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Province won't enforce liquor licence conditions

City to crack down on new liquor licence applicants after the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario changes its enforcement policy.

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ROBYN DOOLITTLE / TORONTO STAR - Order this photo

Vera Frenkel lives next door to Church Apartment bar on Queen St. W. She is worried about new changes to the provincial liquor licence enforcement policy, which will lead to more noise and rowdiness. City councillors Gord Perks, Adam Vaughan and Mike Layton say the new dynamic will cause chaos in neighbourhoods.

By: Robyn Doolittle/City Hall, Published on Tue Apr 08 2014

The Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario has informed city officials it will no longer enforce a litany of conditions currently attached to liquor licences in Toronto.

This means that nightclubs, lounges and bars, which for years have had to manage litter, crowds and noise, among other things, to maintain their licences, are now unshackled from those responsibilities.

"Basically, the AGCO is taking eight years of work and walking away from it. They're throwing neighbourhoods to the wolves," said Councillor Adam Vaughan, whose ward includes the Entertainment District.

A more far-reaching consequence of the surprise policy switch is that the city will make it extremely difficult for new licences to get approved.

On April 1, council passed a motion requiring future applications to go through the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health Safe Bars program, which is much more involved than the Smart Serve course. Applicants must also get a letter of support from the local MPP.

If these two conditions aren't met, the city will declare the application "not in the public interest" and it will go to a hearing.

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Council has no choice, said Gord Perks, who represents Parkdale. Once a licence is finalized, it is attached to that business and can change hands easily. Someone could apply as a mom and pop snack shop, get the approval, then sell the business to someone who wants to open a dance club.

The city prevented this in the past by attaching conditions to the licence, like a requirement to sell food or provide every patron with a chair. The AGCO says it will not add those safeguards and will now ignore previously agreed upon rules.

"Because the province has walked away from its responsibility, everyone who wants a liquor licence in Toronto is going to have to go through the meat grinder," Perks said.

"Even if you just want to sell a sandwich and a beer, you're going to be treated the same as the guy opening a nightclub for 400 people."

The city learned about the enforcement policy change on March 14.

An AGCO spokesman said it will now be up to Toronto's municipal inspectors to police issues not directly covered under the Liquor Licence Act.

"Issues of intoxication, service to minors, overcrowding, service after hours and violent/illegal activities," will be the AGCO's focus, Jeff Kozy wrote in an email.

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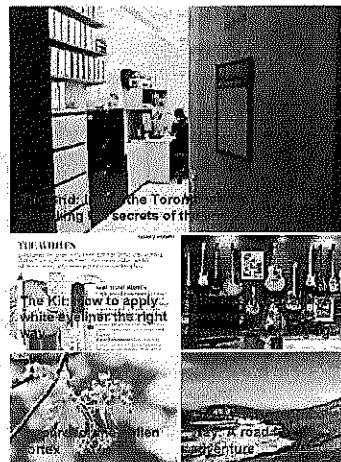
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Police shut down EDM festival after ravers die of overdose

Rendi A. Witular, The Jakarta Post, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia | World | Sat, March 15 2014, 8:27 PM

The organizers of the Future Music Festival (FMFA) abruptly ended the festival on its third day Saturday following the death of partygoers from a suspected drug overdose.

The reputed festival, Southeast Asia's biggest electronic dance music (EDM) event, began Thursday at Bukit Jalil National Stadium in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

"In the interest of public safety we have heeded the authority's advice to [end the event]," said Live Scape Sdn Bhd. in a statement. "This is also to help in the ongoing investigation."

As reported by *The Star*, Kuala Lumpur Police chief senior deputy Comm. Datuk Mohamad Salleh said 9 people aged between 21 to 28, collapsed during the second day after consuming drugs at around 1.30 a.m.

Friday was the legendary State of Trance: 600 day, featuring Armin Van Buuren, and a host of internationally acclaimed trance DJs including Andrew Rayel, Markus Schulz and Paul Van Dyk.

Mohammad Saleh said one person died at Bukit Jalil while another on the way to the hospital.

