

funktioning fine

MICHAEL EAVIS RETRACTS STATEMENT CONDEMNING FUNKTION-ONE SYSTEM AT GLASTONBURY

Audio manufacturer Funktion-One and several key production crew personnel have claimed that *Glastonbury* Festival founder and chief Michael Eavis wrongly blamed FI's Resolution Series PA system for the dramatic drop in volume during The Killers' Saturday night set on the Pyramid Stage.

Eavis condemned the system during a press conference on the Sunday morning, saying it was not "strong" enough, but later retracted his statement when he was told freak weather conditions were at fault. By then, news of the insufficient volume levels had already made the national press.

NME.com reported that Eavis announced: "I'm sorry about the sound... we're using a similar system to what we used at Glastonbury Abbey's concert. But some people's experience was that it wasn't loud enough on the Pyramid Stage. I was disappointed with it and I'm looking to move to a different system for next year."

However, after discovering that environmental consultancy Capita Symonds had instructed FOH to turn down the sound to reduce abnormally high offsite noise levels, Eavis apologised, stressing that the PA system and highly skilled technical team were in no way responsible or at fault for the complaints. Unfortunately, the switch from a line array back to a point source system at the festival was a revolutionary moment within the live sound industry that went down in history for all the wrong reasons.

THE REAL STORY

Production manager for the Pyramid Stage and Other Stage, Dick Tee, said: "The sound was fine on Friday and Sunday, but there were unusual weather conditions on Saturday making the sound carry further than what was acceptable. This resulted in direction from the licensing



authority that it had to be reduced, but this reduced noise to insufficient levels in the arena itself. This was then stabilized."

The terms of the festival licence state that offsite noise level must not exceed 60dB(Aeq, recorded as a 15 minute average. The Pyramid FOH was operating at a level of around 98dB on the Friday and Capita Symonds reported no breach of the regulations at the perimeter points. However, although the mix position maintained a level of 98dB on the Saturday night, the noise at the perimeter dramatically increased.

It was freak weather conditions, not a malfunction of the PA system, that caused this, according to Pyramid Stage PA co-ordinator Chris Beale. He added that the morning rain created warmth and humidity that later reacted with the evening chill to form an "abnormal temperature inversion", with warm air on the ground and cold air on top. The boundary where these two temperatures meet affects noise levels. "It was a bizarre evening where you could hear people talking from really far away," he recalled.

Capita Symonds, who worked for operations director and licence holder Melvin Benn, reacted swiftly and directed the Pyramid Stage to reduce sound levels in order to comply with the regulations set out by the licence.

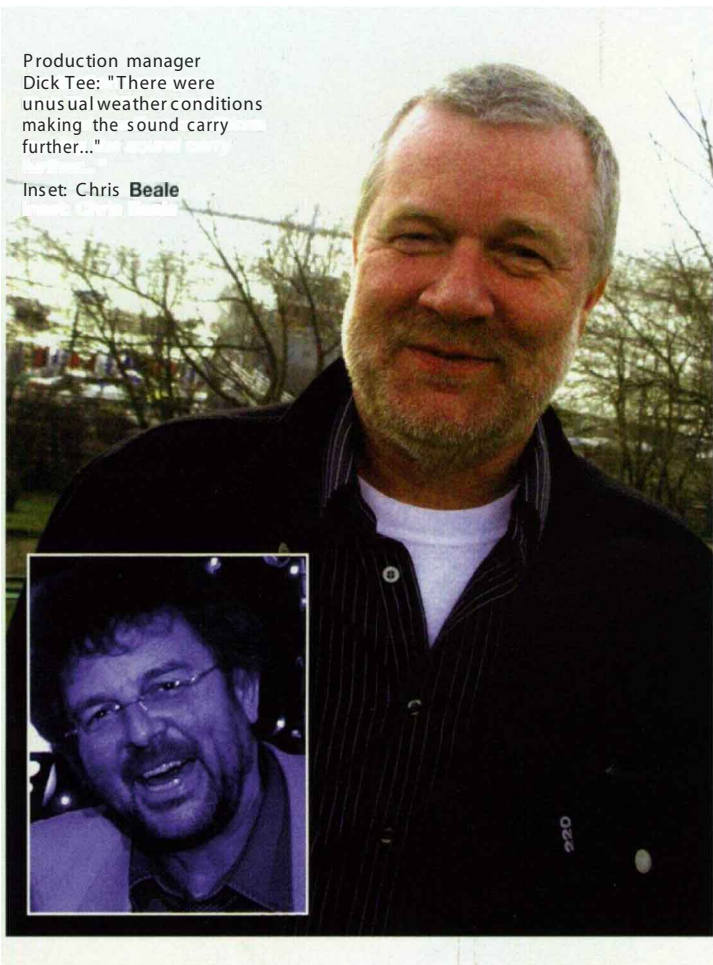
Tony Andrews, owner of Funktion-One, said: "When instructions from the noise police to turn down the sound arrived at FOH, the crew's natural instinct was to obey and protect the licence of the festival."

