

# Martin Audio WPL for South Facing Festival



Solotech have been servicing the South Facing Festival since the transformation of the dormant Crystal Palace Bowl in South London, back in 2021. Promoted by Marcus Weedon, and with production duties back in the capable hands of Method Events (in the shape of Mia Barrett and Matt Hendry), Solotech again fielded Martin Audio's WPL line array, which had last year replaced its long-serving forerunner, the MLA multicellular array. This combination made for an event in which the sound quality - to which daily audiences of up to 8,000 were treated - was generally considered the best yet.

Since this year's programme leaned more heavily than previous years towards EDM and DJ-oriented acts - with Nile Rodgers & Chic, Basement Jaxx, Skepta and Busta Rhymes among the prominent acts (alongside Mogwai and Morcheeba) - Solotech account manager, David Preston, said that a diligent approach was required when it came to sound containment, in view of the dependence on sub bass. Thus production was fortunate to again have vastly experienced system tech Ryan Bass on their team. The layout of South Facing is unusual in that the floating Orbit stage sits on a pontoon on the lake. Here Solotech rigged 15 WPL elements per side as main hangs, with four WPC per side acting as outfills and a further five WPS performing front fill duties - all driven in 1-box resolution from Martin Audio's iKON iK42 process-controlled multi-channel amplifiers.

But it was the low frequencies, and the design and placement of the 15 SXHF218 subwoofers that required an astute technical approach. Ryan Bass justified his preference for a castellated broadside array, by stating, "After utilising the sub array features within DISPLAY 3 [prediction software] I was able to design and tweak

the array to ensure solid bass onsite whilst maintaining suitable levels offsite and on stage. In DISPLAY 3 I was able to adjust the sub spacing, arc delay and gain shading to achieve my desired results. This eliminated any guesswork and delivered a great result."

The fact that the site is in a bowl naturally helps offsite containment. "Care was taken with the design to ensure I wasn't overshooting, but still hitting all the way to the back of the arena," he added. "Similarly with the WPC side hangs, one of which was pointed straight towards an offsite measuring point, flying them a little higher and down into the crowd helped to contain the spill."

The Solotech team, under crew chief Oli Fallon, worked closely alongside noise management company, Vanguardia to ensure "everyone had a great time whilst keeping the local residents happy," according to Bass. Following their offsite monitoring the PA company realised they had further headroom, and consequently ended up with a limit of over 100dBA at FOH ... "which in a park in London is excellent!" he said.

Reflecting on the response to WPL, Bass said, "The reaction has been overwhelmingly positive. Every guest engineer had a good show, comments from production/promoter were positive and the crowds certainly seemed to enjoy it as well. Several engineers commented on just how good the coverage was and how consistent everything sounded across the site." Rigging WPL is always a breeze, he says. "Being able to preset angles on their carts means it takes no time at all to get the PA up in the air, a big improvement the 4-point rigging of MLA. Tuning WPL is always an easy task, I never feel like I'm taking too much out of the system or fighting it in order to end up with a great result.

Working with Martin Audio products is always a joy, he concluded. "From designing a system, rigging and implementing it to hearing the show and end result ... the quality of sound is always excellent, with consistency right across the site. Martin Audio products always outperform for their size, while having tools such as Hard Avoid can often be a game changer." This was confirmed by David Preston. "The WPL performed brilliantly again this year, and with the use of Martin Audio DISPLAY software and all the optimisation tools they provide for the system we achieved great levels across the site - and importantly also off site - always staying within the dB limits set by Vanguardia at the offsite measurement locations."

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