Staff

Managing Editors:
Kathleen Kang
Jessica Hanway

Contributors:
Sean Mihaljevich
John Baierl
Mel Arroyo
Marisa Yang
Wesley Ho
Jessica Hanway
Maimouna Siby
Kassie Leidemer
Contents

LFSX

Sonic Youth

Jean Michel Basquiat

Art of Music Festivals

Tomorrowland is Here!

The History of Ultra Music Festival

Sixto Rodriguez

The Rise and Fall of Disco
Hey 90’s kids! Remember when bands like Blink-182 and Green Day were all the rage—when songs like “What’s My Age Again?” and “Basket Case” filled the airtime on all the major radio stations? Now, over a decade later, our taste in music may have evolved, but such songs will always hold a special place in our hearts, and I’m sure a lot of us are ready for a new band to carry on the pop punk musical style.

LFSX (Life Sucks), a band created by and featuring 19-year-old Los Angeles native Luke Turner, does just that. Inspired by NOFX, Blink-182, and Green Day, LFSX continues the pop punk tradition with just the right dash of Best Coast like surf to keep things fresh. From a young age, Luke has been attracted to such music for its fun, catchy style and its rebellious nature.

Before LFSX, which took shape in the latter years of high school, Luke and a few middle school friends formed the grunge rock band “Amplifianation.” Amplifianation’s music was influenced heavily by the likes of Nirvana, Alice in Chains, and Velvet Revolver. The band didn’t yield much in the way of good music, but it did serve as an educational experience for Luke. He learned all too well the difficulties of working with selfish, egotistical band members, most notably the lead singer, who at one small show enthusiastically ripped his shirt off in front of an audience of about ten people, half of which were bewildered parents.

Since that time, Luke has produced most of his music entirely on his own, exposing and developing his natural talent as a songwriter. Excuse the cliché, but LFSX is literally a one-man band. After writing a song, Luke plays and records the drum, bass, guitar, and vocal tracks separately, and then mixes them to form the final song. Occasionally, friends have played bass and drums, temporarily joining the LFSX crew and allowing for live performances of LFSX’s music, most commonly at house parties.

Generally speaking, LFSX’ music is lo-fi and
slightly washed out, and it features varying amounts of distortion and reverb. Luke is always trying to change his musical style and be innovative. One notable trend in LFSX’ music is that it has progressively become cleaner and more melodic, in part due to improved recording techniques. LFSX’ first album, Dregs (released in March of 2011), is very raw and distorted to the extent that the vocals are at times difficult to discern. LFSX’ self-titled second album (released in September of 2012) features much clearer vocals. LFSX’ two singles “Sick Of Everything” and “It Was Kinda Cool”, released about a month ago, maintain this same level of clarity.

The subject matter of LFSX’ songs varies a great deal. The nonsensical yet entertaining “Sithlord Skateboard” is, well you guessed it, about sith lords riding skateboards. Meanwhile, “Hash Boner” clearly references enjoyable drug use. “Ocean View” contains no lyrics at all, instead featuring swooping and wavering “ooohhhs” and “aaahhhs” throughout. His song “Boring” vocalizes the commonplace nuisance of having to listen to peoples’ uninteresting stories. “My music references the bad shit we all complain about or shit we do to have fun,” said Luke. He tries to capture basic emotions—fundamental happiness and sadness—and the common experiences from which they stem.

This emphasis on happiness and sadness is intrinsically related to the name LFSX, or “Life Sucks.” Through his music, Luke highlights the things that suck about life (for him personally as well as for other people), but then shows that he and others can still have fun and enjoy living. For instance, songs like “Friends Are Gone” and “It Was Kinda Cool” (reminiscent of Blink-182’s “Going Away To College”) express his emotions surrounding the end of high school and consequently his closest friends moving away. As a counter, “Wwhhooaa” seems to celebrate the beauty of the ensuing SoCal summer that consists of going to the beach and hanging out with those same friends. “I’m stuck at home. I’m bored. My girlfriend broke up with me. All that stuff sucks, but I can still hang’ with people, make music, and have a good time,” he said.
“That is what I hope to capture with my music.”

This past year, when not busy writing and playing his music, Luke has been attending the independent artist program at the Musicians Institute in Hollywood. There, he has been taking classes in a variety of areas ranging from harmony, to musical marketing, to recording techniques. Despite his age, Luke has already achieved moderate success as a musician. In addition to performing at numerous house parties, he has played at notable Hollywood venues, such as the Key Club and the Whisky a Go Go, and has received airtime on the USC student radio station. Overall, getting shows has proved difficult, however, due to the lack of committed, responsible band members. Luke is still anxiously awaiting a breakthrough for LFSX and continues to pursue new routes for recognition. This July, he will begin working towards a Bachelors of Science in audio production at The Art Institute of Austin. In Austin, in addition to receiving his degree, he hopes to meet potential LFSX members and play at the South by Southwest music festival. The songs are catchy and the lyrics express sentiments to which just about everyone can relate. With a little promotion and the right exposure, there is no predicting where LFSX will end up.

