Narvik battle realism captured with Martin Audio WPC 5.1 system



The story of Hitler's first defeat in the Second World War is depicted in the stunning new Netflix film, Narvik. This is named after the small town in Northern Norway where the Norwegian army and the Allies fought and won the first battle against Germany. The world premiere was naturally held in Narvik itself with a big outdoor cinema especially created in the town square, which was free for everyone. The realism of the battle, and the associated sound effects, were authentically captured by a Martin Audio Wavefront Precision line array deployment in 5.1 surround, in a completely unique and unprecedented production.

Stein Hjertholm from the event production company All-In, originally contacted Thomas Nordvik Olsen from Audiolight in Harstad and he, in turn, asked if Øystein Wierli, Head of Sound at Atendi, Martin Audio's Norwegian distributor, could act as consultant. This was because such an undertaking had never been attempted before, let alone for a movie world premiere in a town centre.

"We had no hesitation in jumping straight in," exclaimed Wierli. "But when we

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actually started thinking about it, we had two main challenges. Aside from the fact that this was a first for an outdoor cinema in this format, it was also planned for mid-December." He was well aware that temperatures in the Arctic Circle at this time of year are generally down to below -20°C. "If you are lucky, you only get a metre of snow in a day! So not only was the production ambitious in the first place, but the weather was certainly a wild factor as well." On the day itself the temperatures were somewhat kinder and the weather clear. "It was only -10°C ... obviously still cold for an outdoor cinema, but those who were dressed for the occasion had the opportunity to witness a historical event - and right on the exact same ground where history had taken place over 80 years earlier.

However, there had also been further hiccups. The premiere had been originally set to take place in December 2021, until the pandemic rendered this impossible. An attempt was made to reschedule to March 2022 but the war in Ukraine then posed ethical questions on whether it was appropriate to show war scenes in such a format. "So the production moved on once more," continued Wierli, "and finally on December 11 last year it went ahead."

Øystein Wierli was on site supervising and tuning the Wavefront Precision to perfection. "They needed to make sure the PA system would do justice to the film's massive soundscape. The soundtrack was created to match the actual scenes and sounds from 1940. It was both frightening, and at the same time authentic."

To achieve this a total of 36 WPC elements and 18 SXH218 subwoofers were deployed, in 5.1 configuration, powered by 16 iKON iK42 multi-channel DSP amplifiers. Audiolight provided the PA and crew to rig the WPC / SXH218 system.

"The biggest problem beside temperature and snow was to create a phantom centre channel, as a centre hang of speakers was impossible," Øystein Wierli admits. Summarising the success of the event, he concludes, "We don't think anyone around the centre of Narvik would have missed the explosions and other hard hitting sound effects." But for those that wanted something softer, as a bonus there was also a family-friendly film and kids' afternoon on the same day.

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