

# RTL The Golden Lion

The Lion weighs 2.5 kg (5.5 lbs) with base and is 26 cm (just over 10 inches) high. It was designed and first cast by the Luxembourg painter/sculptor Auguste Trémont in 1958. The sculpture was modelled on the heraldic animal in CLR's then logo with the motto "Alas Leoni Dedit".



## History

The Radio Luxemburg Lions were first presented on 17 March 1959 at a press conference in Frankfurt am Main, Germany. Their first public presentation took place on 30 April in Essen's Gruga-Halle.

Radio Luxembourg presenter and Schlager (German pop music) singer Camillo Felgen is credited with having invented the Lion Awards. Felgen, a native of Luxembourg, began his career in 1946 as a French-language news presenter on Radio Luxembourg. In 1958, he was appointed as the first Programming Director of the new German-language radio station 'Radio Luxemburg', where he presented the RTL Hitparade from 1958 to 1963.

The Lion was commissioned by Claude Fischer, who was then Director of the German Programming department. Beyond Camillo Felgen, others who contributed to the idea were Helmut Stoldt (CEO of the airtime sales company IPA) and the former Head of PR at IPA, Gerd von Hassler.

Originally, Gold, Silver and Bronze Lions were presented to the most successful stars of the Radio Luxemburg Hitparade, as determined by listeners and a jury of experts. Important factors here included sales figures, as well as ranking and frequency of appearance in the Hitparade.

From 1959 to 1995, the Lions mainly went to German and international Schlager and pop-music artists. From 1990, other categories for achievements in TV and politics were added. In the early 1990s, the restructuring of *RTL Radio* into the oldies station *RTL – Der Oldiesender* and the more hit-oriented *104.6 RTL Berlin* resulted in the addition of awards for 'Oldies', 'Cover Versions' and 'Latest Hits'.

In the 36 years between 1959 and 1995, the Lion Awards developed into a glamorous media event with grand ceremonies, and simultaneously became one of the world's most successful radio extravaganzas. When RTL turned the Lions loose, 10,000 fans were on hand at the Gruga Hall in Essen (and later at Dortmund's Westfalenhalle) or at the German Schlager Festival in Wiesbaden's Rhein-Main-Halle. Frank Elstner recalls: "The Lion events sold out in 24 hours. We could have staged the event three or four times in a row. It was *the* event in the 'Ruhrpott' and for teens at the time it was the definitive music event."

As well as Frank Elstner, Helga Guitton and Jochen Pützenbacher were long-time presenters of the Lion Awards. In 1982, Elstner himself received an honorary Lion, and in 1993 he presented the coveted trophy to Pützenbacher.

The 59<sup>th</sup> and final RTL Lion Award presentation was held in 1995. It was presented by Jochen Bendel and Hans Meiser.

In 1998, the Lion Award merged with the Telestar TV award administered by WDR (1983 to 1998). This merger resulted in the *Deutscher Fernsehpreis* – German TV Award – which was called into being by the CEOs and Directors of RTL, Sat.1, ARD and ZDF in 1999. The founders were Gerhard Zeiler, Fred Kogel, Fritz Pleitgen and Dieter Stolte.

The Radio-Journal.de reminds viewers that international stars weren't always popular at the Lion Awards: in 1969, Dusty Springfield performed to boos and whistles from the audience, which demanded "Va-len-te". David Cassidy suffered a similar fate in 1973, with the audience insisting on "Hei-no" instead. In 1981 the audience refused to let the runner-up, Silver winner Roland Kaiser, exit the stage as they frenetically celebrated him with chants and sparklers. Minutes later, the Golden Lion winner, Visage from England, scored a mere spattering of polite applause.

59 Galas were celebrated and 227 Lions presented from 1959 to 1994. Originally, Lions were presented twice a year; from the beginning of the 1980s only once a year.

### **Lions Laureates**

Past winners of Golden Lions and Honorary Lions include: Abba, Peter Alexander, Lale Andersen, The Bee Gees, Roy Black, Rudi Carrell, Drafi Deutscher, Fats Domino, Fischer Chöre, Connie Francis, Hans Dietrich Genscher, Rex Gildo, David Hasselhoff, Heino, Gitte Henning, Ernst Huberty, Michael Jackson, Curd Jürgens, Udo Jürgens, Peter Kraus, James Last, Vicki Leandros, Peter Maffay, Nana Mouskouri, Eros Ramazzotti, Chris Rea, Walter Scheel, Caterina Valente, Otto Waalkes, and others.

The 'Lion King' is Freddy Quinn, who won 15 Lions in all.

Freddy Quinn: "I keep all my Lions in a bank safe because they mean so much to me."  
Howard Carpendale: "My Lions are displayed in the glass cabinet in my manager's office. They're safe there – and I'm happy every time I see them." Former German president Walter Scheel won an Honorary Lion in 1974 and has used it as a classy paperweight ever since. Peter Kraus, who in 1959 became the first singer to win a Lion, says: "It was a sublime award. It was a jubilant time, and the Golden Lion was the icing on the cake."

- **Freddy Quinn** is the Lion King. He was presented with a total of 15 Lions: 8 x Gold, 3 x Silver, 3 x Bronze, 1x Honorary Lion.
- **Roy Black** won 13 RTL Lions.
- **Golden Lions:** Petula Clark, Udo Jürgens, Bee Gees, Peter Alexander, Heintje, Roy Black, Abba, Queen, Mireille Mathieu, Boney M., Peter Maffay, Nino de Angelo, Bryan Ferry, David Hasselhoff
- **Silver Lions:** Nana Mouskouri, Mireille Mathieu, Cliff Richard, Howard Carpendale, Roland Kaiser
- **Bronze Lions:** Dalida, Adamo, Sacha Distel, Vicky Leandros, Caterina Valente
- **Honorary Lions:** Walter Scheel, James Last, Rudi Carrell, Otto Waalkes, Heino, Chris Rea
- **Political Lions:** Johannes Rau, Hans-Dietrich Genscher



A statue of the Golden Lion in front of RTL Group's Corporate Centre in Luxembourg