FOH decreased sound levels to around 92dB, and considering a loud show would be around 100-103dB and a quiet one roughly 98-99dB, this level was highly insufficient. It was effectively six times as quiet. The crowd reacted vocally, many chanting "turn it up" and some beginning to push at the front of the stage.

Beale investigated the meters at the monitoring

Production manager Dick Tee: "There were unusual weather conditions making the sound carry further..."

Inset: Chris Beale



"The whole sound crew were hugely demoralized..." — Tony Andrews

position and discovered that even at this low level, the perimeter noise was still above the limit. He said: "When the Pyramid Stage went quiet between songs, the meters still read 62dB, and only went up by 2dB when the music came back on again." He added that, from that position, the Pyramid wasn't contributing the bulk of the noise and they could even hear sound from the Other Stage. "It was bizarre that the Other Stage sound wasn't reduced as well," he said.

Tony Andrews agreed: "When The Killers' sound was operating at around 92dB, the offsite levels were over the limit. However, on Sunday when the FOH recorded 100dB, the threshold limit was not reached," he said. "The noise levels were different every day depending on the weather."

The FOH crew eventually decided to turn the volume back up after the crowd became increasingly frustrated and it was feared their safety may be put at risk. Andrews stated: "We knew that if we didn't turn it up we would risk security and people's frustration would explode. We were thinking of the licence for next year, but we didn't want to short change the audience either."

However, the damage had already been done. Michael Eavis responded to complaints from the BBC and other media by blaming Funktion-One before he knew the facts. It was hardly surprising, given the amount of attention paid to the Pyramid Stage and the amount of interest invested in the original line array system, that many were quick to follow his example.

Chris Beale commented: "Glastonbury is a festival where you can't win, particularly on the main stage, because it is seen as the jewel in the crown of UK festival production and there's so much attention paid to it. You've only got to drop a spanner and everyone points the finger. It happened to SSE and it will happen to anyone."

The festival organisers' decision to abandon line array technology and choose the Funktion-One Resolution S system was contentious in many eyes, and this atmosphere of tension fed the blame that Michael Eavis initially placed on the strength of the system.

"FI are building a system which opposes the technology that the entire

industry has invested in and it's not surprising there was comment from other companies to protect their own business," added Beale. "Some people said the system sounded brilliant and others said it sounded rubbish, even during the same set. I've never heard that range of comments before."

Pyramid Stage production crew stressed that the only real noise problem arose during The Killers' set and that any other fluctuations in sound could be put down to the disparity of the sound engineers and equipment that came to work with the system (as noted by the BBC).

"The whole sound crew were hugely demoralized by it," said Andrews. "This was a tiny incident out of the whole three days that masked everything else. We had no overruns, no time loss, and we did not break the curfew. Our equipment was out in the rain for a week from the Monday and there wasn't a single failure. Michael Eavis even said he was pleased with the system on Friday when he came backstage."

Beale defended the FOH team: "The crew that worked on the Pyramid Stage sound system were second to none — in fact, one of the fastest, most organised and professional teams that I have ever had the privilege to work with. The press reports about the sound levels on Saturday evening for the Killers are unfair to those people and to the system."

Andrews called for more flexible offsite noise regulations in the future in order to accommodate freaky weather conditions. He enthused: "If this carries on, outdoor festivals will be killed off. We need to start asking whether the inconvenience of half a dozen people should prevail upon the enjoyment of 80,000."

