

OFFICIAL FESTIVAL-NEWSPAPER

FESTIVAL TODAY

POWERED BY:

WACKEN



MMXXIII

**HAVE
A SAFE
JOURNEY
HOME.**



**ADIOS
MUD-CHACHOS!**

SEE YOU AT W:O:A 2024!

WACKEN

2024

31.07.

03.08.

SCORPIONS

AMON
AMARTH

JN EXTREMO



Blind Guardian

PAIN BEAST IN BLACK



BURY TOMORROW

blues pills

DEUTSCHLANDS MEISTE BAND DER WELT
KNORKATOR

SONDTARCTICA

MOTIONLESS
IN WHITE

UNLEASH THE ARCHERS

sick of it all

THE WARNING

RED FANG

The Black
Dahlia Murder

ANKOR

PRICORONAL

FOTSAM
LAND
FETSAM

XANDRIA

SOIL

EMILBULLS

VIO-
LENCE



EXUMER

Breid

brutus

IGNER

FUTURE
PALACE

JOHN COFFEY



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WACKEN ONLINE

Do you want to watch the legendary Doro anniversary show on a continuous loop? You missed asking your cute (albeit muddy) tent neighbour for her number? Online, you can rewatch W:O:A 2023 on various channels and network with other metalheads.

To socialise and look back, follow Wacken on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter/X, and TikTok. Here you'll find heaps of content with and about you, about the Holy Ground and the bands and artists that graced it this year.

Free recordings of many shows at Wacken Open Air 2023 are available on Spotify, YouTube, and especially on MagentaTV and MagentaMusik.

Find our various channels via our website or the adjacent QR code.

On Instagram, our handle is @wackenopenair.official



PHOTO: PEP BONNET



NÖ SLEEP 'TIL ENGLISH

Are our keyboards as exhausted as our rain boots? Maybe. But damn, creating Festival Today 2023 and its English counterpart has been a blast. With our adrenaline pumping along to Doro, Maiden, and Megadeth, we've turbo-translated interviews with next year's headliners Scorpions and Blind Guardian, insights into the "Lemmy Forever" festivities, and a deep-dive into the Wasteland Warriors. We hope you enjoyed both our German and English versions of Festival Today. See you in Wacken! Translator: Victoria Schaffrath

IMPRINT

FESTIVAL TODAY is a special of the Schleswig-Holsteiner Zeitungsvlag GmbH & Co. KG, Fördestraße 20, 24944 Flensburg

EXECUTIVE BOARD: Paul Wehberg, Stefan Berthold, Jens Wegmann

COVER PHOTO: ICS

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LAYOUT: Oliver Cole

PRINT: Druckzentrum Schleswig-Holstein, Fehmarnstr. 1, 24782 Büdelsdorf

Dear Metalheads,

the 32nd edition of Wacken Open Air is coming to a close, and it was a festival like we've never seen before. The continuous rain caused insurmountable difficulties, especially during the busy arrival days. This meant that thousands of loyal fans, members of our huge, worldwide Heavy Metal family, could no longer enter the festival grounds.

Please believe us, it was the hardest decision we ever had to make together with all the authorities and trades in the history of the W:O:A. We are aware of how much we owe to those who stayed home or turned around. You are the true heroes of this year's festival and made it possible for all Wacken visitors who had already made it onto the Acker to party on the Holy Ground.

For that, we want to say thank you! Thanks to all the people who made it possible, to the many helpers, the fantastic crews, the people who moved closer together on the camping sites, and to the many supporters who sent us words of encouragement and showed us what solidarity means. You have proven to us once again that Metal is so much more than fun. Metal is compassion, Metal is community, support, and heart.

We hope to see you ALL again on the Holy Ground in 2024.

Rain or shine!

Thomas Jensen & Holger Hübner

W:O:A GOES N:F:T

Some take a T-shirt home with them, others get a Bullhead blasted onto their skin as soon as they get home. But if you want to carry Wacken with you digitally or even mail it, as of this year you can buy Germany's first NFT stamp, which W:O:A has created in cooperation with NordBrief. The Wacken collector's wallet consists of a physical stamp as well as a digital NFT stamp. This blockchain-based digital twin contains exclusive content from past Wacken years. Metal! And not just because the stamp is limited to 50,000 pieces, but also because your purchase supports charity projects like the Wacken Foundation.

INFO: wacken.nordbrief.sh

// vs



PHOTOS: SARA KONRADI



COMMUNITY IS A GROUP EFFORT

Photographer Pep Bonet and his masterclass turn the spotlight on the incredible Wacken community.



Pep and the six participants.
PHOTO: SUSANNE MÜLLER

The fact that W:O:A 2023 was able to turn into a Metal party despite its rocky start is undoubtedly owed to the people who make the festival so special every year – the community, the fans. And that’s exactly what the participants of Pep Bonet’s masterclass were tasked with capturing this year.

For a long time, Pep was Motörhead’s resident photographer, and he frequently showcased W:O:A with his unique style as well. This year – for the second time – he offered a photography masterclass on the grounds to teach young talent his skills. “My own pictures from my first year at the festival were really powerful because I approached things with a certain innocence,” the Spaniard recalls. Now, he sets out to find a “fresh pair of eyes to document Wacken the way I used to see it” every year.

Six participants, four women and two men, roamed the festival for five days to document it from their point of view. The solidarity between the Metalheads, the support, the loyalty, and, of course, some communal beer drinking. Heartfelt moments in the mud. Laughing, crying, unbridled joy, intimate moments, and public posing in front of the masses – that’s W:O:A for you, baby. So far, Pep’s protégés from all over Europe have had little to do with such shenanigans; instead, their artistic focus has been on cities, fashion, art, and landscapes.

“Community” as a theme was a team decision - and it’s spot on. While Pep’s scholars grew into their own little community



SARA KONRADI

Sara Konradi was born in Tehran, studied photojournalism in New York, has a degree in psychology, and works as a freelance photographer. Her latest project “Women in Nightlife” was shot in New York, Colombia, and Germany. For her, the community aspect was the biggest surprise at the Metal festival – and the mud made for some excellent photos.





