Martin Audio WPS/WPM combo used by Audio Inc

Since investing in Martin Audio's small-format WPM line array, shortly followed by the larger WPS PA last year, New Jersey-based Audio Incorporated has rarely looked back, taking full advantage of the optimised series' breakthrough scalable resolution. While the award-winning two-way WPM houses 2 x 6.5" drivers, the slightly larger WPS is a 2 x 8" 3-way array.

The two 16-element rigs, complemented respectively by eight SX118 and eight SXCF118 subwoofers, provided them with the perfect capacity to handle a myriad of different events across the tri-state area, but specifically some very challenging art gallery spaces. By this time, they had already boosted their rental fleet after investing in 16 of Martin Audio's powerful XE500 floor monitors, and some auxiliary XE300s. Head of Audio Systems, Stephan Wojtecki, recalls the day the WPMs arrived. "They came off the delivery pallet and were immediately loaded onto our truck to go out next day." And they've barely been in the warehouse since. Similarly voiced, the two complementary systems often work in tandem for the production house, with the smaller WPM taking on delay and fill duties from the main WPS FOH PA.

The vast roster of shows they have reinforced during the summer alone has ranged from a classical spectacular by the Riverside Symphonia, to Carnegie Hall's Musical

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Connections programme at Sing Correctional Facility, run in partnership with the New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision. Here they presented Metropolitan Opera's Dead Man Walking, with some of the inmates in the chorus. "With Met Opera singers we barely had to turn the WPMs on." But if both of these diverse events proved major triumphs for the Martin Audio line arrays, Wojtecki believes the biggest accomplishment has been in the more challenging gallery venues, deployed for other purposes. "We work with a number of arts organisations, and they are in tough environments - buildings that are not built for amplified sound."

Key among these is the Beaux-Arts Court at Brooklyn Museum. Dating back to the late 19th century, measuring three storeys high, and clad in glass tile, terrazzo, and marble, the potential for sound to bounce off these unforgiving surfaces like a pinball in this vast 105ft x 105ft space, would be immense - were it not for the expertise of the techs and the advanced control parameters of Martin Audio's proprietary DISPLAY optimisation software. "When they want to do a big rave in there it would sound awful had we not been able to use Hard Avoid, and unique features of the Martin Audio system design to make it sound really good." For speech in the Gallery, he says, they typically deploy 16 WPM in a line, four boxes per stack, in single box resolution thanks to Martin's iKON iK81's "and with the sound coming from one side of the room it really works."

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Both Stephan Wojtecki and Operations Manager, Edward Tolve, were already familiar with the Martin Audio pedigree by the time they took over day-to-day operations for Audio Inc, who are currently celebrating their 30th anniversary. “It was once we started doing installations on a larger scale, outside the corporate boardrooms, that we started looking around for smaller format line arrays, that would appeal to our clients.”

And their biggest takeaway is that while both Martin Audio systems were, to some degree, replacements for older, similarly footprinted systems, they agree the Wavefront Precision paradigm takes the previous technology a massive leap further. “It is way more finessed and more musical sounding [than our previous small to mid-format systems]. With the rear rejection on it you can put it in tough rooms and get way more gain before feedback. It also turned out to be the perfect size as you can deploy these systems with two people rather than a whole crew, even when you have larger events.”

Aside from their own rental requirements, Audio Inc also took on Martin Audio dealership status - stimulated by the need to support the vast all-Martin Audio Glasshouse project - a multi-function, interconnectable event space in New York City on a 75,000 sq. ft footprint. This is equipped exclusively with Martin Audio MLA Compact and CDD-LIVE systems. Edward Tolve emphasises another reason why this acquisition has been such an attractive proposition. “NYC is a very unique market in that there aren’t many big fields for major events, so we were never going to be walking around with an MLA or WPL. Instead we wanted something more versatile, and we found the WPM/WPS systems to be just the right size rigs for what we need, and sounding fantastic. We also love the subs, and I am in love with those SXCF118 cardioids in particular - they are awesome.”

Another recent show highlight was when they provided SR for the Riverside Symphonia - a classical spectacular incorporating a full firework display, in a 500ft long x 250ft wide field with a stage in the corner. “Firstly you need a PA that can cover that field,” says Stephan Wojtecki. “So we actually deployed the full WPS rig and WPM for delays. It sounded absolutely gorgeous once the orchestra started playing, and then to be able to get the volume of the PA above the fireworks once they started up was a tremendous thing to be able to do.”

Clients have universally reacted positively to being introduced to Martin Audio’s new tech … with one or two humorous quirks, as Edward Tolve points out. “For instance Spoon’s monitor engineer nearly had his head taken off by an XE500 when he walked up to the mic, as he had loaded settings from a previous show in. Also the best thing I love about these Martin Audio rigs are when we put a DJ through it you can sometimes hear just how bad the DJ tracks and their sound file is … and that’s because the PA system is so good. And I love that!”

He also highlights an event at New York’s Storm King Art Center Gala. “We had a quiet band from Brooklyn whispering into a microphone and I was 200ft away. It sounded almost exactly the same as when I was standing next to the stack. You could hear the whispering voice clearly across the field.” Finally, believes Edward Tolve, from a financial perspective the Martin Audio investment makes perfect sense. “We’re more likely to get a better ROI on these boxes than a lot of kit that was previously bought at Audio Incorporated,” he acknowledges. “As the company has grown, so our inventory with Martin Audio has as well.”

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