LFSX’ music can be accessed on the following websites:

http://lfsx.bandcamp.com
https://soundcloud.com/lfsx

The LFSX logos below were made by Luke.
Sonic Youth
Making Sense of the Noise
John Baierl

It was often hard to know what to make of the whole mess, with everything always seeming to descend into chaos. Guitarist Thurston Moore would flood the venue with richly textured feedback, while bassist Kim Gordon and drummer Steve Shelley drove with fierce rhythmic persistence. Moore’s guitar wove with Lee Ronaldo’s seamlessly, forming a texture of gritty “noise” that would so come to define their sound. They blended tones of 1970’s New York punk with traces of the avant-garde, crafting a unique sound open to influences from all sides and unpredictable at every turn. They were loud. They were aggressive. And they rocked.

Thurston, Kim, Steve, and Lee formed the core of Sonic Youth, a group that would come to pioneer the genre of “noise-rock” and blending straight-ahead punk with the style of avant-garde music and even cinema, to develop what Karen Schoemer described as “minimalist art rock that would occasionally explode into decibel-crunching chaos” (Schoemer). Sonic Youth drew heavily from the likes of the CBGB punk scene in New York, with their tight, straightforward rhythms, driving bass, and gritty guitar sound recalling that of Iggy and the Stooges. Vocally, both
Gordon’s and Moore’s lyrical style and delivery ring clearly of Patti Smith, and they would continually demonstrate a sonic freedom of experimentation typical of many of these groups. Though their work alluded to earlier punk, Sonic Youth took its sound in an entirely different direction, drawing from a variety of sources in doing so.

Emerging in the wake of 1970’s art rock and increasingly virtuosic composition, punk abandoned these forms, instead exploring the possibilities of noise, as the Velvet Underground had done previously. Music critics such as Lester Bangs praised punk for this to art rock in the 1970’s (Brackett, 276). However, Sonic Youth took this concept a step further, stretching the distorted guitar and driving bass of punk into a “noise” in and of itself, much like the Velvet Underground did with the viola and guitar drones of John Cale and Lou Reed. What the Velvet Underground did for rock ‘n’ roll, Sonic Youth did for punk. Both drew explicitly from the schools of the avant-garde, incorporating atmospheric soundscapes and extended drones to explore the possibilities inherent in guitar noise, rejecting traditional structures and influences. Moore and Ronaldo also made ample use of alternate guitar tunings, giving them an often dissonant and grinding sound, lending additional textural complexity. In doing this, Sonic Youth greatly expanded the sonic pallet possible with a guitar, bass, and drums.

One of Sonic Youth’s most noteworthy attributes is their receptiveness to a vast variety of influences. These ranged from avant-garde and free jazz music, to the visual world of cinema. The group additionally readily cites heavy pop music influences on their sound, taking advantage of the full breadth of American popular culture in the 1980’s. “I think it’s just a matter of whatever strikes our fancy at a particular moment,” states Sonic Youth guitarist Lee Ronaldo. “It’s the whole pop-culture thing, from things as big as Madonna to small-time, generic pulp novels and films” (Dery). Sonic Youth, like the Talking Heads before them, had no qualms about drawing heavily from the pop world and indeed, seemed to embrace and draw influence from many popular trends. For instance, Gordon and the rest of the band readily cite Madonna as a heavy influence, and many of Sonic Youth’s songs retain basic pop structures while incorporating the sounds of the avant-garde.
This gave the group a unique balance between pop music structure and the ordered chaos of their noise. In his review of Murray Street, Wayne Robbins describes, “Whatever harsh or irritable tack the guitars take are inevitably redeemed by the disciplined context in which the sound is placed” (Robbins). Sonic Youth, in contrasting these two vastly different styles achieved a tension between them and expanded the sonic possibilities of both.

In many ways, Sonic Youth approached music as sonic art in contrast to what they saw as the overly industrialized sound of much punk music. They drew upon often-unorthodox strategies to advance that art, pushing the medium through unconventional instrumental means such as alternate tunings and playing their guitars with drumsticks. They took the grit and drive of punk music and, similarly to their contemporaries in the film world, used it in a cinematic way to create a sonic landscape and foster a narrative. Sonic Youth helped to redefine the role of noise in music.

Sonic Youth’s punk origins are also on display in their performance style, favoring touring between
From Test Pattern to Gray

Jean-Michel Basquiat’s Art Band

Mel Arroyo
The poet, the artist, the musician and actor, Jean Michel-Basquiat became an innovative figure for underground new wave music in the 1980’s with his art band, Gray.

Jean Michel Basquiat was born December 22, 1960 and began as a graffiti street artist in New York City in the late 1970s. Throughout the 1980’s, Basquiat’s art transformed into Neo-expressionism and primitivism that explored dichotomies such as integration versus segregation, wealth versus property etc. Whilst his art looked child-like in technique, Basquiat’s art held deeper conceptual meaning.

In 1979, Basquiat’s career in painting started to take shape as he appeared in a couple of television shows such as TV Party hosted by Glenn O’Brien. In the same year, Basquiat formed his first and only art band, Test Pattern. On April 29th, 1979, Basquiat and former band member, Michael Holman met for the first time at the “Canal Zone Party”. Soon Holman and Basquiat invited other Downtown artists to join the band, first Shannon Dawson, Wayne Clifford, Nick Taylor and Vincent Gallo. In 1981, Basquiat decided to rename the band from Test Pattern to Gray, referencing Gray’s Anatomy, which was an important source for Basquiat’s later paintings. Gray captured machine-like ambient music that often felt ghostly.

