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Wacken Open Air Festival To Get 3D Movie Treatment

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By [David E. Gehlke](#).

Heading into its 25th year in 2014, Wacken Open Air's humble beginnings on a field in Northern Germany are a far-cry from the festival's 2013 stats of 75,000 attendees and 137 bands on seven stages. For a vast portion of us, second-hand accounts or pre-recorded video are the closest we'll get, for the festival typically sells out at a record pace. (The 2014 installment is in fact, already sold-out). Looking to bring the Wacken experience closer to this very audience, German filmmaker and 3D specialist Tomas Erhart came up with a workaround idea: A 3D Wacken film titled Wacken 3D: Louder Than Hell.

"I started doing 3D four years ago," begins Erhart from his German homebase. "2D is getting more and more boring. I did 17 movies, which is enough. I moved to Berlin 15 years ago and all of my friends were coming from the music business, so I have a strong relationship to the business. I'm connected, which is when I started getting interested in 3D.

"3D is good when you have kids and want nice effects, the Pixar films and the other films," he continues. "Sometimes [it] works, [sometimes] not as good in others. What I realized, 3D in combination with stage performance opens a completely new world. It's so direct – if you look at the screen in 2D, you're looking

at the artist. The moment you put the glasses on you're in the middle of it."

After [publishing](#) Wacken owners Thomas Jensen and Holger Hubner that his ideas and production team were legit, Erhart did a test run at Wacken 2012. According to the filmmaker, maneuvering his crew with pricy 3D equipment in inclement weather with concertgoers roaming the grounds proved to be a daunting task, but, the resultant exclusive trailer (which The Weekly Fixion has seen – it's fantastic) ended up getting Erhart the green light to shoot Wacken 2013, which took place the first weekend in August.

"We were really lucky with the weather," he admits. "Last year, we were soaking wet – we drowned in mud. We have fantastic mud footage from last year, which for me, is the parallel to Woodstock – the iconic graphic footage. I hoped very much that we'd get one rain shower to cut last year's stuff into this year's. Things went really well. People were happy and we had a really great time."

Erhart's crew included 140 people, which appropriately could have been a nuisance to the festival organizers and bands. But, according to Erhart, his team was able to stay out of everyone's hair thanks to some well-placed camera rigging. This included a mobile big-wheeled truck and techno crane that rises up to 40 feet in order to get harder-to-get shots using a 100 lb 3D Alexa camera

"As a film crew in a festival, you are sand in a gearbox," relays Erhart. "They hate film people. So, I was very aware of that. They want their festival going well, stars on stage, schedule being kept and don't want anything that holds them up. Knowing that, we took great caution to not step in their way. Wacken is organized perfectly and they have this place called the 'Cooler.' It's a little lower behind the big stages, which is where the whole production crew is. We had our vans and office containers in the same spot. Funny thing is this spot is a little field, the first spot where Wacken started 24 years. The only piece of land that belongs to the town of Wacken – the rest that they occupy now is the neighboring village.

"Most of the work was preparation for the shoot," he continues. "Last year, we did a lot of pre-work, so out of [this, we developed](#) some systems that didn't exist that made documentary shooting possible. Not many people have rigs that can carry around hand-held cameras – that's something that's not yet [ready] in the 3D world. We had three prototypes that I was making of modular cameras that we were operated by 4-5 people that made moving around in a festival possible."

In early June, Erhart, along with Wacken organizers submitted an open casting-call for participants in the film. The criterion was simple: You must be a metalhead, and be in attendance for the festival. The submissions Erhart got back in return for the movie's narrative exceeded his expectations.

"In the beginning, I was really scared because if we something on the Wacken Facebook site, we're going to get thousands writing us, but we got a few hundred," he admits. "People came from far away; people that didn't fit into the metal cliché. We didn't want drunken people raising their right arms all the time, but what's making metal special is the variety of people. You have this big tolerance, like anything you can imagine. We had a metal band from China, one from Uruguay, one from Romania, and we had protagonists from Moscow, Siberia, Asia, a Korean girl that was fantastic, one from the United States, from Scandinavia, and Germany. These units were following only their protagonists, and that's the backbone of our film."

An admitted music fan of all styles ("Except bluegrass"), Erhart's exposure to the metal scene was limited prior to this endeavor. One decidedly non-metal band caught the filmmaker's eye and turned in the best performance [of the fest](#): Alice Cooper.

"He made a Hollywood/Las Vegas show in front of 80,000 people," enthuses Erhart. "The daylight was just fading – turning daylight into night. I saw him for a half-hour and went to my live director and saw

the best 3D concert ever made. What made it so amazing, more than Rammstein was one thing: Alice Cooper puts the light on his fans. Normally bands don't like lights on their fans. Normally, it's dark, but if you're shooting at night, you need a little bit of light. I don't know why – maybe he wants to see his audience, but he had his blinders on all the time.”

With the festival now in the books, next steps for Erhart and crew include breaking down 400 hours of footage and putting the sound to the pictures, which is a time-consuming, manual task. After separating the good footage from the bad, work with the assembled editors and directors will begin, allowing them to do a pre-cut in order to get an idea for their vision. Editing will ensue in Hamburg, with the goal of having a proper rough-cut by November in order to meet a proposed spring 2014 release. No surprise – Erhart has lofty goals for the film.

“We want to bring it to South by Southwest, which is fantastic,” he finishes. “I’ve been to Austin and they have a small film section where they show films. The other would be Cannes, the most fancy festival [laughs]. Our distributor has good connections. They had been showing music films – Metallica showed their film [Through the Never], so that’s the deadline we have. The way there is complicated, but it can be done.”

- Wacken.com
- Tomaserhart.de

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[tomas erhart](#) says:
[August 22, 2013 at 06:39](#)

The posted picture was shot between the performances of Deep Purple and Rammstein. The Wacken owners had offered to show the Wacken 3D – trailer on all screens. What we did was showing it in ‘anaglyph’ – red/cyan and pre-producing 90.000 3D glasses, that were given to the fans, when they entered the in-field.

The screening was a great success and by the way: It was the biggest 3D screening in film history.

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