

GERMANY

# Rocking out

With more than 90 live acts on three stages across three consecutive days, and 85,000 fans per day, Rock am Ring is Germany's biggest festival. It also has a new Adamson line array, as Tom Becker reports

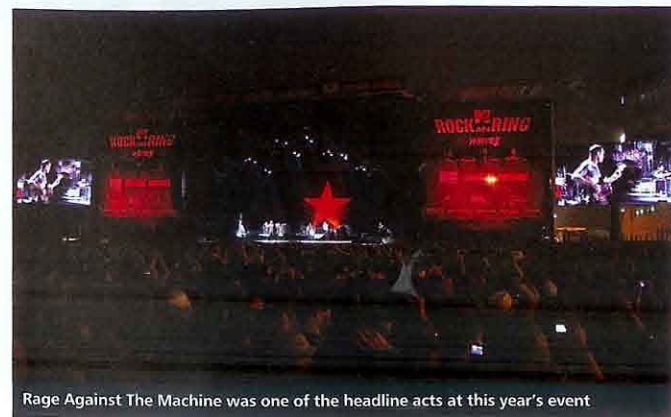
Since its launch in 1985, Rock am Ring has held the enviable position as, arguably, Germany's most famous festival, with world-class acts filling its stages year after year. Taking place at the Nürburgring motor-racing course – known to racing enthusiasts simply as 'The Ring' – this year's event ran from June 6-8. Metallica, Rage Against The Machine, The Verve, and Queens of the Stone Age were on the bill, and as if that wasn't enough, the event also boasted a rather impressive new Adamson sound system on its main stage.

Winning praise for the new system throughout the Rock am Ring weekend, Werner Renz of German rental and production company satis&fy must have been feeling pretty good about his sound reinforcement choice – two huge arrays of 16 Y-18 array loudspeakers that were flown on both sides of the centre stage. Eight T-21 subs were flown on both sides of the stage and four additional T-21 subs each were stacked underneath on both sides. Completing the system was a central cluster of six SpekTrix loudspeakers, plus four further clusters of SpekTrix on

nearfill duty. In all, the system had to cover an area approximating 300m.

Renz and his team installed two delay lines, with the first two stereo towers each carrying two arrays of 12 Y-10 boxes, plus six SpekTrix subs. For the second line, Renz deployed one array of 12 SpekTrix each, bolstered by a further four subs – and one giant LED screen.

Arnd Wagner of satis&fy's sound department was the technical sound director on all three stages and made sure everything ran smoothly. Proudly showing off the row of amplifier racks



Rage Against The Machine was one of the headline acts at this year's event

located behind the centre stage, he explained that the entire rig was driven by Lab.gruppen amplifiers.

"Adamson recommends Lab.gruppen, which is simply perfect for us – we already have them in our portfolio as we also work with V-DOSC. We have the experience and a sufficient amount of material on our shelves as well. In general we are using the Lab 4000 for the high-frequency signals and a Lab 6400 for the Y-18. For the T-21 we are using a FP 7000."

All of the amp racks worked together with XTA crossovers directed from FOH, with an impressive computer-rack to a tabloid PC, with which Jochen Sommer – who was responsible for Adamson's technical support in Europe – was able to walk around the festival site during performances, correcting delay levels or changing the nearfills.

It was also Sommer's job to work with Adamson's simulation software, Shooter. "I did all the simulations before we started using the factsheets that I had received from Arnd Wagner and Werner Renz of satis&fy," Sommer explains.

The system was mastered by six processors – five DP 448s and one DP 446, with two of the 448s deployed on the main rig. Sommer continues: "There we have a so-called mirror system; a slave unit for use in case of damage, which does exactly the same as the master unit." Two more 448s were used to control the two outfill and infill systems, with one 446 applied to the centre cluster and one channel of a 448 controlling the delays.

"With the delay lines we are working with a wireless transmitter from Köln-ton, which sends a high-power signal to the four delay positions. I only have a master crossover here to correct the delay level with the main PA system."

For audiophiles in attendance, the bass delay line included behind the front of house position was also of particular interest. Here the SpekTrix subs were arranged in a cardioid pattern, thereby reducing the bass sound at FOH to about 20dB.

Illustrating the size of Germany's biggest rock festival is the number of technicians that were on-site for the show – around 50 in total. Of that number, 12 were responsible solely for the centre stage, where seven bands played on each of the three days with a changing break of just 20 minutes.

As any hardened festival-worker will confirm, working with the artists was an important part of the technical support job. Wagner explains: "There are two front of house positions, so that we can really concentrate on the sound engineer of the next band that is due to play while we are still working with the sound guy of the band actually playing."

"This means that engineers have the entire set-time of the current band to configure the desk. We have the same system for monitoring at the side of the stage with

two engineers. Then we have some microphone technicians, a system operator, myself as the technical director, and one technician working at the splitters who distributes the patches of the bands to the right desks."

Renz is an old hand at this kind of thing, having worked in the industry since 1978. He was partly responsible for satis&fy's decision to invest in Adamson, and he's quick to explain why. "For me, this equipment is the best on the market, as it is an extremely dynamic system. The intelligibility of speech is extraordinary. Even if Adamson might be a bit exotic in



Two DP 448s mastered the main PA on the right and the left side

"This equipment is currently the best on the market, as it is an extremely dynamic system"

these latitudes – I am sure that within two or three years maximum, this PA system will be ranked top. Of course, every PA system serves its purpose, but this is the system I prefer at the moment."

Renz also explains why there were two analogue Midas Heritage 3000 consoles at the front of house – as well the "private" Digidesign Venue desk belonging to Rage Against The Machine. "At a festival there are always some people who want to change some things in no time, and for that they prefer analogue desks, as they can easily turn the knobs there. But maybe this will be different next year."

If Renz sounds laid back, then there's a good reason why. He's been doing this so long now that little surprises him these days. But that doesn't mean he doesn't call it hard work.

"The whole month of June is a challenge. If we have managed this month, I will be glad to hear the last of that." ❖

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