

Martin Audio MLA at Rock in Japan



The Covid 19 pandemic has had a profound effect on the music industry in recent years, not least being on the international festival circuit, where many established events were forced to close.

Rock in Japan, the country's largest festival was no exception, and suffered the same hiatus in 2020 and 2021. However, this year, it was finally ready to make its return and it did so in very different fashion. The five-day event was reborn as an urban style festival in a new location, having moved to the Soga Sports Park in the attractive coastal resort of Chiba from its previous home of Hitachinaka.

However, the change of location had been a major concern for those managing and promoting the shows. For Soga Sports Park is located near residences and in a densely populated shopping area - hardly ideal for holding a loud rock show. Additionally, it was the first time that a festival had taken place here. The potential of noise pollution problems caused huge headaches for the production team.

"We had to adopt a completely different the approach," stated Shuzo Fujii, president of MSI Japan, the sound production company. "Up until now, we have always focused on how far we could throw our MLA loudspeaker array, but this time we had to think in an opposite direction."

With Tomoya Shitakubo, who also acted as system tech, in charge of the design, they devised a unique solution which had not been adopted previously - importing a number of delay towers and developing a distributed sound system. MSI acknowledge that in the history of Japanese festivals, the distributed sound system approach had not been attempted, and so this became a voyage of discovery for both for the promoters and MSI crews.

“The promoter is our client, and he has specified MLA for the past 10 years,” stated Shuzo Fujii, who also acted as chief engineer for the event. “Everybody had faith that MLA would be able to overcome this difficult problem.”

The two main stages were both equipped with eight MLA per side for the main PA system. These were reinforced by 18 MLX subwoofers in cardioid pattern. The subs were set in two 3 x 3 cabinet stacks - on both sides of the stage - with the middle one in each reversed. In addition, seven MLA arrays comprising seven elements were set in four locations as the delay towers (with eight delay towers in total).



Generally, delay towers are set symmetrically to provide coverage for both sides. However, these were positioned only for coverage on one wing in order to reduce the spill to the neighbouring residential area. The result was amazing. There was no difference in sound level, starting at the FOH mix position and sufficient power was distributed across the entire venue, meeting the required SPL and quality of sound.

“The result was a major success, not only because of the unique distribution design but also because of the controllability of MLA system. Once again, I was able to appreciate the wonderful capability of this loudspeaker,” Shuzo concluded.

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