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Rock Werchter

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Coordinates: 50°58′5″N 4°41′3″E

Rock Werchter is an annual [music festival](#) held in the village of [Werchter](#), near [Leuven](#), Belgium, since 1976 and is a large sized [rock music](#) festival. The 2003, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2012 and 2014 festivals received the Arthur award for *best festival in the world* at the International Live Music Conference (ILMC). It can host 88,000 guests daily, of which 67,500 combine all four days, to add up to a total maximum of 149,500 different attendees.^[3]

The festival started in 1974 as a one-day event with performances from Banzai and Kandahar, but over the years it has evolved to become one of Belgium's largest music festivals. Originally it was a double-festival, called "Torhout-Werchter", with two festival areas at different sites in Belgium: one in Werchter and one in [Torhout](#). In 1999, the festival dropped the Torhout site and since then has taken place only in Werchter. Since 2003 Werchter has been a 4-day festival, as it was sold by owner [Herman Schueremans](#) to American organizers [Live Nation](#). Schueremans however remains the main organizer of the event. The festival is organized every first weekend of the summer vacation in Belgium (last weekend of June or the first of July).

In recent years, there has been controversy about rising ticket prices. Because of this, Schueremans was [heckled](#) during an appearance on [HUMO](#)'s Pop Poll, a Belgian alternative award show. At €200 for four days (€18 extra to include camping or €25 for xl-camping) in 2012, it was still considered a relatively inexpensive music festival.^[4]

Rock Werchter



The Rock Werchter main stage in 2023

Genre	Alternative rock , rock , indie rock , pop , hip hop , heavy metal , electronic music , dance music
Dates	First weekend in July
Locations	Werchter Festivalpark, Werchter , Belgium
Years active	1974 – present
Founders	Herman Schueremans
Attendance	352.000 ^[1]
Capacity	88.000 ^[2]
Website	Festival Website

The camping sites officially open at 8am on the first day of the festival, but because of guests arriving early and camping on the street, the organizers have traditionally been forced to open the camping sites early - sometimes more than 24 hours. The campsites are located along the three main entrance roads into Werchter (from [Haacht](#), [Aarschot](#) and [Leuven](#)), most of them within one kilometer of the festival site,^[5] but some located as far as 3 kilometers away. In 2011, for the first time, XL camping tickets are available, allowing festival goers to arrive and camp from 4pm on the Wednesday before the festival.^[6]

Until the 1990s, the festival attracted mostly [Flemish](#) festival goers, but in recent years it has become more and more international with an especially large influx of [Dutch](#), [French](#), [Walloon](#) and [British](#) visitors, with notable [Australian](#), [South African](#) and other contingents.^[7] Belgians alternatively go to the [Pukkelpop](#) and [Dour](#) festivals.

All graphics of Rock Werchter, including the posters, were designed by [Tom Hautekiet](#), who died in April 2020.^[8]

History ^[edit]

The festival started off as a one-day event, then named "Torhout-Werchter" festival, becoming a two-day festival in 1996, a 3-day festival in 2000, and a 4-day festival named "Rock Werchter" since 2003.

Before 1995, when the festival was still a double-festival, it had one stage with 8 or 9 bands performing twice, once in [Torhout](#) and once in [Werchter](#). Since 1995 the Main stage was accompanied by a second stage. This stage was an open-air stage until 1999 when it was made a tent named 'Pyramid Marquee', with a capacity of 6,000 people. The performers in Pyramid Marquee are usually lesser-known or aimed at a specific audience. Sometimes groups that do well in Pyramid Marquee are expected to have a hard time taking the step to the Main stage, especially when they are seen as an act needing intimate, smaller venues. [Sigur Rós](#) is the most famous example of this, when they were programmed on Main Stage in 2008 after their 2006 performance in Pyramid Marquee, but they managed the transition and were hailed as one of the best performances of the festival.

In 2012, a new third stage was added, called "The Barn" which is translated to "De Schuur" in Dutch, a reference to the nickname of organiser Herman Schueremans.^[9] The new tent – with a capacity of 10,000 – is meant for the more intimate concerts on Rock Werchter, like [Beirut](#) in 2012.

In 2013, Pyramid Marquee was replaced by a new bigger tent, named "KluB C".

The bands presented at Rock Werchter are traditionally a balanced mix of well known artists, popular crowd-pleasing acts and local Belgian acts. Belgian band [Deus](#) in 2008 was the first local band to close the Main



Rock Werchter 2010

Stage on the last day for several years. The days usually start around noon and end around 1am. At the end of the last day there is a big [fireworks](#) show.

