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ON THE ROAD RAY WADDELL

Bonnaroo's Lessons

When hit with a sudden change in plans after Mumford & Sons bowed out, festival organizers didn't panic



No one got bent out of shape. "We just go with stuff," Mayers says. "You just have to deal with it and figure out solutions. Expect the unexpected."

Lesson No. 2: Adapt or die. For the first time in years, Bonnaroo didn't run the same weekend as the Country Music Assn. (CMA) festival 60 miles up the road in Nashville, and it's no coincidence that Bonnaroo specifically targeted Music City for the first time in a meaningful way by offering single-day sales and shuttles from town in conjunction with the Nashville Convention & Visitors Bureau.

"We experimented with the idea of giving some people who live in the area an option of checking out one day—people who might not necessarily be able to camp or take four days off—and bringing them into the experience," Mayers says. "You've got to keep trying things, experimenting with things. That's how you keep growing and evolving."

Capps adds, "It gives people another opportunity to experience Bonnaroo in a different kind of way. We've been on the same weekend as CMA for a few years—we talked about moving it, and finally we did."

Lesson No. 3: Why we do this. The word most frequently used to describe **Paul McCartney's** nearly three-hour performance on Friday was "epic," and the afterglow of his magic affected the vibe of the entire weekend. "Sometimes you get caught in your day-to-day work, and these are the rewards," Mayers says. "That's what makes it all worthwhile, and you take that energy back to your day-to-day—you feel blessed, you don't take it for granted, and you enjoy the moment while it's happening."

Lesson No. 4: What a festival really is. As more and more events crop up in the category, some are having problems, and perhaps a true identity, or lack thereof, is the differentiator. "There's nothing proprietary about saying, 'I want to do a festival,'" Mayers says. "What is it? We're focused on our identity, what makes us unique, what differentiates us. The business of people coming together for a shared experience, that's never going out of style. The live event is more relevant than ever. We're not in the music business—we're in the 'coming together' business." ●

TAKEAWAY: Never become entrenched in your rules or plans. Even cornerstone festivals need to embrace an adapt-or-die philosophy.

A weekend spent at the 12th annual Bonnaroo festival in Manchester, Tenn., provided a real-time live-music business school about professionalism, evolving, the power of the shared experience and why those in the industry do what they do.

Lesson No. 1: Shit happens. When **Mumford & Sons** abruptly canceled Saturday's headlining show (for good reason), rather than panic, organizers found a quick and appropriate solution in **Jack Johnson**. They weighed such options as moving someone already scheduled into that slot, bringing in another artist in a region rich with them or just looking around the grounds, where they found Johnson.

"Jack was already doing a special surprise performance on Friday [with **Animal Liberation Orchestra**] and is a good friend of the festival, so we thought he would be a great vibe for that slot," says **Jonathan Mayers**, partner in Superfly Presents, co-producer of Bonnaroo with AC Entertainment. "Fortunately, he was here, his production team was here, and it made sense, so it was a great solution."

AC's **Ashley Capps** says the Bonnaroo family both in front and behind the stage was sympathetic to the lineup change. "We understood, the audience clearly understood what Mumford is dealing with, and everyone rolled with that change," he says. "And Jack Johnson stepping in was amazing."



Jack Johnson filled in for Mumford & Sons at Bonnaroo.

.biz
SONGS Music Publishing has struck a novel deal with Condé Nast Entertainment Partners, which will use SONGS' catalog as the primary source of original online videos produced for its Glamour, GQ, Vogue and Wired channels on YouTube and elsewhere.

"Songwriting is like a drug, and I will smoke it until the day I die." —Benny Blanco

Writers Flock, Bonnaroo Rocks

In New York, **Steven Tyler**, **Joe Perry**, **Berry Gordy** and **Benny Blanco** were feted at the Songwriters Hall of Fame induction dinner, while **Jay-Z** and sports elite toasted 10 years of the 40/40 Club. In Tennessee, **Tom Petty** and **Jack Johnson** wowed Bonnaroo

1 Peace be with you: **Wiz Khalifa** (left) honored **Benny Blanco**, recipient of the Hal David Starlight Award, at the Songwriters Hall of Fame 44th annual induction and awards dinner at the Marriott Marquis in New York on June 13. Then the two aligned their chi backstage.

2 Motown founder **Berry Gordy** (left) celebrated receiving the Pioneer Award with Sony/ATV Music Publishing's **Martin Bandier** at the Songwriters Hall of Fame ceremony.

3 Feels like the first time: **Mick Jones** (far left) and **Lou Gramm** (far right) of Foreigner toasted their induction with fellow honorees **Joe Perry** and **Steven Tyler** of Aerosmith at the Songwriters Hall of Fame event.

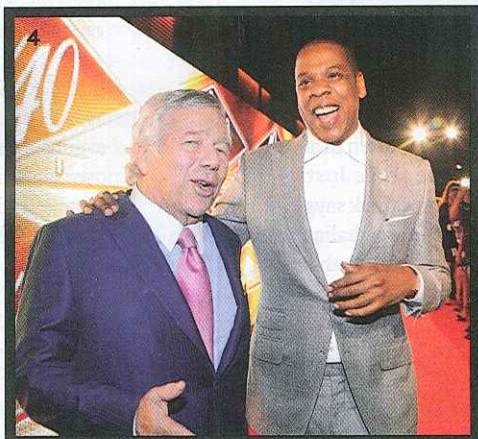
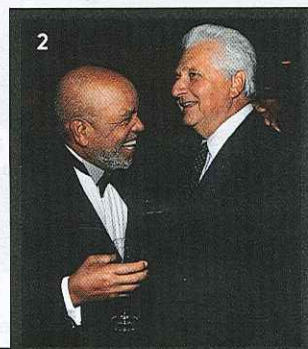
4 Money talks: New England Patriots owner **Robert Kraft** (left) and **Jay-Z** celebrated the 10th anniversary of the latter's 40/40 Club in New York on June 17.

5 Spiking the ball: 40/40 Club co-owner **Juan "OG" Perez**, rookie Jets quarterback **Geno Smith**, **Jay-Z**, Giants wide receiver **Victor Cruz** and Yankees star **Robinson Cano** (from left) play the field at the club's anniversary party. Smith, Cruz and Cano are clients of Jay-Z's Roc Nation Sports agency.

6 Sister trio Haim christened the first day of Bonnaroo in Manchester, Tenn., with an airtight set of pop-rock on June 13. From left: Drummer **Dash Hutton**, singer/guitarist **Danielle Haim**, bassist **Este Haim** and keyboardist **Alana Haim**.

7 You're our hero: Before saving the day at Bonnaroo by filling in last minute when headliners Mumford & Sons were forced to cancel, **Jack Johnson** (center) politicked with Fuse's **David Weier** and Fuse News' **Liz Walaszczyk** on June 14.

8 Learning to fly: **Tom Petty** and his Heartbreakers closed out Bonnaroo with a soaring headlining set on June 16.



INSTAGRAM US! #BACKBEAT



Willie Nelson posed backstage with New Jersey Performing Arts Center execs David Rodriguez (left) and Evan White (right) after his Willie Nelson & Family tour lit up NJPAC in Newark, N.J., on June 12.

@shorefire Backstage last night at #NJPAClive: David Rodriguez, NJPAC Executive Producer, Willie Nelson and Evan White, NJPAC Director of Programming. @Billboard #Backbeat

To get your Instagram photos onto Billboard.biz, tag @Billboard and include #Backbeat in the caption, along with the who, what, when and where. One submission will be featured in the magazine every week.

