



**FLOW
FESTIVAL
HELSINKI
11.-13.8.
2023**



The background features a decorative pattern of yellow and white squares arranged in a checkerboard fashion. The pattern is centered around the text and extends towards the edges of the frame.

FLOW FESTIVAL 2023

IN THE MEDIA

A vibrant night scene at a festival. In the center, a roller coaster named 'Line of Best Fit' is illuminated with purple and blue lights. To the left, a large stage structure is visible with a screen and speakers. The foreground is filled with a dense crowd of people. The sky is dark, and the overall atmosphere is festive and energetic.

“Flow Festival is future facing, friendly, and fantastically fun”

Line of Best Fit

MEDIA EXPOSURE

1,565 news from the first announcement in December 2022 to August 2023 (2022: 1,211)

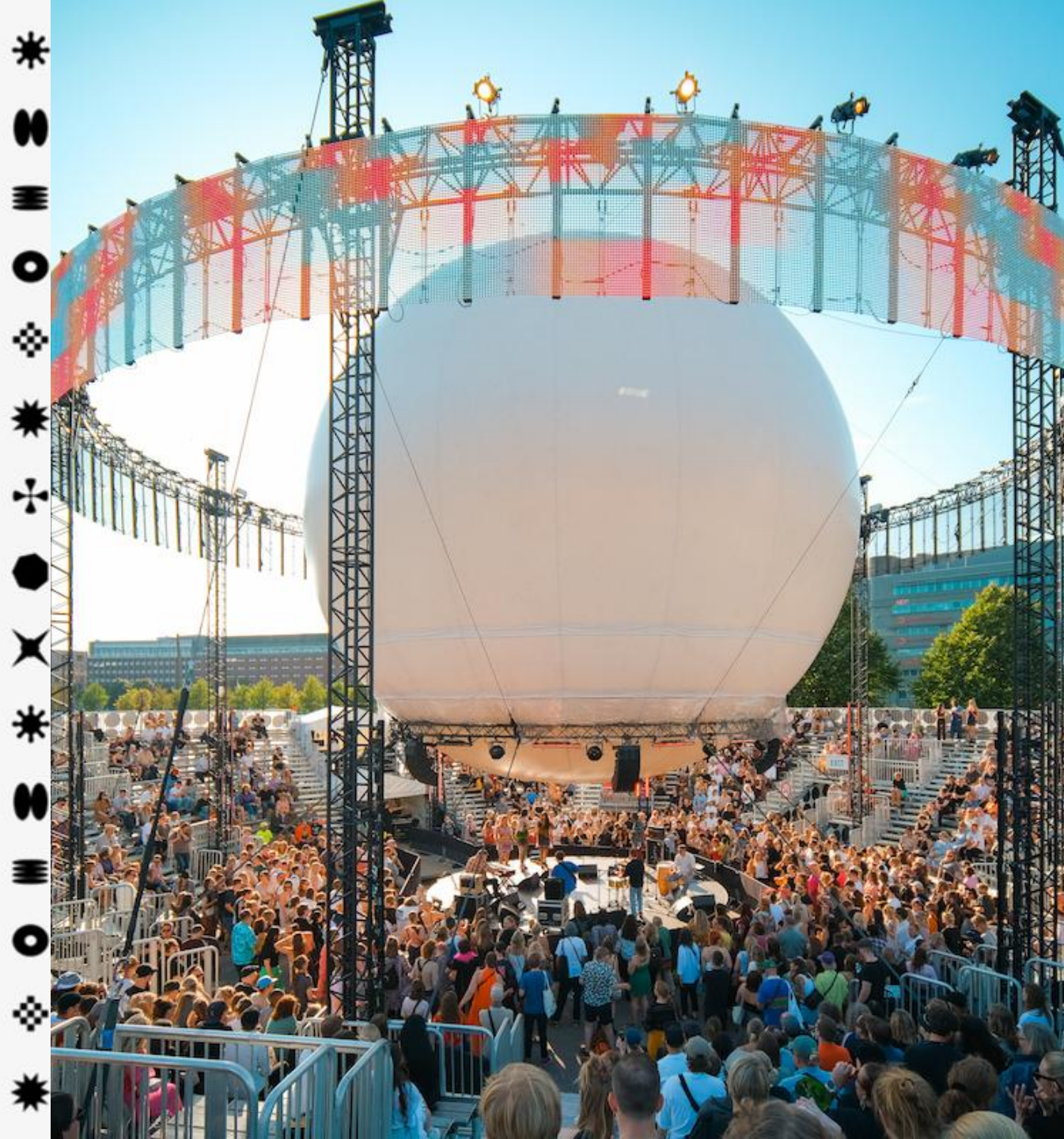
505 Finnish news

1,060 international news

News from all over the world:

Australia, Austria, Argentina, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Croatia, Czech Republic, Dominican Republic, Estonia, France, Germany, Greece, Holland, Hungary, India, Ireland, Italy, Mexico, Namibia, New Zealand, Nigeria, Philippines, Poland, Serbia, Slovakia, South Africa, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, Turkey, UK, Uruguay, USA, Vietnam

Source: Meltwater Media Monitoring



“If there is a festival of the future, Flow is it.”

EVENING

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FLOW FESTIVAL®

Flow Festival Helsinki review: a genre-spanning party with huge names

If there is a festival of the future, Flow is it

[VIEW COMMENTS](#)



Konstantin Kondrukhov

By [Emma Loffhagen](#) @emmaloffhagen |

18 August 2023

Review at a glance



In the nineteen years since its inception, Flow has become a festival transformed. Emerging from the hazy jazz and techno clubs of Helsinki in 2004, its first home was an abandoned railway warehouse, with early crowds made up of just a few thousand revellers dancing into the endless Nordic summer nights.

Almost two decades on, the Finnish capital's annual August festival is a slick operation. Hosting some of the biggest names in the industry, from Afrobeats to alt-pop and some of the buzziest DJs in the world – this year's headliners were Wizkid, Lorde and Blur – it is a staple stop on the European festival tour.

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With a daily capacity of 30,000, nothing ever felt overcrowded – there was plenty of space to weave in and out of sets, and food and drink queues were never longer than a few minutes. Arriving and leaving the festival is also straightforward, even if you've had a few too many of Hartwall's Original Long Drink – an immensely popular local can of gin and juice – the site is only a 20-minute bus or tram ride to the central station.

But, unlike some of the continent's other musical offerings, Flow has still managed to retain the avant-garde origins which set it apart from the pack. Set in a defunct power plant in the centre of the city, there was a distinct Scandi industrial grunge feel (also aided by the fact that everyone dressed like they've just stepped off the runway at Copenhagen Fashion Week).

And, while its backdrop may be concrete, Flow is actually one of the greenest festivals in the world. Completely carbon-neutral, it uses green electricity, 100 per cent reused materials and has completely dropped red meat and poultry from its catering. And for any plant-based sceptics: there is no sacrifice on quality – the food was up there with the best you're likely to experience at a festival.

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When it comes to the musical offerings for 2023, Flow also refused to be pigeon-holed.



The Balloon 360 stage is the most unique of Flow's offerings / Konstantin Kondruchov

The party on Friday kicked off in the X Garden with Club U-Haul, a sensational brown and black queer DJ collective blasting some of the biggest dancehall and ballroom infused bangers to warm up the crowds before the first of the main acts hit the stage.

Heading on over to the Black Tent, American R&B and trip-hop sensation Kelela flitted in and out of the shadows with her typical meditative and minimalist flare. A change of pace came with neo-jazz artist Nala Sinephro who took the stage at the Balloon 360 stage, the most unique of Flow's offerings – an enchanting, seated amphitheatre, where ambient musicians performed all weekend below a giant illuminated balloon.

Then it was time for the main event, not just of the evening, but, it transpired, for the whole weekend. Afrobeats superstar Wizkid burst onto the main stage to his hit single Joro, working the stage with energy and ease. "Welcome to the big Wiz party tonight!", he shouted to a rapturous audience – and that was exactly what he delivered. It was his third festival headline spot in as many days, but if he was tired, it was impossible to tell. Behind a wall of pyrotechnics and an endless stream of water bottles with which he doused the crowd (slightly at odds with the sustainability theme), the Nigerian superstar bounced his way through his myriad hits, with giant collaborations One Dance and Essence compelling even the notoriously quiet Finns to dance along. He was on top of the world, and he knew it.



Afrobeats superstar Wizkid works the stage with energy and ease / Riikka Vaahtera

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Saturday was a vibe shift to the ethereal, with the Kiwi queen of alt-pop herself taking to the main stage. Despite a false start with some technical difficulties, once Lorde got going it was impossible to take your eyes off her. A stripped back version of Royals from backstage blended into the full heady energy of Solar Power without a pause for breath. The track interpolation became a theme, with

new versions of classic hits like Tennis Court energising the packed stage. After debuting two new untitled tracks at Boardmasters the night before, the Finnish fans were hoping for the same, and she didn't disappoint. "Allow me to set the scene," one new song began, "When I met you, I'd never done ecstasy". Perhaps not, but there was certainly ecstasy in the air, reaching euphoric fever pitch by the time Lorde closed out her 1.5 hour set with a thumping rendition of Green Light.



Lorde plays to a rapturous crowd / Konstantin Kondrakhov

As the crowds funneled into the Silver Arena for Swedish pop princess Tove Lo, the energy was already electric, and hits like Talking Body, Stay High and Cool Girl were a perfect pre-cursor to the Saturday night afterparty.

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If there was any doubt that Flow is a case study in genre-spanning, Sunday's lineup was proof positive. A clock counted down the seconds to Caroline Polachek's arrival, and we heard her before we saw her, emerging in a signature wispy black fairy-like outfit. "Welcome to my island", began her staccato opener, and she was right - the stage was hers and the crowd were in the palm of her hands, hanging onto her every spirit-like howl and otherworldly dance move.

After a spellbinding and emotional performance from Christine and the Queens, Blur took to the main stage. The Britpop icons seemed genuinely pleased to be back in the Finnish capital, having headlined the year before, easing into the closing set with some new material, before thrilling crowds with renditions of Parklife and Girls & Boys.



Britpop icons Blur seem pleased to be back in the Finnish capital / Konstantin Kondrakhov

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While Blur were the last act on the main stage, South Korean rap collective Balming Tiger - the self-proclaimed "dark side of KPop" - brought the party to a close at a packed-out Balloon 360 stage. Queues snaked around the tents, prompting shants of "we want more!" which echoed across the festival site as other revellers filed out into the night for the final time.

Much like Helsinki itself, Flow oozes a quiet confidence. The understated jewel in the European festival crown, it lets its stellar lineup and unique, avant-garde appeal speak for itself. If there is a festival of the future, Flow is it.