Three others died at hospital. The five deceased were three Malays, one Chinese and one Indian, *The Star* reported.

Four others are currently in a critical condition, they are two locals and two Singaporeans.

Throughout the two-days of the festival, police also arrested 22 people for possession of narcotics.

Live Scape, however, said that as of 5:00 p.m. Saturday it could only confirm that one death, not five, took place at the festival ground on the event's second day.

"A police report has been filed and we are working very closely with all relevant authorities in examining and determining the cause of this very unfortunate incident," said Live Scape.

Around 85,000 partygoers attended the event, Grammy winner Pharell Williams was on the line up for Saturday.

The main stage played host to the likes of Eric Prydz, Sweden's top House music producer, making his first appearance in Asia.

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This might seem to make sense, but city councillors say there's a big problem with this logic. Toronto inspectors can enforce city bylaws and zoning but the penalties are minuscule. Only the AGCO has "the teeth" to deal with problem owners, said Perks. It can take years to get a violator in front of a provincial judge, he said. And even if they're found guilty, they're only given a fine.

"Just a cost of doing business," Perks said.

Even if Toronto secured stiffer penalties, savvy owners can get around zoning bylaws. Entertainment establishments are only allowed in certain areas, but some operate with restaurant licences elsewhere, said Councillor Mike Layton.

"They can serve food, even if it's a frozen dinner. They can have tables and chairs and in the evening push everything to the side and make room for a dance floor," he said.

The question of what constitutes a nightclub has become the bane of Vera Frenkel's life.

Frenkel, 75, an artist who gets around with a walker, lives in a two-storey converted storefront at Queen St. W. and Dovercourt St. When she purchased the place in 2002, her adjoining neighbour was the Slavic Pentecostal Parish.

In 2011, that church became Church Aperitivo Bar, a posh eatery-bar that opens at 5 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday and stays open until 2 a.m. on Fridays and Saturdays. On the weekend, the place becomes standing room only in between tables.

"They initially claimed to be a family restaurant and that's not what happened," said Frenkel.

"My front step is used as an ashtray, a bedroom, a bathroom. . . . The noise coming through the walls and the floor is incredible. I now have to go to sleep at 3 a.m.," said Frenkel.

"All I had to protect myself were those conditions. Now I can't call anyone."

An owner for Church Aperitivo declined to comment.

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Big Jim

This story is not accurate. The Ontario Liquor Control Act is a Provincial Statute and is enforced by police as well as Liquor Inspectors. Large police services have units dedicated to enforcing the liquor laws and that includes offences committed by the licensees. Fines are steep when convictions are registered. Copies of violations are forwarded to the AGCO who may impose further penalties including hefty fines, suspensions and licence revocations.

11 hours ago · Ontario

Etobicoke ratepayer

Question is, what brought about this change on the part of the province? It is the sort of thing you would expect from Whodel!

10 hours ago · Toronto

Big Jim

@Etobicoke ratepayer. It's the Provincial Gov't and I believe it is the Liberals who are currently clinging to power with the assistance of the NDP. "Whodel" has nothing to do with it.

1 hour ago · Ontario

kmacd

Ms. Frenkel - Fight fire with fire. Get yourself a couple of very large speakers, some good punk, point the speakers at the wall adjacent to Church Aperitivo Bar, crank the volume, and let rip. I suspect the owners might be willing to discuss some arrangement about the noise after a couple of weekends of that.

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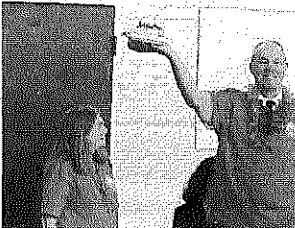
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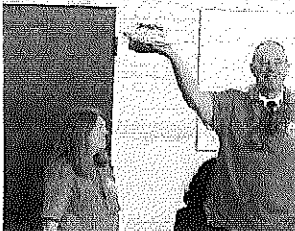
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Drug Deaths Shut Down Asia's Biggest EDM Festival, But Here's What I Saw

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RE: SOUNDSCAPE



Iqbal Ameer speaking to the press in the wake of Future Music Festival Asia's cancellation

On the final day of Future Music Festival Asia (FMFA), I found myself sitting in a traffic jam with various members of the press, ten blocks from our hotel. Massive traffic pileups might be normal for Kuala Lumpur on a Saturday, but something seemed off. For the last two days, our press brigade had been shuttled back and forth between our hotel and the festival venue by a (largely symbolic) six-motorbike police escort. Today, they hadn't arrived.

