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- [Front page](#)
- [News](#)
- [Feature articles](#)
- [Comedy](#)
- [Literature and poetry](#)
- [Music guide](#)
- [Theatre and plays](#)
- [Dance](#)
- [Visual arts films and photography](#)
- [Architecture](#)
- [Help](#)
- [Search](#)
- [Blog](#)

In this section

- [Festivals home page](#)
- [Download home page](#)
- [Download on Friday](#)
- [Download on Saturday](#)
- [Download on Sunday](#)

[Magazine contents](#)

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Feature article: Download Festival 2012 - Saturday 9th June

This page is part of the the [festivals section](#)

Download Festival, Castle Donington, 2012

Saturday 9th June at Download.

[Our coverage of Download day by day](#)

Friday

Sunday

On this page: | [Page 44](#) | [Saxon](#) | [Trivium I Divide](#) | [Anti-Nowhere League](#) | [Sylosis](#) | [Butcher Babies](#) | [Skindred](#) | [Killswitch Engage](#) | [Fearless Vampire Killers](#) | [Metallica](#) |

Kevin Gaughan reports with Pete Coombs

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The second stage, first thing Saturday morning, with straw in an attempt to soak up the mud.

Page 44 - Second stage Sat at 11:00



My first band of the day, was Page 44 on the second stage. A young four-piece band from Birmingham, not looking as aggressive or hard-core as most of the other bands at Download, but still managing to get a good sized crowd turning up to see them so early on in the day.

A gentle way to start the day, they entertained the crowd with their guitar-focused rock/indie songs. Some catchy, melodies were good to listen to as you gently came to after the previous night's excesses.



[Watch Page 44 perform at the festival](#)

Saxon Main Stage at 12:00



As I was waiting in the crowd at the main stage my 'crowd neighbours' told me about the steward standing on the left hand side of the stage. *Steward 836* as he is known, is legendary. He has attended every Download since it started ten years ago, and has his own Facebook community dedicated to him. He keeps the crowd entertained if there's along gap between bands on the main stage. [There were people Tweeting about Steward 836, reporting his appearance on stage.]

Still, bang on time, my old favourites, that I used to love head banging to in my earlier days, Saxon appeared on the stage. Biff, now 61 years old, wasn't moving too rapidly, like he used to, but he still managed to whip the crowd up into a frenzy.



He even 'belly surfed' a platform on wheels across the stage which was funny. Starting off with the old Saxon song, 20,000 ft, their set included all the old classics; *Denim and Leather*, *Princess of the Night*, and of course, *Wheeeeels*, wheeeeels of Steel.

The crowd must have sang along to most of the set. Saxon are currently recording a new album, but, in passing, Biff said this may be the last time they play Download which would be a great loss for Download if this is the case.

Trivium, Main stage at 14:20

I love a band that really appreciates their roots and how they got to where they are today. Trivium do this better than anyone; showing true appreciation for their previous Download experiences after 2005, pretty much being the launch of their career.

This respect pours out through their performance, constantly engaging with the crowd and biging up Download. Playing a mix of songs from their relatively short career, Trivium get their huge crowd moving keeping old and new fans very happy.

The new songs are incredible, well written future masterpieces, mixed with perfect renditions of older songs such as *Pull harder on the strings of your martyr* and *Gunshot to the Head of Trepidation* Matt Heafy and band are welcomed back with open arms and horned hands.



[Watch Trivium perform at the festival](#)

I Divide Bedroom Jam Stage - 14:15



Stumbling into the Bedroom Jam stage, as the mud was turning from watery to thick and sticky, I came across a band with relatively young members, called I Divide. A five-piece band from Exeter, they bought their melodic, high energy rock to Bedroom Jam stage.

No problems with stage presence, which was evident in some of the other younger bands of the day, these guys positively ran around the stage as though their pants were on fire but still managing to produce a good, commercial rock sound that kept the crowd entertained. Head banging and jumping, it was all going on in the crowd, too.

These guys put on a fantastic set, looking like they'd put some effort into their on-stage performance, too. Hope to see them again.



[Watch I Divide perform at the festival](#)

Anti-Nowhere League Pepsi-Max stage at 15:40



The Anti-Nowhere league were born in 1980 with the single aim to be 'the worst band on God's earth - loud, violent, obnoxious yobbos', with one mission - to get banned from absolutely everywhere! Shouting out "I f***ing hate people and they hate me

... ", the ANL are a four-piece maturated punk band from Tunbridge Wells.



Having a sizable following, the big tent was full of skin heads and Mohican-clad punks. Singing high-octane songs about drugs and fighting and generally being quite anarchistic.

Needless to say, they put on a thoroughly entertaining set of their short but ferocious punk songs. There were quite a few of their fans in the audience, too, but, not making any eye contact, I made it clear I wasn't looking for a fight as I moved on to my next band of the day!

[Watch the Anti-Nowhere League perform at the festival.](#)

Sylosis, Pepsi Max Stage at 18:15

A relatively unheard of band in comparison to those rocking the 1st and 2nd Stages but one I was really looking forward to. With a surprisingly big crowd pouring out of the Pepsi Max tent Sylosis took to the stage with a main-stage-worthy performance.