PHOTO: STEVE BRAUN



PHOTO: IRINA OKONESHNIKOVA

as the days went by, they learned to see the team spirit in Wacken's one-of-a-kind fans. "The festivalgoers may come from different parts of the world, speak various languages, look differently, but they all share their passion for Heavy Metal," Pep explains this year's assignment. A passion he has been able to convey to his students, whom the star photographer

wants to continuously "lure out of their comfort zone". "They should deliver unexpected images, not the predictable ones of conventional Rock photography." Sometimes this leads to "great pictures", says Pep. Some of them can be seen here and show the true star of this year's W:O:A: the community.



PHOTO: SARA KONRADI



PHOTO: HAYLS

GET UNDER WAY – AND OFF THE ACKER

Around 60 tow trucks are working around the clock to get you home.

Without them, Wacken would be lost. Because Heiko Martens and his team from the tow truck rental company make sure that the people of W:O:A can find their way home. Martens and his large team are working 24/7 to secure the roads and make the exits accessible. On the campgrounds alone, circa 60 farmers are currently working for the Metalheads. How much longer? "Until the last visitor is off the Holy Ground," Martens guarantees.

To help everything run as smoothly and effortlessly as possible, the pros have some important tips for you.

PREPARATION IS KEY

Be ready when the trucks are! Attach your tow lug properly, finish packing, get your cars ready to go. Does your engine start? Please check! Clear your car of as much mud and dirt as possible. And above all: stay with your vehicles!

EXIT IN SIGHT

The exits of the car parks will be prepared as well as possible for your departure. If you make it there on your own, please watch out for the tractors, don't block any paths, and drive carefully. And if someone does get stuck: Please help each other using your (wo)manpower!

LISTEN TO THE PROS

GPSs off! The professionals are the ones providing directions. So please don't just listen to them, but follow their instructions, follow the route and the direction in which they guide you. Please don't argue - it takes up valuable time!

POP YOUR HOOD

If you already know that your vehicle is damaged or has a problem that affects your ability to drive (brakes, engine, clutch, wheels, etc.): Please pop your hood to

signal damage and call ADAC or your insurance company! The tractors will take care of fully operational vehicles first so that no broken cars block the exits. A professional towing service is available for damaged cars.

SIGN OFF TO DRIVE OFF

Those who need to be towed must sign a damage waiver beforehand because the towers are not liable for any damage to the vehicle. Some of the cars have been manoeuvred so deep into the mud that damage could occur when they are towed out. So please consider this when you decide whether you require the free assistance of the tow trucks.

SAFETY FIRST

Do not run or drive into the path of the tractors, do not impede the work of the drivers, and please do not put yourself in danger! And above all: Please drive carefully.

//Susanne Müller



Heiko Martens on one of the trucks that tow cars from the festival grounds.

PHOTO: SUSANNE MÜLLER

IMPORTANT!

Please continuously check our website and social media for news regarding your departure.

THE STAY AT HOME HEROES OF W:O:A 2023

Due to the persistent heavy rain thousands couldn't make it to the festival. Their staying at home made it possible to have a party on the Holy Ground after all.

It was the hardest decision the Wacken Open Air organisers have had to make in the festival's history. "We are infinitely sorry for all the fans who had to stay at home," Holger Hübner and Thomas Jensen said on Wednesday, an-

nouncing the final entry ban. Thousands couldn't make it to W:O:A or stayed home. It is thanks to them that the Acker in Schleswig Holstein saw a party at all. We talked to three of the heroes and heroines.

KID'S MUSIC INSTEAD OF HEAVY METAL

Danica learned about the travel stop while still at home in Essen and therefore didn't even leave: "My planned and earliest possible festival day was Thursday and by then it was already clear that there was a complete stop on admission," she says. "I was very disappointed! Considering that W:O:A 2022 was such a great experience for me, which I still think back on fondly and which always gives me new energy in my everyday life, I was looking forward to another little mommy time-out and new

memories!" Nevertheless, the mother of four understands the organisers' decision, as she says: "Despite the disappointment, the festival organisers' made the right call." In the last few days, she has been following the W:O:A livestream closely – for example, while baking muffins for her son's birthday. If everything happened as planned, she would have been in Wacken during her son's birthday. "The decision to go to Wacken and not be with him on his birthday was incredibly difficult for me. We wanted to celebrate afterwards, of course." Now, these concerns are a thing of the past. "Now I can celebrate with my son while watching the livestream with him. You have to make the best of it." She's already planning for W:O:A 2024: "I'm already looking forward to the presale and hope I'll be quick enough on Sunday!"



Danica in her kitchen in Essen. For her son's birthday, she made Metal muffins while listening to the Magenta live stream. PHOTOS: PERSONAL



Daniel (left) and Jonas spent time in Hamburg instead of Wacken.



HEAD OFF INSTEAD OF HEAD BANGING

Daniel and his mates started their journey south of Frankfurt on Tuesday morning. After the arrival stop, they were stranded at a brewery in Schillsdorf, about 60 kilometres away from Wacken, where – thankfully – they were allowed to park their vans for a while. “We weren’t too hopeful when we started driving. But when they announced that they weren’t letting anyone in, of course, we were disappointed. Although: Looking at images from the festival grounds, it may have been better this way,” Daniel says. The Metalheads turned their cars around and spontaneously decided to spend the day in Hamburg. There, they met some other Metalheads and visited the “Hamburg Dungeon”, which you can see in the picture with the guillotine here. Back home, the Wacken stream was on hot rotation. “We’ll definitely be back in 2024,”



While Robert and Julius are sad about missing out on Wacken, they’re looking forward to W:O:A ’24.

Daniel clarifies. “And if the prices go up because of this year, so be it.”

