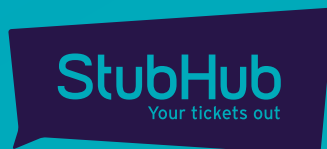


FESTIVAL  
**INSIGHTS**  
THE KNOWLEDGE HUB OF THE FESTIVAL INDUSTRY

PRESENTS....



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## WELCOME...

To the fifth edition of the Festival 250, a new annual project from Festival Insights that ranks the world's top festivals in terms of size and commercial success. We'll be releasing this year's listings in batches of 50 over the course of the next few weeks, so be sure to keep an eye out to see who's made the cut for 2016.

The data used to determine the rankings was sourced and analysed by the renowned business intelligence consultancy CGA Strategy during the 2015 season, and was based on such metrics as duration of the event, ticket revenue, capacity, and sponsorship estimates.

Each entry on the list is accompanied with a short bio, and I hope that you enjoy reading through and gaining a little insight into some of the history and unique characteristics of these eminent events. Next year's edition will maintain the same format, and will also demonstrate whether festivals have moved up or down in the league table.

In the meantime, please enjoy the inaugural list and feel free to provide any feedback that you think will help to refine and improve the initiative.

Cheers,  
Michael Baker  
Editor, Festival Insights

## 50. BRÅVALLA

OSTERGOTLAND, SWEDEN



**BRÅVALLA**  
FESTIVAL

Despite starting out as recently as 2013, Bråvalla has already become one of Sweden's largest and most popular festivals. With six stages, a rising amount of tickets sold year-on-year, and headliners such as Rammstein, Kanye West, and Muse, it's clear that the FKP Scorpio-organised event will continue to thrive.

## 49. OUTSIDE LANDS

SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

Set in the iconic Golden Gate Park, Outside Lands apparently wants you to forget there's even music on with its onslaught of delicious sounding cuisine. There's 'Bacon Bacon' for those who like their meals tautological, an entire land of chocolate aptly titled 'Chocolands', and 4505 Meats – who may or may not serve 4505 different kinds of meat.

With a 2016 line-up that included Radiohead, LCD Soundsystem, Chance the Rapper, Grimes, and Vince Staples, only the cynical and tasteless could have had anything approaching a bad time.



## 48. ROCK IN VIENNA

VIENNA, AUSTRIA

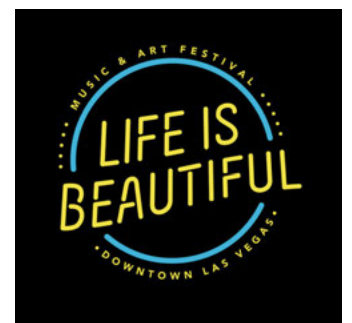


Besides timely and obvious tributes to David Bowie and Lemmy at this year's Rock in Vienna, the festival also paid homage to the city's own Nobel laureate and cat enthusiast Erwin Schrödinger, neatly exemplifying its unusually cerebral undertones. Last year, this academic aspect was represented through dedicating stages to psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud and symbolist painter Gustav Klimt. As for the music, it's mostly metal centric – with the exception of acts like Iggy Pop, Anti Flag, and The Subways.

## 47. LIFE IS BEAUTIFUL FESTIVAL

NEVADA, USA

Self-professed as an 'inspirational social platform', the ambitions of Life is Beautiful festival include but are not limited to: putting on a diverse line-up of musicians, public speakers and world class eateries, and sharing inspirational online articles to help its fans subdued their baseline level of existential angst. Its youthful optimism and all-embracing positivity are reflected in its age, having only been founded in 2013. Still, gaining this level of prestige in such a short space of time is no small feat, so expect Life is Beautiful to rocket up this list in the future like a rocket, or something similar to a rocket.



## 46. ROCK WERCHTER

WERCHTER, BELGIUM



Rock Werchter was inaugurated in 1977 as the Rock & Blues Festival, and it didn't take long for it to establish itself well enough to attract internationally renowned bands such as Talking Heads and The Runaways. It also didn't take long for it to change its name to something a little less generic, doing so in 1980.

## 45. STEREOSONIC

VARIOUS, AUSTRALIA

Held in Brisbane, Adelaide, Perth, Sydney, and Melbourne – Stereosonic is a collaboration between two of Australia's largest promoters: Hardare and the SFX Entertainment-owned Totem Onelove. The organisers took a break in 2016 in order to ensure that 2017's event is as spectacular a spectacle as possible.

## 44. SWEDEN ROCK FESTIVAL

SOLVESBORG, SWEDEN

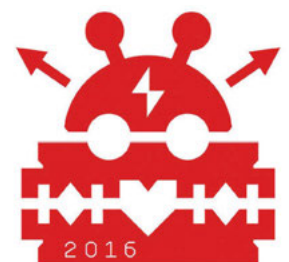


If the name wasn't self-explanatory enough, Sweden Rock Festival's line-up is absolutely stacked with the elder statesmen of rock and / or roll. It even had a band called 'D-A-D' playing this year, if there was any confusion on the intended demographic.

## 43. LOWLANDS

BIDDINGHUIZEN, NETHERLANDS

Lowlands – or 'A Campingflight to Lowlands Paradise' as it's referred to by approximately no-one – attracts around 55,000 visitors to its annual three-day event. Appealing to both Renaissance men and women, Lowlands encompasses music, cinema, street theatre, cabaret, stand-up, ballet, and literature.





## 42. TOMORROWLAND

BOOM, BELGIUM



'Ostentatious' would be a good word to describe Tomorrowland. With a ridiculous, Steampunk-inspired behemoth of a main stage serving as its focal point, the hyper-conspicuous EDM-centric mega-spectacle necessitates excessive use of hyphens. Despite its parent company SFX Entertainment suffering a sustained period of well-documented financial turbulence in 2016, Tomorrowland remains as opulent as ever, owning its own fleet of branded private jets and maintaining an expenditure of over \$1 million on wristbands alone.

