

Lemon Lounge traverses the country with a bespoke sound system, a tiny dance tent, and a group of driven music-lovers bringing untethered revelry to whichever field they end up in. Its lineups consist of highly talented and often obscure DJs and MCs, with no generic big-time headliners in sight. This is all bound up in an unpretentious, community-centric, DIY identity – anyone is welcome, and lemon-adjacent outfits are strongly encouraged. The combination is an unforgettable and raucous atmosphere that has festival-goers returning night after night.

We spoke to co-founder Borge about the collective's origins, best moments, and everything in between and got some *\*literally\** unbelievable responses. Take this zesty interview with a pinch of salt – and a slice of lemon, and enjoy your time in the Lounge.

What inspired the founding of Lemon Lounge? Was there a particular moment, or did it naturally evolve between the group?

Yeah, it was more the latter. It evolved from two separate janky but lovely sound systems (run by various crew members) into what it is today. Three of the founding members met at a specialist doctor due to all having suffered from citric acid poisoning, and that's where the name Lemon Lounge comes from. We always wanted to do a festival stage, so we pooled our resources, pulled in a bunch of favors, and the zest is history.

How do you curate the Lemon Lounge programming? Do certain genres work particularly well in your intimate tent?

The programming is a collaborative effort, starting with ideas from the whole crew and ending with Borge putting together a programme from everyone's ideas and mixing in a few of his own. First and foremost, we program people because we love the music they play and the vibe they bring. Also, we are a sound system, so most of the music is of that lineage, be it Caribbean or hardcore-continuum/free party. Large amounts

of bass in small areas seems to make people happy, so we play up to that. Also, we are a Lemon Lounge, so we like to keep things fun where possible.

Your travelling sound system and unmistakable DIY ethos have proven massively popular at We Out Here and festivals and venues nationwide. Can you identify what has driven the hype and makes it such a highlight of people's weekends?

An unrelenting shared love of lemons, of course. Sweet or savoury, medicinal or domestic, they are the wonder fruit that keeps our community zesty. They inspired us to build a sound system that is way too big for the space, programme music that makes you want to dance, be kind and sound to the people we meet, and just have fun at the end of the day. I think this is why people like to spend time in the lounge.

Can you share one or two particularly standout moments from a previous appearance at We Out Here that encapsulate what Lemon Lounge is all about?

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LEMONLOUNGE: WORDS BY DAN MCCARTHY

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In 2021, we had a soca crew called Release D Riddim play, and it might have been the wildest thing the Lounge has ever seen. It was when We Out Here was on the same weekend as Notting Hill Carnival, so it felt important to have a carnival crew representing (on the Saturday, of course). It seems that despite the influence carnival and sound system culture has on the UK festivals of today, the crews involved don't get as much of a look in as they deserve.

Another moment which has to be mentioned was when UK Hunky played a bluegrass tune during a big b2b2b2b. There was uncertainty at first, followed by mutual acceptance, which eventually led to a full hoedown and a pull-up. Then it happened again. Extremely Lemon Lounge behaviour. Also, the gabber remix of Green Day was quite surprising at 3am.

Alongside the musical programming is a typically eclectic menu of workshops and talks. What have been your most memorable talks or workshops over the years?

'Sexplorations and Sensualisations' has been a real highlight as not only have we learnt about the fascinating world of sex tech, but attendees have also had the opportunity to design and pitch their very own pleasure pieces.

Similarly, there have been countless weird and wonderful pitches to Theo Pip-phitis and Debra Squeezden in The Lemon's Den, which have left the audience in segments. Actually, this year, we'll

be doing a late-night version, which is bound to throw up some wild ideas.

Another fan favourite has been the 'Neolithic life sculpting' classes, where attendees attempt to recapture the human form in all its glory using clay. The fig leaf is optional; zesty prizes are awarded for the most elaborate designs. This year, we have the wonderful (and very pregnant) Niaomh filling the spot.

What's next for Lemon Lounge? Are there any upcoming projects or plans that fans will be particularly excited about (including at this year's festival)?

Of course, this year's programme and everyone on it equally. We have a couple of parties going on in London – another one at The Albany in Deptford is coming up. We have also planted a small lemon grove in Italy with plans to make our own limoncello to raise money to buy Gilles Peterson's worst records.

Who is the ultimate dream Lemon Lounge guest?

Our ultimate dream guest would be a public figure who has overcome significant challenges, such as Selena Gomez, whose advocacy for health, resilience, and good times aligns perfectly with our mission to support and uplift those affected by citric acid poisoning.

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