



DiGiCo SD5 and Blue Array rock Oppikoppi

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Rumour has it that Oppikoppi 2017, with this year's theme 'Me now the mango Picker' has never sounded this good. Blue Array have been involved as an audio supplier at Oppikoppi for more than a decade, and for the fifth consecutive year, they were appointed as the sole audio contractor at the three-day rock festival hosted in October on a dusty farm in the mining town of Northam in the Limpopo Province of South Africa. Blue Array were finally able to put their DiGiCo SD5 through its paces and there was no looking back!



No stranger to the festival which was established in May 1994 and has grown from a few hundred people to 20K and become an internationally recognized event attracting bands from across the world, Audio Engineer Marinus Visser from Blue Array has personally worked at Oppikoppi for over a decade. He takes care of the six main stages, a few smaller mobile stages and activation areas, and has the enormous task of planning and making sure each stage runs smoothly.

"Oppikoppi has a different vibe when compared to other events and that's why we still do it," said Marinus. Organised by right brained individuals, the festival is innovative and brave, a combination of camping, music, food, togetherness... and did we mention dust?



Marinus Visser

While there is usually a set up time of three days prior to the show, this year Marinus was pleasantly surprised to arrive on site to find the trenches for cabling had been dug, the structures were all set up and the generators were hooked up and ready to go. It was just a great way to start setup, not having to wait for anything.



There were at least five international bands alongside an extensive local line-up, with Flume being the main act. The DiGiCo SD5 was positioned at the main stage and a DiGiCo S21 and S31 were used on the Skellum stage. "It was unreal," said Marinus. "Blue Array have had the desk for a year now. Lately we've

really started using it more often. It's very valuable for what it can do for you, it saves me a lot of work now that I'm getting very comfortable with it." For someone like Marinus, who is also a musician and musically inclined, how the desk sounds is key, as well as having a console he can trust.



For the first time in his life, Marinus was able to run a show with more than what he needed. "I was able to be silly and put things in my show file that would never otherwise be realistic on any other console. That was amazing, just having things where you like them and being able to get into that speedy work flow. The SD5 is solid."





With a passion for his craft, Marinus took a week to build his Oppikoppi show file, and had two or three rehearsals at the Blue Array warehouse where artists came in and played, allowing him to set up the console, record the rehearsals and do virtual soundchecks. It's not something he charges extra for, but a value-added service he gives to artists he works with regularly to ensure he is well prepared to get the right feel instantly at the show, enabling the artist's performance to really stand out.



Complimented with a large D&B Audiotechnik J-series audio system, the sound generated from DiGiCo SD5 at Oppikoppi was chalk and cheese compared to former years. Kobus van Rensburg, owner of Blue Array, came into FOH and asked Marinus what he had done. 'How does it sound this good? It has never sounded this good,' he asked. Other engineers operating on S31 and S21, Kgotso Motaung and Conrad Jamneck, were hugely impressed too.



"I have never heard what I heard this year at Oppikoppi," said Marinus. "It has to be the desk because it was just me running the same PA system that I usually do. The clarity, depth, detail and thunderous low end that this console produces, is really something special and I feel that we now finally have the best sounding front-end to our already incredible PA system. It also feels like there are copious amounts of internal headroom within the console. Even when you do push it hard and run things hot, it never feels like it's falling apart, on the contrary, I feel this desk actually likes to be driven hard. The improvement in audio quality is enormous in my opinion and it has really challenged me to mix the show with more flair and taste than ever before!"



Fast forward a couple of months, and these days Marinus is finding that the need for external plugins is not always needed. "External plugins and units used to be in my secret bag of tricks, the one thing I could not do the show without, and now I don't feel like I need them as much as I used to in the past. The DiGiCo SD5 is just an unbelievable instrument and a sterling quality piece of audio equipment."





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