

I first heard about L Fest in 2012 when The L Project, a campaign against LGBT bullying, posted on Facebook that they would be performing their charity single, "It Does Get Better", live at the festival. A quick look at the programme made me realise that this was the festival I'd been waiting for without even knowing it. There would be live music, writing workshops, author talks, a silent disco, stand-up comedy and, of course, hundreds of women!

As I watched The L Project perform on the main stage on the Sunday evening of L Fest 2012 and sang along with them at the top of my voice, I never could have imagined that two years later, at L Fest 2014, I would be on stage with them, having sung on their second single.

For me, that's the beauty of L Fest. It's a place where, for one weekend a year, women can be whoever they want to be without fear of judgement from the outside world. They can try new things, meet new people and dare to dream. It's a place where nothing seems impossible. As soon as you pass through the gates and swap your ticket for a wristband, you become part of the L Fest family. Strangers become friends with the exchange of a smile and even those who arrive alone leave with a heart full of happy memories and an inbox full of Facebook requests.

L Fest 2014 was the fourth annual event and my third. It has been a pleasure to watch the festival get bigger, better and more ambitious each year, with word-of-mouth seeing the numbers of women in attendance continually growing. Although L Fest is run for women, by women, the diversity within that; both in terms of what's on offer and who attends; is incredible. All age ranges are catered for and whether festival-goers arrive as a 'solo', part of a couple, with friends or with family and pets in tow, the only downside to the weekend is generally that there just isn't enough time to do it all.

From Friday's opening night cabaret to the now traditional Sunday night stand-up event, the depth and diversity of talent was phenomenal this year. You really haven't lived until you've helped comedian Barbara Nice crowd-surf to Iggy Pop at Uttoxeter Racecourse! A personal highlight for me was Caz 'n' Britney's performance of "Mis Les" on the Saturday night. A standing room only audience were treated to 90 of the finest minutes of comedy I've ever had the pleasure of seeing live. I would have paid good money just to watch their show, and the fact that it was included in the ticket price is a testament to the value for money that L Fest continues to provide.

For those who wanted to try something a bit different, workshops ranging from humourology to unleashing your inner drag king were on offer alongside more traditional pursuits such as yoga and salsa dancing. Bubble football proved to be a big hit with adults and kids alike and those of us watching had just as much fun as those taking part.

No matter the time of day, L Fest is programmed to ensure there's something on to suit every taste and mood. For those looking for a more traditional festival experience, live music, drinking and dancing always seemed to be an available option. Up-and-coming artists are included on the bill alongside seasoned pros, allowing the L Fest crowd to be amongst the first to hear the best new talents on the scene, whilst also as having the chance to sing along with favourites such as Never the Bride and Erin McKeown.

It's not all about the music, though, and for those seeking some downtime, the L Fest cinema proved to be a popular option. As always, L Fest cinema-goers were treated not only to an array of the best

new LGBT films, but also to panel discussions with some of the film-makers and cast members; a number of whom spent the weekend mingling with the crowds. I was fortunate enough to catch an advanced screening of Peccadillo Pictures' new release, "Who's Afraid of Vagina Wolf". Aside from the brilliant title, I had no idea what to expect and was more than pleasantly surprised to find the film was both heart-warming and hilarious, as well as painfully relatable in places. I shouldn't have been surprised, really, considering I've had similarly positive experiences on my visits to the L Fest cinema in previous years.

Having attended L Fest as part of a couple, as a solo and now as a performer too, I've had a unique insight into the festival and what I've discovered is quite amazing. I've realised that it doesn't matter who you are, how you arrive or why you are there, at L Fest, everyone is equal. As brilliant and diverse as the weekend's programme of events is, that isn't what makes it special. What makes it special are the people who attend, the crew of volunteers who keep everything ticking and, most of all, the uniquely open and accepting environment that can't be included in a programme, can't be planned and can't really be explained without experiencing it for yourself.

And I, for one, am already counting down the days until I get to experience it again at L Fest 2015.

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