It turns out that the authorities were busy shutting down the entire show. Due to six drug-related deaths (allegedly from methamphetamine overdoses; although there have been several conflicting reports about the substance in question), the last—and biggest—day of FMFA had been called off. According to Malaysia's *New Straits Times*, 29 others were arrested over the first two days for drug charges.

The impact of this cancellation cannot be underestimated. FMFA in Malaysia has grown to become one of the biggest EDM festivals in this part of the world, with ticket sales jumping from 15,000 to 85,000 since its inception in 2012. A large chunk of concertgoers come from abroad—mostly Singapore, Indonesia and Australia. But large international crowds were all part of the grand vision of Iqbal Ameer, a Malaysian national and former Australian club promoter who now works for Livescape Asia, the events management company that produced FMFA along with Australia's Future Music Group.

Now, Iqbal and a representative from Future Music were standing in a buzzing media center looking visibly distraught. In an extremely brief press conference, he read a statement that had appeared on FMFA's Facebook page just minutes before. "In the interest of public safety we have heeded the authority's advice not to proceed with day three," he said. In a nutshell: show's over, folks.

It's standard practice (and probably a good idea) to cancel a festival like this in the event of serious safety concerns—but it's nonetheless a shame, because day one and two of FMFA provided a fascinating insight into EDM culture in Southeast Asia. So before I spend the next 24 hours at the hotel bar having to pay for my drinks, I took note of the things I learned about EDM in Malaysia from FMFA.

MALAYSIA IS MOSTLY FED BY AUSTRALIAN EDM



Australian DJ Will Sparks

"In the US EDM is about everything being big, everything being mega-huge-and-now-what's-next," Iqbal told me during an earlier (and happier) interview. In comparison, Australia's own sound is both a bit harder and more progressive, which explains why Will Sparks absolutely blew apart the main stage on day one. "Australians are stubborn, they're less fashion orientated. If they like it, it goes," Iqbal added. Which also explains why Will was DJing in his underwear.



BUT ADVENTURE CLUB ARE CANADIAN, AND THEY'RE PRETTY DAMN GOOD



Canadian duo Adventure Club

Adventure Club was probably the best act I saw at the festival. The duo hails from Canada—another newly EDM-ized nation—and started out as a rock group, like Skrillex and Zedd. They're relatively new on the international circuit, and while the turnout at the beginning of their set suggested they're still relatively unknown in Malaysia, the hysterical crowd at the end (people were literally in tears when Christian stage-dived) suggests they're going to be a regular fixture here.

MALAYSIAN DJS HAVE A STEEP HILL TO CLIMB



Malaysian DJ Eva T

EDM is sort of like the English language. It has transformed the world of electronic music by creating a common lingo that brings together distant acts and venues. It's also made it easier for new producers and listeners to engage with each other. But now, EDM is so prolific that it's harder for native electronic cultures to grow organically. Props to FMFA for making a conscientious effort to address this, bringing in Malaysian acts and treating them with the same level of importance (dressing rooms, riders, press slots, flyer mentions) as everyone else on the roster. But it seems like Malaysia's DJs still have much room to grow. For example, Eva T, considered one of Kuala Lumpur's top DJs, played a tight set, but has yet to branch into production—now arguably the fundamental driver for an artist's success.

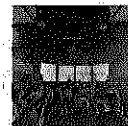
THE OLD GUARD STILL DOMINATES



Southeast Asia regular Armin Van Buuren dominated day two with his legendary *A State of Trance* showcase—an all-day affair that included fellow heavy-hitters Markus Schulz and Paul Van Dyk. So even though there appeared to be more hysteria for acts like Will Sparks and Adventure Club, the arena was at its busiest—the pyrotechnics, smoke, and soundsystem at full blast—for Armin and his legion of trance dudes.