Neither Basquiat nor the other band members had any formal training in instrumentation and so they created music purely on experimentation. Experimentation in music was emerging in New York City around the 1980’s with the formation of punk music. Gray performed throughout downtown New York such as CBGB, The Mudd Club and Hurrah’s. The way Gray performed has often been referenced to some of Basquiat’s paintings. Gray was known to be an experimental noise band; Basquiat’s
paintings can be seen in the same light. Basquiat’s painting, DaVinci’s Greatest Hits contains the rawness of Basquiat’s technique as he references DaVinci’s anatomy pieces. This painting contains fragments of DaVinci’s famous paintings and anatomical drawings. The fragmentation of historical sources can also be heard in Basquiat’s band. Basquiat knew jazz, funk, Miles Davis, Charlie Parkers and Bootsy Collins and many more. While some hear Gray’s music as noisy and industrial, Gray’s music contains fragments of funk, jazz, rock and new wave into an innovative and experimental form.

Tragically on August 12, 1988, Jean-Michel Basquiat died of a heroin overdose at the age of 27. With the tragic lose of a friend and music innovator; Gray was hesitant to continue their music. At Basquiat’s memorial service, Gray commemorated his legacy in art and music by performing some of their music. It would take a little under ten years for the band to perform again and 20 years to release an album. Gray released their first LP ever in 2011 entitled, Shades Of ... Interestingly, Gray’s reunion album was their first recorded album.

http://www.michaelholman.com/MUSIC.html
small, local venues across the country instead of
filling larger and less personal stages. From her 1987
tour diary, bassist Kim Gordon responds to a sugges-
tions that bands no longer travel from city to city to
tour. “Personally, I like to know that a band has suf-
furred by the time they get onstage,” she says, instead
preferring the type of groups that “drove out of L.A.
in some crappy station wagon they bought with a
record company advance, and they had big suitcases
filled with their gear... and everything got all messy
and wrinkled, but a half dozen dimes they shimmied
onstage and played their hearts out” (Gordon, 448).
Gordon’s description here highlights Sonic Youth’s
punk origins, in their emphasis on gritty, personal
performance, directly opposing the trends of arena
rock toward larger and larger venues.

Their shows in many ways resembled punk
shows as well, with loud and aggressive guitars and
an assertive stage presence. However, unlike the
Ramones or the Sex Pistols who contained them-
selves to a three-minute-and-under song format,
Sonic Youth often descended into lengthy sessions of
“noise” in which they would layer guitar feedback
with often-dissonant rhythm guitar and bass, forming
a rich, Velvet Underground-esque drone within the
context of a given song. In a 1992 New York Times
concert review, Peter Watrous describes, “The band
tries to work nonlinearly, avoiding obvious sequences
of events, and on Saturday night, the two guitarists,
using drumsticks to beat on their guitars, unusually
tuned guitars, feedback and other noises, created
enormous amorphous swells of sound” (Watrous).
These periodic atmospheric noise sessions would
become characteristic of both their recorded and their
live sounds, simultaneously displaying their propen-
sity for the avant-garde as well as their clear punk
sensibility.

Sonic Youth continually pushed the enve-
lope in terms of sonic freedom. In many ways, their
experimentations forever expanded the possibilities
and freedom of their medium, opening the door for
later grunge and noise groups such as Nirvana and
My Bloody Valentine. In the face of pop, punk, and
avant-garde influences, Sonic Youth manages to blend
all three together into a sound all their own.

Brackett, David. The Pop, Rock, and Soul Reader:

Dery, Mark. “Sonic Youth And The Great Cosmic
sonic-youth-and-the-great-cosmic-blender>.

Perry, Jonathan. “Live Review: Sonic Youth.” Roll-
view-sonic-youth-19980608>.

Robbins, Wayne. “Seeking Sonic Truth On Murray
Street: Sonic Youth.” waynerobbins.blogspot.com. 18
rocksbackpages.com/Library/Article/seeking-sonic-
truth-on-murray-street-sonic-youth>.

Schoemer, Karen. “How Sonic Youth Came to Make
the Sound It Makes.” New York Times. 10 Aug 1990:
com/1990/08/10/arts/pop-jazz-how-sonic-youth-came-
to-make-the-sound-it-makes.html>.

Watrous, Peter. “From Sonic Youth, Loud Guitars And
Thunderous Obscurities.” New York Times [New
rock-from-sonic-youth-loud-guitars-and-thunderous-
obscurities.html>.
Lately, my Facebook news feed has been dominated by one event: Coachella. Before the event, my friends attending posted multiple statuses reading “So excited!” and “I can’t wait!”; in the aftermath, I’ve clicked through hundreds of hazy, dreamy pictures and emotional captions reading “Take me back” or “Best weekend of my life!” As an avid concertgoer, my jealousy of their experience was insurmountable, and I watched the live shows streamed on Youtube with the bitter feeling knowing that this was nowhere near the same.