BIKING INSTEAD OF HEADBANGING

Robert had travelled from Munich with his son Julius (12) – in a camper van. When they arrived on Tuesday morning, it was obvious that there would be no passage. “At that very moment, we received notifi-

cation of the travel stop. We were given information about the condition of the campgrounds and then decided to turn back,” he says. “I don’t want to be in the shoes of the organisers, the organising team, and the authorities. From my point of view, the decision to call a complete halt to arrivals was the right one. I thought they would have to cancel the festival in its entirety. So in the end, this was a good and wise compromise,” Robert thinks. Nevertheless, he and his son were very disappointed. “Julius and I had been looking forward to it all year, so the moment of decision and the way back was really hard.” Spontaneously, the two decided to go biking in South Tyrol together with Mum – while checking the livestream during stops. “My alarm clock for Sunday evening has already been set. I really hope to get tickets for next year. We definitely want to be there again!”

**SPENDE BLUT
RETTE LEBEN!**

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“THE WACKEN STAGE STILL GIVES US BUTTERFLIES!”

Klaus, you and the band play the planet's biggest Festivals. Which meaning does Wacken Open Air hold in your world?

For us, Wacken Open Air is right there at the top. Not just for us, but Metalheads across the globe know that Wacken is the irrefutable number one. There are many awesome festivals, but Wacken certainly has a special position and is the most beloved one. So we're very happy to play next year.

Wacken Open Air is regarded as the epicentre of Metal. Between us: Will you be playing "Wind Of Change"?

I don't know that yet. I remember us doing a survey before our W:O:A show in 2012 and asking our fans which songs they want us

to play and which ones we should omit. We ended up not including "Wind Of Change" and that was perfectly fine, honestly. But the wind has indeed changed and we're living in different times. I can definitely see 85.000 Metalheads singing along to this anthem of peace.

What can you tell us about your set and the show in 2024? What can Wacken Fans look forward to?

This is the first time we're heading to Wacken with our new drummer Mikkey

Dee. He's been with us since 2016, plays with us live, and he's a great drummer. We'll give it our all and play a powerful set, with or without ballads. After the somewhat arduous journey of this year, our goal is to reward people with a really wicked show and a good dose of Hard & Heavy.

What's special to you about a show at a Festival?

The atmosphere, the vibes. A festival like this is carried by the team spirit of the Metal community and that's not just present

"A festival like this is carried by the team spirit of the Metal community and that's not just present with the fans, you can feel that with the bands, as well."



Rockin' Wacken in 2024: Rudolf Schenker, Mikkey Dee, and Klaus Meine (left to right).

PHOTO: IMAGO/VACLAV SALEK

It's a done deal: Scorpions will rock W:O:A like a hurricane for the third time in 2024. Their last visit to the Holy Ground was a whopping eleven years ago. We managed to nab a second with singer Klaus Meine to talk about his experiences on the Acker, his early festival memories, and the upcoming headlining show in 2024.

W:O:A 2024

by Victoria Schaffrath

A MAGICAL WORLD OF BETWIXT POWER AND MAGIC

We love them, the epic conflicts and mystical narratives that make up Metal. Amidst thunder and double bass, symbols and coded messages provide us with insights into the nature of man and the universe. But what prevails? Darkness or light, fury or power, Symphonic or Thrash? These are precisely the questions that a powerful witch and a gifted sorcerer battle out in the world of Wacken 2024. In the end, magic wins - and so does Metal in its full diversity. In a spectacular show on Sunday night, the W:O:A team presented the occult concept for the upcoming year.

33 - THE NEW NUMBER OF THE BEAST?

Numbers play a big role in mysticism: From individual numbers like 666, the well-known number of the devil, to areas such as numerology or arithmancy, a subject taught at Hogwarts. But there are several reasons why the number 33 appears so prominently in the imagery for 2024. For one thing, Wacken is celebrating its 33rd anniversary, the festival is, so to speak, in its prime between youthful recklessness and sage life experience. For this reason, an astonishing 33 bands were announced on Saturday, including headliners Scorpions (see left) and Blind Guardian. As a magic number, 33 resembles the angel number 333, which is said to positively influence luck, creativity, and expansion.

DATES, TICKETS, PRE-SALES

So it has been decided: We will meet again on the Holy Ground between 31 July and 3 August 2024. The pre-sale for the much sought-after tickets starts today, Sunday, 6 August 2023 at 20:00 CEST. See you in Wacken - Rain or Shine!

with the fans, you can feel that with the bands, as well.

What has stuck with you the most from your Wacken shows in 2006 and 2012?

Similarly to this year, it was raining cats and dogs and Wacken was drowning, basically. On one hand, fans of the festival love that, but when there's too much mud, things can go south really fast. Back then, we got lucky, but we were still happy we brought our rain boots.

As young rock'n'roll fans, did you visit festivals yourselves, camping gear and all in tow?

Sure, at the beginning of our career, there was a massive festival in Germer-

sheim. We went with our truck and our entire PA in case one of the bands on the lineup couldn't make it. I think that was in 1973. We didn't even get backstage! But we still witnessed an awesome festival with many great bands.

Today, you're playing huge shows. Do you still get the jitters before going on stage on the Holy Ground, or is it business as usual for you?

No, it never is, least of all with a show the size of Wacken Open Air. Even after all these years, that still gives us butterflies. But that's healthy and once we get on stage, all that tension dissipates.

//Timon Menge



Point of honour: Mikkey Dee and Phil Campbell deliver Lemmy's urn in person.
PHOTOS: SUSANNE MÜLLER



DER LEM-GASTHOF

Smack in the middle of Wacken, on its main road, there now is a place where Lemmy fans from all over the world can meet to celebrate their idol together. The Landgasthof has become the Lem-Gasthof - complete with Lemmy's Bar and dressing room, where part of his ashes have found a final resting place.

by Susanne Müller



In an "Lemmy" Kilmister has found one of his final resting places - in Wacken. Since Wednesday, the Motörhead fronter has moved into the pub Landgasthof, creating a place of pilgrimage for fans and a shrine dedicated to the man who has done so much for W:O:A and who regarded Wacken as his home away from home.

