

MLA Receives Universal Thumbs up From Lollapalooza Sound Engineers

Technotrix field Martin Audio premier PA rigs on three stages



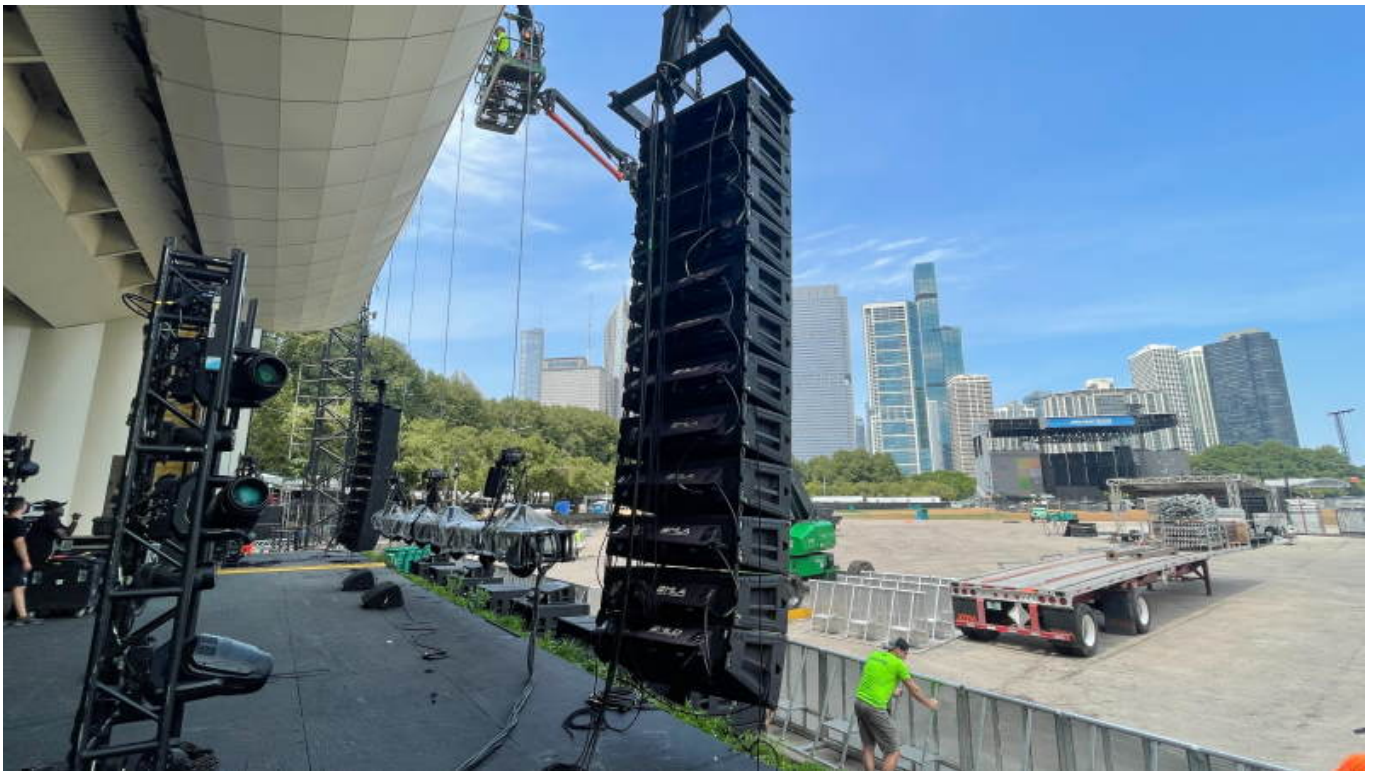
Martin Audio PA rigs dominated three of the eight stages that made up this year's four-day annual Lollapalooza Festival at Chicago's Grant Park.

The premier event - staged by C3 Presents, which dates back to 1991 - features over 170 bands from all round the world and attracts an audience of around 400,000 people.

