

grandMA3 Rocks Poland

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The 30th Pol'and'Rock festival ensured that music fans enjoyed the best guest and musical experiences – whether listening to some of the best Polish and international bands on one of the five stages or engaged in other activities under the banner of “Love, Friendship, Music” – around the Broczyno airfield site in Czaplonek, western Pomerania, home to the event since 2022.

Among Poland's best-known and loved music events, Pol'and'Rock is also one of the largest free and unticketed music events in Europe, regularly attracting upwards of half a million people. Founded by Jerzy Owsiak in 1995, it was inspired by the Woodstock 94 festival he attended in the US commemorating 25 years since the original legendary Woodstock event.

This year, a team from design studio Green Beam Design (GBD) led by Jacek Chojczak specified an all grandMA3 system for lighting control on the Main Stage, comprising four grandMA3 full-size consoles running as two main and one backup, plus another grandMA3 full-size for the onsite pre-viz suite, all running with 5 x grandMA3 processing unit Ls.

The lighting rig contained nearly 1700 fixtures – supplied by ATM System Sp. z o.o – an impressive megamix of moving lights, LED battens and washes and strobes from multiple manufacturers, plus nearly 400 PARs and 160 DWE blinders in tribute to lighting rigs of the day in the 1990s when the festival started.

Green Beam Design, based in Warsaw and working internationally, has been involved in producing this festival for many years, handling production lighting design for the main stage and the ASP Stage.



The scope of GBD’s work involves managing the entire lighting process, from project preparation – including overseeing the stage and lighting setups – through to executing the concerts and assisting guest lighting designers, directors and operators onsite.

The two grandMA3 full-size consoles this year were used in “Full Tracking Backup” mode as the central control system, together with six grandMA3 processing unit Ls.

The signal was distributed via grandMA3 8Port Nodes, enabling management of 120 x DMX

universes with MA-Net3, Art-Net, and sACN networks, all configured on Luminex's top level switchers. The entire network infrastructure was managed using Araneo software with the MA License offering intuitive central monitoring and control of all network aspects.

This huge undertaking absorbed the talents and creativity of most of the GBD crew at some stage in the process of delivering the event's lighting.

Every feature of the grandMA3 was important for this event, stated Jacek.

They have leaned heavily into the Offset function, which they have used extensively throughout the grandMA2 era and now in grandMA3, where the speed and workflow perspective is at a new level. The crew also used plug-ins to transfer positions from the pre-viz room, to the Selection Grid, which is "indispensable when working with such a large rig".

Jacek believes that grandMA3 offers "the world's best system for merging signals from other lighting consoles and allowing guest LDs to use their own consoles," which is a must for multi-user setups like Pol'and'Rock.

He is hard-pressed to single out specific features of the grandMA3 system because "using the software is so second nature now that we don't even think about it anymore - the system works and performs VERY well".

He adds, "This is exactly what great tools are for - you don't even have to think about how to use them, they just get the job done. That's exactly what grandMA3 consoles offer!"

One of the many challenges in lighting Pol'and'Rock was time - or lack of it - with 5 or 6 bands playing each day. To use time as efficiently and effectively as possible, substantial portions of the show were pre-programmed virtually, so transferring those positions to the console was a key "and the offset function worked flawlessly," Jacek noted.

A second system was utilized with a grandMA3 viz-key license so operators could prepare for FOH via Depence R3 software. "Importing and exporting the datapool worked perfectly, providing presets to our guest LDs and generally enhancing a more streamlined programming process," he explained.

Another big advantage of the grandMA3 system in this context ... is scalability.

The advanced networking capabilities, synchronous DMX signal transmission, customizability, and ability to write custom extensions using the LUA scripting language are “unparalleled,” Jacek asserted, adding that the full backup capabilities, connectivity, and variety of protocols available have meant they “never needed to seek alternatives - everything is there to execute the most complex and multi-level productions.”

The GBD crew divided themselves into teams and shifts to ensure that everyone could also grab enough rest periods.

The first team was assigned to the pre-viz station where they worked alongside the guest LDs to configure the grandMA3 system, check anything related to addressing and prep for onstage operation, a highly efficient exercise and a massive time saver.

The second team co-ordinated the operators once they had finished tweaking in the pre-viz studio and then managed the connection of guest consoles, protocol configurations (Art-Net, sACN etc), and system merging, as not all operators wanted control over the whole ‘house’ lighting rig.

“Thanks to grandMA3, we could sometimes offer control over segments of the lighting,” Jacek elucidated.

The third and final GBD team on the main stage were the operators who, between the various guest LDs, ran lighting for bands without operators via a separate pre-prepared station which was ready for the evening sessions.

Being the 30th anniversary, the pressure was on to create something special in terms of imaginative, cool and interesting looking, so the production focused intensively on lighting to evoke this atmosphere.

While there were LED side screens each side of the stage and behind the FOH position, these were used only for IMAG feeds.

“We wanted to return to the roots and essence of the event, the feel of those heady early days,” related Jacek, a task that involved the inclusion of “lots of incandescent fixtures, plenty of dust, and a beautiful atmosphere” ... a strategy and design that paid off with spectacular results.

Jacek and the GBD Team had been using a fully grandMA3 system for over a year when this event happened in August, so it was a natural choice for show lighting control.

Their grandMA3 show experiences started with the 2023 *Got Talent!* series which allowed them time to learn the basics and develop their workflow to be able to fully utilize grandMA3's potential for larger productions like Pol'and'Rock. "We've now fully transitioned, and we're very happy with how it works!" he underlined.

The company's history with MA Lighting dates to the grandMA days, but it was the grandMA2 system that really consolidated this relationship, which they worked on for over a decade as "the best and only system" used for all projects after 2009.



Asked about his impression of MA Lighting as a brand, Jacek is equally enthusiastic. "I think the products are super-stable and the support is excellent," he relates. Every call to MA's local support in Poland and the HQ in Paderborn, Germany, has resulted in "almost immediate response and knowledgeable assistance".

GBD is also highly impressed with MA Lighting's general openness to suggestions "and our ability to participate in the future grandMA3 software development," he commented.

MA Lighting and Luminex's local distributor for Poland is LTT which also provides tech support for impressive projects like Pol'and'Rock.

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