Fans were the first to enter the hallowed halls. Well, some of them: The smokers. The whisky lovers. The smell

just wasn't quite right yet in this dressing room which was supposed to emulate an authentic refuge for the deceased Rock legend - and as such, had to smell like one, too. The slot machine and bottle of Jack Daniels set the mood while books, overflowing ashtrays, and Kinder surprise eggs (Lemmy's guilty pleasure) crowded the table. "It's spot on," smirks Mikkey Dee, Motörhead's final drummer. "Just as chaotic as I remember Lemmy's real dressing room."

The heart of the exhibition, however, is a smaller room, secured by a glass panel. In it: an urn that carries a portion of Lemmy's ashes. It's modelled after the cowboy hat he so loved to wear. Other memorabilia in the shrine include his leather



Hallowed halls: Exhibits like his bass and boots memorialise the Rock legend.



AND WHAT DO THE FANS THINK?

1. Motörhead tribute band Motörizer (above) couldn't pass up a meeting with Mikkey Dee and Phil Campbell, and also performed at the pub later that evening.
2. For Motörhead fan Sascha (left), attending the ceremony was a matter of absolute import. „I came here specially for this and I'm actually on the verge of tears right now. I finally have my picture with Mikkey Dee. I'll hang it above my bed.“ Fan Harris (right) even knew Lemmy personally, used to work in Motörhead's crew, and one time found himself with Lemmy's credit card in hand to get the Rock legend cash for a slot machine. „I still can't believe he's gone,“ he says.
3. Dirk (right) is just „totally blown away“. For him and his friends, Motörhead is everything. Since they didn't know beforehand, Mikkey and Phil entering the Landgasthof was a “true pinch-me moment“. Dirk even attended one of Lemmy's last shows – the unforgettable frontman died two months later.

boots, hat, and jacket as well as his Rickenbacker bass and Marshall amp. Since Wednesday, fans can visit Lemmy's Dressing Room.

Wacken boss Thomas Jensen and Lemmy's band-mates Mikkey Dee and guitarist Phil Campbell handed over the urn to the Landgasthof after taking part in a parade in his honour. The “Lemmy



Thumbs up: Mikkey Dee and Wacken organiser Thomas Jensen approve.



Lemmy Forever: The parade moves through the village. PHOTOS: SUSANNE MÜLLER



“Forever”-themed parade included three trucks – one with a DJ team from Hamburg, one loaded with the Wacken Firefighters, and one carrying Motörhead fans – and made its way through the village before passing the campgrounds and the Louder stage. After that, the urn travelled to the Landgasthof. Meanwhile, Mikkey and Phil, driving in an old school VW Iltis, led the way for Heavy Metal marching band Blaas of Glory, churning out Motörhead tunes one after another. Mikkey even filmed them: “That was great. A wonderful event with so many people. I’m happy it didn’t rain too much,” the drummer comments after the celebrations. And on a more sombre note, he adds: “It was really moving.”

High level: Mikkey Dee has secured the best seat for the parade.





More memorabilia: Lemmy's Marshall amplifier, a statue, his slot machine, jacket and hat, and a classic messy table in Lemmy's dressing room.

OPENING HOURS LANDGASTHOF WACKEN

Monday & Tuesday: rest days
 Wednesday: 11:30-14:00 + 17:00-22:00
 Thursday: 11:30-14:00 + 17:00-22:00
 Friday: 11:30-14:00 + 17:00-23:00

Saturday: 17:00-23:00
 Sunday: 17:00-22:00

www.landgasthof-wacken.de

TRUCK



WACKEN



A massive, loud “Thank you!” goes out to everyone who made this particular Wacken Open Air 2023 possible. First and foremost, we would like to thank those who could not be here to celebrate with us. Thanks to you, your understanding and thoughtfulness, those who were already on site were able to enjoy and celebrate the festival. Thanks also to our excellent crews, our infrastructure professionals, the farmers who pulled vehicles onto the sites around the clock. Thanks to the state of Schleswig-Holstein, the district of

Steinburg, the village of Wacken, the surrounding communities, the operators of the diversion areas, and the exceptional people who live in the region and immediately offered their help: Overnight accommodation, parking spaces, shower facilities – all so that our visitors are not left out in the cold or in the rain. Thank you to the many people, colleagues, and other festivals who showed their solidarity with us and offered us so much support. Thank you to all of our staff, the crews on and off the stage, all the bands, performers, and

their technicians, all the security guards, service providers and Metal Guards, all the traders and caterers, our cooperating partners, and sponsors. We would also like to thank the police, emergency services, fire brigade, customs, and the Schenefeld authorities for security and supplies. But the biggest thank you always goes out to our extraordinary Wacken community. See you in 2024!

Holger Hübner & Thomas Jensen
organisers Wacken Open Air

Hansi Kürsch and Blind Guardian will be back to headline W:O:A 2024.
PHOTO: IMAGO

“THE SHOW

Welcome back! Blind Guardian are true Wacken veterans and will headline W:O:A 2024. In this exclusive interview, Hansi remembers past shows, reveals why their gig in 2024 will be even better, and what Wacken feels like for him as an audience member.

By Christof Leim &
Victoria Schaffrath

You've played W:O:A six times, headlined a couple of those years. Do you remember your first show in 1992, when Wacken was only three years old?

I remember it quite well, actually; I just don't know how much of that is owed to my misty eyes (laughs). Back then, it was just a small festival in the Kuhle. They had maybe 2,000 people in there. It still was kind of a backyard thing, and nobody could have guessed that the festival would become this big of a deal.

Catering was a piece of really good country-style bread and some goulash soup as well as a case of beer and some water, I think. That's what I liked about the festival immediately – it was just really personal and had this Northern German charm. The vibe was smaller, but not any different than it is now. Everybody had a blast.