Satellite festivals [[edit](#)]

TW Classic [[edit](#)]

Main article: [TW Classic](#)

Since 2002, the organizers created TW Classic as a tribute to the early days of Rock Werchter. TW Classic ('TW', as in Torhout-Werchter, is the traditional abbreviation of the festival) is a one day/one stage festival held one week after the main event. It usually programs veteran acts like [Bruce Springsteen](#), [Phil Collins](#), [The Police](#), [Depeche Mode](#) or [Simple Minds](#), supplemented with younger mainstream Belgian acts. In 2014, [The Rolling Stones](#) headlined TW Classic as one of their few festival concerts of 2014. In 2015, [Robbie Williams](#) headlined with his [Let Me Entertain You Tour](#), and in 2016 Bruce Springsteen returned to the stage.



Inside Pyramid Marquee

Werchter Boutique [[edit](#)]

Main article: [Werchter Boutique](#)

This new festival was created in 2008 and organised one week after the main festival. It mainly aims at complete families with acts for children, teenagers as well as adults. The main acts in 2008 were [Tokio Hotel](#), [Santana](#) and [Doe Maar](#). In 2009 was centered on a concert of [Madonna](#) during her [Sticky & Sweet Tour](#). In all, 68,000 tickets were sold for the concert, making it a one-day sell-out event. In 2010 [Prince](#) made one of his only 3 stops in Europe as the headliner. In 2012, it was headlined by metal band [Metallica](#), supported by various [heavy metal](#) and [rock](#) bands like [Gojira](#), [Mastodon](#) and [Soundgarden](#). Muse performed there during their 2013 Unsustainable Tour, with Belgian bands [Balthazar](#) and [SX](#) as support. In 2016, [Rihanna](#) was planned to headline the event, but a shortage of police forces on the planned day because of the Belgian national holiday led to the 2016 event being cancelled, with Rihanna rescheduled to appear a month later at [Pukkelpop](#).

Main Square Festival [[edit](#)]

Main article: [Main Square Festival](#)

Since 2008, the organizers created a small version of Rock Werchter on the central square of [Arras](#), in northern France. It is held on the same dates as Rock Werchter, with a similar line-up - which is an advantage for organisers as they can offer artists two shows instead of one. Arras was chosen as a location because of its large historic central square and because of the lack of big rock festivals in France.

Separate concerts [[edit](#)]

From 1980,^[10] there were concerts organized on the Werchter festival ground outside the concept of Rock (Torhout)/Werchter, TW Classic or Werchter Boutique. See [Werchter festival ground](#).

Festival by year [[edit](#)]

Year	Dates	Guests per day (avg)	Main artists	Notes
1977		5,000	Philip Catherine , Jan Akkerman , Kayak , Dr. Feelgood	
1978		6,000	Talking Heads , Dr. Feelgood , Nick Lowe , Dave Edmunds & Rockpile	
1979		12,000	Raymond van het Groenewoud , Talking Heads , Dire Straits , Rory Gallagher	
1980		18,000	Kevin Ayers , Fischer-Z , The Specials , The Kinks	
1981		23,500	Elvis Costello & the Attractions, The Cure , Robert Palmer , Dire Straits	The Cure, after being told to cut their set short by Robert Palmer's managers, play a 9-minute long rendition of "A Forest".
1982		37,500	Allez Allez , U2 , Steve Miller Band , Talking Heads , Jackson Browne	
1983		36,000	Eurythmics , Simple Minds , U2 , Peter Gabriel , Van Morrison	
1984		55,000	Chris Rea , John Hiatt , Joe Jackson , Simple Minds , Lou Reed	Schueremans and De Meyer created StageCo Staging Company. All audio and video equipments were dismantled at Torhout and transported to Werchter to be built up for the Werchter leg of the festival. This had to be done in 10 hours.
1985		63,000	Ramones , Lloyd Cole and the Commotions , R.E.M. , Depeche Mode , U2 , Joe Cocker	