The music festival has come a long way in the last decade or so, for a number of reasons. Festivals have increased in size and scope, while single-headliner concert sales have dipped. Evidence of their growing popularity is overwhelming. In 2011, concert promoter Live Nation launched eight new festivals in the United States; Superfly Productions, the entertainment company that puts on Bonaroo in Tennessee, purchased the land used instead of renting it and erected a permanent stage in 2007 and 2011 respectively; in the past year, Coachella expanded its festival into a second weekend as well as created two cruises, the S.S. Coachella, with glamorous destinations such as the Bahamas and Jamaica. Music festivals sell out faster year after year, while single-headliner concerts struggle to fill their seats. According to Pollstar, overall ticket sales from concerts dropped 12% from last year, and gross revenue of the top 100 tours nationally fell almost 13%. That’s 4.8 million fewer tickets and a $300 million decline overall. However, these festivals continue to set record attendance.

So why are music festivals so popular? Unlike in the past, today’s music scene isn’t dominated by a single genre, so music festivals are able to capture a larger audience. Festival promoters purposefully choose headliners with crossover appeal or that represent different genres in order to attract a more diverse, broader scope of people. For example, Lollapalooza in Chicago has secured The Cure, Nine Inch
“I think more and more the way young people experience music has less and less to do with the music, which is to say they experience music as part of a larger cultural or social experience”

Nails, Mumford & Sons this year; in 2012, Outside Lands in San Francisco had Stevie Wonder, Metallica, Neil Young, and Skrillex. There are also music festivals that focus on a single genre – for example, Ultra Music Festival and Electric Daisy Carnival are both centered on electronic dance music (EDM).

In addition, both the bands themselves and the audience are able to benefit from playing music festivals. Today, an ever-increasing number of people are illegal downloading their music on the Internet. Because of this, bands are unable to profit from album and song sales, and more of their income and distribution depends on live performances. Festivals are also a great way for smaller bands to promote themselves and gain followers. Historically, festivals have launched careers; the Newport Folk Festival stimulated the career of Bob Dylan, the Montreal International Jazz Festival hosted Miles Davis and Muddy Waters, the Monterey Pop Festival spotlighted Janis Joplin and Otis Redding. Jack White of the Ranconteurs acknowledges the importance of playing festivals. “That’s the whole point of playing festivals. That’s what I think festivals are good for—exposure.”

For the audience, the advantages of attending a festival are numerous. Festivals often represent the city that they are held in, allowing the customer to experience local food, art, and nightlife. From an economical standpoint, the customer gets much more “bang” for his buck. As Rolling Stones magazine’s Steve Baltin puts it “Would you rather spend $300 to go see 100 bands and get a feel for everything, or go spend $90 to see one of these headlining bands on their own?” And it’s not just $300 to hear the music. The money you spend on a ticket also includes the experience itself, something that is considered priceless. Baltin comments, “These concerts have become events, they’ve become experiences.” For those attending the festival, the three-four days spent driving to, camping at, and/or walking around the festival
less and less to do with the music, which is to say they experience music as part of a larger cultural or social experience.”

This social and cultural context of the music festival harkens back to the days of Woodstock, the three-day concert in New York known forever in history for peace and love. Today’s “Woodstock” equivalent is Coachella, the wildly popular festival in Indio, California. In its first year in 1999, Coachella drew in just 10,000 people. In 2013, 80,000 people attended each day with final ticket sales equaling $47.5 million. These 80,000 people camp for three nights, sporting handmade flower headbands and ultra-hippie attire not acceptable in any other setting. Professor Josh Kun states, “So Coachella really has mastered that feeling of creating a kind of commune, collectivity, a let-it-all-hang-out vibe that in some ways is the nod to Woodstock, although stripped of any countercultural association. It’s become sort of a completely corporate-sponsored Bohemia.”

That’s not to say music festivals don’t come with their disadvantages. The massive size of most festivals result in a larger gap between the audience and the artist – performances feel much less personal. The poorer visual and sound quality due to crowd control and festival speakers/video screens only adds to this lack of intimacy. In addition, because of the sheer number of bands present, artist set times are bound to conflict, thus forcing you to choose to either miss one set, or see part of each, which makes it difficult for you to really envelop yourself in the music. Because of the huge crowd, litter is inevitable, Porta Potty lines are perpetually long, and navigating between stages is slow and frustrating.

That being said, I strongly feel that the positive aspects of attending a festival vastly outweigh the negatives, and strongly advocate for everyone to enjoy this experience at least once in their lifetime. As someone who has attended Outside Lands twice now, I’ve been able to discover new bands, listen to the live performances of many bands that I love and those that I can now appreciate, support local artists’ work, and enjoy local San Francisco food, all with the company of great friends.


http://www.chicagotribune.com/travel/chi-music-fests-0629_r_pm_lmvjun29,0,6733300.story


http://www.ypulse.com/post/view/concerts-music-festivals-disneyland-for-millennials1


http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/04/11/coachella-culture-important-music_n_3060937.html

Pictures:


Tomorrowland Is Here!

