

travel

CROATIA: the secret's out

CROATIA'S GORGEOUS DALMATIAN COAST PLAYS HOST TO ONE OF EUROPE'S SEXIEST AND SLINKIEST UNDERGROUND DANCE FESTIVALS. BUT WHO WOULD HAVE THOUGHT IT WAS MADE IN BIRMINGHAM? BRUM NOTES MAGAZINE GETS THE LOWDOWN ON THE GARDEN FESTIVAL.

Pics by Turnmaster Tim



"Instead of getting soaked, queuing for toilets, queuing for overpriced drinks and crap food we can substitute relaxing under the pines, soaking up the sun or dancing in the sea." This is just one of many advantages of hosting a boutique dance event in a gorgeous coastal location, bathed in sunshine, explains Garden Festival founder Nick Colgan. "The original plan was really to bring together all of the various groups of DJs, bands, promoters and music lovers from across the UK and Europe that we had been working with over many years in promotion and provide them with an

ideal sun-drenched setting for a holiday and festival combined. "The intimate vibe of the festival is very important to us so after 2008 when we really did reach capacity we made the decision to contain the numbers to 2000 per week and spread



the festival over two weekends - what we call the Double Whammy," Nick continues. "We noticed that most festival-goers instead of coming just for the weekend were booking for seven to 10 days and were planning a holiday around the festival. So

the Double Whammy was really a natural extension of that." Running across the first two weeks of July and with the headline parties spread across two weekends, the festival also offers a full programme of events during the week giving people the chance to relax at a different pace, with boat parties, smaller club nights and beach BBQs. As Nick explains, from the moment you arrive there are opportunities to relax in the sun or carry on the party. The relaxed timescale is also one of the festival's strong points, giving clubbers the chance to explore the attractions

beyond the nightlife. "During the course of a single day you can relax in the sun, swim in crystal clear waters, experience the famous boat parties, watch world class acts on the main stage and party until dawn in the nightclub. Also, the beautiful old village of Petrcane being only minutes from the music stages really becomes part of the festival site," he says. "Most people stay in the village and have the option to eat super fresh seafood at the local restaurants, so it gives the genuine feeling of a holiday experience with an extraordinary party going on just moments away." It certainly seems a change of scene for Nick who started his musical career in the urban environs of Birmingham, before going on to promote parties across South America and the USA, later returning to the Midlands to set up a production company alongside friends UB40 and continue promoting. The sunshine of Croatia became a draw after a holiday in 2003 and the following year he moved with wife Charlotte and their family to open what was the country's first outdoor lounge bar, The Garden Zadar. After the success of providing UK dance music in a stunning location on the ancient city walls



overlooking a harbour, Nick began looking for a spot to hold a boutique festival and soon stumbled across a beachfront site on a pine tree-covered peninsula in the nearby village of Petrcane. With the help of friends Eddie and Gail O'Callaghan they set about renovating the 70s built venue ready for the first Garden Festival in 2006. Now in its fifth year, the influence of Birmingham's dance scene is still running heavy throughout the festival. Keen clubbers will spot some familiar names on the line-up, with the likes of Adam Shelton from Below and Leftfoot's Adam Regan on the bill. "Of course, we have always maintained close links with the Birmingham scene," explains Brummie Nick. "This year we've got our old mates Lee and Jock with the Discomendments posse and also the lads from The Rainbow, Adam and Lee, who have been



always have guests come from all over the music-loving globe. This year will have crews from Zagreb, Ljubljana in Slovenia and Sofia in Bulgaria and are forging links with Berlin. We are even looking forward to reconnecting

with California." Despite the international influence and the influx of 2,000 clubbers every year, Nick insists they are determined to keep things intimate and loyal to the village where they are based. "We think its fair to say it has become an important and integral part of summer in Petrcane. Part of the reason we kept the capacity down was so the village would not become overwhelmed, and over five years living there we have built up a trust. Also many people are coming back year after year and have made good friends in the village. We are lucky to attract so many more mature music lovers who

have fallen in love with Petrcane and show it the respect it deserves."

- The Garden Festival runs from July 2-12 with passes starting from £80.
- For details on travel visit www.thegardenfestival.eu