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Edit

DANCE

Why the Canadian Government Is a Fan of This Music Festival's Drug-Testing Tent

3/12/2020 by [Katie Bain](#)





Adam Straughn

The drug-testing tent at 2019's Shambhala music festival.

In the picturesque Kootenay Rockies of British Columbia, a line of festival attendees forms outside a tent. It's early August, and they're carrying MDMA, LSD, ketamine and other substances — or so they think.

They're actually here to use the drug-testing service offered at Shambhala, the electronic music festival that takes place each summer at the Salmo River Ranch, about 400 miles east of Vancouver, since 1998. Operated by the nonprofit AIDS Network Kootenay Outreach and Support Society (ANKORS), the service aims to help attendees make informed decisions about illegal drugs, which the festival prohibits but are inevitably snuck in. A large-screen TV visible to passersby displays the results: One substance sold as MDMA was actually bath salts; a bag of ketamine contained meth. "We're not trying to stop them from using drugs or get them to use drugs," explains project coordinator Chloe Sage. "We're neutral."

Shambhala's stunning location and stacked lineups — 2020's headliners include [deadmau5](#) and [REZZ](#) — have made it a favorite

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past decade, Shambhala also has become an industry leader in harm reduction.



Currently, drug testing at festivals is rare. In the United States, it's not available at any major dance music festival, partly because of the 2003 RAVE Act. Sponsored by then- Sen. Joe Biden, the law effectively made venue owners and promoters liable for drug use at their events, which discouraged organizers from sharing harm-reduction information that might draw attention to illicit activity.

Thus as the flurry of drug-related deaths at dance festivals during the EDM heyday put a national spotlight on the issue, promoters' hands remained tied, particularly as many once independent events were consolidated under parent companies like Live Nation and AEG. While well-intentioned, festivals remain wary of how on-site drug education might be perceived by venue owners, insurers and local government agencies – all of which can block festivals from happening.

Independently owned and free from RAVE Act restraints, Shambhala first invited ANKORS to do drug testing in 2002. For years, ANKORS volunteers took precautions like not handling drugs directly to avoid liability. (Because the festival is held on private land, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police must also be invited onsite, which they are for two hours a day during the event. Sage says Shambhala has a good relationship with local law enforcement.) ANKORS, which is government funded, also carries its own liability insurance.

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But as the opioid crisis gripped British Columbia in the past few years, its government recognized the value in Shambhala's efforts. In 2018, the province granted the festival a special exemption that allowed ANKORS to carry out its work more freely. Last year, epidemiologists from the British Columbia Interior Health Authority even volunteered with ANKORS.

Once in the ANKORS tent, Shambhala attendees place a tiny bit of their drug on a plate to be tested by an FTIR spectrometer, which uses infrared light and a substance database to test substances with excellent accuracy. (All substances are also tested for the powerful opioid fentanyl.) Introduced in 2018, after years of testing with less sophisticated methods, the spectrometer's \$42,000 price tag was partially covered by festival attendees, who could donate to the cause when purchasing tickets. (Three other machines owned by various health organizations are also brought in to reduce wait times.) Volunteers who've come from as far as Australia to train with ANKORS then explain the results.

"Obviously there is risk associated with any kind of drug use, says Colton, a Shambhala attendee from central Alberta, "but for me, there's peace of mind in being able to find out that what I buy here is what it's supposed to be." Shambhala drug dealers are encouraged to have their products tested, and Sage says overall drug quality at the festival has improved through ANKORS' presence. (The festival does not serve alcohol and discourages attendees from bringing their own.)

Now others are taking note: Another British Columbia festival, Bass Coast, began working with ANKORS and in 2019 received the same exemption. More recently, British Columbia provincial health minister Bonnie Henry signed a letter to festival promoters requiring any mass gathering in the province to have drug testing. Sage hopes festivals across Canada and beyond will follow suit. "We were the only one for so long," she says, tearing up. "I'm so excited to see this spread."

