing? - 'Boys, we're getting the band back together. Put the scissors away'.) Richie Lewis still cuts a bendy dancing hip-swivelling figure and his vocals haven't aged a jot. There's a reliable stink of weed as they kick in to 'Stoned'. 'Sundial' and 'Acid Rain' are highlights, as is the closer 'Daddy Longlegs'. All in all this reunion hangs by a thread between banished heritage rock and a re-opened stab at modern usefulness but shit, the 'Weed are the fun time highlight of Friday night.

- Back at the campsite, one of our number is explaining the time he took too many drugs at a party in Newcastle and ended up smashing a concrete mirror-ball into his face. Soon after he is violently screaming at **Royal Crown Revue** that they've "come on too early, the Ballarat Municipal Brass Band isn't due 'til 10 tomorrow".

TELL US SOMETHING WE DON'T KNOW: "I won't make a lot of sense, but I'll go a long time".

- When I think of **Yacht** now my stomach turns. A cartoonish man (Jona Bechtolt) and woman (Claire Evans) yelling at the audience in Americanese over undanceable dance music. It's the last bit that kills. So offensive are they that we have to go drink heaps, meaning we miss **Tim Sweeney** who, from campsite reports, turns in a far superior effort in the 2:30-4am slot.

- We drift off whilst listening to a camp-crashing loudmouth tell all how when she refuses her partner sex, he masturbates in her hair as protest. "But he has a great sense of humour!". A friend isn't sure if he kissed a girl or a boy for half an hour on the dancefloor and is wondering if he's turned gay. Though her name was Sophie.

SATURDAY

- The joy of it being a cool night with cloud cover is that you wake up in your tent, not in a fire-breathing enclosed armpit. Some time is spent in the communal Gazebo wondering what it all means, which is a pack of Chicos for breakfast. A good 60 people are lined up at the coffee joint closest to the stage. Summoning our druthers we cunningly cut through the line to the *other* coffee place 5 paces away and are nursing a tremendous flat white while 59 people try and control their shakes.

- Keiran Ryan's voice washes over the Amphitheatre like a treacly morning tonic. **Kid Sam** work the morning slot perfectly, although their flirting around the edges of atonal guitar jams does turn to mush a number of times. I've said it before and I'll say it again: they're still not playing 'Sunday Bus' and it's just not doing anyone any good. The petition starts here.

- There's always a couple of bands that you want to see at Meredith and for whatever reason - conversation, food, tired legs, Acid, dressing up as a cow - it doesn't work out. A slew of acts would fall by the wayside today for a number of these reasons. **Thee Oh Sees** sounded rad from a distant field and reports were that they kicked out the jams. **Kitty, Daisy and Lewis** too, albeit in a more subdued way. The guitarist is "bullshit" we're told.

TELL US SOMETHING WE DON'T KNOW: "That's my package in eleven megapixels".

- **Why?** took ages to set up. Yoni Wolf is seen side of stage pissing off the soundman by constantly tweaking the mixing desk. They finally go on over ten minutes late, and they're pretty good before getting great. Wolf is prowling around finding his groove, spitting concise verses even as he makes out as if he's going to backflip into the crowd. Why? are perfect for this early arvo Saturday slot, the one that a baked morning crowd needing a focal point is forced to fall in love with. Like Buck 65 and Mountains in the Sky from previous years, Why? build an engaging performance with intricate attention to detail via drums, vibes, rhodes, wuritzer, guitar, bass and Wolf's half-singing, half-rap delivery. 'Gemini Song' is superb, 'Fatalist Pamistry' gets a little boost from multiple member beat-boxing and 'Hollows' rounds out the set on a high. The set that sells sideshow tickets.

- US rapper **Pharoahe Monch** has an epic crowd going batshit. We leave halfway through, yet 'Simon Says' and its reaction is easily the loudest thing we hear all festival. From way up in our campsite at North Pines. Amazing. We wonder if the sound of **Combo La Revalacion** airing across the plains is the reason why all Meredith's blur together. One friend's mishearing of Jon Spencer's new project 'Hard Rubbish' is, for some, apt. **Heavy Trash** is a euthanised disappointment. Spencer works best either going nuts or going completely nuts. The donut stand desires us. We miss the plastic slip n' slide taking place (surely formed in tribute to the actual mud one during last year's rainstorm). How no-one ever cleaves off a nipple or tears a testicle doing that is of constant amazement.

- **Paul Kelly** walks a fine line between M.O.R and veteran folk-genius. He seems to be enjoying a resurgence recently - Triple J tribute night and whatnot - and facing a massive sea of mostly yooof, he kills it today. He gets the "boot" award. He leaps in the air. Every second song is a National Singalong. The soundman gives him a 10. (More on that in our upcoming review). Our friends who have just worked their volunteer shift at the bar are telling us they're going to run out of Pink Flamingos. We get antsy.