Perhaps, as Chris Beale suggests, an ascending scale of noise level throughout the day, whereby loud music is limited to a few hours in the evening, could deter future complaints and lessen the need for strict noise level monitoring.

He concluded: "There is definitely a case for a review because we have safety issues. We need to be proactive and find a practical solution."

Rachel Esson

*Our main Glastonbury feature begins on page 44

glastonbury07



RACHEL ESSON FIGHTS RAIN AND MUD TO REPORT ON THE PYRAMID STAGE PRODUCTION ACTION, AND OTHER HIGHLIGHTS FROM ACROSS WORTHY FARM...

This June's 2007 edition of the *Glastonbury Festival of Contemporary Performing Arts* was unfortunately stained with a muddy aftertaste, not only from the persistent inclement weather, but also from the dark cloud surrounding Michael Eavis' hasty critique of the Funktion-One PA system, as detailed separately in our news feature.

What needs to be addressed, however, is the real story of the festival — the true success of Funktion-One's involvement, and the pure passion and hard graft that went into making the biggest Glastonbury yet. So let's throw some sunshine on memories.

After an absence in 2006, this was the year *Glastonbury* went BIG. In March, Mendip District Council granted a four-year licence for the festival, which supported an increase in attendees from 150,000 to 177,500, a larger site, new campsites and

the addition of Emily Eavis' Park entertainment area. The dance music side is also expanding and the main dance arena (the East Dance Stage) was one of the focal points, with high profile artists including Fatboy Slim, Carl Cox and Mark Ronson.

By 9am on Thursday morning — a day before the festival actually kicked off — 74,292 visitors (almost half the audience) had arrived. They swarmed through the gates at a rate of 5,000 people per hour to attend the three-day festival from Friday 22 June.

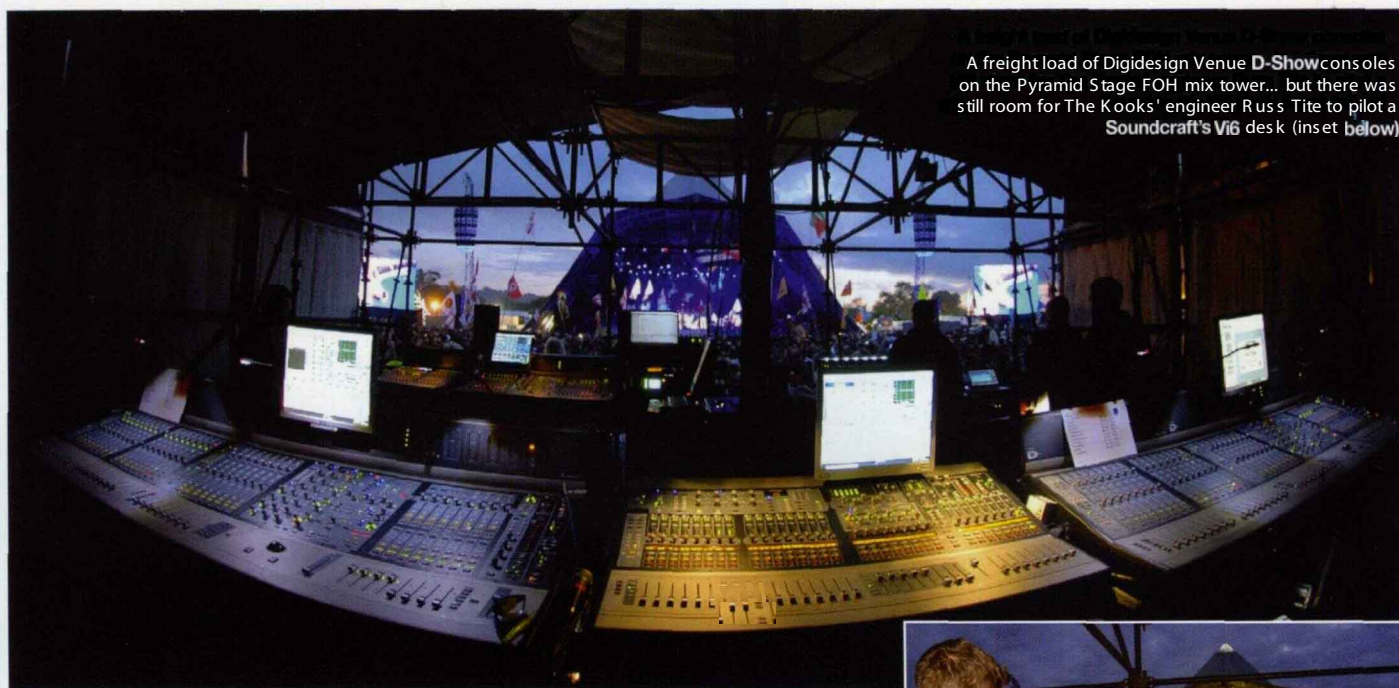
'Glasto' is the longest-running greenfield festival in the UK. It was created in the wake of the declining hippy movement and the success of the *Woodstock* and *Isle of Wight* festivals, although its catalyst was the performance by Led Zeppelin at the 1969 *Bath Blues Festival* watched by local dairy farmer Michael Eavis and his wife Jean (Emily's mother). Inspired by the overwhelmingly positive atmosphere, they hosted their

