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HISTORY

SWEDEN ROCK



A PERFECTLY
ORGANIZED FESTIVAL!

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Thanks to its maximum professional approach, Sweden Rock rightfully has earned the reputation as one of the best-organized festivals in the world of music. Fans can enjoy the best possible mix of classic rock, hard rock, metal, blues and other related genres every year. I can only talk in superlatives about Sweden Rock, because I have only had positive experiences throughout my years of mutual collaboration with their team.

THE HISTORY OF THE SWEDEN ROCK FESTIVAL

The first edition of what Sweden Rock eventually came to be first saw the light of day in 1992 under the name Sommarfestivalen in the city of Olofström. The organizers wanted to offer music which was quite unusual on the Swedish festival scene at the time: classic rock, hard rock, folk music and blues. Two of the acts that year were NAZARETH and WISHBONE ASH.

During the years 1993–1997, the festival moved to the neighboring city of Karlshamn and changed its name to Karlshamn Rock Festival. The festival slowly transformed into a pure rock festival and booked acts like LYNYRD SKYNYRD, BLACK SABBATH (with

Tony Martin as the singer), BACHMANN TURNER OVERDRIVE and FLEETWOOD MAC.

In 1998, the festival had outgrown its location and was moved to the huge grass field by the Baltic Sea, outside the city of Sölvesborg, where the festival still is located today. The name of Karlshamn Rock Festival was kept, and this first year in Norje offered bands like BLUE ÖYSTER CULT, STATUS QUO, DEE SNIDER and SIMPLE MINDS. Inviting these representatives of synth pop-rock was a courageous step from the promoter's side, as multi-genre festivals weren't as common as they are nowadays. Many of the orthodox rockers weren't forced to accept SIMPLE MINDS – on the contrary, the band actually gained a nice amount of new fans.

In 1999, the name Sweden Rock Festival was born with hard rock coming into focus. Heavy metal was on the rise again right at that time, so MANOWAR, MERCYFUL FATE and MOTÖRHEAD were some of the popular acts that year.

In 2001, the festival had a change of management, and since then it has slowly increased in size, with the maximum number of visitors set at 35,000 in order to



ACE FREHLEY / Photo: Jan Tatar

still ensure good service and quality. Today, Sweden Rock Festival is one of the most famous rock and metal festivals in the world, with visitors from over 50 different countries every year. Bands like AEROSMITH, KISS, GUNS N' ROSES, ZZ TOP, SOUNDGARDEN, ALICE COOPER, BLACK SABBATH, OZZY OSBOURNE, WHITESNAKE, MÖTLEY CRÜE, RUSH, SCORPIONS, IRON MAIDEN, JUDAS PRIEST, ACCEPT and many more have all played at the festival. Another thing that makes Sweden Rock unique is the fact they book artists who can't be seen anywhere else during the festival season, as well as artists who exclusively perform one show in Europe each year – only at Sweden Rock.

VENUE AND THE SURROUNDING AREA

Sweden Rock takes place outside the town of Sölvesborg in Blekinge in southern Sweden. If you are planning a trip to Sweden Rock, there are many options for getting there. There are two airports within an hour of travel from Sölvesborg. One of them is located outside of Ronneby and is called Kallinge Elygplats. The other one is located outside



BILLY IDOL / Photo: Jan Tatar

of Kristianstad and is called Kristianstad Österlen Airport. Many international guests also fly to Copenhagen Airport (Denmark), which is directly connected to Sölvesborg by train (2 hours ride). You can use the shuttle buses to the festival area from the nearby villages/cities. You can find festival information services located straight away in front of the Sölvesborg railway station. The shuttle busses are running each day of the festival from the morning till late at night, even the day before the start of the event and one day after. If you are not planning to stay at any of the nearby camping areas and you prefer to find accommodation in a hotel, you can also use the shuttle busses to the nearby cities/villages.



MICHAEL MONROE / Photo: Jan Tatar

You can find all the detailed information including the shuttle bus timetables at the Sweden Rock official website – www.swedenrock.com.

Sweden Rock Festival traditionally takes place every year during the first week in June – from Wednesday to Saturday. You can enjoy a variety of music styles from more than 80 bands from all of the world on five stages within these four days. The main Festival Stage and Rock Stage are closed the first day of Sweden Rock, so instead you can enjoy the artists who are performing on the Sweden Stage, 4Sound Stage or Rockklassiker Stage. I really appreciate the fact that each artist gets a decent set length – not just the big acts get to perform in really solid conditions. Fans can meet many of the artists during the great autograph sessions offered as well.