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THE MEDIA'S FEEDING FRENZY IS PART OF THE PROBLEM



The gap of international visibility that exists between Malaysian DJs, EDM upstarts and the old guard is felt out on the main stage to an extent. But it's no where more clear than in the press room. Festivals are not only where artists make their money—it's also where they get their next gig and push their name further out there. Sadly, I was the only journalist interviewing Malaysia's Eva T, one of two for Adventure Club, and one of twenty for a press conference with Armin Van Buuren. For some reason which even Armin seemed confused by, everyone just wanted to ask questions about his infant son. The media's side-stepping of smaller names in favor of asking the big fish silly questions will only exacerbate this divide.

MALAYSIA'S GROWING EDM INDUSTRY IS FRAGILE



There's no skipping around this: Day three was supposed to be the climax of FMFA, with Pharrell, Rudimental, Knife Party, Macklemore and Ryan Lewis, and Eric Prydz (who under normal circumstances doesn't play anywhere he has to fly to) all confirmed as headliners. While drug-related deaths at festivals are (unfortunately) not uncommon, what made this news feel especially surreal was how entirely at odds it felt to my experience at the festival. I've travelled around Croatia and done serious time at London warehouses, so I'm accustomed to dancefloors where half the occupants are swapping shots for dabs, bumps or snorts.

But FMFA's drug scene was different: we didn't find any. In fact nobody in the crowd seemed particularly drunk. Back at the hotel room at 5AM, hunched over the thousands of photos I took, there were none of the usual telltale "Wow, look at that dude's eyes..." shots. Security at the event was tight too. Searches on the entrance, no re-entry, even US-style no-drink, no-litter zones.

This was a drug-related death, and the fledgling Malaysian EDM scene will suffer heavily for it. What makes it all the more tragic was that this simply was not a particularly substance-saturated festival.

NEVERTHELESS, WE'LL BE BACK

Malaysia's exchange rate, geography, and its growing creative class put it in the perfect position to carve a name for itself in the EDM world. There are questions to be asked about how emerging communities use and respond to EDM. The bottom line is, however, that for the two days it ran, the festival appeared to have the charisma, the crowd and the energy, to ignite a much-larger scene. If it's on next year, we're going.

Ally Byers is still jetlagged. • @ByersAlly

Written by: Ally Byers
Mar 17 2014

Tags: futura music festival, malaysia, edm, drug deaths, cancelled, Liveness Asia, everyone wants to talk about Armin's baby

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COMMENTS



Miami officials call for Ultra Music Festival ban after guard trampled

Posted: Mar 30, 2014 7:17 PM EDT
Updated: Apr 09, 2014 1:45 AM EDT

MIAMI (WSVN) -- The security guard trampled by a crowd at this year's Ultra Music Festival continues to fight for her life amid calls from city officials to shut down the popular Downtown Miami event.

Twenty-eight-year-old Erica Mack remains unconscious at Jackson Memorial Hospital, where she is listed in critical condition. Police said, however, that she is no longer on a ventilator and is able to breathe on her own.

As tens of thousands of revelers gathered at Bayfront Park for the electronic music showcase's third and final day, Miami Mayor Tomas Regalado said he will do everything in his power to ensure Ultra does not return to Downtown Miami. "It's time to say goodbye," he said. "We are bringing a resolution to the City Commission. If approved, the city will deny the permits for next year. We'd rather take quality of life instead of money."

The mayor is taking action two days after Mack was trampled by a mob of Ultra party crashers, Friday night. "Doing what she was supposed to do, she's trying to tell them that they can't do that, to move away," said Miami Fire Rescue Lt. Ignatius Carroll, "but she was not strong enough to deal with the mob of people that actually pushed this fence down, pushing her backwards, and the fence landed on top of her."

