

Martin Audio WPS debuts at Access The Festival



Facing his third year of providing technical services for Access The Festival (ATF), the three-day EDM dance party in Warwick's Sherbourne Park, events specialist Sound Access turned for the first time to Martin Audio's Wavefront Precision (WPS) for the sound reinforcement. The Festival, organised by DJs Will Darley and Alex Neidhardt, continues to evolve its concept (this year adding a third day). But mindful that with three stages in close proximity, and a lot of low-frequency energy to contain, Sound Access owner Joe Baker's rationale was simple. "The organisers wanted to upgrade the audio this year because we all felt that the listening experience was the most important."

In order to mitigate sound spillage, tight control was required. "Last year, noise rejection out the back was quite bad with the system we used," acknowledged Baker. But there were no such problems this year. Sound Access have collaborated with Martin Audio partner dBS Solutions on several tours - including Burn The Floor, where they carried a WPS rig. "It was the first time I had used it, and I had the best time. I never had to change my mix even when we dropped boxes for smaller venues, whereas with other systems you have to work hard to get that consistency."

When ATF came around Baker was back in contact with Chris Bogg at dBS Solutions

who was happy to cross-hire his WPS and TORUS systems for the summer party. Sophia Livett from noise consultants Acoustec set site sound thresholds, which Joe Baker knew he could meet by deploying Martin Audio's 'Hard Avoid' feature in the proprietary DISPLAY software.

The event featured live performance as well as DJ playback from house, disco and techno specialists. The main Daylight Disco stage was bedecked with mirrorballs and set in a Clearspan marquee, with a stage thrust, enabling dance aficionados to experience the extravaganza from all sides. On the opening night French exponents, Session Victim and Bomel starred with live sets which were played out through six WPS elements per side, ground-stacked on 2 x 4 decks, working within the limitations of the marquee structure. With this configuration they could project the sound above the head height but were restricted by the lower-than-expected roof height, and after time alignment they were experiencing bounce back of the roof girders. "With an accumulation of reflections, we used Hard Avoid [in DISPLAY]; this worked extremely well and gave us the coverage we wanted." They were comfortably able to achieve level at the FOH measurement position, with most of the HF firing down into the arena stage itself.

A pair each of TORUS T1230 on the outside edges of the marquee, where the audience was bleeding out, filled the gap perfectly and sounded "absolutely brilliant", according to Joe Baker. As for the LF, a broadside array of eight SXC118 single cardioid subs provided tight control and the all-important rear rejection in the 15m x 15m space. "This was necessary because the sound was firing out across a lot of farmers' fields and towards a noise sensitive country house," he explained. "We were only talking about notching 2dB at 50Hz, so it was nothing drastic, but without that noise rejection from the main stage we would have had massive problems." In the event they were able to isolate this area perfectly from the other two stages.

Martin Audio WPS makes high-octane debut at Access The Festival

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The smaller Groove Garden stage deployed a TORUS constant curvature ground-stacked system, three T1230 elements per side, attached via scaff bars and battens to the estate trees; these were illuminated by LED uplighters to create a great atmosphere. “TORUS was mounted on chain blocks above head height angled down to prevent any bleed,” continued Baker. “The coverage was fantastic even right down at the front. TORUS did what we wanted 100% - the quality was fantastic and when DJs did big HF sweeps the sound remained really clear without biting.”

Further Martin Audio XD12 were used as biamped DJ booth fills, while a pair of CDD6’s were deployed for front fill duties and a pair of WS218 subs (in stereo) were mounted onstage either side of the booth. Summing up, Joe Baker said the supreme control and optimisation characteristics of the Martin Audio software had paid dividends both within the sound field and offsite.

Chris Bogg put it all into perspective. “You could have a normal conversation as you walked into the tent but as soon as you crossed the threshold it was pumping. The pattern control once you walked into the tent was amazing. Once Joe had done a couple of tours on Martin Audio systems it was a natural step to advance the festival’s sound knowing that we were on hand to provide support if necessary.”

Will Darley agreed that the event had been an unqualified success. “Joe and the team did an awesome job designing, installing and operating the sound systems. Altered stage designs and site layout added to the challenge of meeting strict offsite noise limits while maintaining the energy required for dance music. The Martin Audio PA Joe spec’d this year was especially impressive and was recognised as a good upgrade by our touring guest DJs. I’m already looking forward to planning

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2024's edition with the great groundwork laid this year."

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