W WILL BE BRILLIANT!"

Had you even heard about Wacken?

No, I hadn't heard about Wacken. In July 1992, we released "Somewhere Far Beyond", and were supposed to go on tour in September. Then we got the call: "Do you want to play a festival before you go?" We didn't have a lot of live experience. For us, every show counted, and that's how we ended up in Wacken.

Are you caught up on "Legend Of Wacken"?

I am, indeed! I knew we had a song on the soundtrack and there were some talks about that. We were touring and all of a sudden Magnus started ranting and raving: "Has anybody watched that Wacken thing yet? They included us! We look like idiots!" (laughs) I then watched the show and was very entertained. It is a little slapsticky, but it's done with love. It is a homage to the story, but it's told in an entertaining way. And at the end, you can see a version of Blind Guardian. I thought it was hilarious.

Fast Forward to 2024: You will headline once more. What else is on the agenda that year?

We will be touring for "God Machine", currently there are shows planned for Australia, America, and England. From June on, we're visiting all the European festivals before we headline Wacken as our personal and professional highlight.

What significance does W:O:A hold for a Metal band nowadays and for Blind Guardian in particular?

Wacken is the Mecca of Metal. You're playing for the entirety of the Metal community here and that's not a moment you can afford to screw up. We really want to create the best Blind Guardian show possible for this festival. We always do – whether we're playing in front of 500 or 85,000 people. But when 85,000 people sing along to a song like "Valhalla", that's

a kick that nourishes your soul for the next four years (laughs).

Do you already have a plan in place for your Wacken show in 2024?

The scale in Wacken is different. We want to fill that with our presence, but on the other hand, we visually want to do our music justice. At our last show, that was a trick from our pyrotechnics department. I reckon this time we'll work with imagery and lights. We're going to pour a lot of creative juices into this performance, but the music will stay front and centre. The show will be brilliant, what can I say!

Do you visit Festivals in your off time?

I like club gigs, they're just more intimate. This year, however, I am hitting a few festivals, like Wacken this week. Doro celebrated her 40th anniversary on stage, I couldn't miss that. I've been to Wacken to do some promo with André a few times and we certainly savoured partying through the backstage areas and catching the odd show.

Can you still hang out in the crowd to do that?

People do recognise you, they say hi – one or two might want an autograph, but it doesn't get overwhelming. People have other things to worry about than who is standing next to them. I remember in 2011, I took my then-11-year-old son and watched the Ozzy Osbourne show with him. No problem there.

When you think about it, was one Wacken show particularly special?

In 2002, I was still really nervous, and the audience really carried us through. It was the first time I ever saw that many people in front of a stage. The support and the crowd were both really impressive.

And in 2016, we had an almost perfect show.

"Wacken is the Mecca of Metal. You're playing for the entirety of the Metal community here and that's not a moment you can afford to screw up."

HANSI KÜRSCH



W:O:A 1992

Just three years after its inception, W:O:A was able to book Saxon and Blind Guardian. Owing in part to commitments from artists like Kürsch and others, the festival has become what it is today.

AN INSTRUMENTAL

By sheer chance, Doro Pesch and Sabina Classen met at neighbouring rehearsal rooms 40 years ago. Since then, the two women have forged a friendship as durable as Heavy Metal.

by Andrea Leim

Düsseldorf isn't the first place that comes to mind when people think about the origins of German Metal. But it's exactly where, sometime in 1983 or 1984, a chance meeting took place that would forever change the Genre and even Wacken Open Air. "My drummer at the time was going to uni with me in Aachen, but was originally from Düsseldorf," Sabina Classen of Holy Moses fame remembers. "Every now and again, we'd head over there to use his other band Snake's rehearsal space. One time when we were over, I heard another band next door. I said: 'Wait, that's another woman singing!' Which was quite unusual back then. So we knocked on the door, and there she was: Doro with her band Warlock," Classen describes the fateful moment.

After that, the two women crossed paths regularly, got to know each other, and became fast friends. "As women in Metal we had to stick together. Her pursuing her genre of Metal, and I Thrash. We were never competitors: She was the Metal Queen, and I was the Thrash Metal Queen," Classen chuckles. They were also the absolute exception because back then, female artists were few and far between.

For that reason, it was instrumental to know someone who pursued music with the same intensity and passion, says Doro: "It felt great to have a soulmate. With Sabina, I knew immediately: She was very serious about this and was gonna keep at it for a long time. She always created music with fervour, with her entire heart and soul. And she was the only woman within her genre – a true anomaly who always gave it her all."

And giving it her all is exactly what Classen did for W:O:A in 1993. It was she who told Doro about a new festival that was all about Metal but didn't pay that well yet. Pesch accepted her first headlining slot in 1993 regardless – precisely because she'd been asked by her friend Sabina.

Backstage at the Wacken Open Air 2023, Doro and Sabina met again, as they often do.
PHOTO: SABINA CLASSEN



FRIENDSHIP

But Doro remembers another legendary Wacken incident very clearly. "Sabina had asked me to do 'Too Drunk To Fuck' together during her show in Wacken, and, of course, I said I'd join her onstage. On my way to the festival, however, I got stuck in traffic and on top of that was pulled over by local police. I don't drink or do drugs, but for some reason, it was us they wanted to shake down. And they took their sweet time searching our entire car, it took forever. I said: 'I have a show to play, we need to get going!' They didn't care at all. Once we were allowed to gather our belongings, we set out for Wacken at the speed of light. I had to cover the last few miles by foot, but by some miracle, I made it on time," Doro recalls. "Just as the band played the first chords, I jumped onto the stage and we did the song together."

The two women even shared a tour bus – and a lot of the stuff they were carrying on it. At some point, they were on a bus with three bands and were having a blast.

"We drove the bus to England and got to spend a lot of time together, which doesn't always happen on tour."

SABINA CLASSEN

"They guys loved Sabina as well. We drove the bus to England and got to spend a lot of time together, which doesn't always happen on tour."

