Martin Audio Wavefront Precision at Richmond Jazz Festival



Soundworks of Virginia returned to the familiar 100-acre Maymont Park site in Richmond, VA to help stage the Richmond Jazz and Music Festival, an event for which they have provided sound reinforcement since 2017. Working for promoter JMI (Johnson Marketing Inc) they fielded their flagship Martin Audio WPL optimised line array on the main stage, deploying hangs of 12 WPL elements on each wing. These were underpinned by 12 SXH218 in cardioid formation - a move largely designed to prevent the stage from vibrating - with a delay tower of eight smaller WPS elements, set around 275ft back and with four WPS deployed along the stage lip as frontfills. Monitors comprised four WPS loudspeakers atop a pair of SXC118 subs, mounted both stage left and right for sidefills, plus 12 of Soundworks' own SW2 proprietary wedges.

Soundworks also equipped the second stage with 12 WPC per side with eight SXH218 subs in a centre cluster. Monitor provision again consisted of four WPS enclosures above a pair of SXC118 on each wing for sidefills plus 12 of Martin Audio's powerful XE500 wedges. Run from iKON multi-channel amplifiers in 2-box resolution, this provided the perfect setting for an all-star line-up headed by Chaka Khan to showcase their art. Yet although Soundworks' tech team has worked this site many times in the past, there is still work to be done in advance, and it is far from a case of simply applying existing site measurements, as founder and CEO, Steve Payne, explains.

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“Maymont shows use a temporary stage - typically a Stageline SL320 - and there are several different locations used within the park for concerts. Additionally, the stage is never placed in exactly the same spot each time which means the spatial definition of the audience area varies each time. We have found that the more accurate the audience area definition is the more accurate the results we achieve … and for that reason, in order to get the best results possible we opt to measure each time.” He continued, “We go in once the stage is set in place and do our laser measurements. Then we use Martin Audio DISPLAY software to predict and optimise coverage.” Any time alignment adjustments are then carried out in a Lake LM44 processor.

For this event, the Martin Audio PA was required to broadcast evenly across around four acres for the main stage and two acres for the second. It was reported that around 14,000 people attended over the two-day festival. As usual, Soundworks found they could run the system with minimal EQ. “As a matter of fact we only had one engineer - for Dave Koz - that wanted a small EQ cut,” reported Soundworks president, Grant Howard. “Then when I showed him that nothing else had been done to the EQ he laughed and made a flat line gesture with his hand, and said, ‘Well, that’s Martin Audio’”.

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After the event, Mike Ferguson, production manager of Richmond Jazz and Music Festival, complimented the team on a successful deployment of the Martin Audio system. “As a producer of music festivals and concerts for over 30 years one thing is for sure, high-quality audio plays a critical role in delivering an exceptional audience experience. Great audio coverage means you need a system that can ensure the music reaches every corner of your audience.

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“Soundworks of Virginia has always done a super great job for our audience when it comes to audio. The range of bands at the Richmond Jazz Festival requires a system that has a broad, flat frequency response and a wide dynamic range. The Martin Audio systems cover all the bases. There’s no area of the audience that isn’t properly covered. Exceptional experience delivered!”

Responsible for the success of the event were Soundworks’ Bryan Hargrave and Grant Howard, who handled the overall system design (Hargrave also took care of all the measurements in advance, as well as running the software and loading the amps. Day of show duties were carried out on the Main Stage by Grant Howard (FOH), Joe Carpenter (monitors), Brett Sipos (patch). Second Stage duties were entrusted to Bob McNichols (FOH), Bryan Hargrave (monitors) and Jay Holland (patch).

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