own version at their home, Worthy Farm, the following year.

Since 2002, the festival has been run by a company created each year by Mean Fiddler plc and Glastonbury Festivals Ltd, with the majority of the latter's profits going to charities, such as Greenpeace, Friends Of The Earth, Water Aid, Oxfam, Future Forests and the Piers Simon Appeal.

This year's headlining performers on the iconic Pyramid Stage were The Who, Arctic Monkeys and The Killers. As the sun went down on the Friday evening, The Fratellis and Kasabian attracted huge crowds, the latter really capturing the spirit of the festival. Arctic Monkeys followed with an electrifying set with many tearing up the mud to 'I Bet You Look Good On The Dancefloor'. Dame Shirley Bassey was surprisingly 'just right' for the moment, and The Marley Brother raised spirits as the sun came out with their





A freight load of Digidesign Venue **D-Show** consoles on the Pyramid Stage FOH mix tower... but there was still room for The Kooks' engineer Russ Tite to pilot a Soundcraft's **V16** desk (inset below)



heartfelt renditions of their dad Bob's classics.

The Other Stage saw impressive sets by **Babyshambles**, (Kate Moss took the mic for a few lines), The Coral, Arcade Fire, Bjork, Klaxons, Maximo Park, Editors, Iggy & The Stooges, Mika, The View and Chemical Brothers, among others. Over on the John Peel Stage, the brashness of Beth Ditto from The Gossip's signature song 'Standing in the Way of Control' was heightened by her random impulses to strip and bare her bum. The crowd also over-spilled from the boundaries of this tent for Mark **Ronson**, Just Jack, Jamie T, Hot Chip, The Maccabees and The Twang.

At the end of this year's festival, infrastructure manager Bob St. Barbe, who had the mammoth task of looking after the drainage, toilets, roads, bridges and exterior fences, said: "It was a huge job and all the crew spent the entire weekend maintaining the site."

After an investment in the region of £250,000, Taunton Environmental Agency together with a consultant installed a huge amount of new drainage to cope with the extra influx of people. "We had more drainage than last year. There was a lot of surface water throughout the site, which was inevitable given the constant rain, but in no place did we have flood

water," added St. Barbe.

He quoted some site figures to portray the scale of the event: "We had a total of 9.2 million litres of water delivered. 500 tonnes of straw to soak up the rain. 400 tonnes of wood chip, 14,000 tonnes of stone for the roads, an initial supply of 175,000 toilet rolls, which was increased by 100,000, and Eve Trakway laid 12,000 metres of road to drive on."

Just eight noise complaints were received from local villagers and Mendip District Council stated that it was pleased with the overall management of the festival, including the increased numbers. The only major breach of the licensing conditions was Bjork's over-run on the Other Stage — not bad for a three-day festival featuring over 1,000 bands!