By: Wesley Ho

Tomorrowland is an electronic dance music festival organized by ID&T, a Dutch entertainment and medium enterprise. It started in the summer of 2005 and has since then occurred every summer in the small town of Boom, Belgium. Tomorrowland has also become one of the most famous and notable global music festivals. The main theme behind the Tomorrowland setup is a fairy-tale world that offers many subgenres within the broader electronic dance music scene. Artists that have performed at this festival include Armin van Buuren, David Guetta, Swedish House Mafia, Avicii, Hardwell, Steve Aoki and many more high profile electronic artists. However, this year the organizers of Tomorrowland announced that a spinoff of Tomorrowland called “TomorrowWorld” is coming to the United States and taking place in Chattahoochee Hills, Georgia. This is the first time this music festival has been held in the States and it has made some big headlines in the electronic music world.

With TomorrowWorld coming to the US, the organizers want to keep many of the key components of the TomorrowLand festival while adding in new parts as well. One of the new elements they are adding is a trap music stage and another is the addition of a bass heavy stage. The festival consists of several smaller stages that feature a smaller specific part of the genre of electronic music along with a main stage that features the headlining artists. Despite having different stages set up around the festival, each stage will still inspire the feeling of being in a magical fairytale. Trap music also has its roots in Atlanta, Georgia so it’s only fair that the genre gets its own stage. Some of the artists performing on the trap stage will be UZ, Mimosa, Luminox, Mayhem, gLAdiator, Brillz, and several more.

There is also a bass heavy stage that will be featured at the festival. This one, dubbed “All Your Bass Are Belong To Us” will be catered to fans who like a little more bass in their face. This stage will be a strictly bass heavy affair that will feature artists such as Excision, Rusko, Delta Heavy, Figure, Sound Remedy, and some more. Aside from the trap music stage and bass heavy stages, the lineup for the entire festival ensures that trance and progressive and electro house fans will have their days as well. Some of the headlining artists include, Tiesto, Alesso, Afrojack, Hardwell, Calvin Harris, David Guetta, Steve Aoki, and Nicky Romero. With this high powered lineup, Chattahoochee Hills looks like a very desirable place to come.

The announcement of TomorrowWorld coming to the states was met with a lot of enthusiasm as well as skepticism. The organizers of TomorrowWorld want to build and create that same fantasy world for thousands of new fans. Chattahoochee Hills was also the perfect place to hold such a festival. According to Beers, “it’s like a second home to us.” TomorrowWorld will be nearly identical to TomorrowLand with the addition of some new experiences unique to the USA. While many of the most important elements from Belgium will be shipped overseas to Georgia, a portion of the festival will be built specifically on site for Chattahoochee Hills. This cross-pollination of festival assets embodies the ID&T mantra of always improving on perfection. Beers and his team of organizers are very optimistic about the grandeur and magic of the festival.

However, the expansion is not without its list of concerns. The organizers acknowledge that the festival bubble the market is experiencing will probably burst eventually. Every festival has to bring something new and unique to the table and with the American festival market beginning to feel a bit homogenized, TomorrowWorld comes in at the per-
fect time to shake things up a bit.

American electronic dance music fans reacted very positively to the announcement of TomorrowWorld coming to the US. Event promoters said that tickets sold out after 1 second being on sale. With the growing popularity of electronic music in North America, more and more people welcome the news with open arms. This is one of the main reasons why the TomorrowLand team decided to hold a spinoff music festival in the states. Many fans have expressed their excitement through social media such as Facebook, Twitter, and Youtube.

TomorrowLand is the world's most popular music festival and bringing it to America will only increase the number of fans of the genre. The moving of TomorrowWorld to the US is exciting news that has the entire electronic music community waiting on the edge of their seats. But America is not the only place where spinoffs of TomorrowLand have landed. ID&T has also organized similar music festivals all over Europe such as Sensation held in Amsterdam, MysteryLand held in the Netherlands, dome. All of these festivals were met with great success and further promote the perfection of ID&T’s work. Hopefully that same enthusiasm and magic will also be put into the American TomorrowWorld.

Sources:
http://www.dancingastronaut.com/2013/05/tomorrowworld-announces-trap-stage-featuring-uz-bro-safarri-and-more/
http://www.dancingastronaut.com/2013/04/tomorrowworld-announces-all-your-bass-are-belong-to-us-stage-featuring-excision-rusko-more/
http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/02/18/tomorrowworld-tomorrowland-festival_n_2710972.html
The History of ULTRA Music Festival

By: Jessica Hanway
What began in 1999 as a small, one-day electronic dance music festival held on South Beach in Miami, Florida has become Ultra Music Festival, one of the most famous electronic dance music (EDM) festivals in the world. Celebrating its 15th anniversary in 2013, Ultra Music Festival made history as the world’s first electronic music festival to extend over two weekends. This year’s festival also set the record as the most viewed festival in U.S. history, with more than 300,000 attendees and over 10 million web viewers through its online streaming service UMF TV. Ultra Music Festival 2013 will also be remembered as the venue at which Swedish House Mafia played their final show of their “One Last Tour.”

With all of these achievements, Ultra Music Festival has grown exponentially since its inception in 1999, bringing fans together from across the world to listen to some of EDM’s most popular artists.

