

## GOOD VIBRATIONS EVERYWHERE

The inaugural Good Vibrations attempted to put a new slant on preconceived ideas of 'the music festival'. And, to all intents and purposes, it succeeded writes **Cat Strom**

### LOOKING TO CREATE GOOD

karma and vibes in natural surroundings, Australia's Good Vibrations festival concentrated on hip-hop, roots, breaks, house, and rare groove set over three main stages. Two stages predominantly featured top-quality live acts, while the third showcased DJ talent from the world over. A fourth area contained a cocktail bar and some suitably laid-back DJs to accompany a well-shaken Martini or two.

Good Vibrations founder Justin Hemmes wanted the festival to be about the cutting-edge of music, remembering the original festival spirit, before things turned to big name draw cards and corporate robbery. Music and dancing was at the centre of the festival, giving music fans the opportunity to come together for the event as a whole and absorb the atmosphere. All of the Good Vibrations events – held this year in Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne – were staged within natural surroundings. Certainly, having botanic gardens and natural amphitheatres as the backdrop for proceedings helped to create a relaxed and inviting environment. Acts appearing included Moloko, Nitin Sawhney, Jazzie B and the Soul II Soul Sound System, Asian Dub Foundation Sound System, Blackalicious and Gang Starr.

Norwest Productions supplied all audio requirements for the festival including a Funktion-One PA for the



Residents around the Centennial Park venue tend to be well-to-do professionals with plenty of money and clout, and they were not prepared to have their Saturday night disturbed by mellow grooves. 'It made the evening very challenging,' says Shapcott. 'Ideally it should have been about 105dB.'

**Clockwise from top left: Moloko on stage; The FOH outboard rack; Funktion-One speaker hang; The Good Vibrations festival in Sydney; Norwest FOH systems engineer Ian Shapcott.**



main stage. Norwest FOH systems engineer Ian Shapcott was posed with a few problems when setting up the rig: 'We had problems flying the PA under the towers provided,' he explains. 'There was a main support underneath where the PA was flown. This meant that the PA had to be pulled forward every time we wanted to add a layer of boxes. Unfortunately we couldn't achieve the desired trim height'

An even bigger restriction at the Sydney concert was the imposed sound pressure level limit of 95dB.



In fact, circling the expansive park while looking for the site, there was no noise to indicate the correct location of the event. And between the four stages there was very little bleed of sound, except for a slight bottom end from the Big Top. The setup consisted of 30 Resolution 5 boxes, 10 Resolution 4 wide-dispersion boxes, 24 F218 double 18-inch bass enclosures and six Resolution 2 front-fill cabinets. Eight racks of six of the Lab Gruppen FP6400 amplifiers powered all.

Of the Funktion-One PA system Shapcott says: 'I enjoy using it for the fact that it has less distortion than most systems, and that it doesn't have a compression driver on the upper mids, resulting in a very smooth response through 2kW to 4kW. It's configurable in many ways and is also small and light. It's a very hifi, audiophile-type sound because it has less distortion and the super tweeters seem to cut through very well in the 10kHz region.'

After using the Funktion-One PA



on last year's European tour, it has become a firm favourite of Moloko's FOH sound engineer and manager, Graham Peacock. Even though he had to run the PA at a much lower volume than he would have liked, he still achieved clarity and precision. 'It has a transparency that a lot of the other systems just don't have,' he says. 'With the advent of line arrays, everyone is getting fooled into believing that they are the answer to everything. While it's fantastic for outdoors, a line array doesn't

really work indoors. Funktion-One is the most versatile system I've ever used – it out-performs everything, indoors and outdoors.'

The new Lake Technology Lake Contour EQ and loudspeaker processor was also deployed, the first time that Shapcott had used one. 'Getting around the software took a bit of time,' he admits. 'It's an extremely nice sounding piece of gear – due to the ADDA converters.'

Outboard processors included a Klark Teknik DN360 graphic equaliser, two Drawer DS201 stereo noise gates, one dbx 160SL comp/limiter, two dbx quad comp/limiters, two TC Electronic Money dual effects, a TC Electronic Dato Multiplan delay and a Yamaha SPX990.