ON THE PYRAMID

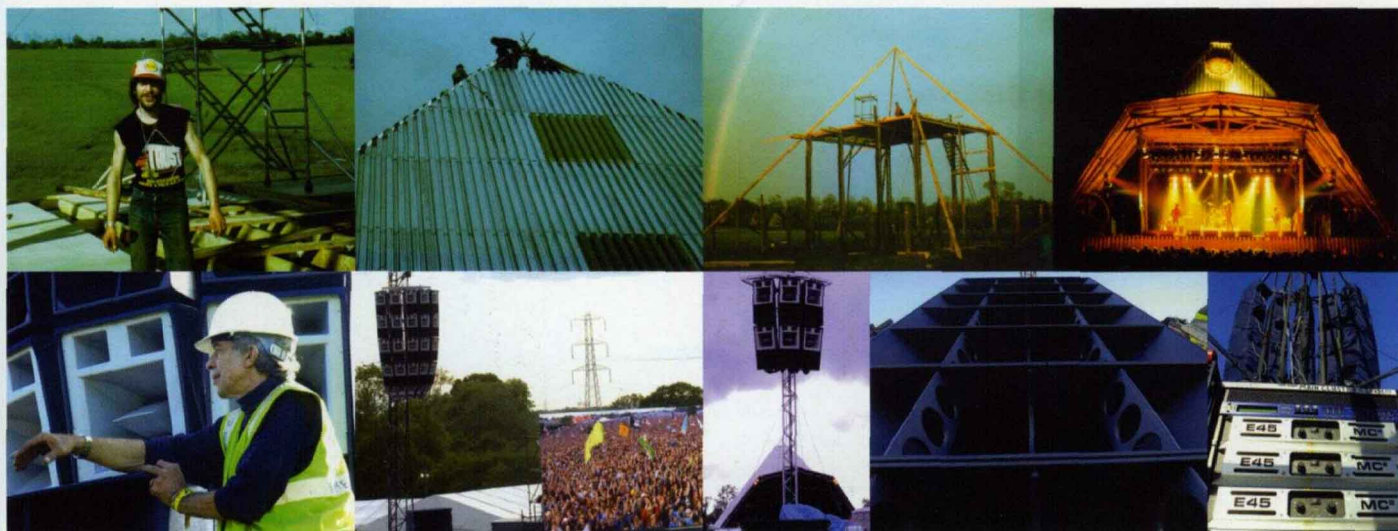
Michael Eavis and Dick Tee, production manager for the Pyramid Stage and Other Stage, decided to use the Funktion-One Resolution 5 system after hearing it on trial at the *Glastonbury Abbey Extravaganza* in 2006.

Tee, who has been involved with *Glasto* for over 10 years, calls himself one of the 'old men of the

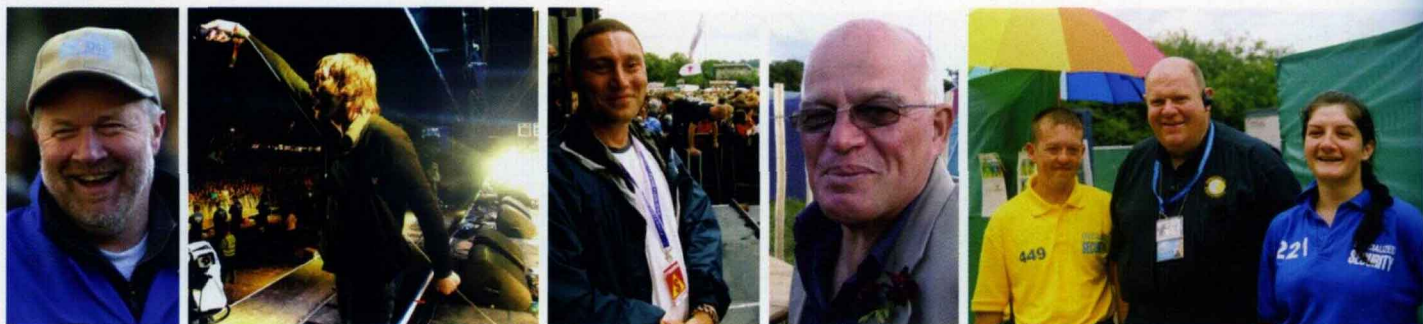
festival"! He said: "We were very impressed with the system and decided it could be the one to solve problems we've had in the past with keeping within the confines of the licence in terms of offsite noise."

