



## in case of sonic attack

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Extreme volume, monastic metal, outer-space party tunes and a touch of folktronica:

**Supersonic** is Birmingham's best kept secret and our festival of the year

I'm aware it behoves anyone fairly ill to admit to the idea of disliking festivals – I mean, just look at the name: what else don't you like, Mr Fun-Hater, kittens and candy? – but the last five years or so have chiselled out the personal mindset that most of these events are the sort of life-sapping, spirit crushing affairs that could easily be replicated by listening to one of your favourite bands playing on a stereo at the far end of a wind tunnel as you upend your wallet into eight inches of brown slime.

Picture my surprise, then, to look back at 2007 and think, well, that was pretty great. At ATP Vs The Fans, Les Savy Fav's Tim Harrington got an onstage haircut and stuffed a video camera down his Y-fronts, and Daniel Johnston appeared incapable of staying off the stage. At Faster Than Sound, an experimental festival held on Bentwaters, an old Cold War airbase in Suffolk, Pierre Bastien carefully calibrated his tiny toy orchestra and I fell over, drunk, in a rabbit hole, trying to make it to the 360 degree speaker circle before Haswell and Hecker's set ended. Sonar was a neat mix of the minimal – the neat pop'n'click of James Holden – and the maximal, Jeff Mills holding court in front of 10,000 people. Green Man worked out just fine thanks to Directing Hand, Stephen Malkmus And The Jicks, Six Organs Of Admittance (with guest Magik Marker Elisa Ambrogio) and lots of whisky.

Of this welter of well organised, wisely curated festivals, perhaps the best organised and most wisely curated was Supersonic. Plotted by Birmingham promoters Capsule,

2007's Supersonic inhabited the nexus where metal, folk and noise meet: where the metal-pounding scree of Jazkamer and the monastic, boulder-rolling stoner rock of Om meets the folktronic chatter of Tunng or the Funkadelic shuffle of Chrome Hoop.

Supersonic's secret weapon is actually its scale: big enough to boast three concurrent stages, but small enough that you never experience that tiresome, punishing trudge between stages, those endless hours queuing for a fucking beer. Supersonic also boasted the

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first UK show from Qui, newly expanded to include former Jesus Lizard/Scratch Acid man David Yow. Qui were really great in a good natured, throw-beer-on-your-friend, whoop-like-a-cowboy-riding-a-pig way. If you wanted the simmering danger of The Jesus Lizard, though, you would find it more readily with Oxbow Duo – or, as they were billing themselves, Love's Holiday – in the Medicine Bar. Eugene Robinson growled and wailed like a rabid Malcolm Mooney, Niko Wenner chopped darkly at an acoustic guitar, and together, they rocked with all the simmering

tension and latent potency of a coiled python. That I left before the encore, performed with help from Sunn O)))'s Stephen O'Malley, Peter 'Pita' Rehberg, and Jesu's Justin Broadrick, says less about my patience than Supersonic as a whole: stand still for too long and you'll can bet you'll be missing something amazing, happening somewhere nearby.

### louis pattison talks to capsule What was new for Supersonic in 2007?

"We used a new space called The Arches. It gave us a chance to have a broader and more ambitious program. The [metal] symposium was also a first for us but something we'd planned to do for a while. The aim was to highlight how many of forerunners of metal originated from the West Midlands. There are plans in the pipeline for a coach tour around significant places in the region, taking the symposium on the road, if you like!"

### What's due for 2008?

"We're hoping to have some satellite events in different venues. We plan to have a special opening concert at the new Birmingham Town Hall, which is a very grand seated concert hall in the city centre."

### Tell us about your new label?

"It gives us the chance to extend the work of Capsule and support that bands we love. Our first release, Bee Stung Lips, is a great example: we've been working with the band for years, so to be able to put out their first EP is brilliant. We're also working on releasing limited editions of live performances at Supersonic."