

**music**[Home](#) [News](#) [Reviews](#) [Pop](#) [Urban](#) [Classical](#) [Jazz](#) [Video](#) [Festivals](#) [Arts & entertainment](#)  
[Blog](#) [Live](#) [Rock](#) [Folk](#) [Electronic](#) [World](#) [Quiz](#) [Podcast](#) [Readers recommend](#)

Pop

## ATP: The Nightmare Before Christmas

4 stars Butlins, Minehead

## Search Music

 **James Smart****Tuesday December 11, 2007**[The Guardian](#)**Recent arts news**[Jazz: London Jazz Festival, Various venues](#)[Alfred Hickling on Christina Kubisch's Electrical Walk](#)[Hattie Collins on female hip-hop](#)[Liverpool trumpets cultural future \(plus Macca, Ringo and Diddy\)](#)[The mighty Salzburg festival now has a rival. Erica Jeal joins 3,000 musicians heading for Bucharest](#)

It is all too easy to remember Portishead, who have not played a proper gig in a decade, as a coffee-table band. But one look at the lineup for this All Tomorrow's Parties festival should disabuse anyone of the notion that the band are middle of the road.

Now in its seventh year, the twin forks of ATP's appeal are its holiday camp base (which means you get to see a twee display on the history of the Redcoats on your way out of Fuck Buttons' set of intense white noise), and the fact that its headliners help select their fellow acts. On Saturday, it was possible to move from A Hawk and a Hacksaw's exuberant gypsy-folk, past avant-rock composer Glenn Branca, before winding up in front of Julian Cope barking about Exmoor and apocalypse, his performance a winding road of expletives, shamanic lore and muscular psychedelia.

[Article continues ▼](#)

[Festival Watch](#)

[Bestival, Robin Hill  
Country Park, Isle of  
Wight](#)

[Primal Scream, Connect  
festival, Inveraray Castle,  
Argyll](#)

[Carling Weekend,  
Bramham Park, Leeds](#)

[Festival Watch: Green  
Man, Glanusk Park, Brecon  
Beacons](#)

[Tim Jonze on why it takes  
a bottle to play Reading  
Festival](#)

[Pop preview: Aug 25-31](#)



Portishead, by contrast, make almost no concession to spectacle, yet their quality makes you miss them with a real ache. The old songs are stunning, Beth Gibbons's voice, clean, slender and full of soul, moving over a dark, compelling backing. The new numbers - the group's third studio album is due next year - show as much promise, often leaving middle tempo behind in a clatter of tribal drumming, but never losing sight of the eerie brilliance that the band do best. At the end, Gibbons hops off stage and shares polite but fervent clasps with the crowd, plainly as delighted to have Portishead back as they are.

The venue doesn't work for everyone - Thurston Moore's textured, melodic solo set on the second stage feels rather sapped by the blank facades of Burger King and Pizza Hut. But the three arenas do offer an enormous amount of entertainment. Chrome Hoof play remorseless metal while dressed like wizards, and OM's deafening, hypnotic bass'n'drums take on the genre at times has the spare, spacey feel of a dub set. Black Mountain's hairy, anthemic space rock, meanwhile, is one of Sunday's highlights. But the award for most hardcore moment of the weekend goes to Aphex Twin, who kicks off with some sensibly groovy techno before ending with fierce drum'n'bass that collapses into itself, until all that is left is a crushing beat and the spectacle of several thousand people gamely trying to dance to it.

### **Useful links**

[UK venues](#)



[Privacy policy](#) | [Terms & conditions](#) | [Advertising guide](#) | [A-Z index](#) | [About this site](#)  
[Join our dating site today](#)

Guardian Unlimited © Guardian News and Media Limited 2007