## 41. SECRET GARDEN PARTY

HUNTINGDON, UK

As boutique as festivals come, the not-so-clandestine Secret Garden Party is a miasma of paint, mud, fire, light, fireworks, sunflowers, water, and other fun things. Its line-ups are the opposite of mainstream, simply because it'd rather entertain its fans by playing to its strengths, namely its surroundings and sense of discovery. There's an onsite lake that you're free to swim (or sink) in, clothing-optional jelly wrestling, some kind of demonic spectacle entitled 'the Dance of the Horned Gods', and *clothing-optional jelly wrestling*.



## 40. PRIMAVERA SOUND

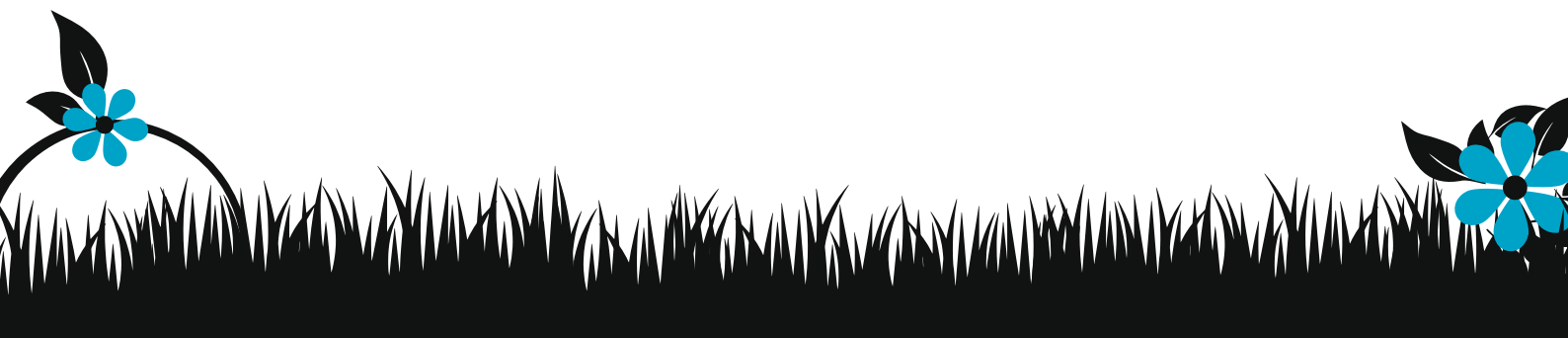
BARCELONA, SPAIN



Photo: Eric Ramirez

Host to a plethora of both historic acts and contemporary luminaries, Barcelona's Primavera Sound has championed innovative music for over a decade. 2016's roster was replete with inventive and influential artists, from the inimitable deconstructionism of Holly Herndon to a reunited, raw-as-ever LCD Soundsystem. The site – which offers the Holy Trinity of Sun, Sea, and Sand – is a stark contrast to the swamplands that British 'summertime' festivals are synonymous with. Sadly camping isn't an option, so you'll either have to find a hotel, sleep on the streets, or not sleep at all, depending on how hardcore you are.

In addition to the main weekender, the Primavera umbrella encompasses a few sister events, such as the concurrent industry conference dubbed 'Primavera Pro', and the simultaneous inter-city 'Primavera Club' nights.



## 39. PEACE & LOVE FESTIVAL

DARLANA, SWEDEN



After filing for bankruptcy in 2013, the newly rebranded Peace & Love World Forum rose from the ashes in 2014 like an eco-friendly phoenix. Since the original's inception in 1999, each year has had a 'focus area', such as 'Revolution', 'A New World', and 'Wake Up!'

## 38. GOVERNORS BALL

NEW YORK CITY, NEW YORK

Over the past six years Governors Ball has conquered a notoriously difficult market for music festivals, survived a historic tropical storm, and grown from a one-day event to a three-day affair to emerge as one of North America's most revered music festivals. Promoted by Founders Entertainment and held on New York City's Randall's Island, the festival's programmers maintain an admirable balancing act between booking the ubiquitous and the esoteric.



## 37. ROCK IM REVIER

GLESENKIRCHEN, GERMANY



Launched in 2015, Rock im Revier is a sister festival to fellow Festival 250 debutante, Rockavaria. Although the fledgling festival has the backing of veteran festival promoters, it hasn't rested on its laurels – with the second edition of the heavy metal festival switching from a metropolitan to an open-air configuration.



## 36. ORANGE WARSAW FESTIVAL

WARSAW, POLAND

### Orange Warsaw Festival 2016

Taking place at Warsaw's Sluzewiec Horse Race Track, the relatively young Orange Warsaw Festival has grown massively in the mere seven years it has been running, especially considering that the event's debut had only six artists on the bill. Topping said bill that year was Wyclef Jean, whose one hour scheduled set lasted three hours.

## 35. ROCKAVARIA

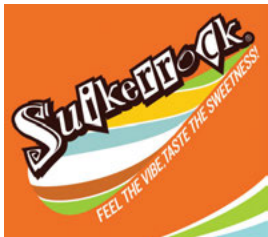
MUNICH, GERMANY

Featuring an identical line-up to its sibling that you just read about, Rockavaria this year featured Iron Maiden, Nightwish, Apocalyptica, Garbage, Slayer, Gojira, and many more.



## 34. SUIKERROCK

TIENEN, BELGIUM



Suikerrock's name is derived from Tienen's nickname of 'Sugar Town', due to its housing of Belgium's main sugar refinery. Fittingly, the rosters are short and sweet, and – depending on your perspective – could be characterised as either wonderfully eclectic, or suffering from an identity crisis. For example, the first edition of the festival had Iggy Pop, Shaggy, Within Temptation and Status Quo on the bill. Puzzling as that combination may be, Suikerrock is clearly attracting a very specific and very loyal demographic year upon year.

