



Last updated: 09:34 AM ET, Tue July 25 2017

50 Years of Quebec's Most Popular Music Festival

ENTERTAINMENT | CHELSEA DAVIS | JULY 25, 2017



PHOTO: This 11-day Festival d'été de Québec is the oldest music festival in Quebec. (photo by Chelsea Davis)

There are few experiences more electrifying than being within the historic capital city of Quebec during a major celebration.

Whether you're there for the *Carnaval de Québec*, the Quebec Winter Carnival, or *Festival d'été de Québec (FEQ)*, the Quebec City Summer Festival, the energy and excitement of these events resonate throughout the entire town.

This 11-day summer event serves as the most anticipated music festival for Quebecois. And it's not just young people getting in on the action. You can find every age partaking in the festivities—even children. Everyone joins in on the revelry.

This year marked the 50th Anniversary of the FEQ. In addition to being the oldest music festival in Quebec, it's also one of the largest non-profit music events in the world.

Set within Quebec's Upper Town, the festival offers visitors expansive views of the St. Lawrence River and brings them into the center of the city's historic district. A UNESCO World Heritage Site, it's an epic area enclosed within preserved fortress walls.

Elegant, French-inspired architecture characterizes the majority of the buildings that today are occupied by charming cafes, upscale bars and lively eateries making this section of Quebec City particularly lovely.

Each year, the international music festival takes place across three main outdoor venues, the most impressive being the scenic Plains of Abraham—an area large enough to accommodate more than 100,000 guests. Then there are the smaller venues of Parc de la Francophonie and the Place d'Youville.

"The festival was originally only francophone and world music and in the early 2000s we changed the formula to integrate international stars into the lineup," says Daniel Gélinas, General Manager of FEQ. "In 2003, we began to include big, internationally known names into the programming. We started with ZZ Top and The Scorpions. Since then a lot of the big names continue to return because it's a special place to perform."

For just \$90 (compare that to any other major music festival in the world!), attendees got an all-inclusive, transferable pass and access to all the stars and stages.

“We sell more than 140k passes annually and it’s this volume that allows us the opportunity to pay all parts of the programming without charging extra fees to our festival goers,” continues Gélinas. “Our festival model was built with both the city and the people of the city in mind. It’s fantastic for the people of Quebec City, most of whom don’t go see shows throughout the year.”

Each of the sites and stages are within walking distance of one another, providing the festival a distinct celebratory, party atmosphere. There is a constant buzz of excitement whether people just saw a performance or are waiting to see the next one.

Given that this event generates more than 1.5 million festival-goers, the fact that I didn’t see a single fight or even a scuffle is a testament to the overall character of Quebecois. The politeness and courtesy while I was exiting the massive Plains of Abraham stadium never ceased to amaze me, performance after performance.

This year’s headliners included major artists such as Metallica, Gorillaz, The Who, Muse, Kendrick Lamar, The Backstreet Boys, Lady Antebellum, P!nk, Melissa Etheridge and more. Just one look at the lineup makes it clear diversity of genre is crucial to the festival's success.

If on one stage a rapper is performing, the other stage will have a pop or rock star, ensuring that all musical tastes are being catered to.

The Festival d’été de Québec is both eclectic and inclusive, providing an energized environment to immerse yourself in all aspects of the festival and its setting—the city.

Quebec is also an amazingly walkable destination, meaning that before you rock out to Metallica, you could check out the nearby Musées de la civilisation or take a ride on the funicular railway down to the romantic, cobbled-stoned streets of the Petit Champlain district for some shopping.

Given the special anniversary, the Festival d'été de Québec also showcased original programming throughout the entire festival as well as an exhibition of highlights and history from the past 49 festivals. Attendees also enjoyed street performance shows and an incredible though eerie aerial performance by a troupe of acrobats, musicians and dancers suspended from a giant mobile, which was held up by a crane.

If the Festival d'été de Québec wasn't on your summer bucket-list before, it needs to be now. For more information, visit www.infofestival.com/en/.