1986		60,000	Simply Red, Talk Talk, UB40, Elvis Costello & the Attractions, Simple Minds	Ticket price was Bfr 850, which is €21 nowadays.
1987		60,000	Iggy Pop, Echo & the Bunnymen, The Pretenders, Eurythmics, Peter Gabriel	
1988		60,000	Ziggy Marley & the Melody Makers, Los Lobos, John Hiatt, INXS, Bryan Adams, Sting	Bryan Adams records his live album <i>Live! Live! Live!</i> while it "rained in torrents."
1989		50,000	Texas, Pixies, Tanita Tikaram, Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds, The Robert Cray Band, Elvis Costello, R.E.M., Joe Jackson, Lou Reed	Elvis Costello is performing solo, yet he manages to overwhelm the crowd
1990		60,000	Mano Negra, De La Soul, The Jeff Healey Band, Lenny Kravitz, Ry Cooder / David Lindley, Wendy and Lisa, Sinéad O'Connor, Midnight Oil, Bob Dylan, The Cure	
1991		50,500	The Scene, Dave Stewart, Deee-Lite, Happy Mondays, Bonnie Raitt, Pixies, Iggy Pop, Sting, Paul Simon	In Torhout the crowd spontaneously started throwing empty bottles in the air during Sting's song 'Message in a Bottle', soon filling the skies with bottlework. The same happened in Werchter the next day, ending with bottles hitting people's heads and resulting in injuries. This incident marked the beginning of the prohibition of visitors bringing their own drinks to the festival, a decision criticized and alleged to be for mere commercial purposes.
1992		60,000	The Tragically Hip, Extreme, The Smashing Pumpkins, Crowded House, Lou Reed, Red Hot Chili Peppers, Bryan Adams, Luka Bloom	Kiedis shouted at the crowd: "If you love us, throw more mud!" A few seconds later the stage was transformed in a place best described as a mud fight arena.
1993		60,000	Sonic Youth, The Levellers, The Black Crowes, Faith No More, Neil Young w/ Booker T. & the M.G.'s,	

			Lenny Kravitz, Metallica, Guns N' Roses	
1994		50,500	Tool, Clawfinger, Therapy?, Sepultura, Rage Against the Machine, Aerosmith, Peter Gabriel	A camping festival was held the night before the festival itself. dEUS and Tool performed on this stage.
1995		65,000	Jeff Buckley, PJ Harvey, The Offspring, The Cure, The Cranberries, R.E.M.	Second stage added.
1996		50,000	David Bowie, The Chemical Brothers, Afghan Wigs, Rage Against the Machine, Radiohead, Red Hot Chili Peppers, Björk, Pulp, Massive Attack, Foo Fighters, Neil Young & Crazy Horse	First time as a two-day festival. First time ever Radiohead played <i>Paranoid Android</i> .
1997		50,000	David Bowie, Daft Punk, Supergrass, Live, Radiohead, Jamiroquai, The Smashing Pumpkins, Beck, Deus	
1998		20,000	Sonic Youth, Eagle Eye Cherry, Garbage, Therapy?, Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds, Beastie Boys, Björk	
1999	2–4 July	51,500	Pavement, Blur, Marilyn Manson, Bryan Adams, Metallica, Placebo, Robbie Williams, Faithless, Lenny Kravitz, R.E.M.	First time in Werchter only. First time as a three-day festival (shows started at 5pm on Friday).
2000	30 June – 2 July	55,000	Nine Inch Nails, Oasis, Bush, A Perfect Circle, Counting Crows, The Cure, Eels, Paul Weller, Live, Hooverphonic, Manu Chao, Kelis, Suzanne Vega	
2001	29 June – 1 July	60,000	Fun Lovin' Criminals, Sting, Beck, Placebo, PJ Harvey, Muse, Sigur Rós, Grandaddy, Faithless, Incubus	
2002	28 – 30 June	63,000	Sonic Youth, The White Stripes, Red Hot Chili Peppers, Rammstein, Queens of the Stone Age, Faithless, Coldplay	