He was helped by a hard-working team that included deputy production manager Yasha **Morgenstern**, senior production assistant Amy **Harmsworth**, and site managers Dave **Wilkie** and Tim **Rodger**.

Tee's initial exploration of PA options resulted in Tony Andrews and John Newsham at Funktion-One being invited to collaborate with festival sound co-ordinator Chris **Beale** of CBA and environmental sound



How things have changed — Funktion-One's Tony Andrews working on the original Pyramid Stage in 1981 (top row)... and back there again in 2007 with F1's Resolution Series system, powered and processed by MC2 and XTA (above).



Pyramid Stage vibes... left to right Production manager Dick Tee; **Kasabian** and a glimpse of the **on-stage** Synco monitor wedges; **Funktion-One's** David **Bruml**; festival infrastructure manager Bob St. **Barbe**; Specialized Security's Stephen Connor, **MD** Tom Clements and Claudia **Foresti**.

consultant David **Leversedge** of Capita Symonds to present a design using Resolution Series loudspeakers, supplied by Essex rental company Audio Plus.

Andrews was involved with the very first **Glastonbury** Festival when the London underground came together to create a free festival, with the likes of the Pink Fairies and David **Bowie**. His and **Newsham's** Turbosound Rentals supplied sound for the festival for many years.

"Back then we had what we called 'the festival system' which was a forerunner of the Flashlight," Andrews mused. "We later got into Turbosound TMS-3s because people wanted it all in one box, then we got the Flashlight together in the early 90s."

Andrews and Newsham left **Glastonbury** in '92 to pursue manufacturing and set up **Funktion-One**. Britannia Row continued to supply the Turbosound Flashlight system for most of the '90s, until it decided to bring in the V-DOSC line array. This system lasted

one year, then SSE took over with the Nexo GEO system, before Audio Plus was brought in this year to supply the Funktion-One system.

Said Andrews: "There's a pretty cool group of people together now who are seriously professional, very committed and into it because they want to experience excellence; it's not a grind to get through, it's a place to shine."

Audio Plus also supplied sound to the Orange tent and other areas, as it has done in the past. Stage managed by Steve Jones from Stage Miracles, the Pyramid Stage featured main left and right PA clusters with 5 x 4 flown **Res5s** and five **Res4Ds** for underhang. Additional left and right inner clusters each included 2 x 3 **Res5s** and three **Res4D** underhangs. To cover the centre crowd at the front of the stage and increase the bass in that area, there were four equally spread stacks of 2 x 2 **F221s**.

Main system technician 'Chubbs', who was

supported by **Arron** Smith and crew member 'Sticks', said: "We also had a column of eight **F221s** per side on a high riser. We went to great lengths with the bass to make it more directional and ensure there was no rear spillage." They achieved this by introducing bass baffle panels and a sponge layer either side of the columns and blocking the foot of space underneath it.

For super long-throw delays there were four equally spaced towers each with 3 x 2 **Res5s** and two **F221** subs underneath. Chubbs commented: "This is a very directional speaker, which precisely focuses on the area we want it to go to."

On the back of the FOH tower, where people could view the stage via a video screen, they attached a single **Res2** so that no one lost out on sound, even if they couldn't see.

XTA processors had an increased presence throughout the festival this year. The Pyramid Stage featured a mixture of 16 **DP448s** and **DP446s** in its

FOH and monitor control systems. Apart from the **XTA**-powered **F221s**, amplification was via **MC2 E45s**. Chubbs explained: "We used these across everything even though it's the most powerful amp, because it give us the headroom and reserve power."

Sound crew chief Stefan Imhof said: "On the Friday I was overwhelmed with the amount of people saying how good the sound was. The system did exactly what we wanted it to do." **Arron** Smith also spoke fondly of the system: "Everyone is really happy with what we have done with the Funktion-One. When you stand in the middle of the field there's minimal phasing. This box looks after itself; there are no control racks, just a computer, and you need minimal EQ."

• It wasn't only the Pyramid Stage that boasted a Funktion-One system — Audile of Manchester provided one for the East Dance Stage, comprising Resolution 5s and **F221** subs, with a range of **XTA** units including two **DP448s** at FOH, with a **DP324 SIDD** inserted over the left and right channels being used for system EQ.