Sabina, too, remembers this time fondly: "We compared notes, played shows together, and shared a night liner. I vividly remember us going to Bloodstock and Doro and me sharing the lounge in the back of the bus. Once we had unpacked our bags, there were black clothes in the same size everywhere. They guys were like: 'We thought only Doro was this much of a slob!' Well, they thought wrong," Sabina Classen smirks.

Whenever people share this much history, they carry it into the present and future. It's no surprise, then, that Sabina Classen joined Doro for her anniversary show on Wednesday, marking her own 30th visit to W:O:A. And who knows, maybe we'll see Pesch at Holy Moses and Sabina Classen's final show on 27 December in Hamburg?

Doro celebrated her fortieth stage anniversary on the Faster Stage on Wednesday evening.
PHOTOS: ICS



Sabina visited the festival for the thirtieth time this year. On Wednesday evening she gave her last concert on the Acker - on 27 December she goes into rock'n'roll retirement.

“IT ALL STARTED

Whenever the Acker starts to look like a scene from “Mad Max”, the Wasteland Warriors are never far behind. With their battle armour, their apocalyptic cars, and their carefully crafted props these roleplayers conjure up a dystopia that enthralles Wacken’s international audience. This year, they are celebrating their tenth anniversary.

by Timon Menge

It all started with a movie night,” founder Joe Neuvième reminisces. “A buddy and I were watching ‘Waterworld.’ Deacon, the villain played by Dennis Hopper, is wearing this awesome jacket, which we needed to have. We tried buying one – to no avail.”

So Joe and his friend got to work and simply came up with their own version. More jackets followed. Friends of theirs, avid live-action role players, saw the designers’ potential and took them to a convention in Cologne. And as fate would have it, there, they were spotted by the Wacken team. Asked whether they’d like to bring their costumes to life at W:O:A, Joe recalls answering: “Weird question. Of course, we do!”

After that, the project gained traction: What started as some costumes soon morphed to an entire landscape filled with props and cars. The Wasteland Warriors were born and immediately became one with Wacken Open Air.

In the meantime, Joe’s team has grown to over 70 Warriors. Most of them have normal jobs outside of Wacken; some design costumes for film and television or for advertising. “There are actually a lot of private requests for us to create costumes,” Joe says. In addition, video game developers like Ubisoft are among the group’s clients.

In addition, the Wasteland Warriors make appearances in music videos, for example for German Hip-Hop star Bushido (in his video for “King Sonny Black”). Their latest cameo, however, has been with Metal



Wasteland Warriors founder Joe Neuvième.

PHOTO: TIMON MENGE

WITH A MOVIE NIGHT

Queen Doro Pesch. "Doro is incredibly lovable and working with her was fantastic," Joe raves about the shoot. Doro is equally delighted to work with the group. "We've wanted to collaborate for a while, and this year it finally worked out," the musician tells us. "They are featured in the video for my new song 'Time For Justice', so of course they were on stage during my show for that very song."

A special moment for the group, as Joe explains after the show: "The show with Doro was fantastic and it was an awesome experience being on stage with her in front of so many people. I'm also really looking forward to her jubilee show later this year, we'll be part of that, as well!"

By the way: Festival visitors are often part of the Wasteland Warriors' creative process. Every now and then they approach mem-

bers of the group and offer them, among other things, retired vehicles. Some of the cars the group has converted in the past have come from Wacken fans. Others they have bought and modified themselves. "Wacken is our huge playground. Here we are supported and can really let loose."

"They are featured in the video for my new song 'Time For Justice', so of course they were on stage during my show for that very song."

DORO

three or four friends who make cool clothes as a hobby."

To celebrate their 10th anniversary, the Wacken organisers and the Wasteland Warriors have come up with something special. "We always party a lot, for example at our so-called Plushy Parties," says Joe. "At those, we wear plushy onesies and listen

Would the Wasteland Warriors have become what they are now without Wacken Open Air? "Absolutely not," Joe thinks. "If it hadn't been for the chance meeting in Cologne back then, we'd probably still just be



With Doro on stage.

PHOTO:ICS

to music that has nothing to do with Metal. I objected to that, just for the record! We used to have these parties just for us, but it's become an event. So this year, the party was open to the public for the first time."

In the future, the group plans to organise more efficiently, because it's growing all the time. But one thing is for sure: the Wasteland Warriors will definitely be back in Wacken 2024.



The Wasteland Warriors celebrating their apocalyptic cars like Mad Max.

Iron Maiden F.C.: The band's football crew won against a team of German locals and former pros.



KICK IT LIKE MAIDEN

Iron Maiden boss Steve Harris is known for his devotion to football. In order to get in a proper game, he travelled to Wacken a day early.

by Susanne Müller

It takes a village... to beat the Harris'. Even though the football match between Iron Maiden and a selection of Wacken's best players was supposed to remain a secret, a good por-

tion of the village's residents turned up to support their own.

"We had a great game and a terrific atmosphere in this small stadium," Steve Harris praised the match after the final whistle. The bassist and

founder of Iron Maiden is a passionate footballer himself, rarely misses a game of his own Maiden team, and played for more than 90 minutes at the Erich Koller Stadium in Wacken. In the end, Maiden won 5-0, which prompted Harris to neatly summarise: "We won -

it couldn't have gone any better."

Meanwhile, Harris had no idea there would be serious talent in the rival team: Ansgar Brinkmann (Eintracht Frankfurt), Richard Golz (Hamburger SV), and Thomas Helmer (68-fold



Goal-oriented: Peyton Parrish.



Helmer vs. Harris: titans in their own rights



Quiet spectators: Holger Hübner and Thomas Jensen enjoy a moment of respite.

German international player) added some serious Bundesliga experience to the opposing team. "They only told us after the fact. But Colin Hendry from our side used to play for Scotland, and my son almost went pro himself. We had a great roster ourselves." Harris's son George pulled all the strings during the 90-minute match, scoring as well as showing off his technical finesse.