In 1999, Miami locals Russell Faibisch and Alex Omes decided to become business partners based upon a mutual appreciation of dance music. The success of Ultra Music Festival was founded upon Faibisch’s true passion for electronic dance music and Omes’ industry experience. Before Ultra, Faibisch had become interested in electronic music during high school and started attending local raves in Miami. By age 20, Faibisch was involved in the Miami entertainment industry as an event promoter. The electronic music scene officially clicked for Faibisch after he attended a Depeche Mode concert in 1993, and he would later name Ultra Music Festival after Depeche Mode’s 1997 album Ultra. Prior to Ultra Music Festival, Alex Omes was involved in Miami’s EDM culture as a publisher of his own dance music magazine, DVOX. Omes had also established many business connections from working as a bouncer at Miami’s Cameo Nightclub, Living in Miami, Faibisch and Omes recognized that a business opportunity existed in the form of a dance music event. They capitalized on this opportunity by holding the first Ultra Music Festival at the same time as Miami’s Winter Music Conference, an industry event at which EDM artists, DJs, producers, and promoters unite to attend seminars and discuss the future of the industry.

Ultra Music Festival 1999 was held on South Beach and attracted 10,000 fans. The headliner was Rabbit in the Moon, a Tampa-based electronic act that Faibisch had secured in order to attract other performers, such as Josh Wink, Baby Anne, and Paul van Dyk. Overall, Faibisch felt that the first festival was successful, even though the company had generated a loss of $20,000. Faibisch was very passionate about Ultra and continued the business. By 2001 Ultra Music Festival was relocated to the Miami Bayfront Park to support an increased attendance level of 23,000 people.

By 2003, Ultra Music Festival was drawing greater attention from the music industry, and the event had become a staple for industry professionals who were already attending the Winter Music Conference. In 2004, Ultra Music Festival began working with the Winter Music Conference to coordinate event dates and to allow Winter Music Conference badge holders to attend Ultra Music Festival for free. Together, Ultra Music Festival and the Winter Music Conference strived to promote electronic dance music. By 2005, Ultra Music Festival had become the official closing event for the Winter Music Conference. It was also during this time that Omes and Faibisch created a “memorandum of understanding” that established Faibisch, his younger brother, and Omes as the company’s shareholders. Omes and Faibisch also established themselves as having managerial authority, which would resurface as an issue in 2010.

Starting in 2006, Ultra Music Festival moved from the Miami Bayfront Park to Miami’s Bicentennial Park, as attendance would increase from 40,000 to over 100,000 attendees by 2010. During that time, there was also an increase in the festival’s ideology as Ultra began to feature crossover acts, such as The Black Eyed Peas, The Ting Tings, and Santigold. Ultra Music Festival 2009 was an important year for electronic dance music, as Swedish House Mafia would perform their first concert in America at Ultra. This debut performance provided great exposure for Swedish House Mafia, whom would become one of the favorite mainstream EDM groups in the United States.

2010 was a hallmark year for Ultra Music Festival, as it was the first time that the festival had sold out, which demonstrated
its increased popularity. During 2010, Ultra Music Festival also experienced a change in management, as founder Alex Omes was replaced with Adam Russakoff. Omes claimed that the decision had been made without his knowledge during a secret shareholders’ meeting. According to Omes, Faibisch, his brother, and Russakoff developed “a conspiracy to oust Omes from the Ultra family” so that they “could control the now financially successful event” (Miami New Times). In Omes’ lawsuit filed against Ultra’s shareholders, Omes claimed that he was abandoned because of his disapproval of the decision to separate Ultra Music Festival 2011 from the Winter Music Conference. Having left Ultra, Omes partnered with Go Big Productions and was able to keep Swedish House Mafia from playing at Ultra in 2011 and 2012.

Having sold out in 2010, Ultra Music Festival became a three-day event in 2011. This was also the first year since 2004 that Ultra Music Festival and the Winter Music Conference did not coordinate dates and were held on separate weekends.

Competition developed between the two events as fans were faced to decide when to travel to Miami, which resulted in the Winter Music Conference seeing a drop in attendance, while Ultra Music Festival witnessed its highest levels of attendance yet. Decreased attendance in 2011 motivated Winter Music Conference to coordinate dates with Ultra Music Festival in 2012. Ultra Music Festival 2012 was once again held over three days – March 23, 24, and 25. Pre-sale tickets for the festival sold out within 20 minutes of being released. Tickets for the festival were sold out entirely by January, two months before the festival occurred. The festival clearly was continuing to grow in prominence.

2013 has been Ultra Music Festival’s most successful year ever. This year broke history as the first time that an electronic music festival has extended over multiple weekends – from March 15th through March 17th and March 22nd through March 24th. Notably, Miami Commissioner Marc Sarnoff fought unsuccessfully against the second week, arguing that the event would be “disruptive to the local business community and area residents due to noise, nuisance behavior of festival goers, and gridlock traffic” (Elite Daily). Yet the Miami city council voted in favor of both weekends of the festival, which brought in over 300,000 fans to listen to more than 300 performing artists. More importantly, it is estimated that with the approval for a second weekend, Ultra Music Festival was able to bring South Florida an extra $79 million in economic impact, a figure that seems too large to argue with (CBS).