Mack was transported to Jackson Memorial Hospital with severe brain hemorrhaging and a leg injury. Her father, Dwight Mack, told 7News, "It's devastating. How could something like this happen?"

Miami Police Lt. Dan Kerr, vice president of the Miami Fraternal Order of Police, said this was an unfortunate incident caused by people who were not ticket holders. "People without tickets, they're going to pick the weakest spot [to enter the venue]," he said.

Regalado placed the blame squarely on the festival's organizers. "This is not an accident," he said. "This is something that could have been avoided. The promoters need to have all the measures for securing the perimeter, and they didn't."

On Saturday, Miami Commissioner Marc Sarnoff echoed Regalado's comments. "Ultra did two things wrong. One: They tried to use too much of their private security, and two: They failed to secure the perimeter fence as they were instructed to do so by the City of Miami Police Department," he said.

Contemporary Services Corporation, the security company Mack works for, released a statement that reads: "We are deeply saddened by the tragic events that occurred this weekend at Ultra Music Festival. We will continue to keep Erica Mack and her loved ones in our thoughts and prayers as we closely monitor her condition."

On Sunday, a spokesperson for Ultra issued the following statement:

"The event organizers of Ultra Music Festival share the sentiments of our security partner, CSC, with regard to the condition of Erica Mack, the security guard currently receiving treatment at Jackson Memorial Hospital. The Ultra Family hopes for a swift and full recovery.

The event organizers prohibit any form of unlawful entry in to the event grounds. Preliminary investigations show that the incident was caused by individuals not in possession of event tickets and who were determined to gain unauthorized entry.

Every year the event organizers work collaboratively with police and other municipal partners along with the organizers' independent security partners to ensure the safety of all patrons, crew and working personnel.

Because a thorough investigation is underway, event organizers regret that additional comment cannot be provided at this time. The event coordinators are cooperating fully with investigative authorities."

Kerr said it's possible for Ultra to retain Bayfront Park as its venue, but organizers need to make significant adjustments. "They just have to make sure it's done correctly in the future," he said.

Miami Police continue investigating, reviewing surveillance video and interviewing witnesses.

By Monday morning, police had made 84 arrests at this year's festival. Twenty-eight of those were for felonies. So far, there have been 153 people treated by paramedics, including some with broken bones from dancing.

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Carlos Gonzalez · 9:13 AM

This event is a drug fueled fracas that should be banned.

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Electric Zoo Festival Canceled Following Two Drug-Related Deaths (Updated)

By Kerri Mason and Billboard Staff | September 01, 2013 11:40 AM EDT



Today (Sept. 1), the final day of the three-day Electric Zoo Festival was canceled by New York City government following two fatalities and after four concertgoers became critically ill and were placed in critical care units in area hospitals. The city claimed the deaths "appear to have involved the drug MDMA (ecstasy or molly)." A statement released by the city said the following:

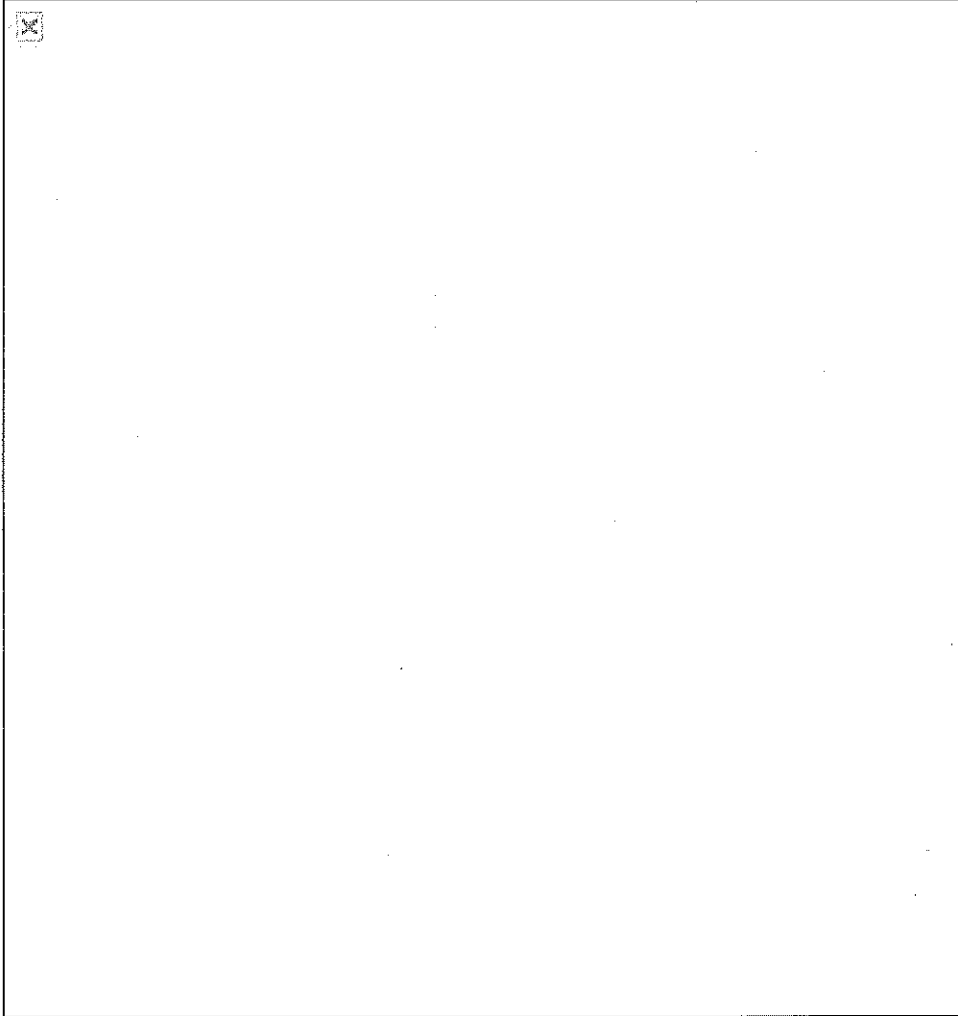
"Due to serious health risks, the Electric Zoo music festival on Randall's Island on Sunday, September 1st has been cancelled. The City recommended cancellation and the event promoters have agreed."

"During the first two days of the Electric Zoo music festival, two concert-goers have died and at least four others became critically ill and have been placed in intensive care at area hospitals. Definitive causes of death have not yet been determined, however, both appear to have involved the drug MDMA (ecstasy, or molly). The Electric Zoo organizers have worked with City officials to reduce health risks at this event, but in view of these occurrences, the safest course is to cancel the remaining day of the event."

Police identified the victims as Jeffrey Russ, 24, of Rochester, N.Y., and Olivia Rotondo, 20, of Providence, R.I. Russ was reportedly attending the festival with 23 members of his Syracuse University fraternity. According to the Associated Press, Russ was pronounced dead at Harlem Hospital around 3:20 a.m. Saturday, police said. He had been brought to the hospital from the festival. Rotondo was taken to Metropolitan Hospital later Saturday, around 8:45 p.m., and was pronounced dead shortly afterward, police said.

In a statement on the Electric Zoo website, the promoters issued the following statement: "The founders of Electric Zoo send our deepest condolences to the families of the two people who passed away this weekend. Because there is nothing more important to us than our patrons, we have decided in consultation with the New York City Parks Department that there will be no show today."

The Electric Zoo festival has been held over Labor Day weekend since 2009.



The Electric Zoo homepage. (screenshot)

According to attorney Ed McPherson of McPherson Rane LLP, who represented rock band Great White in litigation over the fatal Station nightclub fire in 2003, Made made the right move.

"Electric Zoo organizers have done absolutely the right thing after the fatalities occurred -- and that is to close the festival," he said. "Of course, that is a huge disappointment for everyone, and potentially a great expense for the promoters. However, if one life is saved because someone had to go home, where (hopefully) that culture does not exist, and they can make certain that nobody uses whatever drugs they have, it is obviously well worth the disappointment and expense."