Flow Festival 2024 will be held at Helsinki's Suvilahti on August 9-11, 2024. For tickets and more, head to <https://www.flowfestival.com/>

A decorative background consisting of a repeating pattern of yellow and white squares arranged in a checkerboard grid. The pattern is centered and extends across the entire width and height of the image.

“...a packed weekend full of emerging local and international talent, as well as some 5-star headliners.”

i-D

MUSIC

5 things you need to know about Flow Festival 2023

Helsinki's eco-friendly festival brought international acts from Kelela to Blur to the Finnish capital, as well as spotlighting local emerging talent.

BY I-D STAFF | 24.8.23

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When you think of Helsinki what comes to mind? Perhaps it's the city's design-centric outlook as demonstrated by its architectural diversity or the world-renowned drinking water – a clear marker of the high quality of life the Finnish Capital. Or maybe it's the obvious one, hitting the sauna, of which there are many dotted around the city (more on that later).

In actual fact, something that should be vying for your attention is Flow Festival, the city's premier music event that has been running in the Finnish Capital since 2004 – which pairs everything that makes Helsinki great with an A-List programme of music and arts that has seen the likes of Björk, Kendrick Lamar, and Frank Ocean make the journey to the 'White City of the North'.

This year's edition, the penultimate at its current unique setting within a former power plant in the graffiti-covered Suvilahti district, promised more of the same – with a packed weekend full of emerging local and international talent, as well as some 5-star headliners.

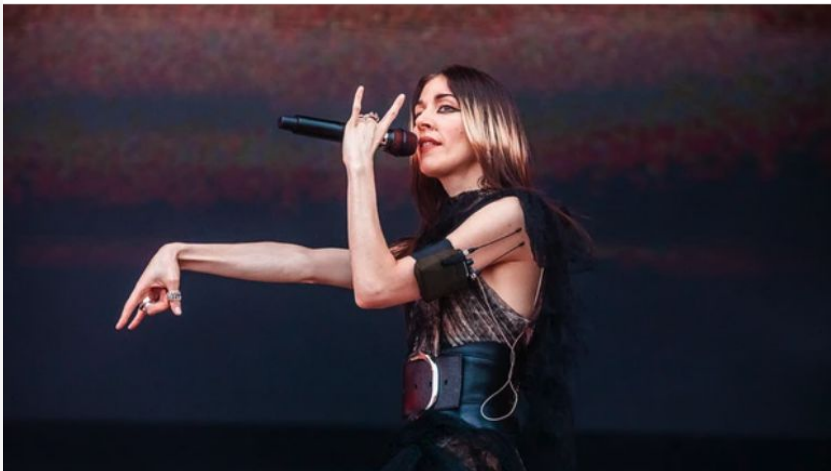
Read on as we break down 5 things you need to know about Flow Festival:

1) An international lineup: Flow has historically been known for its diverse and genre-spanning music lineup, and this year was no different with a range of stellar acts from around the world over the three days.



Kelela performing at Flow Festival 2023 – Photograph by Konstantin Kondrukhov

Friday saw [Kelela](#) present some expansive live remixes of her latest album 'Raven', London experimental darlings [Jockstrap](#) showcased new music and [Afrobeats](#) superstar Wizkid hit the mainstage with a hugely energetic headline set.



Caroline Polachek performing at Flow Festival 2023 – Photograph: Riikka Vaahtera

To round things off on Sunday, [Caroline Polachek](#) demonstrated her ethereal vocals and impeccable on-stage choreography, whilst Sudan Archives gave a typically captivating and experimental performance before Britpop legends Blur closed off the festival with a huge grin on their faces as they rattled through their classic hits and new material.



Blur's Damon Albarn performing at Flow Festival 2023 - Photograph: Konstantin Kondrakhov

2) Spotighting local talent: It wasn't just the big international acts who stole the spotlight at Flow – several Finnish acts took centre stage, whether it was Helsinki-based BIPOC queer party collective [Club U-Haul](#) taking over X Garden on Friday night or Siilinjärvi rapper [Sexmane's](#) autotune-abundant, energy-raising set at the Silver Arena on Sunday afternoon.



Sexmane performing at Flow Festival 2023 - Photograph: Riikka Vaahtera

3) Touch... concrete: Since 2007, Flow Festival has been held in the historic Suvilahti area of Helsinki, a former gas and power plant area in which is made up of nine buildings and two imposing, yet eye-catching gasholders that feel like a symbol of the festival after 3 days at the site. The backdrop gave a distinct atmosphere to the event, with the post-industrial aesthetic a perfect match for its future-facing lineup and ethos – plus no grass means no mud on your sneakers, which is always a plus!



Photograph: Samuli Vienola

4) Sustainability isn't just a buzzword: Whilst it's always questionable just how sustainable any event that involves mass consumption and energy usage over a short and intense period, it genuinely feels like the organisers of Flow Festival's well-thought-out efforts are not in vain. Their strong commitment to being as eco-friendly as possible was evident with red meat and poultry banned from food stand menus, multiple recycling options for waste at all times plus a recycling system that saw visitors get €1 back for each tin and glass bottle returned.



Photograph: Samuli Vienola

5) Go beyond Suvilahti: Seasoned festival vets will know that the downtime away from the site is just as important – fear not as there is plenty to do in the Finnish capital before and after the party. For starters, there's Vanha Kirkkopuisto Square or Temppeliaukio Church which are both perfect for some chill time, or take it a step further by hopping on a boat out to one of over 330 islands surrounding the city – all ripe for sight-seeing and maybe even a swim. For the ultra brave - consider visiting the world's most public sauna; Sompasauna – which is open 24 hours a day and just a short walk from the festival site – perfect for exorcising those toxins!

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“Flow is a festival unique in its appeal and superb in its execution.”

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BLOGS › FESTIVALS BLOG

Flow Festival 2023: huge headliners and avant-garde experimentation in Finland

The Helsinki-based weekender proves to be a festival unique in its appeal and superb in its execution

By **Will Richards** | 14th August 2023



Credit: Konstantin Kondrukhov

In partnership with Flow Festival

Flow feels like a number of festivals rolled into one. On one hand, the inner-city Helsinki event is a destination for the world's biggest bands and pop stars, having welcomed the likes of **Cardi B** and **Frank Ocean** in recent years. Head a little off the beaten track though, and you'll find cutting-edge experimentation and avant-garde noise. Team that with its strong eco initiatives – in 2022, the festival cut out red meat and poultry from its menus – and it becomes an event that stands out from many on the cookie-cutter European festival circuit.

A daily capacity of just 30,000 makes Flow feel like a uniquely intimate venue to see the stadium-dwelling likes of headliners **WizKid** and **Blur**, and also allows the rest of its line up to thrive in smaller and more unusual spaces. The most striking of these is the Balloon 360 stage, a seated tiered amphitheatre where jazz and ambient musicians perform in-the-round below a giant inflatable balloon. Elsewhere at the Suvilahti venue, a brutal abandoned power plant in the middle of the city, you could see a solo bagpipe player in a pitch black room or dive into the always-buzzy Front Yard stage, which features excellent sets from Auckland-via-Peckham house duo Chaos In The CBD and techno heavyweights Eris Drew and Octo Octa.



Credit: Konstantin Kondrukhov

In the festival's bigger areas, comprising three larger stages, a pleasing mix of next-generation names, modern superstars and old-timers are rolled out. In early evening main stage slots, both Suede and Devo show they have enough energy for their continued resurgences to continue, while Friday night sets from **Jockstrap** and **Shygirl** see their Mercury-nominated debut albums continue to impress. To end their raucous set, the former premieres new music in the form of a frenzied slab of electronic noise, promising a suitably unexpected next stage of their evolution.

Other highlights at Flow come from **Caroline Polachek**, whose magnetic and dramatic show behind 'Desire, I Want To Turn Into You', continues to grow and evolve across the summer, and the effervescent **Sudan Archives**. "You don't need to be Irish to get jiggy with it!" the latter beams before launching into a traditional jig on the violin, either side of her rowdy pop-rap anthems.



Credit: Konstantin Kondrukhov

Rock is also well catered for, with **Amyl & The Sniffers** whipping up a storm on Saturday night, so much so that Amy Taylor has to become an impromptu security guard, helping crowdsurfers safely over the barrier. The following day in the same tent, **High Vis**' remarkable ascent continues. "We're used to playing to 20 people in a pub, and 10 of them hate us!" frontman Graham Sayle tells the crowd, utter disbelief on his face. The London quintet's mix of hardcore grit and Britpop melody is a gorgeous combination, and has the tent in a sweaty mess within minutes.

For its headliners, Flow has also gone broad. Friday sees WizKid top the bill, with extensive use of pyro feeling slightly at odds with his largely mid-tempo offerings. Regardless, he's the pop star of the moment, and his global appeal continues to grow. In terms of looking towards the future, though, it's **Lorde** whose set is the most revealing. After ending the 'Solar Power' era earlier this year, the singer returns for a short run of festival dates that clears the decks and makes way for what comes next.



Playing out like a greatest hits megamix, she meshes one song into another throughout, barely pausing for breath and interpolating tracks from her back catalogue into one another. Previously serene, acoustic 'Solar Power' cuts 'California' and 'Mood Ring' are given snappy 808s and a sonic aesthetic closer to debut LP 'Pure Heroine', and the two new songs she previews also point in this direction. The untitled tracks are both carried by propulsive beats and keep the warmth of 'Solar Power's' vocals while welcoming back the harsher, more club-ready energy of 2017's 'Melodrama'.



Credit: Konstantin Kondrukhov

Blur, who close the festival out on Sunday night, seem giddily happy in the here and now. Though many might try and hide it, reunion tours that are done purely for the pay are easily identifiable from those by bands who are actually thrilled to be back together. The Britpop icons' latest comeback falls firmly into the latter category, as they roll through highlights from recent chart-topper 'The Ballad Of Darren' and all the requisite hits from the back catalogue.

Whether you catch any of these world-beaters, or choose to spend the evening in any of the quieter, weirder corners of the site, Flow is a festival unique in its appeal and superb in its execution.

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*“...the weekend delivered the prime environment
for covetable festival style.”*

VOGUE SCANDINAVIA

FASHION

The best street style from Helsinki's Flow Festival 2023

By Vogue Scandinavia
August 15, 2023



Photo: Angelina Ilmast

The best looks from Flow Festival, all in one place, as captured by Angelina Ilmast



Each year, in mid-August, tens of thousands of festival-goers flock to the Finnish capital for Flow Festival. With legendary Britpop band Blur, indie-pop sensation Caroline Polachek and French favourite Christine and the Queen leading the star-studded line up at Silver Arena, the weekend delivered the prime environment for covetable festival style: with lacy lengths, distressed layers, and subversive silhouettes at the fore.

Below, see the best street style looks from Flow Festival as captured by photographer Angelina Ilmast.



