Hippotizer Tierra+ MK2 feeds kaleidoscope of visuals for Electric Forest festival

Rothbury, MI, USA – Michigan's much-anticipated Electric Forest Festival returned for 2022 with an expertly curated line up of EDM stars, jam bands, dubstep heroes and multiple other genres. On the Sherwood Court stage, a massive 7056×2864 canvas of LED screens made up of 180m2 of Roe MC7 and 150m2 of YesTech MG7 featured mind-blowing visuals created by Observatory and powered by Hippotizer Tierra+ MK2 Media Servers.

Notable on the Sherwood Court stage were US 'heaven trap' DJ duo Slander, bass-heavy Mersiv, and 'chillwave' pioneer Toto y Moi. Observatory's brief was to create the scenic visual content for the Sherwood Court stage's proscenium arch LED screens, and the upstage LED screen when there wasn't a guest VJ or content supplied with the performer. The team was commissioned by Electric Forest organisers Insomniac events and Leisure Expert Group, on the back of a successful visuals collaboration on the Beyond Wonderland festival in Southern California earlier this year.

"Creative briefs from Leisure Expert Group are second to none as their attention to detail and overarching themes are crystal clear," says Observatory's Director of Production, Simon Harris. "Their initial brief was to focus on the Sherwood Elephant stained glass styling, which was the main content used throughout the day. In the evening and into the night we introduced more diverse themes including an art nouveau greenhouse structure, lush trees, growing flowers, animated branches and vegetation, natural kaleidoscopes, growing roots, waterfalls and graphic patterns."

Harris and the team created the content in Cinema4D, Octane and Redshift and sequenced in Adobe AfterEffects and Premiere. They used a range of third-party control equipment via Hippotizer's Multicontroller component to control two Tierra+ MK2 servers – one as main and one as backup – which were supplied by Screenworks NEP and sub-rented from DMDs7udios.

"We specified Tierra+ MK2 due to its power," Harris continues. "We needed the system to run multiple layers of 7K content – mapped to 2 x 3840×2160 outputs – in addition to scenic overlays and any additional content supplied by the performer. We also wanted to utilise Hippotizer's X-Fade mode across all mixes to maintain seamless transitions between content and scenic overlays."

Harris notes that one of the biggest challenges was not only creating visuals for such a huge canvas, but also receiving content from a variety of performers that arrived in differing formats and dimensions.

"Hippotizer remains the ultimate video toolbox for me, and its flexibility is the ideal solution for running house video on festival stages," he says. "I'm often asked that age old question that begins with 'can you just…' andI'm confident in being able to do what is asked of me when I have such a multitude of real time functionality atmy fingertips.


"Hippotizer Zookeeper allows me to build an interface to suit the needs of the project, access to all the controls I need as well as performance information across both main and backup servers. In addition, Hippotizer VideoMapper allows us to output to non-standard configurations of LED screens across multiple outputs – we had differing sized DJ booths for different acts, which can easily be dealt with by quickly and easily creating an alternate mapping to suit. The servers ran flawlessly, often in very hot and dusty conditions!"

Harris managed the incoming visual content using Hippotizer MediaManager and says the Tierra+ MK2 Media Servers continued to playback without any noticeable change in quality even while importing or syncing new content in a variety of shapes, sizes and codecs.
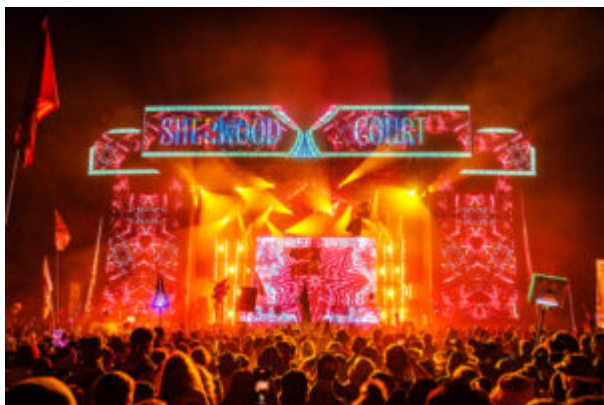
"This was the first project whereby I was able to utilise MediaManager sync across a 10GB network. Syncronising more than 200GB of show content, and then updating the servers when guest visuals were added throughout the weekend was seamless and seriously quick!" he adds.

This year marked the tenth anniversary of Electric Forest, and a return after a two-year hiatus due to the pandemic. Electronic music sites were abuzz with news that the festival was confirmed for 2022, with fan favourites such as *EDM Identity* writing about how 'the magic was back' and 'every performance, every memory made was amazing'.
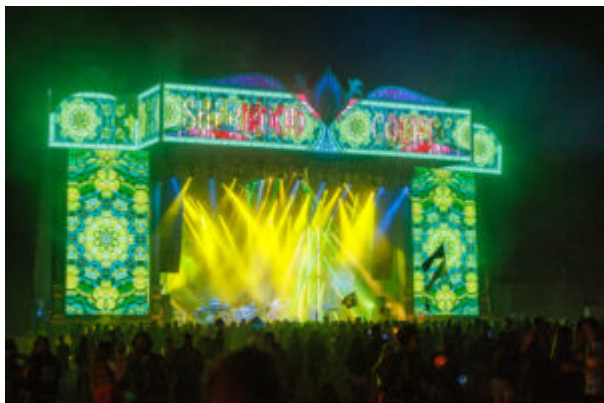
Harris concludes: "There were some really standout performances when both guest VJs and our team were able to concurrently deliver a great looking show and to be thanked by incoming teams was a great feeling. Mersiv, in particular, loved the visuals and gave me a hug after his performance! I was also proud to receive such positive feedback from management, production and incoming artists regarding the quality of the scenic content we had created for the stage. Our team did some incredible work on this show and it's always great to hear it from a range of different sources."