

SWG Events field Martin Audio WPL for Hampton Court Palace Festival



Occupying the stunning Tudor courtyard, the two-week Hampton Court Palace Music Festival returned recently with a top-grade line-up, performing in this spectacular Grade I royal palace setting, dating back to the early 16th century and once home to Henry VIII. Working within constraints of heritage buildings, and tasked with creating a technical infrastructure for the event in recent years has been SWG Events.

A major investment in the manufacturer's cutting-edge technology has enabled them to field an end-to-end solution (the latest acquisitions being further TORUS T1215 speakers and SXC118 single 18in cardioid subwoofers). This is in support of their flagship WPL Wavefront Precision line array which was deployed as the main PA hangs. All of which has this year delighted the many visiting sound engineers accompanying artists ranging from Gladys Knight, Kaiser Chiefs, Soft Cell, Kool & The Gang and Tom Jones, who have been playing to capacity audiences of 3,000 immersed within the Palace surrounds.

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Working again for promoters IMG, according to SWG Events Head of Audio, Simon Purse, this product streamlining has made their task a lot easier. “It’s the first time we’ve had a complete flagship Martin Audio system in our inventory and as a result we’ve been able to refine the design,” he confirms. “Everyone has been very complimentary—the FOH guys are loving the system.”

Despite having established a proven design template, rigging this 50ft x 50ft courtyard certainly wasn’t without its challenges. “It’s a massive, cobbled courtyard surrounded by walls and turrets,” he says. “And being a Grade I-listed building you have to be careful not only with cobbles but also shaking the ancient windows.” This required working within specific frequency response curves and managing content within control software. The lower frequencies are most problematic, but the DISPLAY software also needs to be programmed to ‘hard avoid’ the back wall.



Further complications are set from the flat floor stage which rakes upwards, as Purse explains. “We have only used six-box left/right arrays which are flown low because they have to fire up under an awning at the back. Run in one-box resolution [from the iKON amplifiers] this solution works very well.” In previous years we’ve used Blackline X8 as nearfield monitors, but there is no longer any

need for this. This is testament to the ability of freelance system tech, Matt Pope, who is on duty at FOH to assist any visiting techs with EQ curves and optimisations refinement.

The L/R hang is boosted by a centre, three-box hang of TORUS, (two T1215 and a single T1230) to give them a 75° coverage. On the stage lip are a further two ground stacked T1215 double cabs, stage left and right. Front fills comprise four pairs of Martin Audio WPM, over the stage apron, while 12 SXH218 2 x 18" subwoofers are set in a broadside cardioid array under the stage. "It's all about keeping that low-end energy off the rear wall - which is closest to the sub array - and ensuring that more energy is radiated out front," explains Simon Purse.

SWG Events have also thoughtfully provided a complement of XE500 floor monitors for artists not carrying their own package, while on each side of the stage two SXC118 subs can crossfire with two TORUS T1230 sidefills - a house rig that's available for any visiting techs to use. Other SWG personnel on duty at the event were overall project and production manager Ian Williams and Oliver Hayward supervising down in monitor world.

Pat Tunbridge, who has been Grace Jones' FOH engineer since 2010 was effusive in his praise for WPL. "Considering this gig was an internal courtyard inside a concrete box, what amazed me was that the system boys needed to apply no corrective EQ - and no EQ across the main left and right from the console either; that's a massive testament to the boxes. Not only did I have a really good experience but the artist herself was particularly pleased and said how great the show sounded."

All of which has set up SWG Events nicely for a busy summer season This promises to stretch the company's Martin Audio hire fleet to its very limits, as it not only includes their usual participation on several stages at the Glastonbury Festival, but also a series of Cardiff Castle concerts coinciding the same weekend.

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