Photo: Angelina Ilmast



Photo: Angelina Ilmast



Photo: Angelina Ilmast



Photo: Angelina Ilmast



Photo: Angelina Ilmast



Photo: Angelina Ilmast

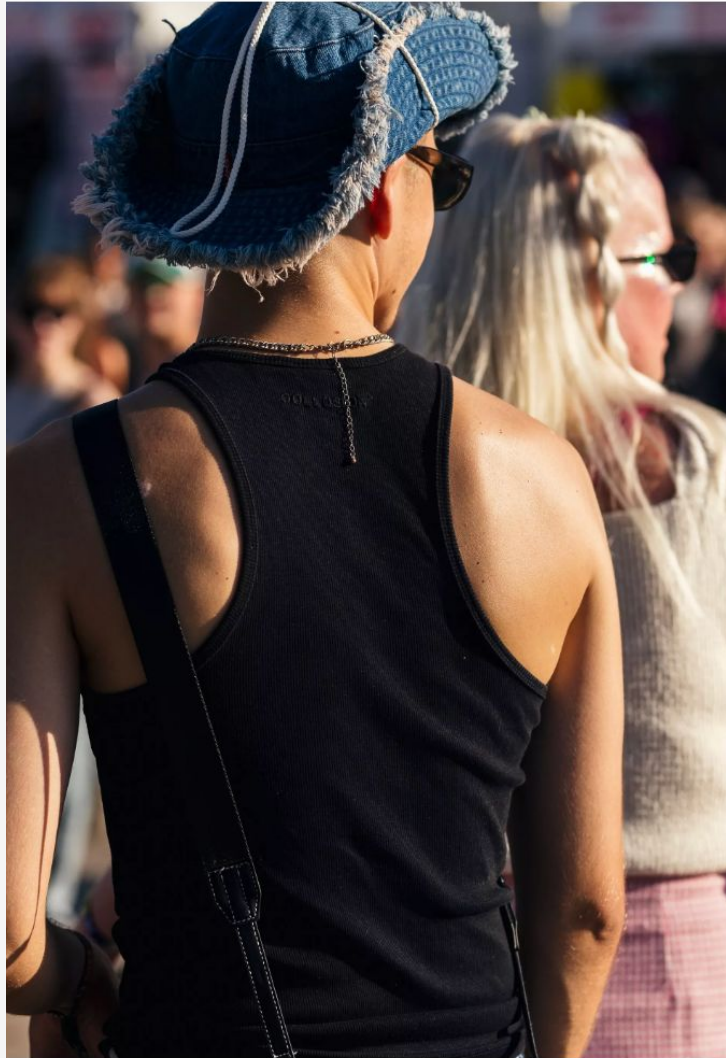


Photo: Angelina Ilmast



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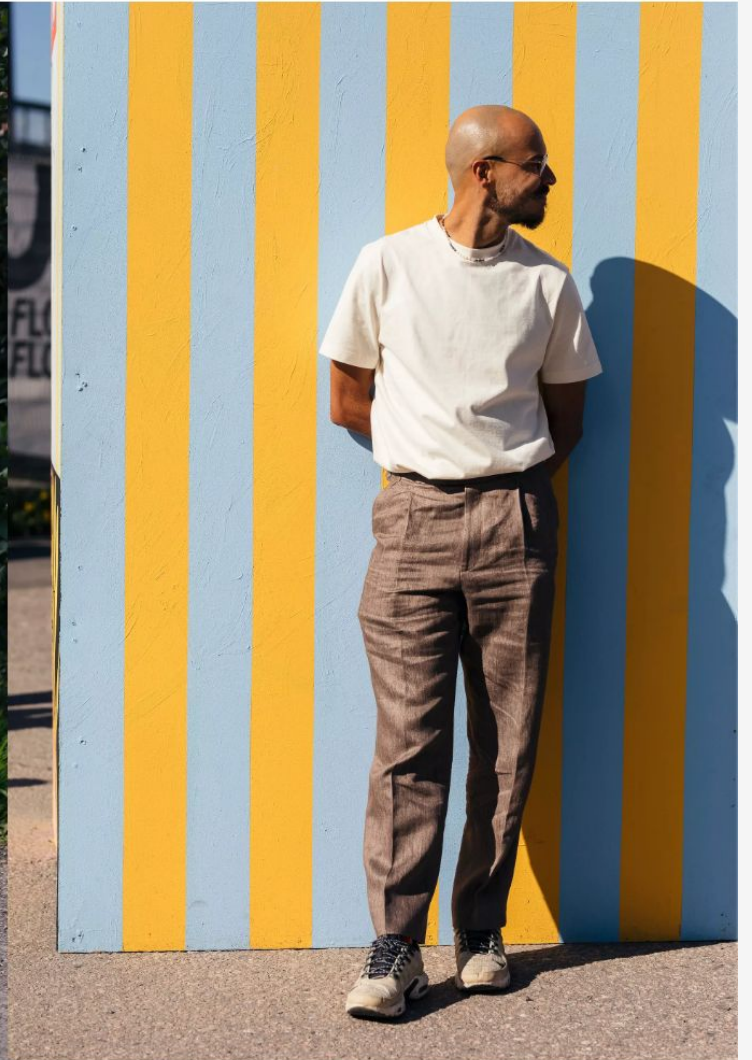


Photo: Angelina Ilmast



Photo: Angelina Ilmast



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Photo: Angelina Ilmast



“A slick celebration of long-established and cutting-edge”

CRACK





A slick celebration of long-established and cutting-edge: Flow Festival 2023 through five standout shows

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LIVE REVIEWS / JASMINE KENT-SMITH / 16.08.23

Suvilahti, Helsinki, Finland

Flow thrives in the liminal space between some absolutes that have come to define the leading Helsinki festival over the past two decades.

The event's charm lies somewhere between its post-industrial power plant surroundings, its sustainability and carbon neutrality commitments, and its dual focus on both established mainstreamers and esoteric music-makers. There's something to be said about an average evening at the inner-city gathering, which could quite easily see a bunch as varied as rap veteran Pusha T, Italy's Nu Genea, composer and sound artist Maya Shenfeld and house hero Louie Vega performing concurrently across the concrete Suvilahti site, which will be home to Flow for just one more year before a move someplace new. And that's not touching on the non-musical offerings – namely dining, talks and art – that come together to complete the Flow long weekend experience.

Taking a similar tack to London's All Points East (or even California staple Coachella), the festival is slick in its set-up and thoughtful in its curation, with many of names appearing at Flow playing in Finland for the first time. As such, crowds are excited to catch many of their favourites in the flesh. However, there is a sense of reserve at shows from artists who'd typically garner far more energetic reactions. When it comes to the headliners – who this year included Wizkid, Lorde and Blur, following frontman **Damon Albarn's** appearance last year with Gorillaz – it is surprising easy to get in the thick of it with only minutes to spare, something that feels like a rarity for performers of this scale.

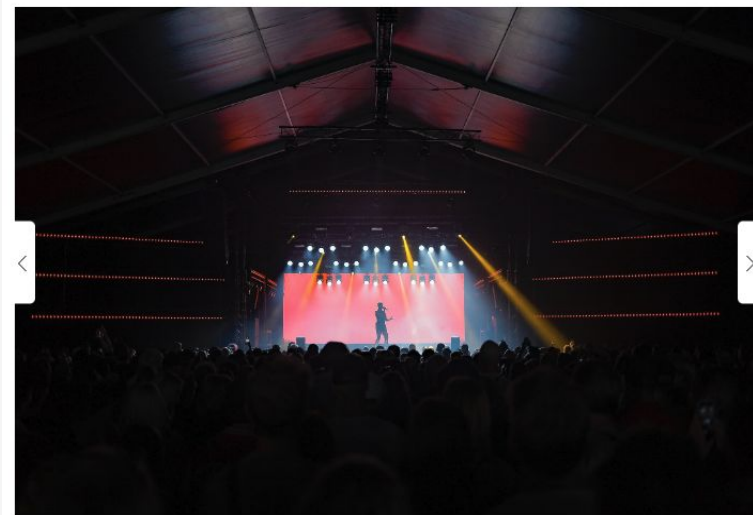
There was a lot to take in at the festival's most recent gathering, but here are just five standout moments from Flow 2023, shared alongside a gallery of images.



© Samuli Vienola for Flow Festival

Yeboyah

The weekend began at the X Garden, a sort of extraterrestrial greenhouse-like structure new for 2023. Its programme shined a light on Helsinki's homegrown club scene through all-day takeovers from local crews. On the Friday, it was the turn of Club U-Haul – a party and collective launched to uplift the Black and brown queer community in the city – and their troupe of resident dancers and interdisciplinary artists, alongside safer space hosts who were situated around the venue. Finnish DJ Yeboyah, a Flow returnee, burned sage behind the decks to a sweat-inducing soundtrack of hip-hop, amapiano and UK funky with a Kendrick Lamar into Daft Punk blend going down a treat as Club U-Haul hosts reminded those in the audience to drink water and take care of their friends.



Kelela

Raven, the dazzling comeback album from R&B foreteller Kelela, has been on heavy rotation from our side since its release in February. For its live iteration in the inky confines of Flow's Black Tent area, the artist leaned into the record's clubber motifs to deliver a soaring set of album staples. In keeping with her history for dabbling in alternate versions of fan-favourites, these were largely in remix and pumping dancefloor edit form, plus the ice-cold vault classic, including 2013's *Enemy*. She cut a singular figure on stage, her silhouette dancing across kaleidoscopic yet minimal visuals as breakbeats and thumping kicks converged with trademark ethereal vocals. The crowd – as we'd soon come to experience elsewhere – was divided into the die-hards and the more casual passerby depending on where you were standing, you could experience an altogether different atmosphere. It's good to have her back.

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© Konstantin Kondrakhov for Flow Festival

Wizkid

A stroll around the wider festival site, past gallery-like inside spaces, plant-based food vendors and the striking Balloon 360 stage – where the likes of Nala Sinephro, Arp Frique and Balming Tiger took turns to perform to cosy crowds in-the-round – led us to the main stage ahead of Wizkid's Friday night headline performance. It took us five minutes to secure a prime spot near the front of the stage, which was lined with a curious (at arrival time, at least) amount of water bottles. The purpose of these bottles, aside from working somewhat against the festival's sustainability ideals, was soon made clear: those who did snag a front row spot were sprayed by the untiring Nigerian star at every chance possible – when the pyrotechnics weren't doing their thing, obviously. The energy is sky-high as Wizkid, a slim live band, plus the equally exuberant DJ Tunez careened through his grab-bag of Afrobeats, R&B and big-name collaborations before an enlivened audience. Entirely momentous.