2003	26 – 29 June	70,000	Radiohead, Björk, Massive Attack, Moby, Metallica, Queens of the Stone Age, R.E.M., Coldplay	First time as a four-day-festival Arthur award for <i>Best festival in the world</i>
2004	1 – 4 July	70,000	The Cure, Metallica, KoЯn, Lenny Kravitz, Pixies, Muse, 2 Many DJs, Placebo, Moloko	Arthur award for <i>Best festival in the world</i> . Headliner David Bowie cancelled because of a shoulder nerve injury. 2 Many DJs were flown back from the UEFA Euro 2004 Final in Lisbon to replace him.
2005	30 June – 3 July	80,000	New Order, The Chemical Brothers, Garbage, Green Day, Kraftwerk, Queens of the Stone Age, Snoop Dogg, Faithless, Rammstein, Foo Fighters, R.E.M.	
2006	29 June – 2 July	80,000	Red Hot Chili Peppers, The Black Eyed Peas, The Who, Muse, Franz Ferdinand, Placebo, Deus, Depeche Mode	Arthur award for <i>Best festival in the world</i>
2007	28 June – 1 July	80,000	Muse, Kaiser Chiefs, The White Stripes, Arctic Monkeys, Pearl Jam, The Chemical Brothers, Metallica, Queens of the Stone Age, Faithless	Arthur award for <i>Best festival in the world</i> . Pearl Jam finally played at the festival after cancellations in 1992 (Eddie Vedder's stress collapse) and 2000 (drama at Roskilde).
2008	3 – 6 July	80,000	The Chemical Brothers, R.E.M., Moby, Neil Young, Radiohead, Sigur Rós, Deus, Beck, Kaiser Chiefs	The ILMC (who gives the Arthur Awards) changed their restrictions, a festival which has won 2 years in a row can not enter the next year. This change has been done in favour of the other festivals.
2009	2 – 5 July	80,000	Coldplay, The Killers, Lady Gaga, Placebo, Metallica, Kings of Leon, Oasis, Bloc Party, Franz Ferdinand, Nine Inch Nails, Limp Bizkit	European Festival Award for Best line-up, artist's favourite festival and best promoter
2010	1 – 4 July	80,000	Arcade Fire, Pearl Jam, Muse, Pink, Rammstein, Faithless, Green Day, Them Crooked Vultures, Editors	
2011	30 June – 3 July	82,750	Coldplay, Linkin Park, Kings of Leon, Iron Maiden, The Chemical Brothers,	European Festival Award for Best line-up

			Arctic Monkeys, Queens of the Stone Age, Robyn, Black Eyed Peas	
2012	28 June – 1 July	85,000	Red Hot Chili Peppers, The Cure, Garbage, Skrillex, Justice, Pearl Jam, Deadmau5, Mumford & Sons, Editors, Rise Against, Chase & Status, Snow Patrol	Third stage added, Arthur award for Best festival in the world
2013	4 – 7 July	85,000	Depeche Mode, Blur, Rammstein, Green Day, Kings of Leon, The National, Editors, Netsky, Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds, Volbeat	
2014	3 – 6 July	88,000	Pearl Jam, Metallica, Arctic Monkeys, Kings of Leon, Pixies, The Black Keys, Placebo, Damon Albarn, Skrillex, Ellie Goulding	One of only two festival appearances by Pearl Jam in their exclusive 12-date 2014 European tour.
2015	25–28 June	88,000	The Chemical Brothers, Faith No More, Mumford & Sons, Pharrell Williams, Lenny Kravitz, The Prodigy, Muse, Kasabian	[11]
2016	30 June – 3 July	TBD	Rammstein, Florence and the Machine, Paul McCartney, Ellie Goulding, Editors, Iggy Pop, Macklemore & Ryan Lewis	
2017			Foo Fighters, Radiohead, Linkin Park, System Of A Down, Kings of Leon, Arcade Fire, Alt-J, Blink 182, Imagine Dragons	
2018	5-8 July		Arctic Monkeys, Queens of the Stone Age, Pearl Jam, Gorillaz, The Killers, Nick Cave & The Bad Seeds, Jack White, Nine Inch Nails,	First year with 4 stages
2019			Fleetwood Mac, Kylie Minogue, Tool, The Cure, Muse, Mumford & Sons, Florence and the Machine, Bring Me The Horizon, Pink	
2022	30 June- 3 July		Pearl Jam, The Kid LAROI, Metallica, Twenty One Pilots,	

			Imagine Dragons, The Killers, Red Hot Chili Peppers, Polo G	
2023	29 June- 2 July		Red Hot Chili Peppers, Queens of the Stone Age, Arctic Monkeys, Muse, Lil Nas X, AURORA, Iggy Pop, Mumford and Sons, Liam Gallagher, Kasabian, The Black Keys, The Lumineers, The 1975, Stormzy, Fred Again	Stromae was the scheduled to perform as headliner but had to cancel due to mental health related issues. His performance was replaced by Mumford and Sons.
2024	4-7 July		Foo Fighters, Dua Lipa, Maneskin, Lenny Kravitz	
2025	3-6 July		Linkin Park, Green Day, ^[12] Sam Fender, ^[13] Olivia Rodrigo, ^[14] Weezer	


See also [edit]

- List of historic rock festivals


Rock music portal

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External links

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- Official website

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