

Embargoed till Monday 27<sup>th</sup> October



## AIF Launch Scheme To Tackle Festival Crime

- *AIF Announces Formation Of Security Task Force*
- *Drive To Identify And Combat Organised Gangs*
- *First AIF Initiative*
- *Scheme To Be Extended To Non-Members*

27.10.2008 - The **Association of Independent Festivals** (AIF), the body launched this summer to represent independent music festivals, has announced the formation of a Security Task Force, a new initiative to address the issue of tent thefts and campsite crime at festivals.

With just a small number of criminal gangs acknowledged as responsible for the majority of on-site theft, the new Task Force will allow festival organisers to better share intelligence and effectively target the gangs involved.

The Task Force will maintain a constant presence at participating festivals, working with event security companies and police services throughout the UK to identify known thieves before they enter festival sites. They will support and build on existing police initiatives, which have proven the benefit of intelligence-pooling in reducing tent theft. Extra teams will be on hand on busy weekends with multiple festivals.

**Jim King**, director of Loud Sound and AIF board member said: *"Whilst still statistically low, thefts at UK festivals have to be addressed. Customer experience and safety is a most important part of the whole festival experience and we want to act to ensure that customers have a great time at our events without experiencing the upsetting scenario of being a victim of crime."*

Although the security task force is an AIF initiative, the board recognises that this is a problem that affects all festivals and would welcome the involvement of non-members in the scheme, especially the larger festivals, which are often hit the hardest.

Speaking at the launch of the scheme, **Rob da Bank**, Bestival promoter and AIF co-founder said: *"Tent theft at our festivals has always been very low, but any*

*theft at all is really upsetting for the promoter and the people involved. This was one of the main reasons I wanted to set up AIF and I really believe we can make a difference with this initiative."*

A tender process with security firms is currently progressing and AIF anticipates the new team will be ready and in place by March next year.

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## **Security Task Force FAQ**

### **Is Tent Theft A Big Problem?**

While it only directly affects a tiny percentage of festival-goers, tent theft is extremely distressing for victims and worsens the atmosphere for all everyone, so needs to be addressed.

### **Who Is Responsible?**

It's common knowledge that the majority of tent thefts are from organised rather than opportunist thieves. These gangs follow the festival circuit around the country, normally targeting the campsites on the first night when people have all their weekend's money.

### **So What Has Been In Place Until Now In Terms Of Security?**

Each festival has their own guidelines, is governed by different authorities and may contract different security firms. Police initiatives are already beginning to support existing event security companies. By pooling intelligence and having a dedicated team on the ground, the Security Task Force will build on their work, helping to stamp out tent theft and make festivals a safer place.

### **Who Was Invited To Tender And When Will The Team Be Announced?**

An open invitation to tender was sent to all reputable security firms who are experienced in outdoor event security. AIF expects to have the team finalised and in place by March 2009.

### **Will The Security Task Force Have A Wider Remit?**

No. It this is a focused task force looking at known thieves who prey on the festival circuit.

### **Who Will Pay For The Task Force?**

Each participating festival would pay their share of the total bill. Organised tent theft is a problem for any show that happens to be on the radar of thieves. Nobody unfortunately has the luxury of avoiding this.

### **Can Non-Members Participate?**

AIF welcomes the involvement of all music festivals. Thefts take place at all shows and criminals move from show to show so it's important that this service is available to everyone. AIF believes the larger festivals may welcome any move that helps them in their battle as they are generally affected the most.

### **Why AIF?**

This is exactly the kind of initiative that AIF was created to deal with. Many of the issues that festival promoters face are much better combatted through collective action, and tent theft is just one of these.

### **This Is AIF's First Initiative, What Can We Expect From The Body Next?**

AIF is working on a number of initiatives including helping members with issues around securing UK visas for international artists and developing supplier, service and event databases. AIF networking and tutoring events will be launched in the New Year covering topics from licensing to booking artists for festivals.

**What If People Have Lost Possessions?**

If someone is a victim of crime they should always report it to the police.

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**About AIF**

The Association of Independent Festivals is a not for profit body set up in 2008 to represent independent music festivals in the UK and Ireland. Founded by Bestival promoter Rob da Bank and Graphite Media's Ben Turner, the association's members range from the 40,000 capacity Creamfields in Liverpool to the 6,000 capacity Summer Sundae Weekender in Leicester.

AIF allows the promoters of some of the UK & Ireland's most innovative and successful festivals to speak with one voice when addressing the wider music business and government.

AIF aims to establish best practice for festivals in a variety of areas such as security, the environment and beyond, providing a knowledge base for festival promoters, as well as creating collective purchasing and marketing opportunities for its members.

Operating as an autonomous division of the Association of Independent Music, AIF is chaired by Alison Wenham (chairman of AIM), with the board comprised of representatives from Beautiful Days, Bestival, Big Chill, Bloom, Cornbury, Creamfields, Electric Picnic, Evolution, Field Day, Glade, Loud Sound, Secret Garden Party, Summer Sundae Weekender and Womad.