While most acts used the supplied Soundcraft Series 5/52 console, Peacock chose a Midas XL4, also supplied by Norwest. 'Mixing Moloko is a very delicate operation,' says Shapcott. 'It may seem like a great cacophony of stuff coming off the stage but it's a real delicate balance to get it right. If you have one thing out of place the whole thing falls apart. You need to really know the music intimately. My actual desk of choice is a Midas XL3 because I prefer the sound of it against the XL4. They sound extremely warm and are easy to use, but unfortunately they are getting harder to come by these days. However the XL4 is my next choice of desk and it performed brilliantly in Sydney. They sound great and are extremely functional. To be honest, we're outgrowing the XL3 in terms of channels anyway.'

Mixing Moloko appears a challenging job, with Shapcott performing more of a dance than a straightforward mixing job. With all of the running around the equipment that he has to do, the last thing he needs to have to do before a show is re-programmed effects. Consequently Shapcott always tours with his own rack of effects. 'One thing I acquired for the 2003 tour is a Yamaha SPX2000, which sounds fantastic,' he says. 'Most of the other effects are really old but it all sounds great.'

It has to be said that Shapcott comes across as one of the most dedicated and thorough sound engineers you are likely to meet. 'I think it's really important to get a feel for the system and the audience,' he says. 'If you just walk out there before the show, you

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**Left: Moloko's FOH sound engineer and manager, Graham Peacock.**

**Below: Lead singer Róisín Murphy charms Sydney.**

haven't had a chance to assess what the system is doing and how it's reacting to the other bands. I go out frequently and if I hear something like a funny spike on a vocal, I'll go look at the other engineers EQ – without making it obvious. From there I can decide what I need to do, and this approach definitely helps in a festival situation where you don't get a soundcheck. You have to make a lot of pre-judgments before a single sound is made.' Shapcott also takes a set of beyer Opus mics on tour with him, which he describes as 'genuinely shock-proof with a great open sound'.

The main stage foldback system was comprised of four EAW KF850 composite cabinets, four EAW

SB850 sub bass cabinets and 18 Nexo PS15 monitors. Monitor mixing was through a Midas Heritage 3000, while Moloko's monitor engineer and production manager, Gerry Wilkes, used a Midas XL3.

Twelve EAW KF750 Cabinets and 12 EAW BH760 sub bass cabinets driven by Crown amplifiers serviced the Big Top Stage. A Soundcraft Series 5/52 was used for mixing and foldback, which consisted of four EAW KF650 cabinets, four Norwest JBL2226 sub bass cabinets and 12 SLP bi-amped wedges JBL2225/Radian 2-inch, all fed by a Midas Heritage 1000.

The outdoor DJ Good Vibrations Stage used eight Funktion-One Resolution 4 cabinets and 12 EAW

SB 1000 cabinets powered by Lab.gruppen FP 6400 racks. The mix here was through an Allen & Heath GL2200. The DJ Bar had six EAW JF26De cabinets and six Norwest JBL2226 sub bass cabinets driven by a couple of two-amp rack Crown VZ5002.

'I thought the night went really well,' concludes Shapcott. 'We had to focus the PA down so it didn't throw too far, so it was very focused. About 15m past the FOH tent you were out of the PA zone. Despite all of the challenges the PA performed well. Although we had to stick to that 95dB sound limit, we still achieved a reasonably full mix sound out of it – something that is achieved quite simply with the Funktion-One system.'

'The night was hard work due to the mixing position being in a tent and the fact that the system wasn't really being driven – every time it started to get going, I had some guy on a radio saying 'turn it down', added Shapcott. 'Also there were plastic panels covering the grass and that gave us some

pretty nasty, mid-high reflections. Although it was hard work at that volume, it was a lot easier with Funktion One than it would have been using another system.'

The crew had all the gear packed away by 1.00am only to be up at 5.00am for a flight to Melbourne. Norwest also supplied production for the Brisbane date

with an EAW KF 760 system, as well as supplying the Moloko control system, plus two crew, for the Melbourne leg of the tour.

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