In spite of the fact that Sweden Rock is rapidly growing, the promotional team is not losing focus on the ideas behind the origins of the festival. The

intention of the promoters is not only to offer the audience the best possible mix of music, but also to have the festival area provide excellent service and hospitality in many senses of the word. There are many kinds of foods offered to visitors, while the lines are kept to a minimum. Regardless, some still find the prices for food and beverages quite unpleasantly high. There is also the possibility to buy a diverse selection goods in the supermarket located outside of the festival area for more acceptable prices.

While other festivals clean their grounds after the events are over, the people comprising the Sweden Rock team are much more responsible for their visitors. They have 200 people who are continuously making sure that guests can enjoy sitting down on the grassy slopes throughout the festival. You can hardly ever find garbage on the ground. There are also clean vacuum-flushing toilets instead of overfilled porta-potties. Safety and health care are provided at a very professional level as well.



JOAN JETT / Photo: Stefan Johansson



RICK SPRINGFIELD / Photo: Stefan Johansson



RATT / Photo: Jan Tatar

From my personal experience, I can only confirm that the safety team works perfectly there. The last night of Sweden Rock 2004 I woke up and found myself in a very uncomfortable situation. Some drunk fans were throwing their empty bottles straight outside my tent. The tent started to collapse shortly after, so it became difficult and bit dangerous to get out. After I got outside, they started screaming some rude words at me. Looking around, with a bit of good luck I noticed two policemen were walking by. I told them what happened and also that I was afraid to stay there alone till the morning. They not only helped rebuild my tent, but they also stayed around till the morning to ensure that we stayed safe. Knowing how the police often deal with people back in my country, it was really an extraordinary experience. Thanks to prohibition and strict orders about consuming alcohol, some people visit the festival to enjoy alcohol as much as they wish. Some visitors unfortunately can't even remember the start of the event or enjoy the music because they are completely blacked out

and sleeping on the grass. This is probably the only negative aspect about the whole festival, but there is nothing the promoters can do about it as everyone is responsible for their own lives.

THE PLACE WHERE TIME STANDS STILL

This saying is of course just symbolic and meant in its best way. Sweden Rock is the only place, if not in the whole world then at least in Europe, where we can travel back in time to the 80s for a few days. Without this event, I would never have realized there are still so many glam rock lovers around. Even though I am not the biggest glam rock fan, every time I'm there I really enjoy seeing the original hair and makeup styling and outfits of all of the guys and girls who live for glam rock, a style they are loyal to no matter the modern trends.

MY FIRST SWEDEN ROCK AND SOME UNFORGETTABLE MOMENTS FROM OTHER YEARS

There are so many memories I gathered throughout



STEEL PANTHER / Photo: Jan Tatar



THE QUIREBOYS / Photo: Jan Tatar

my years at Sweden Rock that I could publish an entire book about them. I am sharing those connected with my first trip there as well as some moments from other years. I especially chose the moments that were only possible to experience at Sweden Rock.

I experienced my first Sweden Rock in the year 2004. Back then, the festival headliners were confirmed to be JUDAS PRIEST, SCORPIONS and EUROPE. The beautiful Vanessa Warwick would be the special festival guest – she went on to become famous as the host of the popular show *Headbangers Ball* on MTV, where she worked from 1990 till 1997. Vanessa would be announcing the artists on the main Festival Stage and on the Rock Stage.

Sweden Rock 2004 was mainly held in the spirit of EUROPE's reunion with the music scene. With the exception of one special TV performance on New



POISON / Photo: Jan Tatar

Year's Eve 1999 in Stockholm, the band hadn't performed together on stage for 12 years. There was another special reason that fans were celebrating the reunion: John Norum was returning to the band after 18 years. EUROPE are together again with the same line up from their most famous "The Final Countdown" era. All around you, you could hear the songs that fans were listening and singing to, even on the train on the way there from Malmö. Some of the most loyal fans were even dressed and having the same hair styles as their idols used to have almost 20 years before. They were just showing their love and honor for one of the most successful Swedish bands of all time. Journalists were of course impatiently waiting for the press conference with the band. There had been much speculation about the future direction of EUROPE's music before. No one, except the band and their recording company, actually knew anything about their plans. The time had come to finally see all the band members and listen to all the news they had to share with us. They seemed to be very relaxed and in a good mood. After a while it was clear that the new era was going to be very different from their famous "The Final Countdown" era, even though the new album was not even out yet. As they



