



and opener *Walk Away*. The only blemish on their performance

poet at 51, is as energetic as ever, prancing from one side to the other without a moment's pause. Strangely, large sections of the crowd seem to be on the mute button.

I hit the mute button myself when a quartet of Texans named Kings of Leon take to the stage. As in 2008, they didn't bother to say hello, playing as if the Werchter crowd wasn't up to their Dixie ranch standard. Writing hits in isolation is fine, but conquering stadia and festivals will require them to shed their gloomy stage persona and behave like Chris Martin does. Maybe not to that extent, no.

DAY 4

Four showers in four days is a record for most campsite goers. We have only started to get used to this lovely field northeast of Brussels, and before we know it, it's almost over.

It rains, at last, swamping the festival ground for a good 30 minutes. It doesn't deter the crowds who turned up for the likes of Mastodon, the Mars Volta and Seasick Steve, even though the Black Eyed Peas look completely out of place here.

is their mistreatment of the drum-kit in an instrumental prior to set closer *Jacqueline*, forcing them to cut their set short and walking offstage rather displeased, to put it mildly. "Can we have your - guitar?" Nick Cave stretches his eyesight to read a placard in the front row. "No, you can't have my fu**in guitar," he retorts, betraying a wry smile. Elegantly dressed and bearded, The Bad Seeds are a delightful bunch of fine musicians with a particular brand of humour. Cave himself, still very much a

DAY 1

The afternoon is partly taken up by the porch pins and the cumbersome security check, through which we miss The Eagles of Death Metal, Lily Allen, and part of Dave Matthews' show. In the marquee (an overcrowded sauna, but we like it that way) Emiliana Torrini, Laurent Garnier and Fleet Foxes are the main lights.

Once inside, however, I got the same shiver as last year. This is Rock Werchter baby!

The *passion* is what leads us here, tonight, to the very first row; *perseverance*, in the form of my girlfriend whose elbows dig firmly into a few hips along the way. Unlike Werchter 2008, the organisers have decided to apply a *numerus clausus*, meaning that getting to the front rows requires timing, cunning and elbow power.

It's almost nine, it's still sunny and Placebo are in brilliant form, firing on all cylinders as you'd expect from their latest release, *Battle for the Sun*. They blaze through their 17-track set without breaking a sweat, even regaling us with three encores at the end, including *The Bitter End* and *Taste in Men*.

The *passion* of staying on the front row is about to turn my *lebenstraum* into reality... It's 11.30pm when Fu**in in the Bushes rings out among the Belgian wilderness, silencing the Brummie stadium chant of "We Love You Oasis, We Do..." and leading into Rock n' Roll Star. It's the Gallagher brothers all right, hardly trading glances with each other

during the low-tempo gig, where a few tracks from *Dig Out Your Soul* sit in between classics like *Supersonic*, *Live Forever*, *Wonderwall* and an acoustic version of *Don't Look Back in Anger*.

Standing straight barely an inch from the mic, hands behind his back, Gallagher Jr seems to be enjoying the proceedings despite the temperature (his military tunic is drenched in sweat by the fifth track). He acknowledges the odd yell from the audience before doing the unexpected-by-Oasis-standards gimmick of walking off the stage toward the first rows.

It was all very fast. The crowd surges forward, pushing us into the barriers, and I am suddenly staring Liam Gallagher, now only inches away, in the eye. He pauses for a moment, then he swings a sweaty high five to my outstretched palm, before walking off to our right to watch the rest of the band conclude their set with *I am the Walrus* (a Beatles cover and regular Oasis curtain call).

Passion, perseverance: I feel like a kid in a daze. I almost forget to applaud Noel. We sit down for roast chicken with apple sauce, €7, for a chunk of Prodigy's gig. Bedtime.

DAY 2

It's really hot inside the tent. Is it noon yet? No, it's only 8.30. Most of my fellow campers are asleep outside their tents, looking for glimpses of shade. The tough morning is compounded by the sickening "Obama Breakfast" (three tiny greenish *bratwursts* and very pale baked beans).

Sadly we miss out on White Lies, and I make up for lost sleep during Amy McDonald's filler show. Come 5.20pm, Elbow take to the stage with a thoroughly enjoyable set mostly based on 2008's *The Seldom Seen Kid*. Singer Guy Garvey even runs offstage to hug a fan.