## 33. EUROCKÉENNES

SERMAMAGNY, FRANCE

Eurockéennes is an independent festival in Eastern France that awakens for three days and three nights on the first weekend of July. It is produced by the non-profit association, Territoire de Musiques, and is nestled on the Malsaucy peninsula – a protected and unspoiled location surrounded by two stretches of water.

The festival is fond of promoting civic values, and each year launches a social responsibility program called Eurocks Solidaires, with an aim to develop access to culture for all.

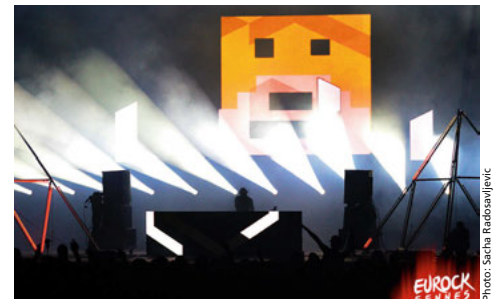


Photo: Sacha Radobaviljevic





## 32. LATITUDE

SUFFOLK, UK



Since 2006, Latitude has been an exemplar of the boutique festival movement. Whereas a myriad of other festivals have hosted all manner of non-musical mediums on their rosters, none have given them equal credence in the way Latitude has. Comedy, spoken word, poetry, theatre and music share an equal amount of the spotlight, engendering more cerebral, chill vibes than your average adolescent blowout. Its serene woodland backdrop, pop-up performances and exploratory, at-your-own-pace atmosphere perfectly complement this ethos.

The curator of Latitude's Poetry Arena, Luke Wright, told Festival Insights: "We make a feature out of the different mediums we represent, and we're proud of it. Increasingly I think you're going to see these other forms of art catch up with music in terms of popularity. We see people coming along to Latitude who've never experienced live poetry before – they come to the Poetry Arena just wanting to sit down and eat their falafel, and next thing they know they're experiencing something new. Some of them stay for six or seven hours after stumbling in by accident."

## 31. PINKPOP

LANDGRAAF, NETHERLANDS

Since 1990, Pinkpop has been designated the oldest continuous pop festival by the Guinness Book of Records. The first edition took place on May 18, 1970 in Geleen, where Pinkpop was subsequently organised 17 times. Since 1988 Pinkpop has been organised at the event site Megaland in Landgraaf, where it took place for the 29th time in 2016.



## 30. PUKKELPOP

HASSELT, BELGIUM



Pukkelpop is a three-day festival organised by Leopoldsburg's Young Humanists. It started life as a small, local music event in 1985 before becoming an outdoor alternative festival of international renown.

Almost 300 current musical sensations, living legends and visionary alternative artists all come to perform across its ten stages each year – spanning rock, metal, pop, and dance. Additionally, the Petit Bazar and Salon Fou usher in street theatre, entertainment and wellbeing elements; the Food Wood serves up dishes from around the world; and the Baraque Futur area focuses on sustainability.



## 29. FIREFLY MUSIC FESTIVAL

DELAWARE, USA



Photo: iALIVE Coverage for Firefly Music Festival

Firefly may play host to a litany of established names, but it's the promotion of emerging artists that sets them apart. The Introducing Stage may be a common fixture at festivals nowadays, but Firefly's 'Treehouse Sessions' take place in – you guessed it – a Cold War-era nuclear bunker. That was a little joke; the shows are in a treehouse.

## 28. AUSTIN CITY LIMITS

TEXAS, USA

Being located in the centre of its titular city allows Austin City Limits to engage with and promote the local community in a way few other festivals can, exemplified by its Austin Eats Food Court and ACL Art Market. ACL distinguishes itself further through the early adoption of cashless wristbands, eschewing the anxiety of having your fat stacks stolen by bandits over the weekend.

Offsetting worry seems to be a prominent theme in the ACL M.O., as it also offers a 'tag-a-kid' policy. It's way less sinister than it sounds, I promise. If you're a parent and you're afraid that your child will go native over the course of the festival – perhaps seeking out other wayward infants to stage some sort of Lord of the Flies scenario – you can register your details at a certain booth and acquire a special wristband so that the silly bugger won't become complicit in a tribal massacre (if they're cool) or get crushed by a boulder (if they're not).

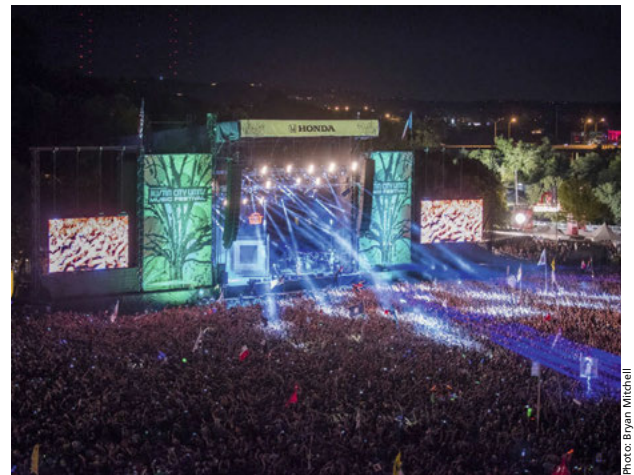


Photo: Bryan Mitchell

## 27. WOMAD

WILTSHIRE, UK



WOMAD is a self-professed bastion of multiculturalism with a plethora of international acts and workshops for children and adults alike. Founded by Peter Gabriel in 1982, the event has since set up shop in New Zealand, Chile, Australia, The Canary Islands and Spain. Since its first year, WOMAD has presented over 170 festivals in more than 30 countries, and remains the most successful and highly regarded world music festival on the planet. Perhaps the most cosmopolitan festival in existence, WOMAD's truly singular endeavour to represent as many cultures as possible has led it into its 34th consecutive year as both a bona fide British institution and international phenomenon.