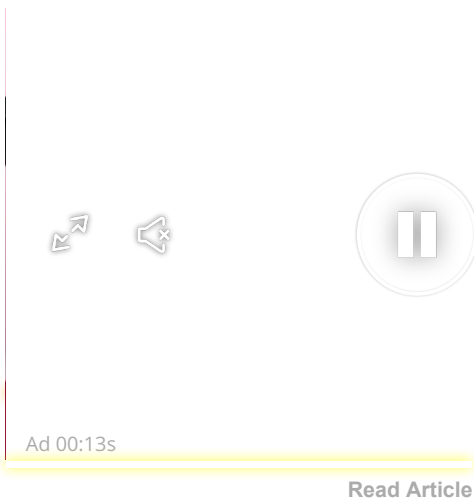
This article originally appeared in the March 14, 2020 issue of Billboard.

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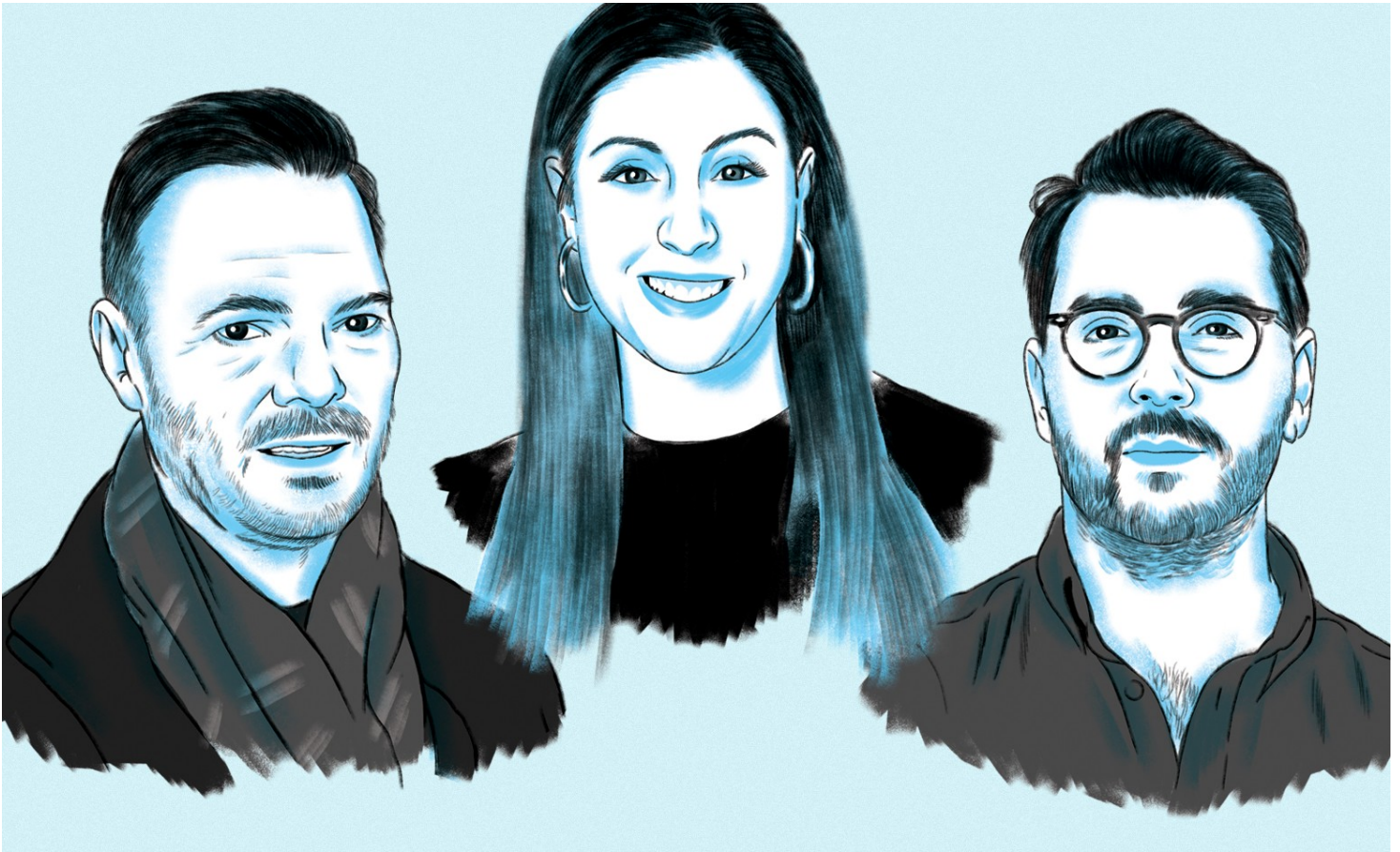