Their songs were a mix of brutal thrash and death metal that almost forced the crowd's heads to move furiously. Josh Middleton's voice screams, growls and powers through without hindrance and the impressive twin guitars show the band's real potential.

Backed by the outstanding drummer Rob Callard, who holds each of the band's songs with impressive speed and agility, Sylosis are a pleasure to watch and are made for Download!

Butcher Babies bedroom Jam Stage



Wow, there was some noise coming from the Bedroom Jam stage as the Butcher Babies were in full flow. I just had to meander inside to see what was going on. Inside I found two partially-clad ladies in full screamo mode, with three chaps on guitars and drums. This was a feast for the eyes and a pain for the ears!



Luckily my ear plugs were firmly in place! Actually, as far as screamo goes, I think it was OK - loud and ferocious and while screaming, the two singers constantly wind milled their hair providing an entertaining spectacle, especially as they were wearing very little and one of them had her breasts on display with black tape stuck over her nipples.

Coming from Los Angeles, the Butcher Babies provided the crowd with some good entertainment and brought something different to the Download audience.



[Watch the Butcher Babies perform at the festival.](#)

Skindred Second Stage - 18:50.



Now, Skindred strike me as being an interesting band, they mix punk, rock and reggae in a fusion that works and works damned well. Although not your typical Download band, having already played Sonisphere, they certainly seem to fit the rock/heavy metal scene.

The crowd in front of the big second stage was enormous, too. The sound was heavy, the crowd bouncy and the rhythms rockin' reggae with a very energetic front man, Benji Webbe, and a man wearing a horse's head playing guitar! Getting the crowd on the left to compete, in volume, with the crowd on the right it was all great fun, and the sound was solid and loved by the heavy-metal crowd.

[ArtsIn reviewed Skindred at Download 2011](#)



[Watch Skindred performing at the festival.](#)

Killswitch Engage, Second Stage at 19:55

With their first UK appearance in quite a while and one of the first performances for new (old) singer Jesse Leech, (who returned to the band earlier this year) the quintet performed an intricate yet slightly odd set, a little unfamiliar, I guess, due to Jesse's vocals, especially when bringing his sound to Killswitch's *Howard era* songs.

But it works, very well! *Life is Lifeless* made for one of the best circle pits the weekend has seen so far and finally a bit of sun sealed the growing smiles on the fan's faces. Killswitch Engage are back! Fact!

Fearless Vampire Killers Bedroom Jam Stage - 19:50



FVK are a five piece band from London who must spend ages before each gig putting a hefty amount of scary looking make-up in an attempt to look like, err, vampires I guess. I do like the look of this band, their appearance has obviously been given plenty of thought and they are good to watch.

Thrashing around the stage like demented chickens, they churned out their songs about "death and s**t" with titles like *Necromania* from their new debut album, *Militia of the Lost*. Sometimes screamo and sometimes otherwise, I think they might have been concentrating too much on running round the stage as the non-screamo singing didn't seem much like singing! Anyway, providing some good entertainment to the thinning crowd, they were definitely one of the quirky bands of the weekend!

[See our review of The FVK when they performed in Leicester.](#)



[Watch Fearless Vampire Killers perform at the festival.](#)

Metallica, Main Stage at 20:45

Metallica are Metallica, and we are mere mortals!



A long awaited set from the metal heroes, with a promise to play the classic *Black Album*, back to back. They (of course) did not disappoint, hitting the stage with an interesting opener. *Hit The Lights* is a song that dates right back to Metallica's creation in the early 80s, following up with *Master of Puppets* and *Four Horsemen*.

Making for an excellent build up to the treat the band had in store

for us. A curious decision to play their self title album not in the original order, but who really cares what order we hear them in? The songs had a real good feel; especially those we haven't been blessed with hearing live for many years.



Stick some impressive solos and an inspiring connection with the crowd and we have a performance that's going to be remembered for many years to come. Especially as we are now all part of 'Metallica's family', which James Hetfield felt the need to remind us of ... a lot!

Now let's be honest, not many rate Metallica's Black Album as one of the greats. Yes, it is amazing, but also a little hit or miss with songs and this was made pretty obvious with the crowd reactions throughout the set, people seemingly saving themselves for the big songs on this album, which (conveniently) playing the album backwards meant these songs were saved for the later part of the set.



Metallica © Andrew Whitton

Therefore when the big number came, my word they were good! The huge *Holier Than Thou*, *The Unforgiven*, *Wherever I may Roam* and of course *Nothing Else Matters* were flawless and the powerful *Sad But True*, got every single person in the enormous crowd pumping their fists and straining their vocal chords.



An excessive pyro and laser show backed an equally impressive rendition of *One* for the band's encore with a couple more quality songs to bring a good day at Download to a close.



[Our coverage of Download day by day](#)

[Friday](#)

[Saturday](#)

[Sunday](#)

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