Another personal highlight, which involves a lot more shoving and pushing, is Bloc Party. Kele Okereke is in ebullient mood in front of an equally enthusiastic crowd, commencing a bristling set with *One Month Off* and *Hunting for Witches*. We enjoy it too, planted as we were once again in the midst of Britain's rowdiest, getting our fair share of bruises.

Getting to the front rows is tough when two bands called Killers and Coldplay are headlining the evening. It's chicken and apple sauce during the Killers' gig, which we followed from a comfortable spot on the grass. Brandon Flowers seemed far from his best, choosing not to over-exert his larynx. Kicking off with the overplayed average tune *Human*, The Killers seemed to step into gear for the final quarter of their show, comprising *Read My Mind*, *Mr Brightside*, *All These Things I've Done* and the rousing *When You Were Young*.

Frankly, I've never had too much sympathy for Coldplay since Chris Martin started his campaign to reach the super good, superhuman rock star (d'you know that Bono guy, by the way?) Tonight, Coldplay get full points. Even as the over-sympathetic singer fell over himself in his tributes to Michael Jackson (piano rendition of *Billie Jean*) and the

Killers (vocal rendition of *All These Things...*) you knew they were doing something immense, and very special.

It was a perfect gig, down to the minute details, played on three different stages, with the band twice returning for encores. The best moments of the night were, of course, the confetti showers during *Lovers in Japan* and the crowd's chanting during *Viva La Vida* - a chant that continued long after Coldplay were having their tea, and still audible from our tents as we drew the curtains on another day of magic.

DAY 3

This morning's breakfast talk, over decent bacon and omelette, is focused on the arrival of the swine flu in Malta. A degree of paranoia creeps in (at the time of going to print, *rockwerchter.be* reported only one known case).

Today, the planned itinerary includes the Yeah Yeah Yeahs' early gig in the marquee, and most of those moving to the smaller venue couldn't help but notice the sounds of Mexican duo Rodrigo y Gabriela whose classical guitars were delighting the park.

Yeah Yeah Yeahs do not disappoint us, even if communication with fans is quite limited. At the end of the sweaty gig we quickly traverse to the main stage, where Franz Ferdinand's roadies are busy setting up.

More fun, anyone? Kapranos and Co. deliver a solid 13-track set, including all the hits such as the anthem *Take Me Out*

The Kaiser Chiefs, however, are completely at home, peppering their fourth Werchter appearance with Ricky Wilson's hyperactive routine and cliffhanging from lighting rigs. The crowd is in raptures as they kick into *Ruby* and *Na Na Na Na*, not to mention *I Predict a Riot* and *Oh My God* from their first album.

Two to go: Nine Inch Nails deliver the perfect gig, ripping through songs from debut *Pretty Hate Machine* and 1994's *Downward Spiral* as well as a few of the newer tracks that don't seem to sink in with a lukewarm audience.

Metallica are the headline of the evening. As the black t-shirts surge forward, I watch the show in silent awe from the moment they launch into the epic *For Whom the Bell Tolls* via *One*,

Welcome Home and *Master of Puppets*, to mention a few. By the end of it my ears are ringing.

Metallica hang on stage for a few minutes after the gig, wishing us goodnight and rewarding fans with a few memorabilia. Around us, bonfires have already started and fireworks illuminate the sky... what a majestic finale.

The final journey to C3 is silent, and way too short. The hordes of people traipsing in the same direction are about to vanish, and so is their chanting. Tomorrow, the train to Amsterdam will take us back to "civilisation".

I guess though, like last year, a part of us is going to be left behind.

hatemail roughtrade@wayneflask.com



eWORLD, 34 Msida Seafront, Msida. 21226112 / sales@eworld.com.mt / www.eworld.com.mt

St Martin's College Sixth Form

A dynamic and exciting post-secondary education tailor-made to your requirements.

WE OFFER:

guaranteed individual attention, small groups, excellent lecturers, outstanding resources, a safe environment, flexible choice of subjects and career guidance on tertiary education in Malta, the UK and the USA.

For further information call for an appointment with the Head of Sixth Form, Mr Tonio Pace on 2134 5146 or email sixthform@smc.edu.mt



ST MARTIN'S COLLEGE SIXTH FORM

St Martin's College • Swatar Road • Swatar MSD 2244 • www.smc.edu.mt