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© Konstantin Kondrakhov for Flow Festival

Jyoty

The same rings true to **Jyoty's** Saturday set at the leafy Front Yard stage. As appears to be the Flow way, many of the festival's international bookings are reserved until later in the day, with the in-demand DJ and broadcaster's dinnertime slot doubling as a sort of mood-setter for the night ahead. Here, dancers vogued and gin-based tinnies fist-pumped as the perennially sunny selector took us to London, Brazil and South Africa via the *Renaissance* tour – think baile funk edits, a *Cuff It* remix, Nikki Nair and HudMo's club smash *Set the Roof* and even a **Charli XCX** and Bicep *Glue* mash-up that felt like a coming together of disparate worlds. Bookended by New York staple **DJ Voices** and Helsinki's own **Sansibar**, it was easy to lose hours here on the festival's second day.



© Miles Myerscough-Harris | @expiredfilmclub

Caroline Polachek

The final day saw the return of the tricky clash; where Friday saw Kaytranada and Shygirl vying for similar crowds, Sunday saw two former Crack Magazine cover stars, **Sudan Archives** and Christine and the Queens, taking their respective spaces at the Black Tent and the larger Silver Arena at the same time. A little before that, however, it was the turn of **Caroline Polachek** on the main stage for her first Finland show. Full disclosure: we've seen Polachek a few times now, but her voice will never not impress. It unfurled like a vista at first light across songs like the **SOPHIE**-dedicated *I Believe* plus older tracks like *Doors* and *So Hot You're Hurting My Feelings*. Polachek glided across the stage in a swirl of black tulle, a bleached stripe across her hair harking back to her Chairlift days as she gave us a crash course on the music that will come to define her current artistic era.

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“Flow Festival is future facing, friendly, and fantastically fun”

THE LINE OF BEST FIT



THE LINE of BEST FIT



Flow Festival is future facing, friendly, and fantastically fun

16 August 2023, 18:00

Words by *Ed Nash*

(BLUR) (CAROLINE POLACHEK) (CLAIRE ROUSAY) (JOCKSTRAP)
(LORDE) (MERIHEINI LUOTO) (WIZKID) (FLOW FESTIVAL)

As Finland's ground-breaking Flow Festival hosts the penultimate edition of residency in Suvilahti, Ed Nash discovers how Flow mirrors its hometown of Helsinki.

With Helsinki being a tale of ten cities rolled into one, it's only natural that Flow Festival also pulls off the amazing trick of being an event that caters to everyone.

Helsinki starts its days slowly and then speeds up at a blistering pace. On my first night there, the manager at the hotel recommends taking a sauna, jumping in the sea, and then going back into the sauna. When I tell him that sounds like a better idea for the morning, he laughs and says the Finnish like to ease into their day, with high energy activities ideal for the evening.

Spending time in the city, you can see what he means – making one’s way back from Flow at night couldn’t be more different to the relaxed mornings. A bar called The Old Irish Pub has hundreds of young Finns queuing around the block to get in at midnight, tempted, no doubt by €2.80 Vodka and Red Bulls.

Helsinki mirrors the culture of Flow Festival and vice versa. To understand what Flow is all about, you have to dig into the multiverse experience that Helsinki offers. You can sit in Vanha Kirkkopuisto square, a cemetery that’s been converted into one of the many verdant spaces in Helsinki and have a coffee to start the day, or visit TempPELLIAUKIO Church in the Etu-Töölö district, which known as the “Rock Church”, a chapel buried beneath layers of stone and covered by a copper dome, where locals sit and have their lunch.



Helsinki’s archipelago has over 330 islands, many of which can be reached from the port in the city centre, where you can have the local dish Lohikeitto, a beautiful creamy salmon soup, before getting on a ferry. From there the beautiful Vallisaari Island is a 20-minute ferry ride well worth taking. Described as the most unique island in the archipelago, it has an area called The Valley of Death, where people died following an explosion in the 1930s, when tonnes of unused ammunition exploded. The Island opened for tourists in 2016, but you have to stick to the paths, because yes, there could still be unused ammo in the ground.

This year, Vallisaari is one of the locations for The Helsinki Biennale, curated by Joasia Krysa, called *New Directions May Emerge*. The most stunning piece is an installation located in an abandoned mine shaft by Emilija Škarnulytė called *Hypoxia*, which features video footage of The Baltic Sea, which is both educational and harrowing, of abandoned army tanks and bullets that lie on the seabed, mutating into the aquatic life.

The progressive and socially aware culture of Helsinki runs through Flow. Since its inception in 2004, originally in the city centre’s disused railway warehouses next to the Museum of Modern Art, the festival has tried to do things differently. Its home since 2007 has been the magnificent base of Suvilahti, a former power plant and home to a swathe of stages, DJ sites and art installations over the weekend.

This year’s festival was originally planned to be the end of Flow’s time in Suvilahti, but local resident’s complaints about the redevelopment of the site has delayed moving to a new location to be postponed until 2025. Flow’s commitment to sustainability is impressive, with red and white meat off the agenda since last year and their manifesto of recycling isn’t lip service, tins and glass bottles can be returned at deposit stalls, where you get €1 back. Flow takes its moral principles so seriously that days before this year’s edition, the organisers ended their partnership with Heineken due to the brands continued presence in Russia.



As with Helsinki, there’s so many things to do at Flow it feels like being at several places at the same time. In the first half hour at the site on Friday, the first artist we see is at the X Garden, where FWU, the local DJ duo of SHY GRL and twenpettie, spin a delirious blend of funk and hip hop to a crowd that takes in young children to grandparents.

Five minutes later we visit The Other Sound X Sun Effects stage where Meriheini Luoto performs the violin drone of “ILO OLI ILO OLI ILO” to a seated audience and it feels like you’re in different era in time, as Luoto plays to a visual backdrop reminiscent of Andy Warhol’s *The Exploding Plastic Inevitable*. At the back of the room is an art installation by Jere Suontausta and Antti Hevosmaa, called *Musta olemus*, described as “a kinetic piece that dances self-sufficiently in aerospace”, and instead of a balmy, sunny evening in Helsinki it feels like midnight in Paris.

Like Finnish mornings, getting your bearings at Flow takes time, which you quickly realise is part of the festival’s charm. It’s a multi-note festival, like the city that hosts it, so shortly after the high art of the Sun Effects stage a trip to the Silver Arena sees afrotrap artist Ege Zulu bring a joyous feel to the packed tent, backed by five piece band wearing identical football tops.

Suede's show on the main stage - like Blur two nights later - is all killer/no filler. A remarkably lithe looking Brett Anderson literally throws himself into the set, knowingly crowd surfing during "Everything Will Flow" as fans of all ages take selfies. They sign off with a staggered start to "Beautiful Ones", and as the sun comes down all is well in Helsinki.



Brett Anderson by Riikka Vaahtera

A quick walk to The Black Stage sees Jockstrap continuing their ascent with a late-night slot featuring the bulk of *I Love You Jennifer B*. Seeing the songs on a live stage adds even more energy to the music, but it's the orchestral touches on the likes of "Concrete Over Water" that really stands out, and blends Georgia Ellery and Taylor Skye's songwriting chops with experiments in sound. They end with a new song, which Ellery announces is called "Running" and points to an even more mind-bending direction for their next record.

Scheduling headaches are rare at Flow, but the reputation of the wonderous venue of the Balloon 360° stage means I only get to see a couple of songs from Wizkid, where he endlessly throws the 50 or so bottles of water lined up in front of him across the stage, which is probably not what the organisers were thinking in terms of climate efficiency, but he seems to enjoy it. Instead I see Esa's Afro-Synth Band round off Friday night at Balloon 360° with some delightfully energetic funk.

The funk continues in the same venue on Saturday afternoon, where Arp Frique & Family deliver a brilliant festival set, with the bassist Marilonah channelling the playing of Bootsy Collins. Such is the party atmosphere that they bring to Balloon 360°, the dancing of a punter with his hair braided in Viking style - a fair few sheets to the wind - draws as much as attention as the band.

On the main stage, whilst Lorde's stardom is undoubted - she draws the biggest crowd of the weekend - it feels as there's a distance between the artist and everything else, with the band hidden behind the stage backdrop and the use of video an attempt to separate the performer from the performance that doesn't quite work. It's a contrast to the joy with which Caroline Polachek attacks the main stage the next day. When Polachek opens with "Welcome To My Island" she nails what Flow is all about - inclusivity, abandon, but above all, fun, fun and *more fun*.



Caroline Polachek by Riikka Vaahtera

On the final day of the festival, rather than a sense of déjà vu, we get the evolving story that is Flow. Local hero Olavi Uusivirta draws an enormous crowd, and hearing thousands of people singing along in Finnish is a reminder of the importance Flow places on including native artists and culture on the bill. A couple of minutes after his set we're in the X Garden again, where the DJ set from Sallidoing has people stood on the DJ booth, dancing along to a 240 BPM house version of The Korgis "Everybody's Got to Learn Sometime".

At the bar I see the Viking guy from Friday - today dressed in full Viking regalia, at 6.30pm, drinking lager faster than Thor in *Avengers: Endgame* - and looks, to use the local parlance, to be "Kännissä kuin käksi", which roughly translates as *drunk as a cuckoo*.

Another trip to The Other Sound X Sun Effects provides one of the musical highlights of the weekend from LA experimental musician Claire Rousay, who starts by saying she'd smoked too many cigarettes the day before and ends it by asking if anyone has a lighter. Rousay's 45-minute set - sat in front of a laptop - is mesmerising from start to finish, where you forget about everything else that's happening outside the room.

The proliferation of Blur t-shirts on Sunday makes it clear who most of the audience are here for. Their reunion has been hailed for its joyousness, despite *The Ballad of Darren* being one of the most moving-but-bleakest records since *13*, and the mood is one of celebration. As a field of Finns shout 'Parklife!', Damon Albarn wanders to into the crowd and emerges wearing a yellow feather boa, that he keeps on for dramatic effect during "To The End".

Whilst both the enduring nature of their friendship and songs is a delight, it's Graham Coxon's guitar playing that remains their ace card. During the solo on "This is a Low", a group of Finnish teenagers skip around me as I dance very badly to the discordant notes. I've seen Blur play more times that I can count on one hand, but tonight was the best they've ever sounded.

Flow is an incredible bricolage of music, art and culture, a microcosm of Helsinki itself, where you start slow, increase the pace, do the right thing for the planet and make friends. Next year's final hurrah at Suvilahti will be something else, but the 2023 edition will take some beating.



“With a wide range of sounds and ideas, Flow Festival manages to offer up the unexpected too.”