MOTHER'S FINEST / Photo: Jan Tatar

mentioned, they were very thankful for that period of their career and those songs will always have a place in their live sets, but now the time had come to do things differently – the way they were truly feeling it, without any pressure from the management or recording companies they used to experience back in the 80s. We enjoyed songs from the first four EUROPE albums during their unforgettable comeback show. Surprisingly, the show was opened with "Seven Doors Hotel", followed of course by selections of the best like "Superstitious", "Time Has Come", "Wings of Tomorrow", "Sign of the Times", "Let the Good Times Rock", "Cherokee", "Rock the Night", a beautiful acoustic version of their big hit, the ballad "Carrie", and of course their undying and highly awaited mega hit "The Final Countdown" was not to be missed. For the very first time EUROPE introduced us to their brand new song "Start From the Dark" from their upcoming album ("Start From the Dark", released in 2006). The reunion show was a big blast of nostalgia for all the fans, me included. I only had the chance



DEF LEPPARD / Photo: Jan Tatar



CINDERELLA / Photo: Jan Tatar



BLUE ÖYSTER CULT / Photo: Jan Tatar



BACHMAN TURNER OVERDRIVE / Photo: Jan Tatar



EUROPE / Photo: Stefan Johansson

to see EUROPE live once, back in 1992 in Prague. It's impossible to describe and forget the atmosphere of the show; even thinking back to it after all these years, I still get goose bumps. As a woman, I can't miss the opportunity to point out how time had left no traces from the point of view of how great all of them looked. Now let me intentionally jump to the year 2013. Nine years after the reunion, EUROPE are the fixed stars and one of the greatest live bands of all times on the music scene. They are doing another special performance again at Sweden Rock 2013 for their 30th anniversary celebration since the release of their debut album. Sweden Rock was the clear choice for the anniversary show as it was right there where EUROPE had started their new era. The band announced two surprise guests for their special gig beforehand. We learned their names only during the show itself. One of them was Scott Gorham (THIN LIZZY, BLACK STAR RIDERS), with whom the band would perform the THIN LIZZY cover "Jailbreak".

The other one was Michael Schenker (MSG, ex-SCORPIONS, ex-UFO), and together they decided for the UFO song "Lights Out". The whole show was recorded and released as a live album and DVD called "Live at Sweden Rock – 30th anniversary show".

One of the rare shows to remember at Sweden Rock 2004 without a doubt was a performance by the American group DANGER DANGER. Their show was set right at noon, which for these New Yorkers meant 6am in the morning. As they were joking themselves, it is never too early to start drinking. "Bang Bang" and "Naughty Naughty" were two of the hits from their set that also appeared on MTV in the times of the Headbangers Ball show, and the emotional ballad "I Still Think About You" was not to be missed. A great party to start the day with! We can only speculate about why DANGER DANGER never made it bigger, especially in Europe, asking ourselves questions like why did POISON make it and not them. But there are



EUROPE / Photo: Stefan Johansson



ELO / Photo: Jan Tatar

probably been many questions about different artists floating in that direction.

One of the biggest highlights of Sweden Rock 2004 for sure was the performance by the famous sisters Ann and Nancy Wilson and their legendary group HEART. I never had the chance to see them live before, and up until today this was my only chance to enjoy their show. Ann and Nancy were guided by two music icons at Sweden Rock: the guitarist Gilbert J. 'Gilby' Clarke (ex-GUNS N' ROSES), and Mike Inez (ex-OZZY OSBOURNE/ALICE IN CHAINS). It was quite surprising as they played just one song from HEART's most commercially successful era, the ballad "Alone", which we enjoyed in an acoustic version. Ann's voice sounded incredible and Nancy looked 20 years younger than she really was. Many fans would expect more songs from the 80s, but most of the set consisted of the hits from the 70s which the ladies became famous for especially in the USA, like

"Barracuda", "Straight On" and "Crazy on You". They also introduced a couple of songs from their new album "Jupiter Darling" and the end of the show was dedicated to Ann and Nancy's biggest influence, LED ZEPPELIN, whom they performed two cover songs from - "Black Dog" and "Misty Mountain Hop".

JOAN JETT & THE BLACKHEARTS rarely perform outside the USA. Sweden Rock had to wait to see their performance until 2011. This rock diva literally carried away the audience from the moment the show started. It really was a nice surprise to see how popular Joan Jett still was in Europe. With each song, the audience grew by about several thousand new, enthusiastic fans. Joan open up her set with "Bad Reputation", a great choice to stir up the crowd right from the start. Joan was in a great mood and sharing jokes between songs. One of her unforgettable sayings was: "It's beautiful when two people are making love. More beautiful is when there are three



GARY MOORE / Photo: Jan Tatar

people are making love and at least one of them is a man." From the RUNWAY era, Joan chose "Cherry Bomb", "School Days" and "Wait for Me". The best reactions of course came for her hits "I Hate Myself (For Loving You)" and the famous "I Love Rock'n'Roll".