Artists slated to play today at the Randall's Island festival location included Steve Aoki, Diplo, Sebastian Ingrosso, Zedd, Armin Van Burren and Krewella. Earlier in the weekend Avicii, Alessi, Benny Benassi and Baauer performed on Friday; Tiesto, David Guetta, Bassnectar and A-Trak played Saturday.

The cancellation makes Electric Zoo the first major festival of the three-year-old EDM boom to be shuttered due to drug concerns, and it comes at a particularly bad time for the industry. Its greatest test thus far, the initial public offering (IPO) of Robert F.X. Sillerman's revived SFX Entertainment -- a multi-million-dollar rollup of EDM promoters and other entities - is scheduled for the coming weeks,

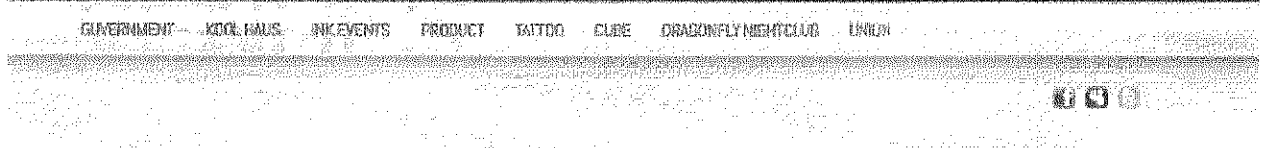
closure also comes four days after a 19-year-old fan died of drug-related causes at a Zedd concert in Boston.

"I am not sure that there is really anything that a festival promoter can do -- and still maintain concertgoers' Constitutional rights -- to eliminate drug usage at concerts," says McPherson. "No amount of security personnel, barricades, et cetera could prevent something like this. Unfortunately, however, ecstasy and other drugs have become the culture of some of these festivals."

Made Event was known to be one of the most diligent event promoters where attendee safety was concerned. Throughout Electric Zoo's first two days, messages broadcast over loudspeakers onsite and sent to all attendees via the Electric Zoo smartphone app reminded fans to be safe, often breaching the don't-ask-don't-tell policy that promoters frequently adopt in regards to drug use. "If you see someone sick or struggling, be a friend to a friend in need," said one. "Seek out a medical professional at one of our Medical Aid tents marked with a Red Cross."

"Putting together the safest electronic music festival possible is of the utmost importance to us, and we work side by side with NYPD and FDNY, as well as several safety experts, in order to ensure the safety of our festivalgoers," Mike Bindra, Executive Producer of Electric Zoo Festival and Founder of Made Event, told Billboard in May 2012. "From medical staff and facilities to security, we consistently staff well above and beyond what is recommended."

Dance culture is no stranger to tragedy: In June 2010, 15-year-old Sasha Rodriguez died from causes related to ecstasy use, after attending Electric Daisy Carnival at the L.A. Coliseum. An L.A. Times investigation, published in February of this year, revealed that over the course of 10 years, at least 14 people had died at events promoted by EDC organizer Insomniac Events. Insomniac was not welcomed back to the L.A. Coliseum, and its CEO Pasquale Rotella was brought up on civil and criminal charges related to alleged financial malfeasance around the event. But none of its events were ever cancelled due to drug concerns. Insomniac announced a partial acquisition by Live Nation this June, and the civil lawsuits against Rotella and Insomniac were thrown out this past Friday (August 30).



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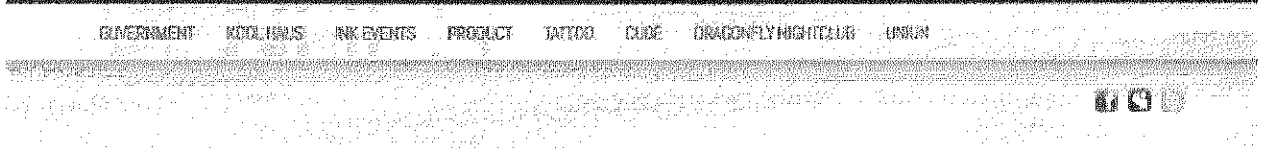
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