A highlight of this year’s festival was Swedish House Mafia’s final performance of their “One Last Tour”. As the show finished, Swedish House Mafia’s Axwell remarked, “Miami is where it all started”, recognizing Ultra Music Festival as both the birthplace of the group’s success in 2009 and the finish line for the group in 2013. Ultra Music Festival 2009 initially gave exposure to Swedish House Mafia, who has since helped move electronic music to the pop charts given its power as one of the largest mainstream house music groups. Swedish House Mafia has achieved commercial success with their song “Don’t You Worry Child”, which was ranked #41 on the Billboard Hot 100 Chart as of April 28, 2013 and has been on the chart for 33 weeks with a peak position of #6. After two years of having been contractually forbidden from playing at Ultra Music
Festival by Alex Omes, the group’s decision to play their two final shows at Ultra Music Festival reinforces the industry’s recognition of Ultra as the place to be for commercially successful electronic music.

Having attended Ultra Music Festival 2013 over the weekend of March 15th through March 17th, I was lucky enough to witness one of Swedish House Mafia’s last two concerts. Having also watched their final performance on UMF TV, I truly believe their “One Last Tour” was an incredibly successful performance. Swedish House Mafia continuously found ways to engage the crowd, both verbally and visually through pyrotechnics, confetti, and massive LED displays. Their final show began with BBC Radio 1 host Peter Tong firing up the crowd. Swedish House Mafia began playing at 9:30 PM, opening with “We Come, We Rave, We Love”. The group performed all six of its singles and ended with “Save the World” and “Don’t You Worry Child”. While the group’s final concert has marked the end of an era in electronic dance music, perhaps this is just the beginning for Ultra Music Festival, as it will need to continue to foster the development of new talent.

Having started as an unknown one-day event to becoming a multi-day event spanning over two weekends and attracting nearly 330,000 people, Ultra Music Festival has exceeded all expectations. After this year’s success, one can only wonder how Ultra will continue to outdo itself in the years to come. Ultra Music Festival Worldwide is attempting to expand around the world and is planning to announce two more new festival locations this year, adding to its current locations in Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Ibiza, South Korea, and Croatia. Regardless of these ongoing changes, fans need not worry – a quick assessment of Ultra Music Festival’s history proves that the event has yet to disappoint.

Sources:
http://www.billboard.com/artist/281173/swedish-house-mafia/chart
http://miami.cbslocal.com/2013/03/18/ultra-music-festival-by-the-numbers/
Imagine being a folk artist in the 1970’s with relatively no commercial success in America, being dropped from a record label and having to turn to the callous streets of Detroit in search for another source of income while, simultaneously, in South Africa, your albums and songs are so famous you are equated to the likes of Elvis Presley, Bob Dylan, and the Rolling Stones. Sounds outrageous, but this is the story of Sixto Rodriguez. Born in Detroit, Michigan Sixto Rodriguez was a Mexican American folk singer and songwriter[1]. Signed to Sussex Records in 1970, Sixto put his all into recording two different albums Cold Fact and Coming from Reality. Rodriguez’s sound received great reviews from producers, he had all the machinery in place and the circumstances were right. Rowland, who produced Rodriguez’s second album Coming from Reality, posits that although he has worked with Jerry Lee Lewis, Gloria Gaynor, The Cure and many more talented and famous artists Rodriguez was his most memorable. Rowland held that Rodriguez was “not just a talent, he’s like a wise man, a prophet, he’s way beyond just being a musical artist.”1 Both albums were released but nobody in America had even heard or developed an interest in him.

While Rodriguez has little to no success in
America, he was an idol/legend in South Africa. The story goes that an American girl went to South Africa to visit her boyfriend with Rodriguez’s record in hand, him and all his friends wanted to buy the album but they couldn’t find it. This resulted in them taping copies and passing them along and Cold Fact spreading very quickly.

Rodriguez’s album Cold fact had a very political message. Rodriguez wrote very poignant songs about working class people. He gave people some kind of courage or license to think outside of the box as the apartheid regime was meant to control what individuals thought. During the height of Apartheid in South Africa, his song Anti-Establishment Blues taught South Africans that they could question and protest against their government and society. His line “this system’s gonna fall soon, to an angry young tune, and that’s a concrete cold fact” was empowering to those who never heard words such as those. His lyrics set them free as oppressed people. Stephen ‘Sugar’ Segerman, an avid fan of Rodriguez, claimed that “In the mid 70’s, If you walked into a random white liberal middle class household, that had a turntable and a part of pop records, and if you flipped through the records you would always see Abbey Road by the Beatles, Bridge over Troubled Waters by Simon and Garfunkel, and Cold Facts by Rodriguez.” Cold fact was the anthem to the South African revolution. His albums sold about half a million copies.

Rodriguez’s fame in South Africa was ended when a rumor had spread quickly that Rodriguez was to perform at a show, but the show had went awry and after being ridiculed he performed his last song.
reached down, pulled out a gun and shot himself. Of course this story was highly embellished as Rodriguez was still living in Detroit and working as your run-of-the-mill construction and demolition worker. Completely unaware of his fame, Rodriguez had been living in the same downtown Detroit house, which he had lived in for 35 years prior. He has no car, computer or television.[2] Where had his royalties gone, and was he involved in a dirty record label money scheme were the questions on everyone’s mind.