WOMAD 2015 hosted 120 artists from 53 different countries, continuing the festival's tradition of restlessly innovative programming. Over the course of its history, WOMAD has helped to make international stars out of acts such as Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan (Pakistan) and Toto La Momposina (Colombia), as well as showcasing some of the biggest names in global music such as Youssou N'Dour (Senegal), Neneh Cherry (Sweden), Ravi Shankar (India), Gil Scott Heron (USA), Gilberto Gil (Brazil) and Toots & The Maytals (Jamaica) to name but a very few.





## 26. ULTRA MUSIC FESTIVAL

FLORIDA, USA



Photo: Adam Caplan

Inaugurated as a closing event of Miami's Winter Music Conference, Ultra Music Festival has enjoyed consistent growth as America's premier importer of European rave culture. Besides the main event, it has overseas franchises set up in Argentina, Chile, South Korea, South Africa, Japan, Indonesia, Singapore, and Spain. Its supplementary Road to Ultra events, which consist of single stage, one-day concerts, were launched in 2012 and take place across seldom-served nations like Taiwan, Columbia, Paraguay, Bolivia, Puerto Rico, and Peru.

## 25. MAWAZINE

RABAT, MOROCCO

To an outsider it's somewhat of a mystery how Morocco's capital of Rabat deals with the influx of 2.2 million Mawazine-bound visitors each year – dwarfing the city's actual population by a factor of three.

Economically positive – albeit infrastructure-annihilating – as these numbers may seem, Mawazine's existence has been a point of contention within Morocco's political and religious spheres. Since the festival is organised by Mounir Majidi – personal secretary to Morocco's King Mohammed VI – the priorities of the government have been called into question as the lavish expenditure involved in Mawazine is juxtaposed against a climate of poverty and illiteracy. Concurrent to these criticisms is a perceived moral threat to Islam, supposedly imported via the sexualised Western artists present on the roster. That isn't to say that this is just a transplant of a Western event; homegrown talent increasingly permeates the line-ups, almost single-handedly establishing Morocco as a player on the global festival scene.



## 24. WACKEN OPEN AIR

HOLSTEIN, GERMANY



Promising 'Faster', 'Harder' and 'Louder' offerings than the competition, Wacken Open Air justifies such superlatives with a nine-year sold out streak. Dubbed the 'Mecca of heavy metal culture', the journey to Wacken has become an annual pilgrimage for bands and metalheads alike. What began in 1990 as a local festival within a small, sleepy North German village is now a virtually peerless metal institution.

## 23. SNOWBOMBING

MAYRHOFEN, AUSTRIA

Combining a dance-heavy line-up with idyllic alpine scenery and snow-based sports sounds like a perfect combination, and by all accounts it is. Snowbombing appeals to beginners and veterans alike in terms of both its sonic offerings and its slopes, ensuring that everyone can get involved via a diverse party platter of the former and lessons for the latter.

If you're especially experienced / clinically insane you can try the aptly-named Harakiri slope, which boasts gradients of up to 78% and has to chain its piste bashers to the ground so that they don't slide down and crush an inordinate amount of dudes. If you're more Sudoku than seppuku you can always eat pizza by the side and watch Solid Gold Nutters slide down on their arses at terminal velocity, with emphasis on the 'terminal' part.



# HOW TO IMPROVE THE FAN EXPERIENCE THROUGH SMART CORPORATE BRANDING

Every year, various brands work with festivals to position themselves in a positive way with key audiences for the business. It is too easy to just put some logos of the brand at strategic areas of the festival. But, is there a smarter, more effective way to position a brand at an event?

The smartest brands create both fun and practical activations to enhance the fan experience, which we strongly believe in at StubHub. In order to have a brand activation that stands out, it needs to either be unexpected or practical for the festival fan. We have pulled together some of our favourite activations of the past few summers.

