How Donnington became the home of rock

If rock and metal are a religious experience – as many believe – then Donington is the Mecca, the jerusalem, the cathedral, etc. This is the first place anyone thinks about whenever the subject of iconic locations and venues is raised.

*"When people think about rock festivals, Donington is one of the first places they think of, if not the first,"* says **Download** Promoter **Andy Copping**. And he talks from a vast experience, not only of being involved so closely with Download, but from going to its predecessor **The Monsters Festivil** in the 1980s – actually, he was there at the very first one. In 1980.

*"I've still got the ticket, the programme and even a special edition of the local 'Brum Beat' magazine about the event!"*

Throughout the festival’s illustrious history, there were just so many highlights. **AC/DC**'s arrival as a mega name by headlining in 1981. **ZZ Top** flying the famous 'Eliminator' car over the masses in '85. The emotional return of drummers Rick Allen when **Def Leppard** played in 1986 – his first UK show after losing an arm. The enormous gathering for Iron Maiden in 1988, at the same festival that really kick-started the momentum which was was to make **Guns n' Rose** the biggest band in the world.

After a gap of seven years – and, boy, had we missed Donington – Monsters of Rock was reborn. As the Download Festival. A new name, a fresh era, now expanded to two days, but very much the son of MOR, with the same high principles and lofty quality of bands. In 2009, there were 128 bands on the bill, across four stages – something for everyone.

The ghosts of 1980 are still there at Donington. In fact, you can feel the resonance from every one of the hundreds of the musical bands who've played there down the years. Why? Because when you are home that's where you want to stay.

PAST LINEUPS

Download 2012: Metallica, The Prodigy and the Ozzy Osbourne led Black Sabbath. Metallica had announced that they would play the whole of The Black Album backwards. The event was the festival's 10th aniversary. Highlights of the 2011 Download included System of a Down, Def Leppard, Linkin Park, Avenged Sevenfold, Skunk Ananzie, Bullet For My Valentine, Disturbed, Alter Bridge and The Darkness.

STAGES AND OTHER ENTERTAINMENT: There are five music stages at Download, Main stage, Second Stage, Pepsi Max Stage, Red Bull Bedroom jam Stage and the Jagermeister Acoustic stage. Comedy can be viewed in the village, with the tent converting to a silent disco later in the weekend.