- Like MGMT the year before, **Animal Collective**'s performance marks the second year that a hugely anticipated act, and arguably the marquee ticket

selling name, don't bring their A-game. When the initial effect is a textural wash, how can you tell when the mix and/or arena is shitting on the desired outcome? 'Cause from dead on in front of the mixing desk it sounds formless. The crisp bits aren't crisp, textures don't reach us and vocals are nearly non-existent. The venue doesn't suit (as their smaller sideshow would attest). But their real crime is robbing us of hearing 'My Girls' at 9.30 on a Saturday night at Meredith. For the second year running the multitude of face-painted tweens are crushed.

- After the darkly-lit deflation of Animal Collective, comes charismatic as fuck pop star **Jarvis Cocker** to wrest control of the entire thing. Yeah he doesn't play any Pulp songs, but when he pulls shapes, enunciates every word like he's in your ear, plays 'I Never Said I Was Deep', 'Angela' and the awesome 'Fat Children' and basically sends the front row pregnant, the night is masterfully recalibrated. He finishes with 'Cunts Are Still Running The World' and the amphitheatre is us vs them for just a while longer.

TELL US SOMETHING WE DON'T KNOW: "It's like that time we watched the fish die".

- **Eddy Current Suppression Ring** have ascended from first on on a Saturday at Golden Plains to headlining Meredith Saturday night in just two years. Brendan still looks the nervous, agitated frontman but by the time they closed their triumphant set he'd found the guts to part the crowd down the front in order to crowd surf. The frontrunner in the creeping feeling that the Australian bands were once again outshining the internationals.

If this doesn't make you smile, you have no heart:

- From then on we descend to the bosom of Meredith's Saturday night: Fumbling desperately through ice water, weaving through trees, tripping in the bar, not knowing who it is that we're dancing to, challenging strangers with great speeches and ourselves with the loss of it, before collapsing in a grisly heap.

SUNDAY

- **Wagons** are setting themselves up to be Meredith mainstays. For all its fringe leanings, the Meredith/Golden Plains crowd sure loves the shit out of country and roots music (Kitty, Davis and Lewis this year, Old Crow Medicine show at Golden Plains, and *cough* the memory of people calling for an encore from Xavier Rudd in 2004 lingers. Ps: I hate you.) Wagons do away with this fringe vs roots divide via having a frontman in Henry Wagons that is rivalled by only Jarvis Cocker for charisma. He loves it. We love it. The band are experts and Si's rap song is again dangerously close to the best thing ever.

- As a friend intones of **The Middle East** "There's just something a bit...creepy about them". I don't really know what he means but, I know what he means. Whether it's a disconnect from the multiple songwriters at work in the band, the rousing anthems placed next to twee hoe-downs, or just the limp stage presence....I don't know. It's kinda weird and at times uncomfortable to watch. (That opening spoken word song about being a war vet?...mmm.) They finish with 'Blood' and 'The Darkest Side' which both put the rest of their set in the shade.

- Doctor from **The Fauves** plays with a broken leg. They go a little overtime, which means that the Meredith Gift is being set up in front of the stage while they play. Thus in a scene pulled straight from the band's pride-pricking doco *15 Minutes to Rock*, their final moments are played to a thick wall of people with their backs to them, all craning their necks to see the row of nude men doing star jumps.

TELL US SOMETHING WE DON'T KNOW: "The top of my legs are raining".

Final notes:

Nude people running is never not funny.

Diving onto dirt must really hurt.

Giant hats look crap but sunburn looks worse.

Not having to wait in line to get in is cancelled out by having to wait TWO HOURS to get out.

Bush Camp wasn't missed, surprisingly.

People are starting to wear more costumes.

One or two dickheads will always get through.

One of them will be ripped while digging a hole in the road with his bare hands.

Was he also in that group of dudes on the clifftop being busted by the cops for something or other? I think he was.

Oh they were the same people set up on either side of the Long And Winding Road paying out on anyone that walked past, throwing rocks (!) and harassing girls while covered in filth. *Some Dickheads*.

Earwigs? Earwigs all over the tent.

It doesn't really matter who's playing if your friends are fun.

A cool Meredith is better than a hot and/or wet one.

Meredith in general is still better than everything.

Bring on Golden Plains.

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Bring on Golden Plains indeed! Meredith is my new favourite thing EVER.

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[katgeorge](#) ON 15 Dec 2009 04:25:03PM



I luuvd your review Andrew. Before moving away from Melbourne, I enjoyed 2 Merediths 2001-2, when they changed sites. That seems to be the only change since. We need a venue like that here in Brizzy!

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[energise](#) ON 22 Dec 2009 02:28:30AM

Andrew? You mean this one: http://www.thevine.com.au/music/reviews/live-review-_meredith-music-festival,-meredith-2009.aspx



[Marcus](#) ON 22 Dec 2009 09:21:17AM



I can't wait for the Meredith Music Festival, your list of your final notes are pretty funny because they're so true. It's almost sad how true they are. But nonetheless, all of it is worthwhile for an adventure, music festivals rock and you can't take that away from us by pussy footing around all the negatives. I didn't even know about The Meredith until a friend off www.knowyourmusicfestivals.info told me about this website, you guys are doing a great job, keep it up.

[jason100](#) ON 26 Feb 2010 10:47:00AM



There are no negatives in the world of Meredith. Such is the romance of Meredith.

[Marcus](#) ON 26 Feb 2010 11:21:17AM

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