The Wacken team, on the other hand, was assisted by social media star Peyton Parrish. For one half of the game, the interim goalie impressed with some spectacular saves. "That was great," Parrish beamed after. "It's been a while since I've played at this level, but I felt right at home. We had a lot of fun." The singer also sang his opponents' praises: "Maiden have many technically versed players, they were

powerful and well-prepared."

Under the watchful eyes of Wacken organisers Thomas Jensen and Holger Hübner, nobody sustained any injuries – thank goodness, because the Harris family still had to take the stage the next day; Steve with Iron Maiden and George with his band Raven Age. And W:O:A's good vibes made George's eyes in particular light up: "Metal fans are such passionate music fans. Despite the rain, all you see are smiling faces. They really relish it." Just like father and son did their match.



Almost went pro: George Harris was en route to start a career in pro football before he turned his eyes on music.



A referee's best friend? Steve Harris in action. PHOTOS: SUSANNE MÜLLER



Thomas Jensen with the certificate documenting the record.



WELL GROWLED, WACKEN!

With 110.3 decibels, the metal fans got louder than ever for the protection of species.

5, 4, 3, 2, 1... OOOUUUH!
On Wednesday night, the loudest growl by a crowd ever made the ground below Wacken shake. Well done, because with this campaign W:O:A and Krombacher want to draw attention to the protection of biodiversity and their joint project „Growling Creatures“.

„We are insanely happy about the new world record for Growling Creatures,“ reports Krombacher senior PR manager Sarah Klappert. „Ultimately, we achieved 110.3 decibels. And with that, Metal fans raised their voices louder than ever for species conservation.“ With this result of more than 110 decibels, expectations were actually exceeded. The world record would have been set at 100 decibels.



Thomas Jensen, Saskia Thode, and judge Olaf Kuchenbecker from the German institute for records are cheering on the audience.
PHOTOS: KROMBACHER/JUSTUS RUDOLPH

For the record to be valid, an ordinary growl was not enough. The lyrics were crucial too. „In order to successfully set the record, the fans had to chant ‚Growling Creatures‘ in true Metal fashion,“ Klappert explains. The crowd was cheered on by Wacken co-founder Thomas Jensen and Saskia Thode, the face of Metal Yoga and Wacken 2023.

„Growling Creatures“ was introduced by Wacken and Krombacher last year. In cooperation with Pitchback Studios in Cologne, the partners released three songs for W:O:A 2022, which don't feature human Metal bands, but the voices of endangered native species.

Check them out at www.growling-creatures.de.

//Timon Menge

GUARDIAN ANGEL FOUND!

Metalguard Olli, who was diagnosed with leukaemia last year, has found a stem cell donor.

Metalguard needs guardian angel": In last year's Festival Today, we introduced Olli from the German town of Geinsheim, who had been diagnosed with leukaemia. He found his guardian angel a mere two months later: Olli has found a stem cell donor and is now planning a return to Wacken.

"I'm still a little weaker than before, and we're watching some blood markers here and there, but apart from that, I'm feeling great!" Olli says. The 42-year-old had spent half his life saving crowd-surfing Metalheads in front of the Louder stage. He had even taken on the job of managing the Metalguards, making Wacken even safer for all attendees. But at the end of June last year, Olli was diagnosed with leukaemia - and while Metalheads were storming the Holy Ground, Olli's search for a bone marrow donor was in full swing.

Luckily, this search was successful. A donor match was found in the global database in August, and Olli received his life-saving stem cell donation. Since then, he has been fighting his way back. "I

still have to take it easy, eat healthily, move my body, and think positive thoughts," he says. After the bone marrow donation, his body has to work hard on adapting to its new immune system. Because of this, he was deemed at high risk of infection, and massive crowds were a no-no.

"All in all, I'm out of the woods," the family man tells us. Although he'd very much like to meet his lifesaver, he can only officially contact them after two years have passed.

Until then, Olli gets to thank his family, who he says "helped a lot." As did Melissa Vogler, daughter of deceased Wacken executive producer Thomas Hess, and his partner Heidrun.

Since 2014, the Wacken team has been encouraging Metalfans to register with the German bone marrow donor database DKMS. More than 11,000 festivalgoers have registered so far, generating 73 donations to patients from 22 countries. Last year, 1,300 people applied to save Olli.

Olli, meanwhile, completed re-entry into his old job in June. And while huge crowds and long festival nights are still not in the cards for him, he is sure: "In 2024, I'll be back at Wacken." His message to everyone: "Don't give up, and stay positive."

To help others like Olli, register via dkms.de/wacken. // Susanne Müller

Today and one year ago: Olli always looks positively into the future and has already achieved a lot with this attitude and thanks to donors and a committed environment. PHOTO: PRIVAT; FESTIVAL TODAY



NEEDLES ARE METAL, TOO!

W:O:A and bikers call for blood donations: All we need is blood!" Powerwolf immortalised this quasi-slogan of blood banks everywhere in a Metal song. Now the Universitätsklinikum Hamburg-Eppendorf, the biker community "Independent Cruisers", and the Wacken Foundation are calling for a big blood drive.

On Saturday, 26 August from 10

am to 4 pm, blood can be donated as part of the "Bikers Blood for Help" event at UKE, Ost 38 in Hamburg. The event's patron is Holger Hübner, who - together with Thomas Jensen - has been encouraging blood donations for years. That's also why the two festival bosses launched a blood donation pass: "We have already been able to hand out 145,000 passes. For that, we are grateful

to our fans, and of course, we are also proud to be able to pass on this support."

Music (by Van Steef) and lots of grilled sausages and drinks will be provided at BBFH in Hamburg, of course. And: Anyone who brings their W:O:A blood donation passport and can present six stamps (Vollblut) will get a Wacken Foundation T-shirt for free.