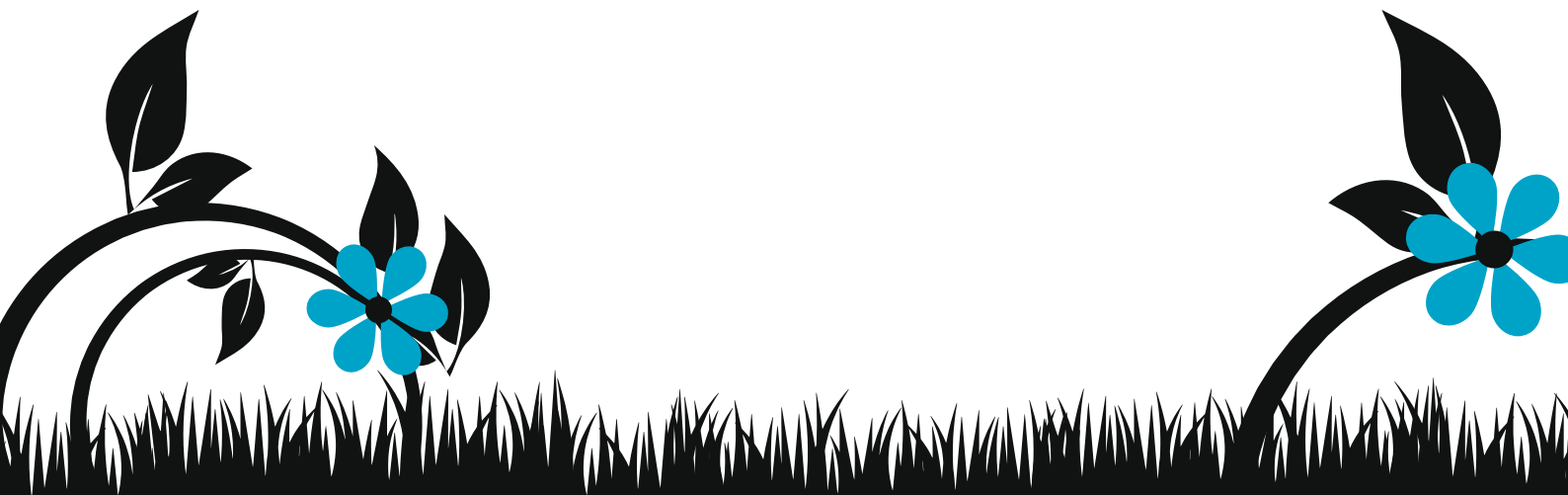
## EE at Glastonbury

When you're at a multi-day festival, there are two eternal problems that we all face – no mobile network coverage and draining the charge on your mobile battery within a few hours. You are taking tons of selfies, videos of

your favourite acts and messaging your friends (when you can get signal) to find each other. It is very easy to use up all of your mobile battery and have trouble getting signal, leaving the fan completely disconnected for the remainder of the festival.

EE developed the Charging Bull where fans could recharge their mobiles. This activation was brilliant because it required fans to use an EE product, the EE Power Bar. You brought the bar to the bull for a quick top up on power. However, if you needed a fully charged bar, you could trade it in for a fully charged one. EE also set up multiple public Wifi hotspots for fans to use during the festival and stay connected throughout the duration.

This worked particularly well because it solved a customer need, but was also authentic for the brand. The activation also required fans to truly engage with the brand, by purchasing the power bar to use at the charging bull.







### **Strongbow at Parklife and Isle of Wight festivals**

Festival fans love to enjoy a nice cold drink, especially on a hot summer day. Strongbow tapped into this idea and created a 12-metre tall tree activation which they used at Parklife and Isle of Wight festivals in June 2015.

Inside the tree, fans enjoyed music at an apple-shaped DJ booth where they were treated to music by top DJs, a seating area where they could rest and relax, as well as a bar to grab a drink. Strongbow had a new product coming out, so used this opportunity to provide samples of Strongbow Cloudy Apple to the guests.

This worked well because it was as a completely natural fit for the brand and the festivals. It also gave fans the opportunity to sample a new drink and helped Strongbow to widen their audience. The apple theme was also carried through and executed well, without being cheesy.

**BY: ANTONIO VALERO, HEAD OF NEW BUSINESS MODELS, STUBHUB**  
**ANVALERO@EBAY.COM**

### **Telenet at Tomorrowland**

Playing on the idea that fans may miss their families and the comforts of home during the festivals, Telenet developed an area called Mariette, a typical name for a grandmother in Belgium to help solve some of the small problems that you face at festivals because you are not at home.

In the Telenet area, fans could do their laundry, with help from Mariette; store their valuables and even get free Wifi. This was a clever activation because it stands out from the typical brands who provide free food and drink. It also worked for the younger audience who valued the support from Mariette.

The next time you attend a festival, take note at what brands are doing to stand out from the crowd. Have they created different and useful activations that enhance the fan experience? Fans value these activations and they can truly make an impact on their experience.



## 22. EXIT FESTIVAL

PETROVARADIN, SERBIA



Exit Festival takes place within an 18th century fortress and has roots in Serbian student activism, which makes it instantly cooler than just about anything else on this list.

Just a short ride away from the Serbian capital Belgrade, the festival's different stages are connected by cobbled streets, ramparts and tunnels, and this year showcased the likes Wiz Khalifa, The Prodigy, Ellie Goulding, George Clinton & Parliament Funkadelic, Bastille, David Guetta, The Vaccines, Hurts, Stormzy, Skrillex, Richie Hawtin, Dave Clarke, Jackmaster, Marco Carola, Nina Kraviz, Wilkinson, Dimitri Vegas & Like Mike, Solomun and Sigma.

## 21. SZIGET FESTIVAL

BUDAPEST, HUNGARY

Situated on the picturesque Óbuda Island in Budapest, and attracting over 400,000 fans from over 70 countries per year, Sziget is a hugely successful cultural event for arts and music lovers – offering a complete festival-holiday experience. This self-proclaimed Island of Freedom is a weeklong non-stop event, with approximately 50 venues and around 200 daily acts.

Aside from the music – which spans pop, rock, electronic, metal, folk, jazz, blues, alternative and even classical – visitors can enjoy theatre, circus, exhibitions and more, as well as a beach area set against the beautiful Danube river.



## 20. LEEDS FESTIVAL

LEEDS, UK



Launched in 1999 as a counterpart to the historic Reading Festival, Leeds Festival tends to remain relatively unheralded compared to its older sister, despite the fact that they're virtually identical. In recent years the pair have introduced the BBC 1XTRA stage to champion both UK grime and US hip-hop.

One notable fixture of Leeds Festival that its counterpart lacks is the Relentless Stage, a joint venture between the eponymous brand and Vision Nine Group, the masterminds behind fellow Festival 250 entrants Boardmasters and NASS. Home to Leeds Festival's late night entertainment, the projection mapped stage played host to Andy C, Jaguar Skills, and Hannah Wants this year, amongst others.

## 19. ROCK IN RIO

RIO DE JANEIRO, BRAZIL

In 2015, Rock in Rio turned forty. But unlike most forty year olds it didn't spend the occasion putting on a brave face around the family it settled for whilst secretly ruminating about its acceleration towards the inevitable embrace of oblivion. Nope, existential crises are for the weak, so Rock in Rio celebrated in characteristic fashion by putting on seven days worth of legendary rock acts and setting off an obnoxious amount of fireworks.



