Martin Audio WPS for Stonegate Church



Based outside Dallas-Fort Worth, TX, the rapidly expanding Stonegate Church moved from its earlier conference centre home to a brand-new building in 2018 - to continue its mission of ‘church planting’, encouraging its congregants to “enjoy Jesus and make disciples”. The eclectic content of its services - ranging from gospel music to new composition - required a studio- and tour-sound quality sound reproduction, as did the intelligibility of its worship leaders. In this respect the church’s existing sound system was found wanting. Stonegate was recommended to local AV integration company, Epic Resource Group, whose own mission is to create a direct connection between the stage and each member of the congregation. Although Epic are brand agnostic, in this instance they specified a Martin Audio WPS line array as best fit for purpose, with low end extension provided by SXH218 subwoofers.

Matt Wheeler, himself a former senior audio engineer at a very large Texas church, oversaw Epic’s tech team and undertook the design and system tuning in what was a full AV integration. “This was our first WPS installation, and we were pretty ecstatic with the result,” he exclaimed. Wheeler has a long association with Epic Resource, which, along with full scope AVL integration, specialises in acoustics excellence largely within the upper end of the worship market. Company founder

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(and former worship leader) Brandon Chynoweth advances the company's 'every seat matters' philosophy. "When we sign up with someone, we are entering a long-term, collaborative relationship which our business model supports. It can be really hard to nail it for a client if it doesn't feel like a completely cohesive effort.

"In the instance of Stonegate, we did a deep dive on what their priorities were. It was clear they had a high value for the music experience, because they have a really excellent music department." Equally, they valued a "personal experience of speech." Each one of the 1200 or so seats has to feel like the individual is being spoken to directly, he says - values shared by Martin Audio. The space itself measures around 100ft x 120ft, with a stage thrust. An entire reconstruction took place behind the wall of the stage without any service disruption. "The place became substantially deeper and virtually doubled in size … once we knocked the wall down."

Brandon Chynoweth has long had a soft spot for Martin Audio since discovering "the best sounding dual 15in sub we could find", some 15 years ago. Epic have embraced the brand more recently with a clutch of WPM installations (using the smallest Wavefront Precision footprint). "They just sounded great," he says. "They were lightweight and really great value, delivering a very high quality. It was the first compact line array that sounded that big. Small format speakers with both finesse and power had been hard to find, and we just felt like WPM was a special thing." However, for some applications WPM was too small, while WPC remained too big. "There was just nothing in the middle until WPS came along." The form factor immediately impressed the Epic team. "WPS picks up where WPM left off," says Wheeler. "We now have it spec'd on other projects. It punches above its weight and is world-class; it's been a go-to for us when we really needed it."

The Stonegate configuration is an alternating left-right system comprising four clusters of WPS - the centre two with eight elements, the outer two with seven - run in stereo. "A lot of us are from a studio background, so with stereo you can pan and be able to get some spatial things going on," he says. A Martin Audio CDD15 provides centre fill and nine CDD8s, infill at the front. Three of the SXH218 subs are flown in cardioid - two forward facing, one rear - driven by a combination of Martin Audio iKON iK42 process controlled amplifiers in bridge mode. Elsewhere iK81s are deployed, with the entire set-up powered in optimum single box resolution. "One box resolution is such a difference maker - it's much more linear and the consistency of volume is much better," reasons Chynoweth. "In the early projects we did, we just couldn't believe how much value you get by just spending a little bit more money on amp channels."

The array processing was modelled in Martin Audio's DISPLAY 2 and control is under the command of a dedicated DX4.0 processor. A further refinement is the application of 'Hard Avoid' to the stage. The entire signal transmission runs over two Dante networks - one of which the church has access to for patching audio sources around, while the second is a dedicated 'hidden' network for the PA. "We don't want someone patching in a Dante keyboard rig in and accidentally

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unpatching the bottom box of the right cluster," smiles Wheeler.

Summing up, Brandon Chynoweth says the church is delighted with the clarity and transparency of the new system. "Their front of house guy is a very accomplished studio engineer and knows what things should to sound like. To say he was impressed is an understatement. Their music minister is a touring artist and is used to high-end sound. Even before [Matt] tuned it, he was stunned." "And once we had the array processing and tuning dialled in, he was ecstatic," concluded Wheeler.

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