Martin Audio WPL makes debut for Brighton & Hove Pride



Heavily supported by the local City Council, Brighton & Hove Pride - a celebration of Brighton's LGBTQ+ community, annually attracts crowds of around 250,000 people to the seaside resort. While the origins of the event date back to 1973 Capital Sound (part of the Solotech UK Group) has provided main stage sound reinforcement for the last three events. Having supplied PA and control for headliners Britney Spears and Kylie Minogue, following a break for COVID they were back in the 63-acre Preston Park site for the 2022 edition which featured Christina Aguilera and Paloma Faith as headliners on the Saturday and Sunday respectively.

After deploying Martin Audio's award-winning MLA loudspeaker array for Britney Spears back in 2018, the enforced break caused by the pandemic had enabled the British manufacturer to move the ground-breaking control technology further still, now enabling the production company to deploy the new Wavefront Precision (WPL system) that proved such a hit this summer at the UK's two predominant Glastonbury and BST Hyde Park festivals.

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Working alongside production manager Dean Parker, at Wilde Ones International Events, their sound design was based around main hangs of 18 WPL per side, with a stage right side hang of six of the smaller WPC, and a larger drop of 12 WPC elements stage left. Maintaining continuity with Martin Audio's Wavefront Precision family, filling the sound at the front of the stage were eight WPS, while providing the all-important low frequency extension were 20 of Martin Audio's ultra-powerful 2x18" SXHF218 subwoofers, designed in a castellated cardioid broadside array across the front of the stage.

Stage monitoring comprised further Martin Audio systems in the shape of 16 x LE1500 floor wedges, four SXHF218 and six TORUS T1215 constant curvature arrays. The coverage was completed by three delay masts set 70 metres back from the stage. These comprised a further 24 WPS divided over the three positions, underpinned by three SXHF218 subs on each mast, this contained the sound within the audience area, as a fairground carousel at the rear provided a buffer between this zone and the dance tent behind.



Solotech worked alongside Robert Miller of F1 Acoustics to achieve both the onsite and offsite sound thresholds, with audio crew chief and system tech, Joseph Pearce

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optimising the sound in Martin Audio's DISPLAY software. He was supported by FOH tech, Alistair Hellard. Miller had taken the precaution of modelling the sound to establish proof of concept although having experienced WPL while carrying out similar duties on the Pyramid stage at Glastonbury, he had no qualms about sanctioning the upgrade from MLA.

As for the new deployment, Solotech senior project manager, Martin Connolly, stated, "Although I have a balanced view, having provided an alternative system in 2019 at the request of Kylie Minogue's sound engineer, I know wherever there is a sensitive site such as this, which manufacturer will be better! In fact we even managed to achieve superior figures with WPL than we had with MLA! Once I had explained to Dean Parker that outstanding results had been achieved at both Hyde Park and Glastonbury with WPL, he was more than happy to run with it."

For Joseph Pearce this was his first experience driving Wavefront Precision for all hangs on an event of this size. "And it worked really well," he confirmed. "The software-based techniques we use to reduce offsite noise levels are the same as those we use with MLA … so all the tricks Capital Sound have learnt over the years at events such as BST in Hyde Park and others could be used with the WPL and WPC hangs in Preston Park."

Stage right was clearly the more noise sensitive area as it was closer to residences and shops, requiring constant level adjustments of both side hangs and delay hangs during the day. "In addition, as part of a site-wide strategy, all speaker hangs utilised the 'Hard Avoid' feature of DISPLAY 2," he confirmed. "This kept both our coverage and non-coverage areas clearly defined and reduces unwanted internal reflections from food and beverage vendors and other structures found at the end of audience areas."

Following propagation tests, Pearce and Miller agreed to run the earlier acts at lower SPL levels - to obviate any complaints when the event is not at it busiest—before opening the system up to the maximum in the evening. "I knew that if we could achieve 100dB LAeq15 or more in an area as densely populated as Brighton, not only I would happy but sound engineers would be happy too."

Robert Miller was also unequivocal in his praise for the system. "The performance and configurable options of WPL meant that less time needed to be spent adjusting the system to achieve the offsite music noise level limits and more time could be spent focusing on delivering great sound levels at all stages. The WPL line array, and the professional installation and management by Capital Sound, gave us confidence that the off-site music noise level was under control at all times."

Consequently the event, which generates around £20m for the city economy annually, was once again an unqualified success.

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