

2016 was the year arts and entertainment shattered 'the season'

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This was the year the Coachella Valley really became a year-round destination resort.

There are still seasonal hotel rates and it's a lot easier to traverse Highway 111 in August than February. But the Goldenvoice company shattered the concept of "shoulder months" with its mega-festivals in April and October, which drove other big events back into the season known as "the hell months."

Coachella and Stagecoach, which extended into May this year, forced the White Party — the nation's largest gay dance party — back to May 5-8 because there weren't enough local hotel rooms to accommodate the 25,000 men coming to dance their worries away.

Goldenvoice's new event, Desert Trip, turned October into the new March. The festival — featuring the Rolling Stones, Bob Dylan, Paul McCartney, Neil Young, Roger Waters and The Who — generated more than \$150 million over two weekends at the box office for Goldenvoice, making it the most lucrative music festival of all time.

Its impact on hotel availability had a bulldozer effect on other October events. ZZ Top went head-to-head with Desert Trip at Fantasy Springs Resort Casino, but the Palm Springs Women's Jazz Festival moved its event to Labor Day because their Eastern fan base couldn't find places to stay in the desert. Goldenvoice shrank the "off-season" from mid-May to Oct. 5, despite triple-digit weather.

Summer events like the Splash House parties and the Palm Springs International ShortFest continued to attract out-of-towners, but new events compressed the off-season even more.

Comic Con Palm Springs, which launched Aug. 25-28 in the Palm Springs Convention, attracted 10,000 people for a pop culture shopping spree and a chance to see Marvel Comics legend Stan Lee, who made a rare appearance at a first-year comic con. Somehow, it complemented, rather than overwhelmed, David Lowery's annual three-day Campout that weekend at Pappy and Harriet's, Jennifer Leitham's brilliant jazz show Aug. 26 on the Summer Jazz Series at the Coachella Valley Repertory, and an Aug. 27 rock concert at Fantasy Springs Resort Casino by Sammy Hagar, which felt like a homecoming because of Hagar's long-time ties to Palm Desert.

The Palm Springs Women's Jazz Festival wasn't happy with its attendance over Labor Day weekend, but Michael Holmes' renovated Purple Room in the Trinidad Hotel in Palm Springs opened the same weekend with Broadway legend Tommy Tune. And it sold out months in advance.

It seemed like the season hardly ever ended. Last year, the Idyllwild Jazz in the Pines was a mid-summer event on the third weekend of August. This year, it was the start of a pre-season tidal wave that climaxed with Desert Trip. Cinema Diverse: Palm Springs LGBT Film Festival had what its director, Michael Green called its best year ever on Sept. 22-25, in part because it didn't feel like an off-season event.

Best of Regular Season

Needless to say, I couldn't possibly narrow this year's best events to a list of top 10. Here are some of the other 2016 highlights, in chronological order:

Jan. 21-23: The Rancho Mirage Writers Festival again grew by leaps and bounds thanks to the limitless energy of producer Jamie Kabler and the professional staff of the Rancho Mirage Public Library. Humorist Dave Barry called it "the best writers festival in the universe." And Kabler adopted that as a marketing tool.