The winning band Phantom
Excaliver from Japan.
PHOTOS: ICS



CHEER 'TIL YOU DROP

For the first time in over 15 years, a country managed to win the Wacken Metal Battle twice in a row. This year the winners from Japan are Phantom Excaliver. We interviewed the newly crowned winners and spoke to Metal Battle organiser Sascha Jahn about the difficult conditions in the run-up to the event.

When Metal Battle organiser Sascha Jahn calls Sable Hills to the stage at 4:20 p.m., some may already suspect that something was up. The Japanese band won the Metal Battle last year and is now tasked with helping Jahn announce this year's winner. He shows them a piece of paper with the name of the band about to celebrate first place. Guitarist Takuya Mishima's eyes widen as he exclaims: "Oh, okay!" Then he, fellow guitarist Riet Mishima, and Jahn pronounce the winner in unison: Phantom Excaliver from Japan! From that point forward, all hell breaks loose.

Sable Hills and Jahn haven't even finished their sentence when Phantom Excaliver singer Kacchang jumps up in excitement, begins cheering like his life depends on it – and then drops to the floor in an instant. We kid you not: The lead singer is so enthralled by his band's win, he loses consciousness. For a few seconds, he's lying there while his bandmates try to wake him up. The second Kacchang regains

consciousness, he resumes his cheering. Triumphant he staggers towards the stage with his band in tow, tears gleaming in all of their eyes. Once they step onto the stage and the audience cheers them on, the waterworks start. Singer Kacchang is completely overcome, as are his bandmates. It's a sight for sore eyes.

"I'm so happy for them," Phantom Excaliver's manager Masami Tsubaki tells us with tears streaming down his face in solidarity. "They rehearsed so much. They tried so hard. And the reward is that they won here. This is perfect."

Sascha Jahn is equally thrilled by Japan's repeat victory. „I think it's really impressive. The Metal scene there is multi-faceted and healthy, which then naturally manifests in the Metal Battle. Phantom Excaliver really blew us away. But I would also like to thank all the other bands for taking part. The selection is extremely difficult and lengthy every year. It shows how much life there is in Metal and how high the quality in this genre still is.“



Aneuma from Spain landed in 2nd place.

Initially, it wasn't clear whether the Metal Battle could take place this year. „The fact that we were able to organise the competition even under these difficult circumstances makes me really proud. It was a big challenge, but we all worked together, coordinated closely with the bands and found the best possible solution for everyone involved. Most of the participants were able to perform thanks to rescheduling. The others will play in the regular line-up next year.“ In Jahn's opinion, the fact that everything went so smoothly is down to one thing in particular: „What impressed me a lot was the solidarity among the participating bands. There was no ill will, everyone had tremendous patience and understanding for the situation and for each other. Perhaps that only exists in the Metal community. It was certainly stressful for everyone, but together we made it work and were able to handle the situation.“ Hopefully, the weather demons will be kinder to the Metal Battle next year. Maybe Japan will manage a triple victory?

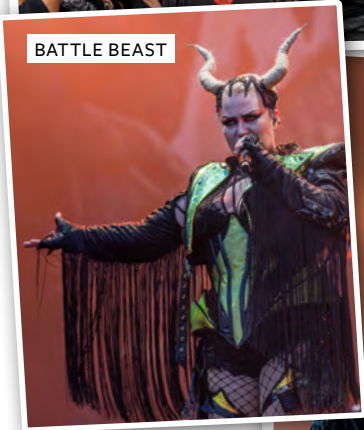
// Timon Menge



0%Mercury from the Ukraine ended up in 3rd place.



RAGE



BATTLE BEAST



PENTAGRAM



LIKES METAL FROM ICELAND:
 Guðni Th. Jóhannesson, the president of the country of elves and trolls, is visiting Wacken for the first time but has already been to many Metal concerts back home. That's why one of his favourite bands is from his homeland: „It's like choosing a favourite child, but I can tell you that Skálmöld are very close to my heart. Their music is fantastic, and the same can be said of their lyrics. They combine the old Nordic cultural heritage with the present and are a great example of how to combine the old with the new.“



IRON MAIDEN



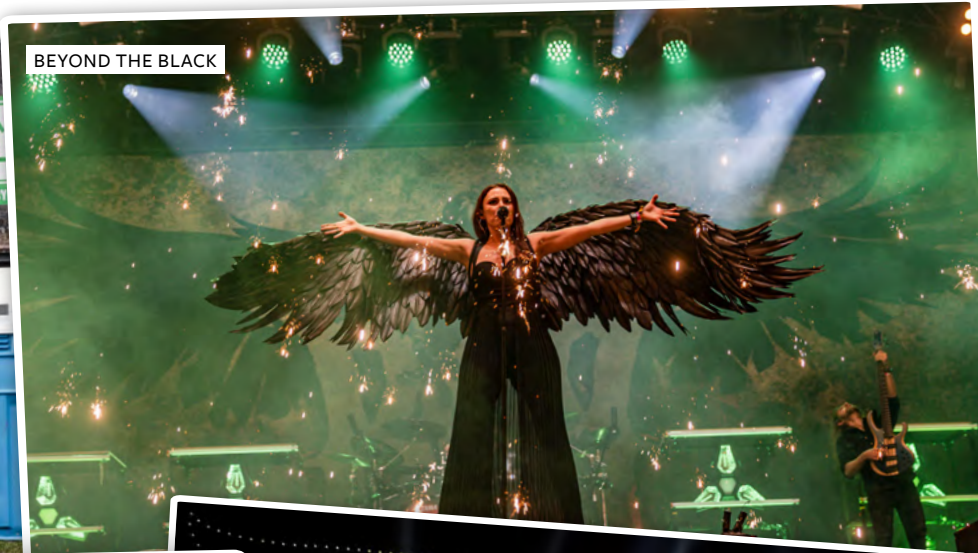
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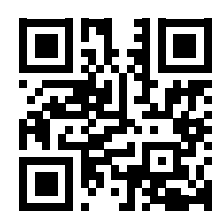
COUNT DOWN THE DAYS

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