

LIVE SOUND

I N T E R N A T I O N A L

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IT ALL ADDS UP

Combining multiple elements with Fifth Harmony.

THE VITALS OF SYSTEM POWER & DISTRIBUTION

KICKING OFF DEVELOPMENT OF THE SEMI-SILENT STAGE

REAL WORLD GEAR: INSTRUMENT MICROPHONES



The Briggs & Stratton Big Backyard stage at this year's Summerfest, presenting a very wide coverage area.



THE RIGHT IMPRESSION

Deploying a new loudspeaker set at Summerfest in Milwaukee.

by Kevin Young

SUMMERFEST in Milwaukee enjoyed its usual successful run this year, attracting close to 1 million attendees to 11 stages at Henry Maier Festival Park on the lakefront that hosted performances from more than 700 bands over the course of 11 days. It's promoted as "The World's Largest Music Festival," and that title

has been certified by Guinness World Records since 1999.

Yet despite the staples of its long-term success, Summerfest also continues to change and evolve. That was in evidence this year with the arrival of a newcomer at the 8,000-seat Briggs & Stratton Big Backyard stage, where long-time production provider Clearwing Productions (Milwaukee, Phoe-

nix) deployed the recently unveiled al-12 larger-format line array from VUE Audiotechnik, which incorporate compression drivers utilizing the company's proprietary Truextent beryllium diaphragms, as the key components in the main sound reinforcement system.

The stage has been served by a variety of systems over the years, notes Bryan Baumgardner, who handles operations and logistics for Clearwing's audio department. One constant, however, is DiGiCo consoles, with an SD10 at front of house and an SD8 for monitors at the Big Backyard stage. "We've had a longstanding relationship with DiGiCo for this festival, and their market



Bryan Baumgardner at Clearwing in Milwaukee, in the shop with a DiGiCo SD5 console.

share has skyrocketed so it's on every stage because of rider acceptability," he explains, also noting that L-Acoustics loudspeakers remain a staple throughout the venerable annual event.

All stages are also supplied with a standard package of microphones and direct (DI) boxes. The roster includes a range of Shure BETA and SM Series mics for vocals and instruments joined by Radial Engineering J48 and Whirlwind IMP-2 DIs. Wireless systems and in-ear monitors are provided on a case-by-case basis, but are usually also models from Shure.

PUTTING IT TOGETHER

The deployment of the VUE al-12 marks its second use in the U.S. following a debut a bit earlier at BottleRock in Napa, CA over Memorial Day weekend. While Baumgardner designs the sound systems for the other Summerfest stages, he relied on Jeff Taylor with VUE (VP Americas) for his expertise in the design of the Big Backyard rig.

"When a manufacturer brings in a system, I rely heavily on them for optimum deployment," Baumgardner notes. "With the recent release of the al-12 system, Summerfest was a great opportunity to showcase what it's capable of."

Specifically, the main system utilized

10 VUE al-12 full-range modules per side, roughly 60 feet apart. Dual VUE al-8 compact modules providing down fill completed the arrays, with the bottom module in both about 15 feet above the deck. "With the height, as well as being flown a bit upstage, which is where the flybays are located, it covered the audience very well," Baumgardner says, adding that the arrays were driven by the new VUEDrive V3 Systems Engine providing



A look at one side of the VUE al-class arrays for audience and stage coverage.

power and loudspeaker management under SystemVUE monitoring and networking control.

Four more al-8 compact modules provided front fill, spaced evenly on top of a mono-block of eight self-powered VUE HS-212 subwoofers placed edge-to-edge, on-axis. An additional four VUE H-15N full-range powered loudspeakers helped reach the widest regions of a coverage area spanning up to 400 feet, directed outward off the sides of the stage.

AMPLE COVERAGE

Performers also had plenty of monitoring capability in being fed up to 12 mixes. Stage side fill was delivered by flown arrays at downstage left and right, each comprised of eight of VUE's smallest line array module, the al-4, and topped by dual al-4-SB cardioid subs in an end-fire configuration.

On stage, up to 10 VUE hm-112 monitor wedges could be positioned as needed, as could a half-dozen hm-212 subs. Two additional hs-25 subs could be deployed for drummers, while two h-12W loudspeakers were on hand to serve as DJ monitors.

Meanwhile, four L-Acoustics 12XT loudspeakers, driven by an LA4X amplified controller, were mounted from the roof of a platform at the rear of the venue that's 20-feet higher than the main audience space. They bolstered coverage and clarity for the VIP area.

USER EXPERIENCES

Brooklyn-based front of house engineer Ruwan Karu (Peaches, Lourdes, Nick Carter), who mixed Jack & Jack this year on the Big Backyard stage, had utilized VUE systems before but notes that they'd made no distinct impression until Summerfest 2016. "Probably because of the environment or the desk," he says. "But at Summerfest we had time to listen to the system and I had a really good desk to play around with. During sound check I walked around and there was a really good spread; that's one thing I noticed, and I was impressed."

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O.A.R. front of house engineer Michael Larcey mixed on the new system supplied for the Big Backyard stage.

It's an extremely wide venue in proportion to how deep it is, Karu continues: "My first concern was the spread. I didn't want to make it too loud because the venue isn't deep and I was looking for

clarity and could tell straight away, with the drum kit, that there was going to be plenty of punch in the bass."

Michael Larcey, Cleveland-based FOH engineer for O.A.R., also had praise for

his experience with the system. "It was clean and neatly rigged," he states, adding that although he initially thought the side fill rig looked small, "It definitely had powerful low end – tight, no flabbiness – and my mix came together quickly. I was impressed with the side fills. It was an easy day, I've got to say."

Ultimately, Baumgardner came away from the experience similarly encouraged. "I would have no problems whatsoever putting VUE gear on any of our other events. Everybody absolutely loved the system. We had so many compliments. I didn't hear a single negative thing. The FOH engineers loved it, the monitor engineers loved the wedges and side fills, and the systems sounded really good, very smooth." **LSI**

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