It was afternoon on the 6th of June 2013 and it was getting pretty crowded in front of the Rock Stage. We were waiting for AOR legend SURVIVOR, who were performing at Sweden Rock for the first time. And it's the first time I had the chance to see the band live too. SURVIVOR exclusively performed with both of their singers for Sweden Rock only. Dave Bickler and Jimi Jamison alternated on stage while also performing some of the songs together. SURVIVOR reached the peak of their fame in the mid-80s, while they were literally bombing the front positions on the charts with their hits. It was clear they were going to perform their best from right during that era. For some reason, fans didn't get the chance to hear the

hit "Popular Girl", which they were screaming for the whole time, but we got all the other ones like "Burning Heart", "It's the Singer Not the Song", "Eye on You", "Rebel Girl", "The Search Is Over", "I Can't Hold Back" and the final one, the mega hit and the soundtrack of the Rocky III movie, "Eye of the Tiger". I'm really thankful I had the chance to experience SURVIVOR with Jimi Jamison at least once in my life. It's never going to be possible again due to his passing away in September 2014.

We were still enjoying the beautiful sunny weather the same afternoon at Sweden Rock 2013. The front rows were mainly filled with teenage girls. You may have expected that some of their more recent idols were going to enter on stage. But the main Festival Stage was ready to welcome the at the time 64-year-old Australian/American musician, Rick Springfield. I've intentionally mentioned his age. Rick is proof that if someone decides to look good, it's possible no



GUNS N' ROSES / Photo: Jan Tatar

matter their age. Not only was he looking amazing and leaving the impression he might have been 20 years younger, but he was in great physical shape too. He really enjoyed the moments on stage and especially the grace of the young beauties in the audience. He was often throwing himself straight out in the crowd and the girls were willingly showing their enthusiasm. The audience already perfectly knew the lyrics for the songs "Wide Awake" and "Our Ship's Sinking" from the last album "The Songs from the End of the World", but the greatest ovations of course belonged to the biggest hits "Love Somebody", "Don't Talk to Strangers" and "Jesse's Girl" - the song all the girls were waiting for since the beginning. Three covers were included in the set, "Everything for You" (SAMMY HAGAR), "The Man That Never Was" (DAVE GROHL) and "The Cross Road Blues" (ROBERT JOHNSON). An excellent performance in every sense of the word.

LINE UP AND WHAT'S NEW AT SWEDEN ROCK FESTIVAL 2019

JUNE 5-8, 2019

KISS, RITCHIE BLACKMORE'S RAINBOW,

**DEF LEPPARD, ZZ TOP,
UFO, JOE LYNN TURNER,
SAXON, TENACIOUS D,
DISTURBED, SLAYER,
AMON AMARTH,
ARCH ENEMY, MAGNUM,
HAMMERFALL,
ULI JOHN ROTH,
BLAZE BAYLEY,
DREAM THEATER...**

THE SMOKE PIT

THE SMOKE PIT is a tasty new addition to this year's festival. The new 1000 m² area sits just south of the Rockklassiker Stage.

THE SMOKE PIT is an area made to be comfier and calmer, and since the Sweden Rock team have understood visitors would welcome more sitting areas, they have added these areas plenty. The food varies from high-quality BBQ, awesome burgers and award-winning street food to fresh pasta and food from all over the world. There will be plenty of vegetarian and vegan options as well. Inside, a bar has been placed of course to quench guests' thirst, which will serve organic products only.

THE ROCK FOSSIL EXHIBITION VISITS SWEDEN ROCK FESTIVAL

Rock Fossil is a unique travelling exhibition focusing on bizarre and long-gone organisms, all named after well-known rock stars. The exhibition will offer a view of life-equal sculptures of fossils, most of them named after artists who have performed at Sweden Rock: LEMMY KILMISTER, KING DIAMOND, THE TOLIS BROTHERS, ALISSA WHITE-GLUZ and ELUVEITIE, to name a few. Visitors can learn even more by listening to one to one of the originators, scientist Dr. Mats Eriksson, when he gives a lecture.

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TESLA / Photo: Jan Tatar



WHITESNAKE / Photo: Jan Tatar



GUNS N' ROSES / Photo: Jan Tatar



AEROSMITH / Photo: Jan Tatar

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