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# Our Music Expert Recaps the Best of the Pitchfork Music Festival 2019

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Scorching heat, torrential downpours, and epic mud couldn't keep the [Pitchfork Music Festival](https://pitchforkmusicfestival.com) (https://pitchforkmusicfestival.com) 2019 down. The 14th annual event brought more than 40 artists and thousands of music fans to Union Park, July 19–21. Temperatures hovered around 100 degrees on Friday and Saturday, before a sudden thunderstorm prompted an evacuation of the park on Saturday. Rain also delayed the start of the festival on Sunday, and crews worked to tame the muddy conditions. Kurt Vile's and Amber Mark's sets were canceled due to the evacuation, but the show went on. Devoted fans took advantage of water stations, cooling buses, and sunscreen to beat the heat and sing along with their favorite indie rock, pop, and hip-hop acts. From the experimental strains of Julia Holter to the aggressive energy of JPEGMAFIA and Robyn's danceable finale, music triumphed at Pitchfork 2019.



Mavis Staples / Photo by Jessica Mlinaric

**Soccer Mommy** The shady Blue Stage was the perfect place to enjoy the introspective garage rock of Soccer Mommy. Led by 22-year-old Sophie Allison, the band opened with "Henry" from their 2016 LP and wound through their three albums in a haze of guitar and late-afternoon sunlight. Allison recalled the '90s with her pigtails and barrettes, but her

controlled guitar work and impassioned delivery of songs like “Your Dog” and set closer “Scorpio Rising” proved that she’s a force for our times. **Mavis Staples** Staples was the jolt of joy that the heat-weary masses needed on Friday afternoon. The legendary soul artist took the audience to church with an inspiring set that included gospel, protest anthems, and a cover of the Talking Heads’s “Slippery People.” Her social commentary reminded the crowd of the power of protest, belting the Selma-inspired “Freedom Highway” with contemporary urgency. Did I mention that she turned 80 last week?



Haim / Photo by Jessica Mlinaric

**Haim** This was Haim’s first time headlining a festival, and they proved to be up for the challenge. Danielle, Este, and Alana Haim entered the stage in a swirl of smoke and fan-blown hair, and dramatically beat on their own drum kits to start the show. The polished set was pop perfection, opening with hits like “Falling” and “Don’t Save Me,” and even covering acoustic renditions of Paula Cole’s “Where Have All the Cowboys Gone” and “I Don’t Want to Wait.” Toward the end of the performance, the sisters kept the crowd wanting more by debuting a new song called “Summer Girl.” **Parquet Courts** Festivalgoers emerged from their shady hiding spots to mosh in the Saturday sun with Parquet Courts.

The garage rockers wasted no time, launching right into “Master of My Craft” and “Borrowed Time.” The quartet crammed the set with high-energy anthems and epic guitar work as clouds gathered overhead before it was cut 20 minutes short due to the weather evacuation. **Stereolab** Stereolab took the stage as soon as the gates reopened Saturday, and festivalgoers who had scattered to take cover scrambled to reenter Union Park and catch some of the iconic band’s shortened set. The stage glowed with sunlight as Laetitia Sadier and Tim Gane led a set of favorites like “French Disco” and “Metronomic Underground.” Their French-British avant-pop felt as fresh as ever, and Sadler left the crowd hoping for an upcoming return, saying, “See you again...sometime soon.”



Flasher / Photo by Jessica Mlinaric

**Flasher** After the gate opening was delayed by more rain on Sunday, Flasher kicked things off with fresh urgency. Call it pop-pun or garage rock, the Washington, D.C., trio got the crowd jumping despite the muddy grounds. Discovering a high-tempo, motorik-drumming band like Flasher is a great argument for arriving to festivals early. **Black Midi** Black Midi justified all their buzz early Sunday afternoon. Watching the crowd, it was clear who wandered over in curiosity and who knew exactly what kind of weird they were getting

into. Despite not being old enough to drink in the U.S., the London band has mastered enough of their musical influences to combine them into a uniquely dissonant sound all its own. With distinctive prog-influenced vocals, post-punk eruptions, and meticulous guitar work, the quartet won over a bunch of new fans.



Black Midi / Photo by Jessica Mlinaric

**JPEGMAFIA** In a weekend of hip-hop acts with late starts and extended hype-man antics, JPEGMAFIA announced that he didn't have time to waste. The Army veteran barraged the crowd with the most energy by a single artist of the weekend. Cueing up his music from a laptop, Peggy spit abrasive, socially charged lyrics while crisscrossing the stage, crowd surfing, and displaying total command of his audience. He closed the set by asking everyone to kneel while he serenaded them with "Rainbow Six," before promising, "I've got something very disappointing coming for you soon." **Khruangbin** With a hard-to-pronounce name (it translates to "airplane" in Thai) and otherworldly style, it's hard to believe Khruangbin hails from Houston. The trio's blend of psych, funk, and jazz was the perfect setting for a midafternoon groove. Their instrumental jam was accented by the

occasional tapping on glass bottles or Laura Lee answering a rotary phone onstage, “Hello, Pitchfork!”



Khruangbin / Photo by Jessica Mlinaric

**Whitney** The hometown heroes of Whitney are no strangers to performing at Pitchfork. Julien Ehrlich and Max Kakacek’s mellow indie rock only gets better with experience, as indicated by the songs they debuted from their upcoming album, *Forever Turned Around*. Their full band, including strings and horns, joined them on “Golden Days” by fellow Pitchfork performers CHAI, Lala Lala, Lindsey Jordan (Snail Mail), and Sophie Allison (Soccer Mommy). Fittingly, Ehrlich’s falsetto floated “No Woman” across the park during golden hour. **Robyn** Judging by the conversations overheard in the crowd, anyone who didn’t know Robyn was won over by the end of her set. The electro-pop siren returned to the Green Stage for the first time since 2010, but this time she was headlining. Bedazzled bodies shimmied between mud puddles as Robyn dazzled with hit after pop hit. Tracks from her 2018 album, *Honey*, bled into an extended dance party for “Love Is Free.” The band stopped playing for the first chorus of “Dancing on My Own” as the audience belted out the lyrics before breaking into a dance party. Robyn closed with club banger

"Call Your Girlfriend" and delivered an encore of "With Every Heartbeat." She formed her hands into a heart and the crowd returned the gesture, a visible representation of her first hit decades ago, "Show Me Love."



Robyn / Photo by Jessica Mlinaric