Martin Audio WPL PA at Big Feastival



During what has proved to be a non-stop summer of activity for SWG Events, the production company has honed its Martin Audio PA rig into something nearing perfection. By the time they arrived at Blur bass guitarist Alex James’ farm near Kingham in Oxfordshire, where each year the three-day Big Feastival takes place, they were able to offer visiting sound engineers - who accompanied most of the acts - a deluxe set-up at front-of-house. With a combination of food and music spread over some 10 fringe stages, SWG Events supply audio, lighting, video and staging solutions alongside artist services, whilst deploying their class-leading audio inventory on the extraordinary width of the main stage.

According to Simon Purse, SWG Events Head of Audio, special care had been needed to ensure the VIP area, set off axis, was still within the coverage area of the outfills. Fully satisfied with the combination of 12-a-side WPL (main hangs) and 12-a-side W8LC (outfills) it was the elegant networking, subwoofer arrangement and overall control that brought most satisfaction to the service providers and promoters IMG.

Purse said this fully validated the event introducing Martin Audio’s flagship WPL for the first time. The key was to avoid projecting sound beyond the rear perimeter

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boundary, butting onto a second venue called the Cheese Hub - a double decker disco. “In previous years we’ve had problems in being able to avoid hitting this venue and disrupting the live music; we’ve used delays to aid in control, but this has never been a perfect solution and had led to compromises with audience and non-audience areas” states Purse.

WPL, which they were able to run without delays, offered a different approach entirely and enabled simple system adjustment. “It provided all the advantages of being able to avoid [the Cheese Hub] while enabling us to use fewer boxes than in previous years. Had there been an issue we’d have been able to deal with it because of the workflow, with a ready solution in place before any potential problem was experienced, rather than relying on a knee jerk reaction. In this instance we used an optimisation profile in the DISPLAY software that transitioned the area from ‘non-audience’ to ‘Hard Avoid’ and as a result the sound dropped off significantly.”



WPL was driven in 2-box resolution from Martin Audio’s process-controlled multi-channel iKON amps, and by using Martin Audio’s new DX4.0 dedicated system controller, they were able to place the legacy W8LC on the same network, allowing full system control from a single point. A further eight W8LM along the stage lip provided front fills and 12 x XE500 wedges were available to provide additional stage energy. Also providing premium stage fills on each side were a pair of TORUS

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T1230 point source boxes on top of two SXC118 cardioid subwoofers.

LF design provided a further success for SWG Events. Their solution was to deploy 14 x SXH218 enclosures as a castellated cardioid system - nine forward facing, five rear facing. “We have used DISPLAY to draw that out with the software’s new Subwoofer Calculator tool because of the width of the venue. This provides the delay times and enables us to design an arc shaped array of subs in time, rather than space. There is also a gain shading element where the volume of each of the subs is alternated to give a very rounded dispersion pattern. It works really well, and I’ve had great results with that all summer.”

It brought the best out of an all-star line-up that included Sigrid, Tom Grennan, Blossoms, Vaccines, Rick Astley, Everything Everything, Example, Hot Chip, Melanie C, Faithless, Natalie Imbruglia, Lightning Seeds, Faithless, Mae Muller, Katy B, Jake Shears, and their respective sound engineers were generally delighted. Sigrid’s long term sound engineer, Jan Halsvik was particularly complimentary. “This was my first time on this new Martin Audio system, and I had a great time mixing on it,” he said. “[The PA] seemed very well tuned for the site, and being able to blend the older boxes with the new made it sound like a seamless transition when walking the area. This worked well with the festival being a very family friendly one. “The whole system kept a tight and consistent output over the whole perimeter, and also stayed true between sound check and show. In fact it was extremely pleasurable having it sound as I had intended during sound check, providing me with ample headroom and solid low end.”

As ever the event’s success owed much to the extensive SWG Events team. Mark Bott was SWG’s operations manager and long-term event production manager; Joe Bailey was his production assistant; Matt Pope was both system engineer and FOH tech (Pope, in particular, was tasked with taking Simon Purse’s CAD design template and making any specific adjustments and fine tuning once on site). Other techs involved were Oliver Haward (monitors); Sam Jones and Daniel Wooles (patch).

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