

BELGIUM

# EML repeats twin site hat-trick

Arras and Werchter festivals running simultaneously provides a new challenge for the rental company, writes **Marc Maes**

Eleven years after promoter Herman Schueremans decided to change the Torhout/Werchter double festival into a four-day event in Werchter, rental company EML has again catered for sound and light in two locations simultaneously. Just when memories of years of hectic nightly move-overs of equipment between Torhout and Werchter began to fade ("100 stage hands loaded eight trailers within the hour and rushed under police guidance from Torhout to Werchter – that was a great time," remembers sound engineer and main stage manager Patrick Demoustier), EML became involved in the production of the Arras Main Square festival, organised by Live Nation France and Schueremans.

"While 10 years ago we had the biggest Martin F2 configuration ever, we now have the biggest Adamson rigs ever displayed at a festival," says Wim Despiegelaere, sales manager at EML Productions. "Both the (three-day) Arras and (four-day) Werchter festivals are staged during the same weekend – and the events use an almost identical configuration: in Arras we use fewer delay speakers and smaller outfills."

Despiegelaere said that EML has grown organically with the Werchter festival. "More technology and more everything," he laughs. "Ten years ago we switched from F2 to Adamson – it was during the full line array hype and we had to play along. But with 90% of our turnover affected in concert touring, investing in compact equipment that would reduce transport costs was more important than being fashionable with array systems. After a comparative shoot out, Adamson came out best for us."

With 120 Adamson Y18 cabinets used over the combined Arras/Werchter weekend, Despiegelaere teamed up with French rental company MPM and European Adamson distributor DV2. "Together with MPM and DV2 we have invested in 48 Adamson Y18 back-up speakers for major assignments," explains Despiegelaere.

In Werchter, EML installed 64 Y18 cabinets and 48 EML S318 subs for main stage PA plus 32 Y18 speakers as delay sets. In Arras the system featured 56 Y18 speakers and 32 Adamson T21 subs as the main system plus 16 Y18 as delay speakers.

This year marks the first time that EML has supplied only one set of analogue XL4-H3000 Midas consoles for FOH and monitors for the Werchter festival. "We see that more and more international bands bring their own consoles, multicores and microphones," says Patrick Demoustier, sound designer for both festivals. "Today's challenge is to stuff all the bands' consoles in the FOH tent, some days this is up to eight desks."

On the opening day of Werchter, only two bands used the standard analogue consoles and Demoustier somewhat regrets this evolution. "When we supply the whole set we know where to look, now it's more like working with custom-build configurations, which is more complicated."

"It's a pity that the industry failed to create a single standard for digital consoles to facilitate the job – only DiGiCo did. And then there's the Adamson line array perfectly reproducing the sound colour of any console," adds Despiegelaere.

This current evolution inspired Demoustier to supply DiGiCo SD7 consoles as standard configuration for next year's Werchter festival. Pending the bands' specs, the current Midas consoles would then be replaced. "The plan also includes an extra DiGiCo console backstage for sound engineers to prepare the set and get additional information on handling when necessary," enthuses Demoustier. "We are thinking about testing the digital console strategy at the next Pukkelpop festival to assess the feasibility – sooner or later we must go ahead with this anyhow."

In addition, Demoustier plans to install extra delay towers in Werchter next year, if the festival keeps growing.

The Arras and Werchter festivals also shared some artists on the bill, including Rammstein, Pearl Jam and Pink, mainly affecting EML's lighting

job. The company employs a crew of 30 in Werchter, with an extra eight people at night for light specials. In Arras some 25 people take care of the production. "Nothing compares to Pukkelpop where we have 150 hands working on seven stages," Despiegelaere says.

Still, Demoustier says providing sound and light for two major festivals, attracting 35,000 (Arras) and 80,000 (Werchter) fans each of the festival days is a major logistical challenge. "Both Rammstein and Pink have a gigantic set, leaving no flexibility at all – we have to break down 4m of main stage during a 45-minute change over – not an easy task."

The Werchter festival, with 54 bands on two stages, was headlined by



Some 32 Adamson Y18 speakers were used as delay sets at Werchter

Faithless, Green Day, Rammstein and Pearl Jam; Main Square hosted 35 bands including Black Eyed Peas and Jamiroquai. ♣

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35,000 people visited Arras each day of the festival