



Four delay towers of Adamson Y10 mean less pressure comes from the main PA

NETHERLANDS

Back to nature

Environmental issues take priority during Holland's Concert at Sea Festival, writes **Marc Maes**

For the fifth edition of the Concert At Sea Festival (CAS), held on the Brouwersdam nature reserve in Zeeland, the Netherlands in June, BLOF producer/FOH engineer Marty Brugmans boosted efforts to minimise noise overload in an attempt to make the event a green festival.

CAS was organised by BLOF for the first time in June 2006 as a one-day festival. The Dutch band has long had an interest in environmental issues and was the first group to stage a climate-neutral concert, held at the Philips Stadium in Eindhoven in 2007, offsetting the event's CO₂ emissions by investing in sustainable energy and forestry projects.

Throughout the years, BLOF and Brugmans have not slowed in their efforts to make CAS a green festival. With an attendance of between 40,000 and 55,000, strict organisation is crucial, from controlled public access and reserved car routes, extensive and well-

organised public transport and bike parking lots, to waste disposal.

"The whole festival has been subject to thorough assessment by ourselves, the local communities and the Province of Zeeland," explains Brugmans. "The festival site is in the middle of a nature reserve with plenty of protected fauna and flora. The event was timed to minimise hindrance for animals in their breeding season and I'm happy to say that our plans, including the restrictions to a sound level of 98dBA (75dBA backstage and fewer than 55dBA room behind the stage, where the nature reserve is), have been accepted by the authorities."

In 2008, Concert At Sea became a two-day festival, remaining faithful to the event's initial idea to offer a keen selection of Dutch and Belgian bands plus guests from abroad. This year's edition (25-26 June) opened with Kane and Gus Meeuwis; bands performing on Saturday included Rowwen Hèze, Milow, K's Choice and BLOF, the traditional headliner closing the Concert At Sea festivals.

"Three years ago, we started using returnable PLA biodegradable drinking cups," continues Brugmans. "The idea is to get the people moving so that they clean up their own mess. It's a first step because before this we collected the cups afterwards. We ask our partners to go for sustainable materials and pro-

duction. The catering companies use huge plastic bags for their PET bottles; a next step is that garbage is sorted out before transport. We also use electric scooters for crew transport."

Brugmans took on the sound design for the festival from day one – beaming the music towards the audience instead of into the nature reserve is the message. "The solution was to bring in more speakers," he says, "allowing us to 'wrap' the audience with sound."

In addition to the two main PA wings, consisting of 20 Adamson Y18 on each side with eight Adamson Spektrix outfills on each side and eight Spektrix as frontfill per side, Brugmans designed four delay towers holding eight Y10 Adamson clustered sets each. "The idea of adding extra delay speakers was implemented in the first year – the aim was to have less pressure coming from the main PA. Throughout the years, the stage has become bigger allowing us to fly more speakers and beam the sound towards the audience," he explains.

Having pioneered the cardioid speaker principle in 2006, Brugmans opted for 28 sub EML S318 speakers in two rows front stage, reducing bass noise at the back of the stage. "We went from 24 to 28 EML subs, resulting in a very equal sound in the front of the stage. By putting them in a horizontal line alongside the stage instead of stacking them left and right we get a great sound dispersion in the lows while keeping the back of the stage very quiet," he says. "The ideal would be that with the 100°

dispersion of the arrays, we could arrange some kind of a horizontal beaming towards the audience."

EML Productions Holland, which took on both sound and light for CAS, played along with BLOF's green mission and replaced half of the lighting inventory with VLX VariLite units, cutting power substantially. "I'm afraid we cannot do the same when it comes to sound design," says Stephan Temps, freelance sound engineer and sound designer at EML. "What we did is send contra-riders to the bands informing them of the issues we're dealing with – but in the end it's us taking care of the extra restrictions in the background; we make sure the cardioid subs are in place and that the delay system works properly. We allow sound engineers to focus on their jobs without having to worry about environmental restrictions."

"The same goes for the artists," echoes Brugmans. "They need to be taken care of – and although we don't really advertise our climate-neutral status, it's the details, like offering local green food, that make the difference."

Both Brugmans and Temps agree that the current system configuration offers the best results given the specific situation of the event. "The outcome is really phenomenal and all of the engineers (and the audience) like the way Concert At Sea sounds – what else do you want?" Brugmans concludes. ♦

www.concertatsea.nl

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