

## Pop: Latitude at Henham Park, Suffolk

The start of summer sent one of the best-booked bills of festival season, including Squeeze, Grimes and the National, soaring

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Latitude lacked its usual talking point — the surprise guests and secret shows that have become its calling card. Florence Welch made an unscheduled appearance on Friday to introduce a short film and local hero Ed Sheeran sneaked in on Sunday to duet with his friend Foy Vance, but both were low-key.

Instead, the surprise was the start of summer, that special guest that Glastonbury couldn't get. Much less buggy-jammed than it once was and with one of the best-booked bills of festival season, Latitude of late has had a high feel-good factor. This year, the weather sent it soaring.

Christine and the Queens were the inevitable stars before dark on Friday, if partly because their billing was based on when they were booked — ie before the French superstar and her dancers stormed the UK charts. Just getting into the tent was an event; those who succeeded were still boasting about it by Sunday. Night-time pitted the Canadian dance genius Grimes against south London rockers the Maccabees. The former's fierce performance caused such chaos that she had to plead with the crowd to calm down, surely a first for Latitude. The latter came with confetti cannons, surely a first for their fans.

Squeeze were Saturday daytime's generational bridge-builders, and despite their recent revival showed no signs of complacency. Their smiles at inciting mass singalongs with their vintage hits was endearing. Their delight at the dancing their new songs started was truly moving, not least when a ukulele-toting Glenn Tilbrook came close to tears.

Ohio's the National had conquered the crowd long before they revealed that it was Latitude's largesse, fees-wise, that saved their skin several years ago. They repaid the debt by premiering five new songs in a bewitching set, during which the quintet were joined by brass players; a superb light show seemed to sprinkle magic into the night; and the Chvrches singer Lauren Mayberry twirled on a duet with the frontman Matt Berninger on *I Need My Girl*.

Berninger's habit of losing himself in his songs can be alienating for an audience, but here, as he crouched down, twisted himself around his mike stand or drifted off during a couple of long, dreamy songs, he took everyone with him. When he called Latitude "a beautiful, kick-ass festival", he was the weekend's Pied Piper.

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