## 18. CREAMFIELDS

DARESBURY, UK



Photo: Anthony Mooney

Never one to rest on its laurels, Creamfields has been rolling out improvements and pollinating new territories year upon year. With not totally humble beginnings in 1998, the then 25,000 capacity, Winchester-based event featured Run DMC, Primal Scream, and Daft Punk. Since then the main event has relocated to the 60,000 capacity site in Daresbury, with additional franchises in Malta, Brazil, Chile, Argentina, Peru & Abu Dhabi.

## 19. SÓNAR

BARCELONA, SPAIN

Sónar – in each of its international incarnations – exists at a nexus between creativity, entertainment and technology, heralding tomorrow's musical and new media trailblazers with astonishing prescience. Since 2002 the Sonar brand has been responsible for over 50 worldwide events, each engaging with its local community to celebrate the talent fostered there.

Insights attended the 23rd Sónar festival, which consolidated its commitment to exploring new formats and content – both in its musical offerings and in the showings of its interdisciplinary, technology-centric conference Sónar+D.

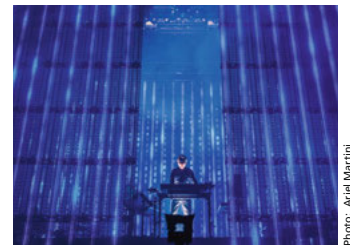


Photo: Ariel Martini

## 16. FM4 FREQUENCY FESTIVAL

ST. PÖLTEN, AUSTRIA



Established in 2001 and set amidst what looks like an up-scaled model city, FM4 Frequency Festival invites you to chill out on the banks of the river Traisen or your way across the tantalising 'food mile' when you're not getting excessively rowdy to that band you really like. Nine Inch Nails infamously referred to FM4's crowd as the worst of its 2007 tour, whose inattention was chalked up to the band's placement on the line-up between two, apparently more worthy, German acts.

## 15. AMSTERDAM DANCE EVENT

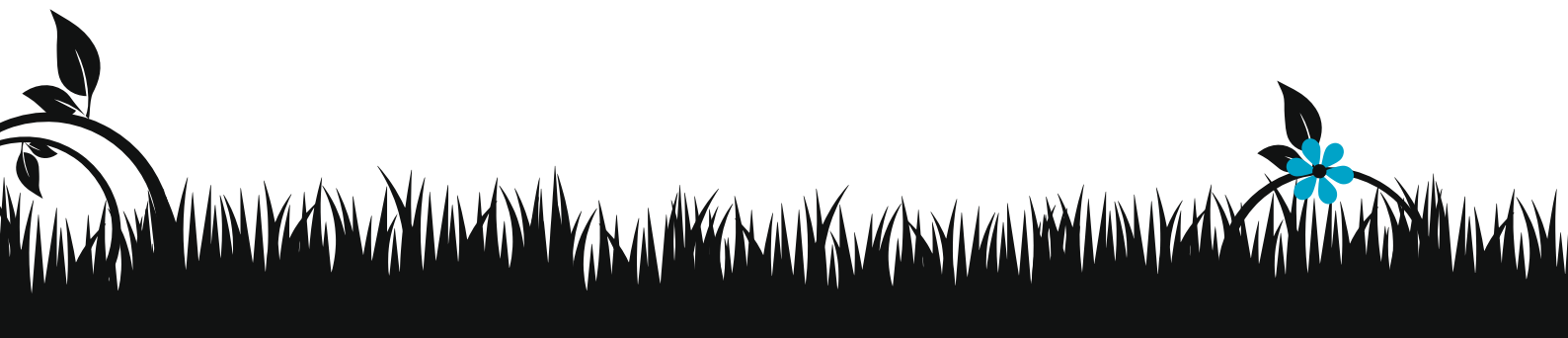
AMSTERDAM, NETHERLANDS

If there's one thing that Amsterdam Dance Event proves it's that quality and quantity needn't be conflicting concepts, exposing it as a false dilemma with a roster of over two thousand DJs whose names ring out as loud as their beats.

Perhaps most interesting are the non-musical elements spread across the city's copy and pasted canals, including a multitude of conferences and gear playgrounds, an art arcade, a stop-motion workshop, and feedback sessions for aspiring producers. ADE also pushes boundaries in areas that most other festivals don't even consider, like partnering with ACS Custom to produce officially branded ear protection.



Photo: Henri Blommestein





## 14. BESTIVAL

ISLE OF WIGHT, UK



Few festivals have managed to develop an aesthetic as distinct and bold as Bestival's, thanks in part to the organisation of husband & wife super duo Rob and Josie da Bank. Thematically diverse but always exuberant, the self-proclaimed boutique event is dripping with character and charm, exemplified in part by en-masse fancy dress, finger-on-the-pulse line-ups, an oxymoronic but nonetheless impressive landlocked port, and a psychedelic ambient forest. Bestival doesn't so much walk its own path as it does skip down it in technicolour garments adorned in excessive sequins and bells.

Festival Insights spoke to Bestival's Creative Producer Katie Madison at 2014's event, and she summed up the spirit of the festival as such: "What sets Bestival apart is the time, care, and attention that goes into what it looks and feels like. It's all driven by Rob and Josie; everything stems from their vision and it keeps the festival's personality true. Bestival still provides the same experience as it did in year one, only now it's much bigger."

## 13. V FESTIVAL (STAFFORDSHIRE)

STAFFORDSHIRE, UK

A clear dichotomy is emerging in the festival market between those who drop the majority of their budget on the line-up and those who direct their focus towards everything but. V Festival pretty comfortably belongs to the former camp, having ushered in a wealth of in-demand talent to its two stately park sites since 1996. From Ian Brown to James Brown, the acts remain consistently world class.



## 12. V FESTIVAL (CHELMSFORD)

CHELMSFORD, UK



Occurring concurrently with its Northern twin, Chelmsford's V Festival usually shares an identical line-up. For its 21st birthday in 2016, however, the two incarnations welcomed different DJs to grace their Radio 1 Summer of Dance takeovers – with Eric Prydz and DJ EZ holding things down in Chelmsford.