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DANCE

The Shape of Dance to Come: 15 Visionaries on the Genre's Future

3/12/2020 by [Katie Bain](#)



Portrait Illustrations by Joel Kimmel

While the 2010s were definitively the EDM decade, the boom has started to cool. But dance music continues to adapt and thrive, with new genres, technologies, markets and more.

At the dawn of this new decade, 15 visionaries -- from artists to executives to radio DJs -- share their predictions for the what's next for the genre.

Pete Tong

DJ, BBC Radio 1



Streaming, streaming, streaming. As the major [digital streaming platforms] mature, I expect dance and electronic music will become more important in distinguishing Apple's and Spotify's services too, with the introduction of mixes on Apple [a little over a year ago] being the first example.

Roger de Graaf, and Jorn Heringa

CEO and Head A&R at Spinnin' Records

Recently, there haven't been many revolutionary new tools for producers, yet historically this has always been the most important cause of new genres. It's time for something innovative again, which producers can adopt to create new music.

Gina Tucci

VP/GM, Big Beat Records



This next decade is about artists who grew up with electronic music in their formative years influenced by their own internet culture. Shorter, quicker, pixelated music will come to the forefront, giving listeners a much more dynamic experience with less fatigue. It will also be about how to take this accelerated music onto the main stage in a compelling way.

James Hunt

*Artist in **RÜFÜS DU SOL***

Above all, I predict the furthering of the "self-care in the streets, euphoric breaks in the sheets" mantra. This is the year dance

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**Cody Chapman***Agent, Paradigm Talent Agency*

Artists that innovate and develop their own branded events will thrive. Others will maintain, but accelerated turnover and an influx of new artists grasping fans' short-lived attention will level the playing ground.

Christie Driver-Snell*Editor of Dance & Electronic for UK & IE at Spotify*

Increasingly, we're curating for trends in culture and lifestyle -- local club scenes, the rise in harder and more intense styles of music in bass and techno, festival trends, etc. --- across the electronic space.

Toby Andrews*GM, Astralwerks*

We're seeing additional opportunities in the streaming and radio space for more styles of electronic music than ever before. Where it used to be only pop crossover records, now there's growth in house and other genres.

Gryffin*Artist*

I see projection mapping continuing to push the visual envelope for DJs and making their shows very immersive and captivating.

Steve Gordon*Co-head of electronic music, UTA*

We are going to see the emergence of more singularly focused one-stage festivals that target a specific audience.

Kevin Gimble*Co-head of Electronic Music, United Talent Agency*

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**Yann Pissenem***Founder/CEO, Night League Ibiza*

Virtual reality. Technology will be the base of everything that will be possible in the next 10 years. We will have new tools to create, produce and manage even better event concepts and experiences, while advanced marketing capabilities will enable us to deliver more targeted and personalized communications.

Ellen Allien*Artist*

I see new technologies helping us create music, with new synthesizers, or new ways of working on your voice. We will also have new analogue instruments and hardware to create music.

Gary Richards*President of North America, LiveStyle*

Currently, there are too many people trying to make money off electronic music without the passion or dedication. In the next decade, things are going to go back underground. More real artists will emerge and shake up the music world.

Damian Lazarus*Artist and Founder of Crosstown Rebels*

With the world generally in such an ominous situation, I expect there to be an underground revolution where musical perimeters are lost and experimentation returns, at the same time heralding music full of heart and soul.

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