Martin Audio WPL used for Michael McIntyre



Having supported Michael McIntyre tours for many years (as Capital Sound) with Martin Audio solutions, Solotech UK have again been entrusted with providing sound reinforcement on the stand-up comedian's current Macnificent 2023-24 arena tour. MLA had successful graced the last two tours, but this time Solotech switched up to the British manufacturer's newer flagship large-format line array, WPL.

The Off The Kerb production team behind the tour remains the same, with Neil McDonald once again overseeing the tech. "It's a pleasure to be working again with Neil and the team at Off the Kerb," stated Solotech UK Senior Account Manager, Robin Conway. "We discussed the tour back in late 2022 and the only thing we've changed is the model of PA. The design is very similar, and Wavefront Precision is a newer and more lightweight cabinet than the MLA," he adds by way of explanation. "I was 100% confident it could achieve the same success as MLA has on the previous tours."

Conway, himself masterminded the system design that the new FOH sound team would be entrusted with, knowing it would need to be scalable. He knew it would be

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in safe hands with system tech Rylan Machin, who is vastly experienced in working with the Martin Audio platforms. “Once out on the road he and Tim [crew chief and monitor engineer Tim Paterson], Sam [PA tech Sam Brazier] and Jason [FOH engineer Jason Barton, mixing on a Yamaha QL5] have been fine tuning the deployment.” The PA is scalable, depending on venue size, but in all instances is driven in the optimum 1-box resolution from Martin Audio’s multi-channel iK42 DSP amplifiers.

“For instance,” continues Conway, “by the time the tour hits the big rooms including the O2 and Manchester Arena in 2024 we will be fielding the full inventory.” This comprises 22 WPL (per side) for the main hangs; 18 of the smaller WPC per side (for the outfills, with an additional six WPC at The O2); eight WPS delays at each of three positions and four SX218 subs per side. Filling other gaps in the coverage are four of the obligatory Martin Audio XD12 (outfill) and eight DD6 for nearfill along the front. Providing monitoring duties on stage are TORUS T1215 and T1230 constant curvature enclosures as sidefills, along with four wedge monitors.

It was a design that Robin Conway had thought long and hard about. “Providing full range power at the front end is something we’ve long practiced with on the comedy circuit. MLA was a killer at delivering a great vocal without exciting the room, and over previous tours for Off the Kerb, we realised that carrying delays for the entire tour wasn’t as important as it had been with the previous system … the complex optimisation really does work with spoken word.”

Solotech UK had to balance achieving optimum sonic performance with a cost-effective solution that would make best use of their inventory. “Scaling the PA up and down allows us to do this. By supplying sufficient, but not too much PA, we’re able to be creative while keeping trucking space low. Nobody wants to be carrying around boxes that are not being used.”

Barton and Machin have worked well collaboratively, as shown in the results achieved. The latter, for instance, has been using Martin Audio’s proprietary DISPLAY control software to productive effect, depending on how the sound is contoured for each venue. He explains: “While WPL is a really good system, enabling us to get really consistent coverage throughout the audience area, speech has to be intelligible everywhere … you have to keep it off the walls and avoid the reflections whereas with music you can cover it up more easily.” He cites Cardiff’s Utilita Arena as an example. “There are big bits of glass at the back of the arena which reflects all the sound straight back to the FOH position - so we’ve been able to optimise that out of the prediction and reduce the level on the back wall. “I’ve been using [the ‘Non-Audience’ feature] in all the places we don’t want it, like the glass at the back of the room, and focusing ‘Hard Avoid’ on the stage, because he is using a DPA headset mic so we’ve been able to reduce that feedback quite considerably.”

Robin Conway flags up a further benefit - for example when McIntyre is lying down next to the monitoring. “The onstage rejection of the PA is great, so the focus can

be more on the quality of the vocal sound, rather than cutting it to pieces by looking for more gain before feedback." In conclusion he says the Solotech UK and Martin Audio packaging of the PA, amps and cable system and control has resulted in a rig that is "super quick to deploy … and Wavefront Precision and the iKON amp racks are a big part of this." Now he is looking forward to the dates in 2024 when they can roll out the larger systems into the bigger-cap venues.

Finally, Martin Audio Global Marketing Manager, Jamie Gomez, also assessed that "having seen the set up at Cardiff, Wavefront Precision very much delivered on what it says on the tin. Controlled sound with richness and clarity of vocals ensured everyone in the audience heard the punchline."

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