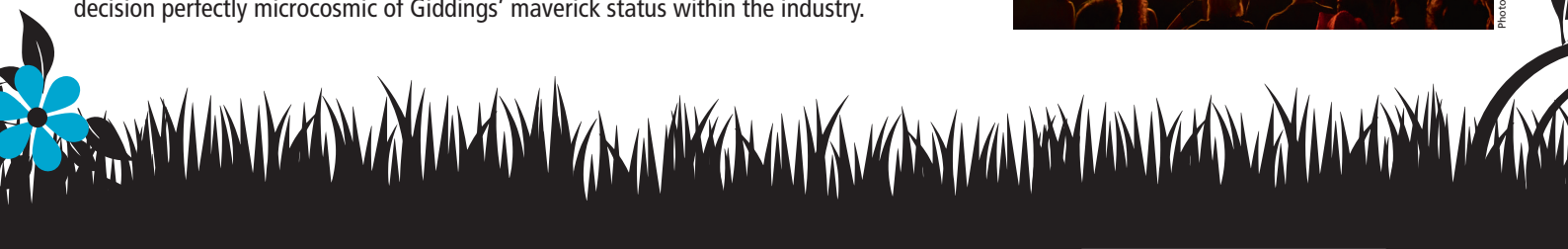
Another commonality between the two Versions is the roster of commercial partners, which includes headline sponsor Virgin Media, as well as MTV, Carling, Smirnoff, JBL, Aussie, Weetabix, Volt and more.

## 11. ISLE OF WIGHT FESTIVAL

ISLE OF WIGHT, UK

With its earliest line-ups including Jimi Hendrix, The Doors, The Who, Jefferson Airplane, King Crimson, Joni Mitchell, and Leonard Cohen, the legacy of the Isle of Wight festival was already cemented, despite its first incarnation fizzling out after a mere three years.

Veteran music promoter John Giddings managed to defibrillate the long departed festival in 2002, and it has since hosted equally legendary acts such as David Bowie, Paul McCartney, Bruce Springsteen, Jay-Z, The Sex Pistols, and The Rolling Stones. The latter closed out the festival's second stage in 2007, and were booked after the festival had already sold out, a decision perfectly microcosmic of Giddings' maverick status within the industry.





## 10. ROCK AM RING

NURBURG, GERMANY



Aside from the occasional exclusive appearance, Rock am Ring and Rock im Park could be considered identical twins. In a refreshing twist on the commercial rock festival, the two German giants do their best to expose crowds to new and homegrown talent.

## 9. BONNAROO MUSIC & ARTS FESTIVAL

TENNESSEE, USA

In 1974, the ridiculously prolific New Orleans rhythm and blues demigod Dr John released Desivately Bonnaroo, a record whose title consists of two characteristically zany neologisms. The latter of which – supposedly meaning ‘the best of the street’, or alternatively ‘a really good time’ – was adopted by Tennessee’s Bonnaroo Music & Arts Festival, and it’s not hard to see why.

Sprawled across 700 acres of land dubbed ‘The Farm’, bound by a decree known as ‘the Code’, and populated by 80,000 ‘Bonnaroovians’, you couldn’t be blamed for suspecting the organisers are building towards some sort of cultish eschatological endgame. Considering that it has sold-out every year since its inception, they’ve probably got a loyal enough following to pull off something like that. So if someone offers you some Kool-Aid there, don’t drink it.



## 8. T IN THE PARK

STRATHALLAN, UK

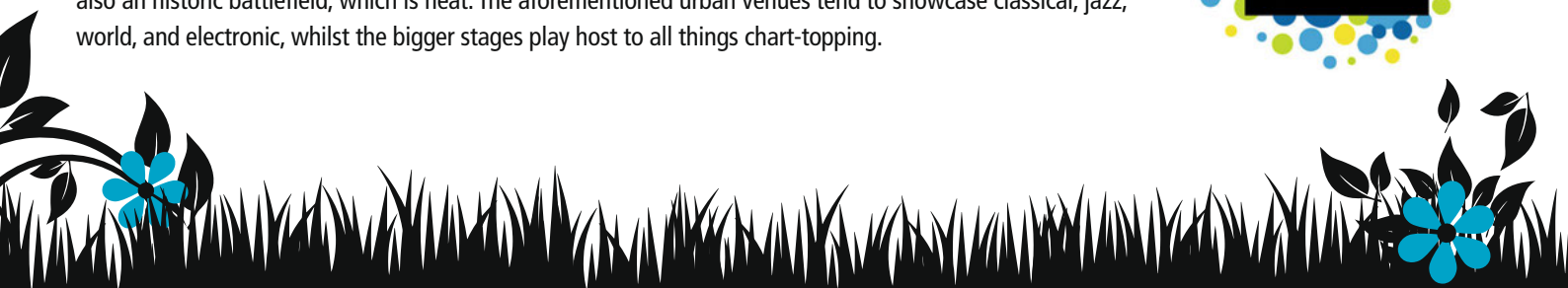


Recently relocated to the grounds of Strathallan Castle, T in the Park is Scotland’s biggest music festival and this year invited Calvin Harris, The Stone Roses, and Red Hot Chili Peppers to headline. Its dedicated techno stage, in association with and curated by Soma Records, injects a little volatility into its otherwise safe but formidable line-up, and brought Jeff Mills, Nina Kraviz, Richie Hawtin, and Seth Troxler for 2016’s edition.