After learning of his success, Rodriguez came to South Africa performed at six different sold out shows, and began to tour. The release of the Oscar-winning documentary Searching for Sugar Man helped to heighten his success and give him the fully deserved recognition he had never received. His comments on what transpired? Throughout the documentary he responds humbly to the events that occurred. He has an odd sense of awe and amazement but it is as if he had separated the shocking events from his daily life. He is one of very few rock musicians who does not enjoy talking about himself and is extraordinarily modest.

Rodriguez now performs and tours quite frequently.2 He still lives in the same house in Detroit, Michigan that he has lived in for 40 years. He gives most of his earned money to his three daughters and old friends. “He takes great pleasure in giving it away, especially to people that supported him when he wasn’t a big commercial success.”2 His priority right now is touring but he is beginning to work on new songs and is considering releasing a third album. Rodriguez’s story is an amazing one and his modesty and acceptance of the events that transpired make his story come full circle.


“Rising like a tribal cry on a shrill wave of whistles and hard-beaten tambourines. It’s at once a call to get down and party, a statement that there’s a party going on.” The 70’s marked a time for partying and dancing. People wanted to come together and dance all night long, unfortunately the rock and psychedelic rock counterculture of the 60’s made this difficult because the music was not designed for group choreographed dance routines. “While the rock music embraced by the counterculture increasingly made dancing difficult clubs in… New York City began relying on music featuring a blend of Motown soul, Latin-inflected funk, and a new, sophisticated type of uptown soul associated with Philadelphia.” Disco is a musical genre that began in the mid 70’s within the underground club scene of New York City. It was most popular amongst the hardcore dance crowds of the black, Latino, and gay communities within NYC. The stars of the early underground disco movement were the DJs who would discover previously ignored albums, foreign imports, and obscure singles that they would play non-stop in order to get the crowd to scream and dance until they dropped. “DJs were responsible for selecting and sequencing songs, it was their taste that dictated disco sense...and successful DJs could acquire their own following...as a recording artist.” In the Rock n’ Roll BBC documentary episode on disco and funk one of the original disco groups Kenny Gamble and Leon Huff remarked on their times spent in the disco club scene. Huff stated, “In order to get people to come to those clubs you had to have music to make them dance, release themselves. When we sang out in the discos we loved to go out and watch people dance to our music. It was a thrill for me.” Their records became one set of the quintessential disco record sounds played in clubs to get people to dance.

Despite the popularity of disco it was still an underground genre in the early 70s. It was not until big name artists such as Donna Summer and Gloria Gaynor began making disco cross over hits, and the release of a Hollywood blockbuster Saturday Night Fever, that the underground disco sound crossed over to mainstream America. Beginning in 1975 disco began to transform into three different styles. There was the “R&B Disco” that was derived from past styles of soul and funk. It contained gospel-oriented vocals and guitar parts that helped bands such as Kool and the Gang, KC and the Sunshine Band, and the Commodores have crossover hits. The second trend was “Eurodisco” that featured simple chanted vocals, less syncopated bass parts, and thicker arrangements filled with orchestral instruments and synthesizers. The song that is said to have started Eurodisco was Donna Summer’s orchestral epic hit “Love to Love You Baby.” The third and final trend was “pop disco” which was represented by mainstream pop artists like the Bee Gees that used disco to boost their faded careers. The final transformation of disco occurred in 1977 with the release of the hit film Saturday Night Fever. The film depicts urban city gang life, and the underground disco dance club scene of New York City. The film’s soundtrack featured songs by the Bee Gees, Kool and the Gang, Walter Murphy, and the Trammps, produced four Number one hit singles and became the best selling album up to that point. This marked the cross over of the underground club scene to mainstream
pop America. No longer was disco only featured in black, Latino, and gay dance clubs, but it was played in hit NYC nightclubs such as Studio 54. The club was frequented by celebrities and other high society members and had a theme that reflected the homosexual community at the time. This showed that in its height, disco had the capability to bring together many races, ethnicities, and sexualities together on the dance floor for a party.

As the 70’s drew to a close so did the desire for disco parties. The late 70’s brought about the “Disco Sucks” era, in which the very people that once donned the polyester formal clothes, and participated in the highly choreographed group coordinated dances now shunned the genre. At its core, disco maintains a dance aesthetic based around a single nonstop groove that contains a steady bass and drum beat to keep people dancing. Unfortunately, it was these same repetitive arrangements that drove people crazy and caused the downfall of disco. George Clinton, leader of Parliament Funkadelic, stated “disco was funky when you take it one record at a time. It’s just that they narrowed it down to one beat to try and market on a particular music, and when you do that with rhythm, you wanna talk about something that get on your nerve, try making love with one stroke.” The attempts by the music industry to mass market disco and play to dance clubs’ trends drained the funk and soul out of dance music. Without funk and soul, music during the 70’s was considered not danceable to most. Another reason disco fell from favor was due to homophobic paranoia from white straight males who did not like that disco brought straight and gay men together on the same dance floor. Although the late 70’s brought an end to disco’s reign on the pop charts it cannot be denied that at its peak disco had the power to bring people all across the country together to dance, which is a feat that is hard to do even with pop music of today.


5 Rock n’ Roll: A coproduction of WGBH Boston and the BBC: Video 8: Lets Make it Funky Sources for pictures