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LIVE REVIEWS

FLOW FESTIVAL OFFERS UP A DIVERSE MENU OF GENRES, NAMES, AND PEAR-FLAVOURED MILKSHAKES

WED 16TH AUGUST, 2023 4:58 PM

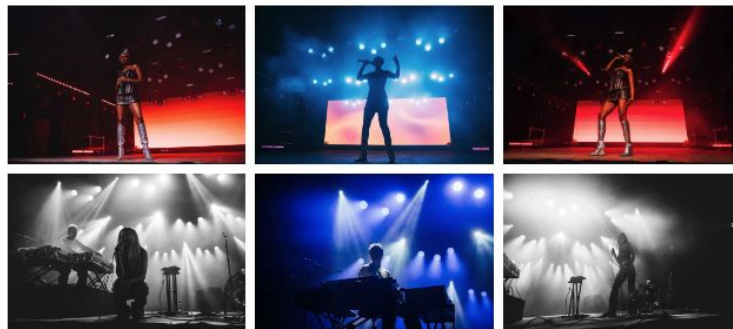
With a wide range of sounds and ideas, Flow Festival manages to offer up the unexpected too.

Words: **Jake Hawkes.**Photos: **Patrick Gunning**

Finland is a country of extremes in a lot of ways. Obviously, there's the contrast between the freezing, dark winters and the pleasantly light and relatively warm summers, but that's not all. It's a nation of health-conscious sauna lovers, but also one where a late-night burger place (which inexplicably sells pear-flavoured milkshakes) is full to the brim at 4am on a Thursday.

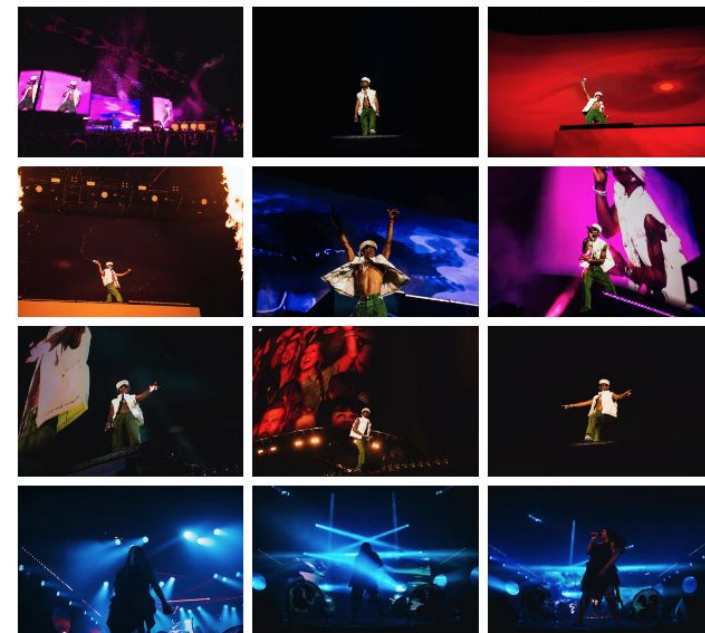
Fitting neatly in the middle of these contrasts is Helsinki's Flow Festival. Taking place amid spectacularly stark industrial buildings, it's one of Europe's most eco-friendly events – even removing red meat and poultry from its menus to cut down on its environmental impact. It also makes a strong bid for being one of the continent's most musically diverse festivals. At any one point, Gabba-esque dance music will be pounding away in one corner while avant-garde jazz draws an equally large, if much more serene, crowd in the other.

Between the two are the stages which play host to most of the recognisable names. Even here though, there's plenty of variety. Kelela's polished R&B draws a tent-filling crowd from the very start, while Jockstrap's genre-hopping setlist shows exactly why they're currently up for the Mercury Prize. Ending on a new track – a freewheeling explosion of electronic noise and glitchy spoken word, the latter certainly leave an impression.



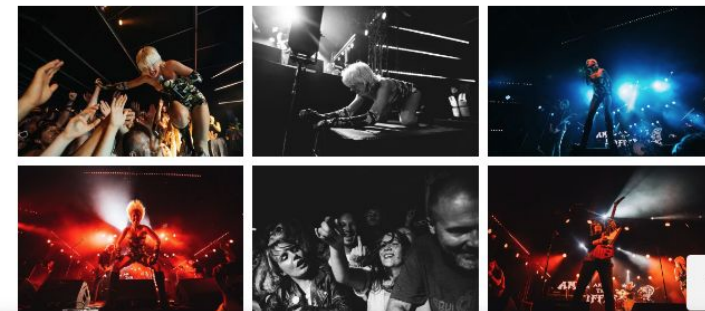
Headlining the festival's first night is Afrobeat superstar Wizkid. It's a set which is light on surprises, but high on energy, with the amount of pyro matched only by the number of water bottles he throws into the air. Helsinki isn't exactly his home turf, but he does his best to win people round and it feels like there are more than a few new fans by the end of the show.

Finishing up Friday is Shygirl. Relaxed and conversational, she strolls on stage at midnight and talks to the crowd as if she's known them her whole life. 'Firefly' is introduced as her "favourite song", an opinion seemingly shared by large swathes of the crowd, who sing it back to her at high volume and leave her smiling from ear to ear.



Occupying the same slot the next day are Amy! & The Sniffers, who seem similarly happy with their booking. "We got that fucking midnight slot!" shouts lead singer Amy Taylor before launching into a set which feels like the audio-equivalent of a hand grenade. People are crowd-surfing from about five seconds in and before long a circle pit forms which is so big it threatens to touch the sides of the tent.

So far, so punk rock. But what sets Flow apart from most festivals is their refusal to be defined by genre, with a Saturday run of pre-Amy! acts which is enough to make your head spin. New-wave legends Devo show that they're more than just silly hats and 'Whip It' (although both make an appearance), Pusha T rattles through a thousand slang words for cocaine, and Lorde cuts through it all with one of the most captivating shows we've ever seen.





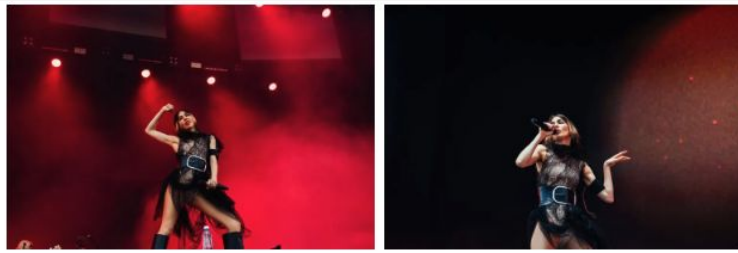
Just under two years since the release of 'Solar Power', her set sees a genuine pop star owning her headline slot. Massive hits get new instrumentation and *those* new songs get another airing after a debut at Boardmasters a couple of days before. Throughout it all, Lorde has the crowd in the palm of her hand. "Your language is complicated, how do you say thanks so much?" she says with a smile. Judging by the screams from the crowd, the sentiment is more than reciprocated.

Opening with 'Royals' and closing with 'Green Light' is obviously huge, but it's also gratifying to see how well tracks from 'Solar Power' fit in alongside the hits from 'Melodrama' and 'Pure Heroine'. It's the calm between albums for Lorde, but with a performance this good, we've never been more excited to hear what comes next.



Sunday is a similarly eclectic experience, with Finnish trap artist Sexmane working the tent into a frenzy, complete with a full live band and a guitarist whose solos would put some rock bands to shame. A rotating 'SEXTAPE' screen graphic completes the absurd picture, but with guest stars and an undeniable stage presence, he's an unexpected highlight of the afternoon.

From Scandinavian rap to something more familiar, Caroline Polacheck puts in a dazzling performance on the main stage. Flawless vocals are paired with idiosyncratic dance moves and stage chat which includes the line "how does it feel to be so, you know...Finnish?" tracks like 'Bunny is a Rider' and 'So Hot You're Hurting My Feelings' are so undeniably big that it feels like only a matter of time before Caroline takes her rightful place as a pop megastar.



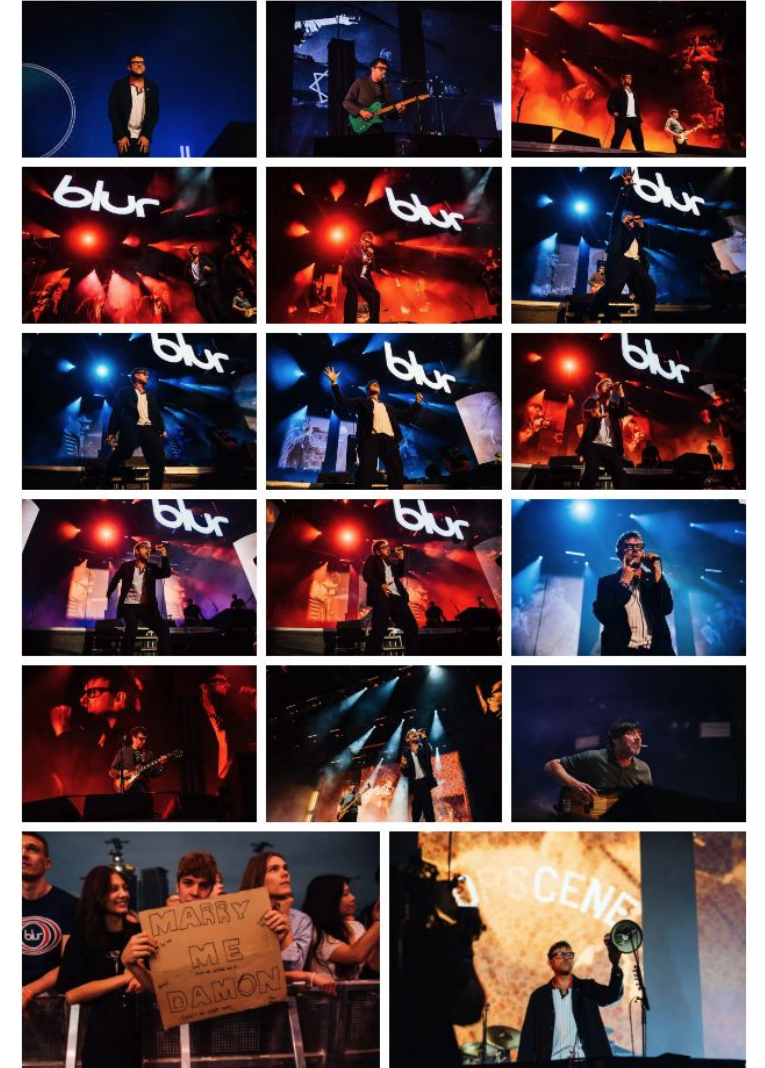
Topping the bill are Britpop icons (and Dork cover stars, dontcha know – Ed) Blur. There's always the worry that reunion tours are cynical cash grabs or attempts to recapture decades-old magic, but tonight's set shows the right way to go about things. Alex James starts things off reclining in an armchair for some reason, Damon struts about in a feather boa, and the whole band seem genuinely thrilled to be there.

Songs from new album 'The Ballad of Darren' are gamely received by the crowd, but Damon and co. know what everyone's really here for. The hits go down a storm, and no matter how many times you've seen Blur play, you've never had a thrill quite like the one you'll get when you hear 30,000 Finnish people shout the words to 'Parklife' in unison.