## 7. QUEBEC CITY SUMMER FESTIVAL

QUEBEC, CANADA

The marathon is a very different discipline to the sprint, and Quebec City Summer Festival is a master of the going the distance in more than one sense. The eleven-day, primarily Francophone extravaganza has been running since 1968, when a set of enterprising individuals from various backgrounds decided that Quebec had too much talent to keep under the radar. Supplemented by a cluster of urban venues, the main stage is situated on the Plains of Abraham, possibly the most grandiose sounding venue associated with this list. It’s also an historic battlefield, which is neat. The aforementioned urban venues tend to showcase classical, jazz, world, and electronic, whilst the bigger stages play host to all things chart-topping.



## 6. DOWNLOAD FESTIVAL

DONINGTON PARK, UK



Photo: Kennedyleigh Scott

From the entry-level to the decidedly obscure, The Festival Formerly Known as the Monsters of Rock consistently champions the most skeletal system-bombing metal, punk, and rock acts from the deepest recesses of the Earth's core.

Tanked up on an impossible amount of Jägermeister and adorned in unnecessary spikes, a horde of revellers converges upon the site once every 12 lunar cycles to engage in ultraviolent dance and the ritualistic worship of brutal riff-slingers through quasi-satanic hand gestures. There are a lot of free hugs on offer too, because despite what all of the above might suggest the atmosphere is actually really friendly.

## 5. READING FESTIVAL

READING, UK

With an unprecedented five headliners on this year's line-up, Reading & Leeds 2016 saw 170,000 festival fans treated to sets from Foals, Disclosure, Red Hot Chili Peppers, Fall Out Boy and Biffy Clyro, alongside hundreds of performances from an array of artists, bands, DJs and comedians across August bank holiday weekend.

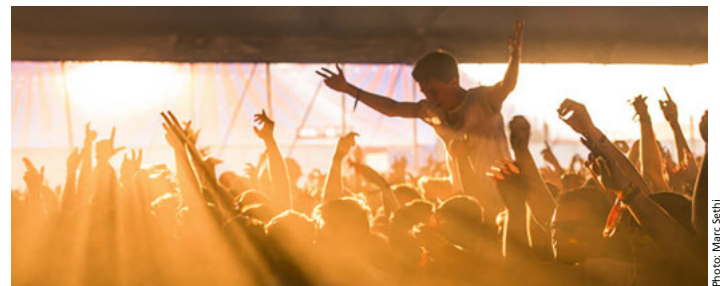


Photo: Marc Sethi

## 4. ROSKILDE

ROSKILDE, DENMARK



Photo: Christian Bjørth

Inspired by the most iconic iterations of Woodstock and the Isle of Wight Festival in the immediate past, two Danish high school students decided to put on the first Roskilde Festival in 1971. To do so, they worked with a Copenhagen based music agent who helped to source the talent. Attracting 10,000 attendees to its debut, the event was a resounding success even by today's standards. Unfortunately, said agent hid all of the proceeds in the back of his Mercedes and drove off into the proverbial sunset. Undeterred by betrayal, the duo teamed up with a local foundation – now known as the Roskilde Festival Society – to stage a non-profit follow-up. It has since become one of the top five most successful festivals in the world.

In tandem with its financial backing of human rights and humanitarian organisations, Roskilde promotes an inclusive and humanist ethos onsite through various means. Its conscientious worldview permeates everything from its security policies to the annual theme, which this year was 'Equality: Stand Up for Your Rights'. The two bookings that best exemplified this agenda were Damon Albarn & The Orchestra of Syrian Musicians, and Danish activist duo The Yes Men's live interview with exiled US whistleblower Edward Snowden via satellite.





### 3. FUJI ROCK

NIIGATA, JAPAN



With half of its inaugural event cancelled owing to an inexorable typhoon, the Mount Fuji-based debutante got off to a [morally reprehensible pun incoming] rocky start. Since then the now formidable festival has relocated to Mount Naeba, whilst retaining its original title. With a backdrop as photogenic as they come, the organisers have played to their strengths by creating woodland boardwalks and a cable car dubbed the 'Dragondola'. And no, it isn't shaped like a big dragon, we checked.

'Independence', 'cooperation' and 'respect of nature' are apparently the core tenets to fully enjoying the proceedings, alongside the possession of an umbrella in case that particular typhoon happens to be out there still, biding its time.

Its position amongst the global elite owes itself, in part, to the incongruously monumental daily ticket revenue it draws in. Other factors include the obvious: its capacity, prestige, environmentalist approach, and its ability to withstand gargantuan and potentially vengeful tropical cyclones originating from the Northwest Pacific Basin.

### 2. GLASTONBURY FESTIVAL

GLASTONBURY, UK

You'd have to be a pretty dedicated contrarian to exclude Glastonbury from the top five greatest music festivals of all time, not simply due to its history or consistency in providing impossibly extensive line-ups, but for its sheer magnitude. It's physically impossible to experience everything Glasto has to offer in a single year, and yet ticket prices inexplicably remain competitive with much less ambitious festivals.

Some argue that since its inception the festival has lost its radical spirit, and there are those who harken back to the days when the Hell's Angels provided security and the festival scene wasn't generally swarming with clusters of bourgeois fashionistas appropriating various cultures' traditional headdresses. Cynicism notwithstanding, Glastonbury is an internationally recognised cultural phenomenon and it will most likely maintain its pre-eminence well into the future.



### 1. COACHELLA

CALIFORNIA, USA



Following the invention of the Internet in 2007, festival organisers rapidly began to consider how to engage with the information super-highway. Coachella – or the Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival if you're not into the whole brevity thing – has benefitted hugely from its prolific use of YouTube. Its annual live-streams attract millions of viewers who can utilise the comments section to complain about how static the crowds are or argue about the Israel-Palestine conflict or whatever.

But back to Coachella: this focus on the digital has allowed it to transcend the insularity of its physical limitations, becoming a truly global showcase of the most acclaimed acts imaginable. Booking such a diverse and revered set of artists ensures that tickets for both consecutive weekends sell out fast, like twenty minutes flat fast.

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