Martin Audio partner Technotrix, who have been supporting the event with barely a break for 25 years, provided Martin Audio's award-winning systems for Tito's, the BMI Stage and Bonus Tracks Stage (which this year replaced the former Kidzapalooza).

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Technotrix hold a vast inventory of premier Martin Audio PA front-line systems stretching back several generations. For the BMI stage this year, Audio Department Manager Brent Bernhardt and BMI stage FOH crew chief Joe Mion, opted for an MLA Compact rig (six elements a side) on this small portable stage. These were reinforced by four blocks of two MLX subwoofers in a broadside array across the front as up and coming acts such as Migrant Motel, Mothica, phem, and Riz La Vie took to the stage.

Assisting them was a selection of XE300 reference monitors, and an SX218 drum sub, while a pair of Martin Audio CDD8 provided nearfield support for the audience at the front.

Stated Joe Mion: “About 50% of the bands brought their own sound engineer, with one using my festival file and the others bringing their own show file. And we received nothing but positive comments. Being a festival, it’s a headphone sound check rather than a live one and that makes sound engineers nervous. But the PA put them at ease, and particularly the subs, which received most comments—because of the sheer output from just eight boxes. Sound techs observed how fast and clean they were, and particularly their great throw.”

According to Brent Bernhardt, who has been involved with the event for the past 12 years, the real triumph was Tito’s, where ‘Hard Avoid’ in Martin Audio’s DISPLAY control software came into its own, helping to mitigate some of the rear reflections caused by the odd shape of the venue. “Having that tool in the box helped us avoid hitting the roof,” he exclaimed.

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Tito's presented the broadest and most eclectic of mixes, ranging from indie to hip-hop and EDM, country music singer-songwriters to soulful singer/guitarist Brittany Howard from Alabama Shakes. For this stage Technotrix upgraded the PA rig to 12 full MLA modules, with a single MLD Downfill at the base and seven blocks of two MLX, again in a broadside array. Providing front fills were four MLA Compact elements, while all non-active speakers, such as the floor monitors and SX218 drum fills, were powered by Martin Audio iKON amplifiers (some of which also appeared on the Lake Shore stage).



“It was the first year we had been involved with Tito,” noted Brent Bernhardt, “and it went extremely well. The throw of the PA had been a vast improvement on what I was led to believe had been the experience in the past.” And much of this was down to Technotrix’s system tech for that stage, Dan Steinman.

Finally, the service company were in action on the smaller Bonus Tracks, which was used for artists interviews and a broad range of performance “designed to get more outreach to a larger community than the previous kids’ stage” according to Joe Mion. This included the popular ‘Best of Chicago Drag’. Sound from this stage was reinforced by Martin Audio’s workhorse W8LC Compact Line Array, which has been a frequent visitor to Lolla over the years, and two pairs of WSX subs, stacked left and right. Supervising this stage for Technotrix was Aaron Adamczyk.

The event was supported by Martin Audio’s Joe Lima, who assisted with system optimisation and tuning, and whom the Technotrix team credit for providing excellent backup. “We know them all personally at Martin Audio, and couldn’t ask for better support,” they say.

Meanwhile, Lima's comments about the performance of the PA bore out those of Bernhardt and Mion. Summing up, he said, "This event proved that MLA is easily the most flexible large-scale festival sound system out there.

"We were able to generate different presets for different coverage needs, under variable atmospheric conditions and the response was always identical, which is critical for an engineer that soundchecks a band at 10am with 90% humidity and then starts the show at 7pm with 50% humidity and 10 degrees hotter. That kind of consistency is what our optimised systems (MLA and WP) deliver every day and knowing exactly how the rig is going to respond immediately on the first chord of the show is priceless."

He was reassured by the favourable comments received from visiting techs. "The FOH engineers for Black Pistol Fire and All Time Low, in particular, achieved some of the punchiest, most well-balanced mixes I've heard. They were ecstatic with the MLA rig at Tito's."

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