As Blur walk off stage and the festival site closes, talk starts of where to go next. Like any inner-city festival there are late night bars and afterparties on offer, but general consensus pulls in another direction. In possibly the best expression of Flow Festival, and Finnishness in general, the real hot ticket is a community-run sauna, open 24 hours and free to everyone. Whether or not a steam cleanse after a night of drinking is the best idea is up for debate, but hey, when in Helsinki...



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"Flow Festival succeeds in transforming what we normally consider utopia into reality."

ROLLING STONE ITALY

GO WITH THE FLOW

No code, no token, acqua gratis: il Flow Festival è il festival estivo ideale

Il festival europeo meglio organizzato di tutti si trova a Helsinki. Ci siamo stati tra i live di Blur, Lorde, Wizkid, Caroline Polachek e una cura la dettaglio formidabile. E con le follie dei prezzi italiani di quest'estate non c'è più differenza di costi

DI MATTIA BARRO

16 AGOSTO 2023 11:57



Foto: Flow Festival / Samuli Pentti

Immaginatevi un festival dove non ci sono code. Né all'ingresso, o ai bar (ce ne sono venti con almeno 6 persone di staff l'uno), ai bagni. L'acqua è gratis e ci sono fontanelle con rubinetti multipli sparse in diverse zone. Non viene servita carne rossa o pollame e ogni stand culinario dei 40 presenti ha almeno una scelta vegana, puntando principalmente su menù a basso impatto ambientale, con scelte vegetariane e prodotti locali. NON-CI-SONO-TOKEN; si paga con carta e il drink è servito. Le lattine hanno un extra costo di un euro che viene restituito alla riconsegna della lattina vuota, il che fa sì che si crei un sistema di auto-pulizia della location che – nonostante ospiti 30 mila persone al giorno – a fine giornata si presenta in uno stato di ordine quasi totale. La raccolta differenziata è praticamente ovunque. I tappi per le orecchie vengono regalati per sostenere i dignitosissimi volumi dei 9 palchi presenti in loco. Pensate che tutto questo sia impossibile? Allora forse dovete segnarvi un nome: [Flow Festival](#).



Una parte della location industriale. Foto: Flow Festival / Petri Anttila

Trovare un festival dove siano presenti – in contemporanea – tutte le condizioni presentate nell'introduzione (e tutta una serie di reali interventi sul piano dell'ecosostenibilità) è quasi utopico. Lo sa qualsiasi persona che vive i festival, e anche tutte quelle che li organizzano. Ma il Flow Festival riesce nell'impresa di trasformare quella che noi normalmente consideriamo utopia in realtà. Non solo un sistema di infrastrutture che funziona nella sua totalità – anche grazie alla scelta di una location eccezionale, una ex centrale elettrica vicino al centro città raggiungibile con metro e autobus che dispone anche di un enorme parcheggio pensato per le biciclette –, ma anche una cura al dettaglio che garantisce a chi frequenta questa tre giorni di metà agosto (quest'anno è stato dall'11 al 13 agosto, il prossimo sarà dal 9 all'11) un'esperienza di confort che altrove è semplicemente impensabile. Viene così a crearsi un clima di umanità e comunità solidale in cui non ci sono spintoni, gomitate nello stomaco, mancanza di spazio umano in cui viverci i concerti o i dj set: il festival diventa luogo ideale anche di civiltà, lasciando all'esterno delle proprie mura tutto ciò che non funziona per ricordarci, anche solo per tre giorni, che come specie siamo ancora in grado di convivere gioiosamente.

PUBBLICITÀ



La miracolosa apparizione dell'acqua gratis. Foto: Flow Festival / Riikka Vaahtera

Ma cosa è successo sui nove palchi – quattro dedicati ai concerti, quattro ai dj set e uno alla pura sperimentazione sonora – del Flow? Ci sono stati i Blur che hanno presentato *The Ballad of Darren*, Wizkid che ha fatto twerkare chiunque e una Lorde in grandissima forma. Tove Lo, Caroline Polachek, Shygirl, 070 Shake, Christine and the Queens e Kelela ci hanno messo ben in chiaro che il futuro del buon pop ricercato è al sicuro. I Nu Genea – gli unici artisti italiani in line-up – hanno conquistato i cuori finlandesi riempiendo il terzo palco più capiente del Flow nonostante nello stesso momento ci fosse il live di Pusha T. Il palco curato da Resident Advisor è stato una certezza con i dj set – tra i tanti – di Eris Drew & Octo Octa, Nene H, Jyoty, Louie Vega, Chaos in CBD, mentre il Balloon 360 (il palco icona del festival, una piccola arena con palco al centro su cui si appoggia un pallone aerostatico illuminato come copertura) ha tenuto i concerti più jazz e afrobeat come quelli di Nala Sinephro, Domi e JD Beck, Meshell Ndegeocello e Arp Frique. Per i ricercatori di nuovi sound, l'unico palco al chiuso (denominato The Other Sound) ha proposto un universo di installazioni artistiche tra ambient e modulari con Arushi Jain, Maya Shenfeld, Claire Rousay e molti altri, mentre l'X Garden ha garantito una costante atmosfera queer e festosa.

PUBBLICITÀ



Foto: Flow Festival / Petri Antilla

Certo, tutto bello, ma quanto costerà mai tutto questo in Finlandia? Paradossalmente, con gli aumenti che abbiamo vissuto in prima persona anche solo nei festival italiani, la distanza tra i costi finlandesi e i nostri si è drasticamente assottigliata negli anni. Per intenderci il costo di entrata per l'edizione 2024 ad oggi – in early bird – è 199€ e salirà a 219€ in seconda release (per intenderci il Primavera di Barcellona costa 255€ alla seconda release), un prezzo totalmente in linea con la media europea. Anche i drink sono stati pareggiati dai festival italiani e gli 8 euro per una birra e i 12 per un drink sono oramai una norma anche ben al di sotto dei paesi nordici. Solo che qui non ci sono token, soldi persi in braccialetti che non verranno rimborsati o costi dell'acqua folli (ricordiamo: al Flow è gratis e il pubblico viene incentivato a portare la propria borraccia in controtendenza rispetto ai divieti italiani).



Il Balloon Stage. Foto: Flow Festival / Konstantin Kondruchov

Per chi ama i festival andare al Flow è vivere il meglio possibile di quell'esperienza perché non ci sono grandi festival europei cittadini capaci di funzionare in tutte le proprie appendici in modo così fluido. In tre giorni non si è presentato alcun problema (avendovi recensito decina di festival solo quest'estate possiamo garantirvi che in tutti abbiamo trovato problematiche più o meno grandi, più o meno stressanti per il pubblico) o se c'è stato è stato risolto in maniera così rapida che nemmeno siamo stati in grado di accorgercene. Certo, il sistema Finlandia è un sistema che funziona in sé e questo sicuramente facilita, ma il Flow Festival è un case study su come organizzare un festival. Se volete capire come si dovrebbero fare, le date le sapete: [dal 9 all'11 agosto, direzione Helsinki](#).

“Finland celebrates established stars and upcoming artists...”

CLASH

FLOW FESTIVAL®



MIMI FRANCIS / LIVE / 17 · 08 · 2023

Live Report: Flow Festival 2023

Finland celebrates established stars and upcoming artists...

For this British writer, who's used to muddy, litter-strewn fields, pop-up tents from Aldi, and rowdy crowds of weekend warriors, **Flow Festival** was an entirely foreign – and welcome – experience. Set in an abandoned power plant in the heart of Helsinki, Finland, the metropolitan event has made a name for itself in the European festival roster with a line-up that skips between headline veterans and avant-garde performers. Pair its pioneering technology and impressive sustainability credentials with crowds of characteristically respectful and ever-stylish Finns, and you're as far as possible from the relentlessly chaotic festivals that define British adolescence.

Throughout the weekend, our evenings had us strolling between stages, which vary from the colossal main stage, the strikingly experimental Balloon 360 stage, and the space-age X Garden tent, stopping on the way to fuel up on the genuinely delicious culinary offerings (that, since 2022, don't include any red meat or poultry). Headliners included Wizkid, Lorde, and Blur, who all offered energetic performances to a comparatively reserved crowd – content to let you zigzag to the crush of superfans in the centre as they bopped their heads and broke into the occasional two-step. Needless to say, it was easy enough to spot us Brits when Parklife came on.

But the weekend wasn't without its raucous moments, and we made sure to be part of the crowd for every mainstream favourite, experimental newcomer, and electronic veteran that we could, all leading up to our definitive list of weekend highlights. Here are the moments that'll stay with us until Flow Festival 2024 rolls around.

U-Haul



© Samuli Vienola for Flow Festival

© Samuli Vienola for Flow Festival

As soon as we entered the festival, it was the high-energy sounds and elated dancers of the X-Garden that had us heading straight to the small space. Decked out with metallic, celestial structures, the X Garden proved to be a reliable destination for anyone that wanted to kick up dust in euphoric crowds during the length of the weekend.

As waves of festivalgoers flocked into the post-industrial setting on Friday, it was **U-Haul** – a Helsinki-based collective founded as a safe space for the black and brown queer community – that tempted the curious early-evening crowds to set the tempo for the weekend with their vitalising tunes. When we joined the crowd of rhythm chasers, Finnish DJ Yebayah was behind the decks, dishing out hip-hop with a healthy dose of synth-pop classics and Amapiano.

With the U-Haul host's reassuring reminders to stay safe and resident dancers keeping the energy high, there was a sense of comradery between the revellers inside the X-Garden on Flow's first evening.

Wizkid



After finally dragging ourselves away from the dancefloor utopia of the X Garden, we got our hearts pumping once again in the race to Friday's headliner: **Wizkid**. With the Nigerian artist's reputation for momentous performances, we were keen to get the full experience, and surprisingly bagged a central spot with minutes to spare, no elbowing necessary.

When the Afrobeats star started his high-powered performance, we were glad to be surrounded by the diehards who didn't shy away when he sprayed us with an endless stream of water bottles. In between the pyrotechnics and DIY waterworks, Wizkid's performance ignited an exhilarated crowd as DJ Tunez wheeled up the energy with classic after classic.

Although the majority of Helsinki likely escaped Wizkid's reach up until now, the star's first appearance in Finland might just have been the perfect debut to change that.

