

festival in the desert

There's little beyond the Malian town of Timbuktu but a vast expanse of *unwelcoming* desert. Yet each January, a host of *musicians* and tourists gather in the market place, *preparing* to head north into the Sahara. As *people fill* their jeeps with diesel and supplies, *it's hard* not to get swept up in the excitement and anticipation of the *remotest* music festival on Earth.

1 ☐

The Tuareg, a nomadic group who inhabit the Sahara, *have more appropriate transport*, arriving on white camels. There are 1,800 of them at the festival, which isn't surprising, *because the event grew out of an annual Tuareg get-together*.

2 ☐

As the Tuareg cook over campfires, the tourists settle into their tents. The sun goes down and charcoal braziers light up the dunes. Then bands from all over Mali and neighbouring countries take the stage, playing lutes and talking drums. There's a group of dancers from Niger decorated with beads and covered in body paint. There are Western performers too. As one group hit their electric guitars and yell into the microphones, an old Malian lady claps her hands over her ears.

3 ☐

Maybe that's because when I visit, the festival is still in its infancy as a tourist attraction. There are no more than 500 foreigners present, most of whom feel lucky to be witnessing something

'authentic'. And indeed, there is *little sign of the profit motive* that underpins most World Music festivals.

4 ☐

A music festival may seem an odd mechanism for kick-starting tourism, but this is the intention. In the eyes of Mali's minister of tourism, Malian music is one of the country's main draws. She is convinced that the north, the poorest part of the country, could support year-round tourism. Until recently there have been few opportunities for the Tuareg. They need tourists to bring employment and development to the region.

5 ☐

But this sort of envy only exists between the Tuareg because the festival is seen to be a good thing. In fact, for now, *it enjoys almost universal support. And similar events are springing up in neighbouring countries* too, with the Tuareg organisers of the Festival in the Desert fast becoming consultants.

6 ☐

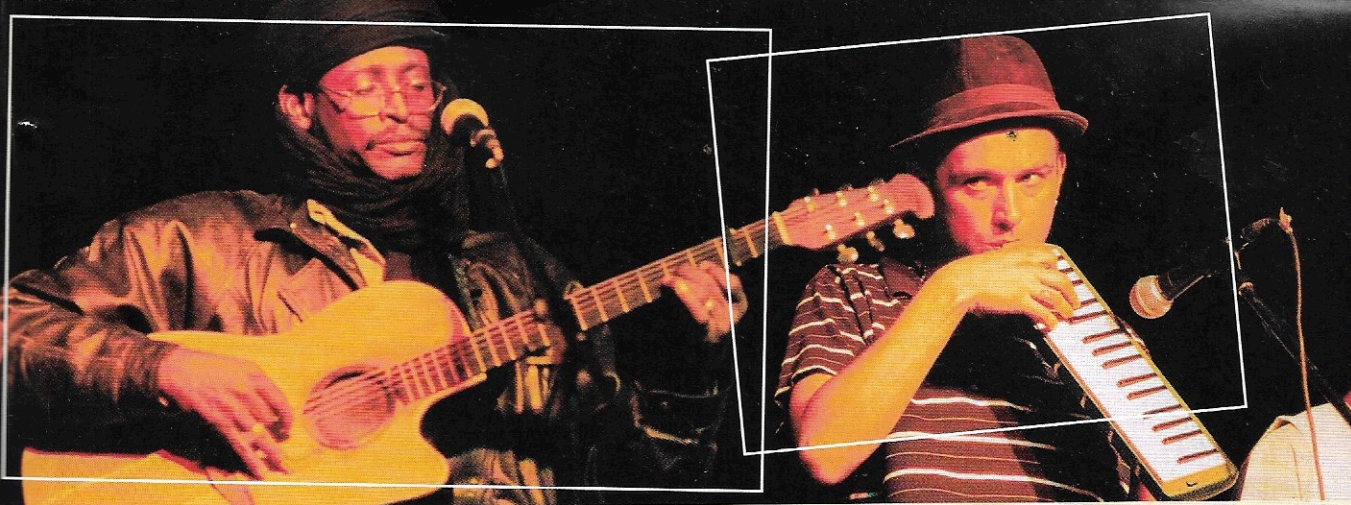
The Tuareg dance and sing, Dicko explains, and afterwards they talk about their problems. He is studying to be a doctor in Timbuktu and his village is far away. At the festival he can meet family and friends for the first time in two years. Perhaps it's to people like Dicko, who've given up the nomadic lifestyle, that the festival brings the greatest pleasure.

Reading Part 7 Gapped text

- 1 What music festivals are there in your country? Who goes? What happens?
- 2 Read the article about a music festival in the Sahara, and match paragraphs A-G with gaps 1-6. There is one extra paragraph. Find links in the text and use the words in italics to help you.

how to do it

- Read the main text for general meaning.
- Look for grammar and vocabulary links before and after each gap and in the paragraphs.
- Fill the easiest gaps first to reduce the number of options.
- Try the extra paragraph in each gap again.
- Read the complete text again for grammar and overall sense.



A With such obvious popularity, who knows what the future may hold for the Timbuktu festival. But for now, at least, it still retains its original purpose as a get-together for the Tuareg people themselves.

B But despite this lack of commercialism, the benefits of tourism are there for local people. The Tuareg stroll between the tents offering camel rides or selling their handicrafts. Dicko, my Tuareg friend, explains that cash spent by tourists is used to buy foodstuff in Timbuktu, which is then taken back to the villages.

C In fact, as the event's organiser explains, *Tuareg have been meeting at this oasis for centuries*. Here they have traditionally swapped news, raced camels, made music and even arranged marriages. They started the festival because they felt it was time to get in touch with the outside world.

D Meanwhile, the sustainability of the festival has been called into question. Westerners say that if the festival gets too big, it will lose its authentic feel. And it appears to have reached capacity already.

E To get to Timbuktu, I spent three whole days driving. As the convoy of *four-wheel drives* headed into the dunes, it became clear that the final stretch of the journey was the trickiest, and the track was soon lined with *jeeps* stuck in deep sand, some almost within earshot of the music.

F There are few concerns about the environmental impact of the festival. But conflict between Tuareg could be more of a problem. An elderly man complains that the festival started out as a moveable event with a different site each year, bringing benefits to different parts of the Sahara. But for several years it has been held in the same place because it is easier to build a permanent stage here. 'Why can't we have a festival where I come from?' he asks.

G But while rock groups might not produce the desired effect on everybody, Tuareg bands do. Their Tuareg fans watch from the seats of their camels. This is clearly a Tuareg event, but there is little sense of being an outsider. As I shovel sand to try to gain some height, my Tuareg neighbours usher me forward for a better view. The sense of intimacy and respect among the small crowd is remarkable.

3 Complete the phrases in a-h with 1-8, then rephrase the sentences in your own words.

- | | |
|---|-----------------|
| a The claim that the festival will remain authentic has been <i>called into</i> | 1 draws |
| b We sat at the back of the crowd but just <i>within</i> of the music. | 2 impact |
| c Traditional festivals can become a <i>mechanism for</i> tourism. | 3 earshot |
| d As the bands began to play, we all <i>got</i> up in the excitement. | 4 kick-starting |
| e The rock music did not produce the <i>desired</i> on everyone. | 5 question |
| f As a tourist attraction, the festival is still <i>in its</i> | 6 effect |
| g Traditional music is <i>one of the country's main</i> | 7 swept |
| h The <i>environmental</i> of the festival is not currently a major concern. | 8 infancy |

4 What positive and negative effects might tourism have on traditional festivals like this?