Spatial Audio for Distillery II with Martin Audio



Since relocating its hi-tech studio in Bath closer to Bristol, Distiller Music has taken the opportunity to develop a spatial environment, building on the legacy of its historic use of Martin Audio speakers. As the former ‘Distillery I’ space has made way for the new upgraded ’Distillery II’ - a fully-rigged, adaptive environment for rehearsal, recording, performance and production - it has added Martin Audio CDD-LIVE 8 to the pre-existing TORUS PA rig, processed through an Airsound spatial system.

In its latest incarnation, the studio has opted to make the facility commercially available for use by recording, film, music video and content producers, after previously being for private recording use only - with no live facility. The men behind the specification are Sam Cunningham and Dave Roden, respectively also the Stereophonics’ long-time monitor and FOH engineer, and thus already heavily invested in Martin Audio technology. It was they who had originally specified TORUS several years ago - with four TORUS T1215 (15°) boxes for each stage wing - along with four SXC118 cardioid subs and four XE300 wedge monitors. A rack of iKON process control amps - three iK42 and an iK81 - have recently been upgraded with Dante cards.

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However, once in contact with Airsound, Cunningham set up a demo in the live room, using existing CDD10s that were incorporated in their breakout rooms, along with some CDD8 - using Airsound Dipole technology at the back of the room, to assess the impact of an immersive objects-based environment. “We added these speakers around the room on high- and low-level trusses to create an immersive system that would still respect the main L/R nature of the existing larger TORUS house system,” Cunningham explained. "The Airsound software basically takes an Atmos mix and allows it to tell where the speakers are placed."

Having been so impressed with the constant curvature technology and value engineering of TORUS, which Cunningham said was perfect for a room just shy of 20 metres deep, they knew that the CDD-LIVE 8 would be the ideal complement. The team already knew the qualities of CDD-LIVE 8, as Roden uses them as his nearfield monitors on live gigs. Thus with proof of concept established, six of these self-powered speakers were purchased to create a system that runs entirely on the Dante network. “There’s network patch everywhere in the live room, so in my mind it became obvious that a Dante solution was the way to go,” said Cunningham.

A single CDD-LIVE 8 is mounted towards the front on each side of the room, alongside the main Left/Right TORUS system; at the rear of the room on the mid-high truss are three further CDD-LIVE 8 - a central, and two sides - using the dipole to steer and create the rear image. The final overhead CDD-LIVE 8 handles the rear height element. “The way the software decoding works means you can position them anywhere,” notes Distillery II’s long-serving studio engineer, Phil Parsons. Explaining the science, Sam Cunningham says, “The Airsound software basically takes an Atmos mix and allows it to tell where the speakers are placed, fooling you into thinking you are listening to an Atmos system. It takes a left/right system that already sounded incredible, into something completely different. In fact it all works shockingly well.”

Having specced all live system elements, Cunningham and Roden, working with Phil Parsons, put in a comprehensive backbone throughout of network, optical and power to make it a very diverse space, with a large live room. And in live mode, a modular 1.2m stage can be brought in, when the portable PA can be relocated from the back wall to 6m into the room. “Because of their remote location I couldn’t get loudspeaker patch to them, but I do have network everywhere so for me it was a no brainer to use powered speakers that can easily be moved - and therefore be used for anything,” concluded Cunningham.

Summarising the set-up, Phil Parsons, added, “It’s exceeded expectations really. People who are used to mixing in the Atmos domain came in and they were blown away by it. It puts us in the immersive listening space and It’s incredibly impressive. There are few places around like this and definitely not one incorporating the Airsound, so to have it on a system this scale it’s quite unique.” All Martin Audio products were supplied by dealers, Solotech.

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