Caroline Polachek



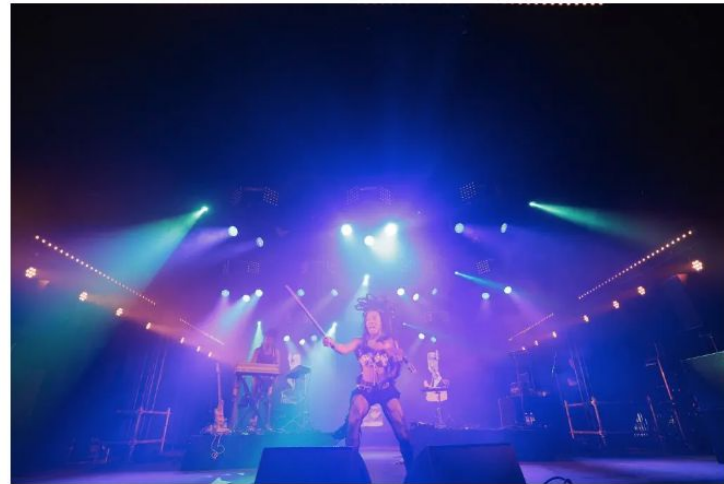
© Riikka Vaahtera for Flow Festival

© Riikka Vaahtera for Flow Festival

By the time Sunday rolled around, we'd already experienced a Saturday spent immersed in **Jyoty's** masterful summertime set at the Resident Advisor's Front Yard, and a main stage performance of **Lorde's** non-stop hits. The final day began back at the main stage, this time for the alt-pop star it's impossible not to love, **Caroline Polachek**. The American artist's earworm anthems are currently disseminating through the mainstream, and her dazzlingly dramatic performances are sure to help in her ascent to megastar status.

It was immediately obvious that her soulful, chaotic sound hadn't quite made it to Finland, as where her spiralling rendition of 'Desire' would have been met with an enraptured, chanting audience back home in London, Flow's audience watched on with an impressed intrigue. Nevertheless, Caroline's dream-like, unfaltering vocals cut through her hyper pop track like butter in new releases like 'I Believe' and old favourites like 'So Hot You're Hurting My Feelings'. As always, Caroline delivered a joyous show that felt little short of sacred.

Sudan Archives



Despite my Britpop upbringing, it was Sunday's female line-up that captured my attention over **Blur's** headline performance. Caroline's lilting vocals would usually be hard to follow, but few artists could cast a shadow over **Sudan Archives**. Her allure exists somewhere between the R&B production, soothing Sudanese folk sounds, club-ready beats, and swelling, powerful vocals. Impossible to define and a wonder to behold, the Cincinnati-born artist was at the top of our must-see list and did not disappoint.

Bearing her violin like a divine sword, she transitioned so effortlessly between giving goosebump-worthy vocals, playing exacting, rhythmic strings, using her violin as a prop in theatrical renditions, and scaling the scaffold to scream with her audience, it almost seemed implausible. While other artists had to adapt to a timid crowd, Sudan Archive's was clearly made up of fans that had been waiting all weekend to finally hear her hypnotising discography live.

After bringing the sonic heat with riotous executions of 'Home Maker' and 'Loyal Confessions', she proved just how commanding she was by somehow getting her swarm of appreciators moshing to a traditional Irish jig.

—

Flow Festival 2024 will be held at Helsinki's Suvilahti on August 9–11, 2024. For tickets and more, head to <https://www.flowfestival.com/>

Words: **Mimi Francis**
Photography: **As Credited**

*Caroline Polachek, Festival, live review, Sudan Archives, Wizkid*

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“Most festivals that book Blur don't also program music as avant garde at Claire Rousay, but thank god Flow did.”

LOUD & QUIET



Short



Claire Rousay at Flow: a magical performance featuring a new direction for the sound collagist

Most festivals that book Blur don't also program music as avant garde at Claire Rousay, but thank god Flow did

Words by Stuart Stubbs | Photos by Sam Walton



It took going to [Flow](#) to realise how deceptive its lineup is. As a Brit, at least, you see [Blur](#) and [Devo](#) and [Christine & The Queens](#) and [Caroline Polachek](#) on the bill and it's quite enough to get you out to Helsinki. [Jockstrap](#) and [Shygirl](#) and [Amyl & The Sniffers](#), and a *lot* of Finnish artists, who are supported extensively by the festival and crowd alike: if at any point you found yourself being swallowed by a blob of a few hundred people moving as one after an act had just finished, that act was always from the surrounding area.

With all of that going on, it was easy to miss that [dub reggae legend Horace Andy](#) was also playing, or to feel that there was plenty on the bill that you already knew about in order to completely dismiss the idea of discovering something as progressive but not party party as [Scottish bagpiper Brighde Chaimbeul](#). There's nothing wrong with that – when I go to Wagamama I only ever order the chicken katsu curry in case I order something else and don't like it as much. But discovering Chaimbeul on the first day of the festival



something else and don't like it as much. But discovering Chaimbeul on the first day of the festival made me look again at the lineup and catch something I'd almost missed altogether, also in the dark, factory-like room of the Other Sound x Sun Effects stage, which was Flow's expertly curated space for the kind of experimental music that festivals booking Blur rarely also program: LA sound collagist Claire Rousay.

Rousay was responsible for one of the best avant garde (and electronic) albums of last year – *Everything Perfect Is Already Here*, a two-track-long record of the artist's signature sparse sounds, made up of field recordings, voice notes, eerie crackles and environmental recordings. It was standing-room-only to hear Rousay recreate this “weird, cool, experimental stuff” last night, where we were all rewarded with what we wanted, but also got a long look at where she's going next with her songwriting – essentially in a more conventional (yet extremely affecting) direction.



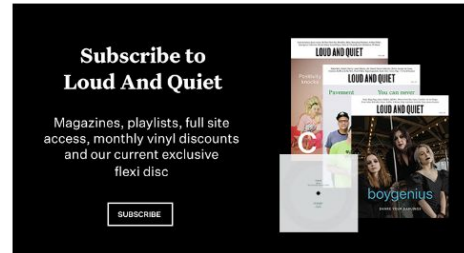
After introducing herself (and acknowledging how she doesn't usually do that), Rousay tells us that she's just come from Berlin where she smoked 100 cigarettes, "So I feel great." She then assumed her sitting position behind a laptop and a few electronics, with a guitar in her lap. The opener is so bare for its first 3 minutes you can't be sure that Rousay has actually started it yet. But it slowly comes to life – what sounds like the sound of a printer, the rustle of a crisp packet, the

But it slowly comes to life – what sounds like the sound of a printer, the rustle of a crisp packet, the ambient sounds of an open window on a day when nothing is happening. It could be the first half of 'Distance Therapy', but is more likely new track 'Your First Armadillo', released 2 days ago via Saddle Creek's Document Series. It's already a mystery to what makes this combination of everyday sounds feel so melancholy, profound and addictive, but clear to me that I will be staying for the whole of Rousay's set, almost involuntarily.

Her second track is something we've never heard from her before – a sung song, played on a clean guitar, with autotune vocals, plus Rousay-esque crackles, tones and strangeness that make it sound like lost Bon Iver gold or something a The Postal Service would have no doubt loved to have done, but ultimately like only a piece Rousay could have made herself. *"I'm drunk as ever,"* she sings on the slow motion emo track, as a viola quietly scrapes and the guitar resembles Slint. *"This is*

Rousay could have made herself. *“I’m drunk as ever,”* she sings on the slow motion emo track, as a viola quietly scrapes and the guitar resembles Slint. *“This is not your problem, this is not your fault / This is me trying to stay involved,”* goes another of these new songs, one of which follows each of her collage instrumentals. It’s as if Rousay’s two styles come in pairs, and they really do compliment each other – wildly different, yet both transporting us to suburban America where it’s permanently night time, with the freaky, crunchy samples preventing the straight-up songs from merely sounding like sappy confessionals.

“It’s weird singing songs instead of the weird cool experimental stuff, so sorry if that’s what you’ve come for,” Rousay says halfway through. “And I’m talking in the middle of the set, which is not cool. So I’m two for two up here.”



There’s a distressing voice note as one track too (beginning: *“It’s 4pm on Monday and I can’t stop sobbing”*), another song where a flat tone breaks into a recording of a party, and another – the closer – called ‘[t2v](#)’, performed through a rudimental robotic voice simulator, where the robot itself is full of anxiety and doubt.

What Rousay does is magic, where, evidently, however she presents her music it lands as a massive gut punch, for all the things she says and all the things she doesn’t even need to. Parklife!



14 AUG 2023

ARTIST

CLAIRE ROUSAY

TAGS

FLOW FESTIVAL

CATEGORY

LIVE REPORT

*“Finland’s biggest open-air
Flow Festival channels the
transformative power of
music.”*

UNDER THE RADAR

FLOW FESTIVAL®



Blur

Blur, Litku Klemetti, Suede, Maustetytöt Flow Festival, Helsinki, Finland, August 11-13, 2023,

Aug 24, 2023 | By Irina Shtreis | Photography by Sami Heiskanen (lead photo) | [WEB EXCLUSIVE](#)

SHARE

Finland’s biggest open-air Flow Festival channels the transformative power of music. Art-punk provocateurs [Devo](#) appear on the festival’s main stage in black and change their attire to trademark yellow overalls after the eighth track of the setlist, “(I Can’t Get No) Satisfaction”, the Rolling Stones cover featured on their debut album *Q: Are We Not Men? A: We Are Devo!*. The red energy dome hats are left backstage. Saturated with visual elements, including fragments from their home videos, the strikingly energetic show is part of their 50 Years of De-Evolution tour, marking the band’s anniversary. “How many people tonight think that De-Evolution is real? You know it – there is a planet on fire, there is an artificial intelligence just waiting to take over and there are a bunch of right-wing fascists running free all over the globe.” Devo’s *raison d’être* introduced by the band’s bassist Gerald Savale sounds as relevant as ever. While the daytime temperature in Helsinki seems higher than usual at this time of the year (+28), the metaphorical de-evolution resonates with the key topic of the current edition, that is, sustainability.

CURRENT ISSUE



Issue #71

Apr 05, 2023 | ISSUE #71 - WEYES BLOOD AND BLACK BELT EAGLE SCOUT

MOST RECENT

10 Best Songs of the Week: Mannequin Pussy, Lauren Mayberry, Lael Neale, Slowdive, and More (News) — Songs of the Week, Mannequin Pussy, Lauren Mayberry, CHVRCHES, Lael Neale, Slowdive, Will Butler, Will Butler + Sister Squares, Katy Kirby, Steven Wilson, Woods, Ty Segall, Oneohtrix Point Never

X @ Palladium Times Square, New York, August 31, 2023 (Review) —

Sylvan Esso @ the Greek Theatre, Los Angeles, August 31, 2023 - IN PHOTOS (Review) — Sylvan Esso

Christine and the Queens @ The Grammy Museum, LA, August 29, 2023 - IN PHOTOS (Review) —



(Photo by Riika Vaahtera)

For the organisers, this year has been eventful. Acknowledging the upcoming construction of the Suvilahti Event Hub, the festival team announced the 2023 edition to be the final to be held in this historical setting – a former energy production facility which has been home for Flow since 2007. However, following a complaint from local residents the construction got postponed by a year, which won the team a chance to organise the next-year edition in Suvilahti again. A few weeks before the festival kicked off, an important decision was made as Flow refrained from partnering with Heineken due to their activity on the Russian market. Hence, the change of the flavour, with drinks provided by the local brand Hartwall. The festival visitors are seen with Lapin Kulta and the legendary Original Long Drink, which was first introduced during the Olympic games in 1952.



