

DEEPLY VALE FESTIVAL

INTO THE VALLEY!

1978. Hippies and punks come together at an idyllic free festival near Rochdale: "It was a really transformative moment!"

THE FLYER PROMISED free food and 10,000 beautiful people: "All you need is love, but the love revolution needs you." 1978's Deeply Vale Festival, then in its third year, was fast becoming the countercultural hub of the north. Held in a wooded valley on the fringe of Rochdale, it represented a cultural shift. "The hippy dream had crashed and burned," explains The Fall and Billy Bragg producer Grant Showbiz, then involved with festival regulars Here And Now. "It was all falling to pieces and we had to learn to fend for ourselves. We thought that Deeply Vale was a pointer to the future, so there was this huge kind of political meaning to it all. It was a really transformative moment."

Conceived by five members of a Rochdale commune, Deeply Vale saw disparate tribes – punks, hippies, new-wavers, tipi people – co-exist in a spirit of alternative living. As a new 6CD boxset proves, it was reflected in the diversity of bands, from newcomers The Fall, The Ruts and The Durutti Column to relative veterans Steve Hillage, Tractor and Nik Turner. What's more, everything was free.

"In '76, we found this natural amphitheatre," recalls Deeply Vale co-founder and Ozit label chief Chris Hewitt. "A beautiful little valley with a stream and lakes for swimming. We knew the farmer and initially asked if we could have a birthday party for 10 people camping. But we ended up with 20 bands and 300 people. The next year we had

3,000 there, 30-odd acts and a review in *NME*. By '78, we had a crowd of 20,000. Years before Glastonbury, we were the first free

festival to allow punk bands on. The Crass thing was about to happen, then Chumbawamba and the rest of it."

One of the more anarchic local bands at the 1978 festival was Danny And The Dressmakers, whose ranks included a 17-year-old Graham Massey, later of 808 State. "It was a good kind of chaos," he recalls. "The stage was basic. Wire and scaffold poles, daylight in a Hobbit wood. Sister Maura, our 17-year-old convent schoolgirl lead singer, just screamed like a car alarm until her voice packed up. The festival seemed to be a platform for musical ideas at a time when the scene was in flux. Punk didn't divide people in the north. There was a commonality to anti-establishment themes and Deeply Vale was where it played out."

The next generation were in attendance, too, among them David Gedge, The Chameleons, Ian Brown, Andy Rourke and an eight-year-old Jimi Goodwin, later of Doves; while those who performed included teenage punks Wilful Damage, Fast Cars, Alternative TV, Pegasus (featuring a pre-OMD Andy McCluskey) and Crispy Ambulance. The latter's Alan Hemsall remembers: "In 1978, we'd only been going for six months. Tony Wilson



made the biggest impression on me. He had a spot on Saturday and put on The Fall and Durutti Column. I think it was the beginning of his idea for Factory. He hadn't seen Joy Division yet, but he knew Vini Reilly from Ed Banger And The Nosebleeds. Vini wanted something that showed off his talents more."

Reilly's presiding memory is of Les Pryor, formerly of Alberto Y Los Trios Paranoias, coming to the rescue when his

Watkins echo unit gave up: "Les stepped forward and said to the audience, 'Has anyone got an elastic band?' He diffused the situation and made everyone laugh their heads off. I had a giggling fit." The rest of the time, says Reilly, was spent wandering around in a hallucinogenic fug, listening to Fela Kuti on his Walkman: "There was this very pure, strong herb that I used to get from Moss Side. It was idyllic."

The last Deeply Vale Festival was held in 1979, though by then it had become victim to local bureaucracy. An injunction was served, demanding a better water supply and sanitary conditions. And though it struggled on for another two summers at nearby Pickup Bank, it was all but over.

"Thatcherism had come in and community spirit went at the end of the '70s," says Hewitt. "Deeply Vale was special because it was about everybody. We'd all been to see Woodstock and bought the triple vinyl. So we just thought, 'Wow, wouldn't it be great to do that here?' We still had that dream of the Woodstock generation." **ROB HUGHES**

The Deeply Vale Box Set, including six CDs, a 272-page book and a pack of incense, is released Dec 1 on Dandelion

The Deeply Vale Festival, 1978: a British Woodstock?

