

Martin Audio MLA at Clockenflap



As Hong Kong's biggest and longest running outdoor music and arts festival, Clockenflap was again held over three days recently at the Central Harbourfront, overlooking Kowloon. Operating over six stages, it featured an all-star line-up including Pulp, Joji, Yoasobi, Caroline Polachek, IDLES and many others. MSI Japan were appointed as the production partner for the event's largest Harbourflap stage, where they deployed a Martin Audio MLA array.

Responsible for the sound system design were MSI's Bunshiro 'Bun' Hote, Yasuhiko 'Yasu' Watanabe and Yukio 'Eddie' Tanada, who explained that one of the biggest challenges faced at the event is noise control. It is not so much about controlling the noise out the front of the stage as limiting the audio coming out the back of the stage. For at the rear of the stage are several government buildings, residential properties and hotels. In past years there have been complaints from residents and so MSI needed to focus on rear rejection.

It immediately became apparent that in order to control the sound across the entire

Martin Audio MLA Rocks Clockenflap and Keeps Residents Happy

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frequency waveband, their only choice was to deploy Martin Audio MLA, with its advanced DISPLAY control and optimisation software. And by further adding a full cardioid subwoofer array, using 30 x MLX, they could achieve close to 30dB rejection at the rear of the stage.



The two hangs of 15 x Martin Audio MLA and a single MLD downfill box were addressed by DISPLAY, the software enabling MSI to control the coverage for the audience. At the same time, by utilising the 'Hard Avoid' feature at the rear they could eliminate audio from on the stage, and therefore also from the residents behind the stage. Limits were also placed at the edges of the audience areas to ensure maximum focus on the audio where it needed to be, without escaping across the water to the Kowloon side.

Clockenflap sound director, Sem Cigna, has been working on the event since 2016, and has seen several sound systems on the main stage over this time. Sem used MLA for the Gwen Stefani concert in Hong Kong in 2019 as well as the Rugby Sevens, and familiarised himself with MLA in a similar configuration to this show (although with slightly fewer subs). There were similar demands back then and after that show Sem commented, "I was able to experience just how MLA could reduce

the audio outside the audience area without losing any impact for the audience itself.” They experienced the same thing at Clockenflap this year.

Sem has worked alongside the event’s production manager, Peter Gorton, since 2019 - and it is the latter who is ultimately responsible for managing the noise thresholds, which all six stages have to conform to. He explained, “When the venue moved from Kowloon to Central [Hong Kong] several years ago, one of the biggest requests from the Government was to manage the noise for the residents. They subsequently endured several years of trial and error, testing different options, from hiring cranes to fly and evaluate different line arrays on site, to craning in large sandbags to sit behind the subwoofers in order to block sound from the rear of the stage.

Over the years various solutions were evolved without using sandbags, and this year they selected Martin Audio’s award-winning MLA to eliminate the noise at the back of the stage area entirely. Noise levels are monitored at four points around the city, three in Central and one across the water in Kowloon. Residents may have adapted to having the Clockenflap Festival in the city; however Peter and the team never take this for granted, particularly as Clockenflap continues to expand. “In 2024 there will be a festival in Singapore, in addition to the original one in Hong Kong,” he explains. “We also have plans for other shows and festivals in HK.”

Having worked with MSI over the years they were delighted with the deployment and performance of MLA, which delivered the punch and impact they were hoping for, especially for bands like Yoasobi, the Japanese J-Pop band who were playing for the first time in Hong Kong. They sold out the Friday night and blew away the excited audience with their energy. The final word came from Fujita Kengi, Yoasobi’s FOH engineer, who has mixed on MLA many times. He described the resolution of MLA as being a “standout feature” making it easier for him to focus on the mix, and thereby create maximum impact for the audience.

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