

# Coachella: An Evolutionary Miracle in 10 Years

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Day one wasn't finished yet by the time I got to the Sahara Tent around midnight to see the robotic duo [Daft Punk](#) in their first show in nine years.

There were too many people crammed into the gigantic tent but giant flat screen TV's were set up for those who didn't want to suffocate inside. The two Parisians were wearing spacesuits, with helmets and all, moving to the pulsing beats they were pumping out of a giant pyramid that lit up like an alien spacecraft.

A robotic voice shouts "One more time" and suddenly every single person within earshot is dancing, it made the ground shake. The bass was so strong it made the hairs on your arm vibrate. This was in 2006.

Its moments like this that brings music lovers from all over the country (and the world) to the [Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival](#) in [Indio, Calif.](#) The three-day event will reign in its tenth year captivating music lovers under the blazing desert sun in April 17-19.

The festival is known as a place where many breakthrough artists came to prominence like the Arcade Fire, reuniting bands – like the Pixies – that sounded too good to be true, and inviting rock legends – like Paul McCartney – to perform to a massive diverse audience that doubles the population of the city it's set in.

"The festival averages 60,000 people per day," said Jim Curtis, human services supervisor of special events for the city of Indio.

Over the years the event has generated several dollars to the Coachella Valley. "Hotels are filled, restaurants are packed, some business make more money in those three days than they can make in a year," said Curtis.

Curtis and the promoter, [Goldenvoice](#) based in Los Angeles, Calif., work together to ensure the event is properly organized for both the concertgoers and the residents. He has been in this position for the past five years.

"They're excellent to work with, very professional," he said. "They have it down."

It started off as a two-day event in 1999 sprawled on 30 acres of grassy lawn of the Empire Polo Field of Indio, Calif. with multiple stages and tents: Coachella Stage (main), Outdoor Theatre, Gobi Tent, Mojave Tent, and the Sahara Tent.

It also features art installations and sculptures, even some that concertgoers can interact with such as the giant percussion structure and "Hotshot the Robot" who wanders through the crowd.

Eventually a campground was added in 2002 to accommodate the growing numbers of attendees and more amenities were added as the festival became a cultural phenomenon of the 2000's.

But it's mostly the music that draws people from the corners of the world to a giant backyard party set against the smoky purple and blue Santa Rosa Mountains.

Like its predecessor the Lollapalooza tour that introduced grunge rock, the Coachella Fest introduced the still mostly underground electronica genre with acts such as Underworld, Massive Attack, and DJ Paul Oakenfold.

The first concert in 1999 holds significant meaning for Chance Huddleston, 36, of Imperial, Calif. It was his first date with Felisa, who would later become his wife.

He was also excited about the venue choice, only an hour away. "I was totally amazed they had the acts they did so close to the (Imperial) Valley," said Huddleston.

"I couldn't believe Underworld was there (in 1999)," he said. "They hardly toured and even then I'd have to drive to L.A. or Vegas."

Chance, also a deejay himself, used to go to giant dance parties, or raves, at the Polo Field in the 1990's before the festival ever came. It was at [Nocturnal Wonderland](#), an electronic music festival, where he first heard of the new Coachella music fest.

"I picked up a flier at the rave and it had an interesting mixture of bands," said Huddleston.

Chance also enjoyed the communal and underground feel it gave, similar to the raves he went to in the 1990's, but feels that it's changed over the years.

"The artwork and look of the event has improved, but the vibe has gone way down," he said. "It got too commercial."

Madonna performed at the music fest in 2006, which later brought more mainstream acts like Kanye West and Prince.

"I don't relate those acts to Coachella," said Huddleston. "But I guess it goes hand in hand with growing."

While some, like Chance, feel the authenticity of the event has gone south, the addition of mainstream acts has expanded the audience. Tickets finally sold out in advance in 2007, according to a [Billboard interview](#) with Paul Tollett, the mastermind behind Goldenvoice and Coachella.

Rage Against the Machine reunited to headline the final night of the show that year; a reunion most thought was a sick joke or wouldn't come to happen. Tollett has an approach

to getting bands back together just one more time, and it's not by flashing them with money.

"You have to approach them with why they should get back together," said Tollet in the 2007 interview. "We'll say, 'There are thousands of people wanting to see you. You're still relevant, and you're the third most-asked-for band on the Coachella message board.'"

And people will give up their rent money to see some of these bands. Ticket prices have also soared over the years, especially since the music fest stretched to three days as of 2007. Single day passes are now \$99 and the 3-day pass is \$269 (plus fees) through [Ticketmaster](#).

However a new lay-away plan is available this year through Coachella.com to help those hit by these hard economic times, and still bring in ticket sales.

The city of Indio greatly benefits from the event every year, but it also adds to the allure of its nickname, "The City Of Festivals."

"We're here if they (Goldenvoice) wanna keep coming," said Jim Curtis. "We love having it here."

The locals are already used to the crowds the festival brings, thanks to the organization and safety plans developed by the city and the promoter.

"Some residents leave during that weekend because they know it's Coachella time," said Curtis. "But some stay and listen to the music in front of their house, drink some cocktails and have their own party."

This year the Coachella Valley Music Festival will feature headlining artists Paul McCartney, The Killers, and The Cure on April 17-19.