Despite being an international event, Flow Festival is a distinctly Finnish festival giving insight into the national psyche. A quirky sense of humour counterbalances trademark melancholy. The name of the duo [Maustetytöt](#) translates as Spice Girls. Despite their moniker alluding to the upbeat pop outfit, sisters Kaisa and Anna Karjalainen play sorrowful synth-pop along the lines of Russian post-punk collective Motorama, tinged with a glimpse of hope. The show is accompanied by a classic of Finnish cinematography – *The Match Factory Girl* by Aki Kaurismäki.



Maustetytöt (Photo by Riika Vaahtera)

Like the film's female protagonist dealing with the offensive behaviour of the upper class, the festival tackles contemporary issues in a somewhat radical way. In response to global warming, Flow Festival obliged the cafes and restaurants on its territory to exclude red meat and poultry from the menu. At the press tent, journalists and photographers are happily feeding on vegan chocolate and coffee with oat milk. Similarly, gender equality politics redefines the music landscape with a particular focus on women artists and musicians who define themselves as queer, e.g. [Christine and the Queens](#). On Saturday evening, the main stage and slightly smaller Silver Arena are taken simultaneously by New Zealand's [Lorde](#) and [Tove Lo](#). The former has a theatrical presence with dramatic gestures and a silk dressing gown that brings to mind *The Great Gatsby*.

Playing on the main stage during the daytime, Finland's [Litku Klemetti](#) is different genre-wise yet equally captivating. At Flow, the kinetic artist performs with Viihdeorkesteri (Entertainment Orchestra), featuring additional string and horn sections. The eclectic set-up matches the music drawing inspiration from Finnish schlager, prog and art rock. In one of the interviews, Klemetti mentioned that the major musical discovery during her formative years was *We're Only in It for the Money* by Mothers of Invention. The overall quirkiness brings to mind that of Frank Zappa and Co.



Litku Klemetti (Photo by Riika Vaahtera)

Perhaps it is the liminal quality of the venue but the programme of Flow Festival seems to be on the borderline between straightforward and strange. Alongside what seems to be easily digestible dance music, the Other Sound pavilion offers a different kind of experience. The immersive set of [Mikko Sarvanne Garden](#) combines haunting melodies from the realm of traditional folk songs and avant-garde jazz experimentalism – a dense and intense bog of sounds bringing to mind late 60s Estonian collective Collage and local psych-folk heroes Paavoharju.



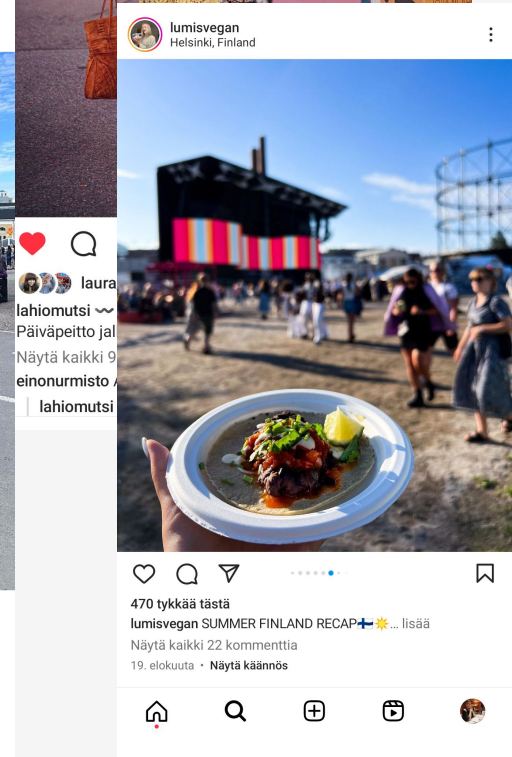
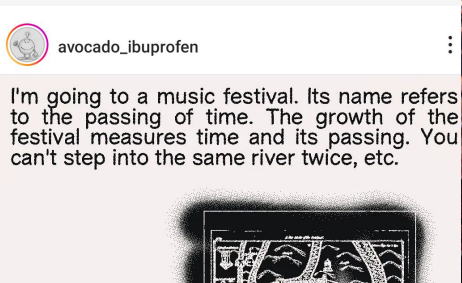
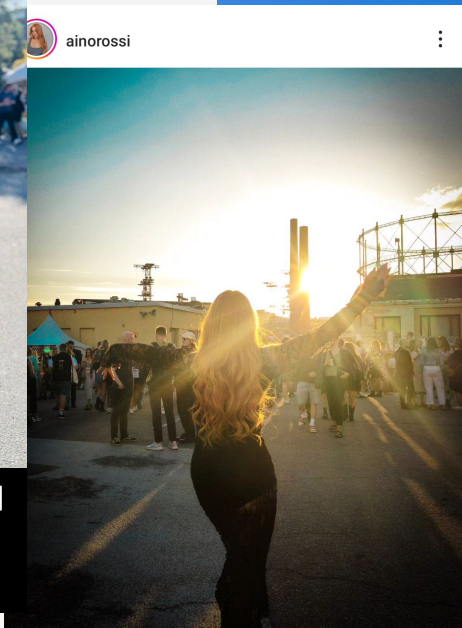
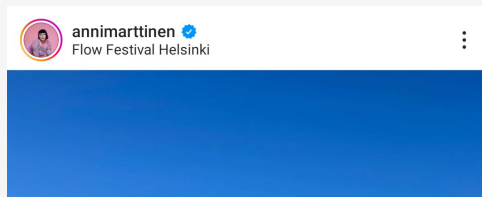
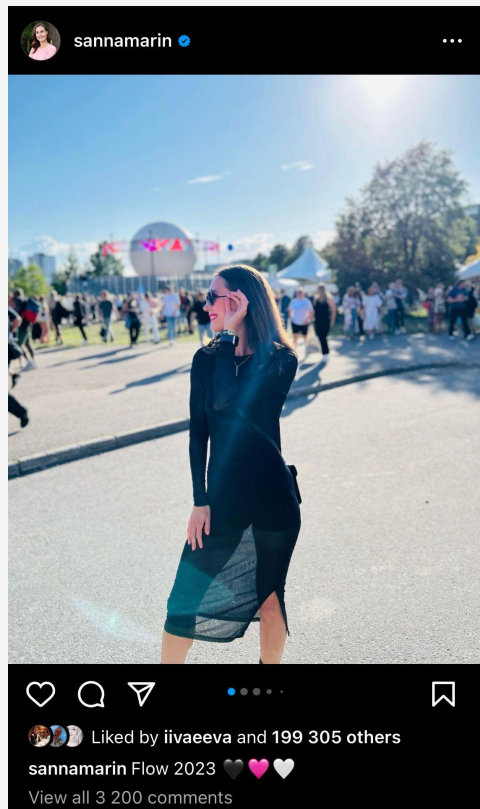
Suede (Photo by Riika Vaahtera)

As 2023 has seen the revival of Britpop, two of the emblematic collectives, [Suede](#) and [Blur](#) hit the stage on Friday and Sunday respectively. While Suede's frontman Brett Anderson repeatedly descends into the photo pit and falls into the arms of the audience, Blur's members remain somewhat more aloof, with Damon Albarn saying very little between the songs. Both bands recently released albums. Songs from *The Ballad of Darren*, the ninth record of Blur, are seamlessly integrated into the set of twenty numbers inevitably including hits such as "Coffee & TV" as well as stomper "Song 2". The set culminates with *The Narcissist*, a moving ballad from the latest album, evidence of the band's capacity for writing impeccable songs that linger on one's mind long after this final show of the festival. And while the lights of the power plant gradually fade away and the area remains silent til next year, there is a glow inside emanating from everything that has been soaked in.



Blur (photo by Konstantin Kondruchov)

SOCIAL MEDIA



SOCIAL MEDIA



anniihamaki Flow Festival Helsinki

kirtiaino ja 6 867 muuta ovat tykänneet anniihamaki Pitkästä aikaa @flowfestivalhelsinki Ihaninta nähdä niiiiin paljon kavereita samalla kert... Näytä kaikki 7 kommenttia



viviwahlstrom Flow Festival Helsinki

laura_studarus ja muut ovat tykänneet viviwahlstrom Mä olin erittäin pinkki viime perjantaina Flowssa, mut olipas kivat festarit. Mun tän... lisää Näytä kaikki 36 kommenttia tiiasusannae



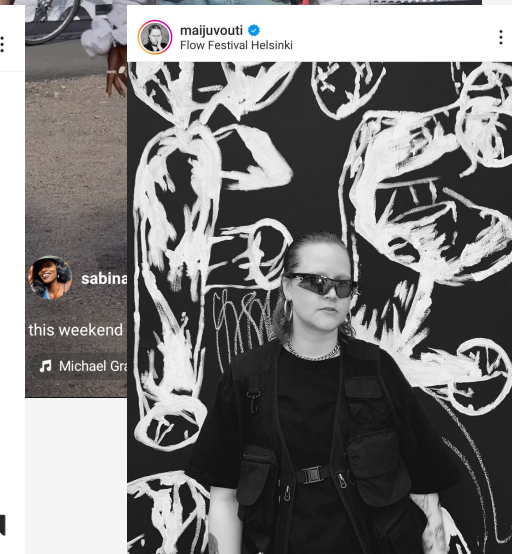
majuvouti Flow Festival Helsinki

joonahellman @flowfestivalhelsinki kolmannen päivän lookki : -) rentoo ja ikonista STYLE @antti.ng ASU @lilging



suviauvi

katri.naukari ja 555 muuta ovat tykänneet suviauvi Elämän planeetan rajoissa ei tarvitse olla kurjaa. Mietin tätä taas viime viikonloppuna suosikkifestare... lisää Näytä kaikki 13 kommenttia iinatuulia Oliko tässä siis laskettu artistien lentämiset ja heidän välineiden kuljettamisen päästöt? suviauvi @iinatuulia tottakai on laskettu. Koko raporttiin pääsee helposti tutustumaan tosiaan myös itse, sieltä näkee tarkan jaottelun ja laskelmat.



sabina

this weekend Michael Gr

iidakontio ja 3 891 muuta ovat tykänneet majuvouti flow 2023 mulla oli taas niin kivaa, etten malta odottaa ensi vuotta! onneksi silloinkin vielä... lisää Näytä kaikki 3 kommenttia inamikkola





THANK YOU!

