

Winnipeg Folk Festival Goes Digital with Shure ULX-D Wireless « SF Marketing Inc.

The Winnipeg Folk Festival is one of Canada's largest and longest-running music festivals, celebrating its 40th consecutive year in 2013. With a wide variety of traditional music on stages strategically located throughout Birds Hill Provincial Park outside the city, the Festival attracts over 80,000 fans over its 5-day run.

Running sound for so many artists is no trivial task, tackled again this year by the Winnipeg office of Sound Art. "I oversee both ends of the stage in terms of the equipment and solve any problems that come up. It's a fairly big set-up, with lots of varying instruments and production requirements for the acts," says Iain Graham, Technical Projects Manager for Sound Art and primary systems tech on site. "Every year is slightly different, but we've been working with the Festival for over 20 years, so we know it's really a matter of preparation and execution."



One thing that was new at this year's Winnipeg Folk Festival was the presence of Shure's **ULX-D** digital wireless microphone system. "I'm used to using the Shure UHF-R, which is kind of the standard for professional wireless, and I have to say the ULX-D was equally outstanding," Graham reports. "Two handheld channels were dedicated to our stage emcees, and which left us six for the bands for use by artist needs and requests. We used handhelds with bands like Galactic and Cat Empire. We also had backpack options for guitar and such. Dr. John requested a wireless Beta 98 for his trombone player, and we were able to accommodate that as well. Overall, it really worked out great."

Sound Art reports having no issues with the Shure systems used at the Winnipeg Folk Festival. "We didn't have an official RF coordinator, so we had to stay alert for unexpected users like visiting media, or if a band came in with their own systems," notes Graham. "I used Shure's software, Wireless Workbench 6, which makes deployment really simple. All I do is use a Shure receiver to do a scan of the area to give me a nice frequency plot and recommended the best frequencies. Then it's just a click of a button to synch the transmitters to those frequencies. The whole process takes maybe five minutes, and it's very reliable."

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SHURE GLX-D IS NOTABLE FOR ITS ABILITY TO COMBINE EXCEPTIONAL SOUND QUALITY AND EASE OF OPERATION AT A VERY REASONABLE PRICE POINT. FROM HIS VANTAGE POINT AT FRONT OF HOUSE, GRAHAM FELT THE NEW ULX-D DEFINITELY MEASURED UP. "I LIKED THE SOUND OF IT. THE SYSTEM HAS VERY QUIET NOISE FLOOR, AND NO ISSUES WITH LATENCY OR GETTING GAIN. THE SM58 HANDHELD SOUNDED THE SAME AS THE HARDWIRED, SAME TONE AND GAIN, SO IT WAS VERY EASY TO WORK WITH," HE SAYS. "IT FIT RIGHT IN, AND THE PERFORMANCE WAS FLAWLESS. THERE WERE NO COMPLAINTS FROM THE VISITING ENGINEERS AND FOR US AS THE SOUND PROVIDER, THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT WE WANT."

With responsibilities ranging over the entire expanse of the Winnipeg Folk Festival grounds, Iain Graham appreciated the reliability of his Shure wireless tools. "Shure Wireless Workbench is the key," he says. "It's super simple to use, especially when you're networking devices to it. It's very simple to connect, then send the information to the software to run the frequency calculation. It lets me do everything in one place, including exclusions for other wireless brands, intercom devices, and DTV stations, which is really out in the field."

In addition to the use of Shure wireless mics, Sound Art used a wide variety of Shure hardwired microphones for vocal and backline. "For a mostly acoustic event like this, we had a pretty Shure-heavy kit out there," says Graham. "The SM58 for vocals is sort of classic for a festival situation like this. Then for instruments, we had a bunch of SM57s, some SM81s, and some Beta mics – 52s, 91s, and the new 98s. It all worked out quite nicely."

Checking out the latest gear in the Artist Lounge

The Artist Lounge at the Winnipeg Folk Festival is a backstage tent area where performers can relax and socialize. As lounge sponsor, Shure took the opportunity to demonstrate some of its latest equipment, including the new GLX-D wireless system and PSM 900 personal monitoring system. Steve Klotz, the area rep for Shure's Canadian distributor, SF Marketing, acted as host.



"Having Shure backstage was a new concept for the Artist Lounge, which has been going for quite some time," says Klotz. "Folk musicians are not generally technology-driven, but they were interested in the freedom that wireless could provide them on stage. It was a great opportunity for them to see what's new, learn a little and ask some questions."

The GLXD16 wireless guitar pedal system was especially



noteworthy. Designed specifically to integrate into a pedal board, the GLXD6 receiver features an integrated guitar tuner. The system also features automatic frequency management. Power up the system and it scans, finds an open channel, and then links the receiver and transmitter automatically. During performance, it detects and avoids interference automatically. The system operates in the 2.4 GHz frequency range and features Shure's lithium-ion rechargeable battery system with 16 hours of operation.

Artists also had the opportunity to try Shure personal monitor systems. Steve Klotz arranged for a feed of the FOH board mix to be sent via a PSM 900 system, allowing musicians in the Artist Lounge to hear the clean sound and isolation of Shure's SE425 and SE535 universal-fit earphones.

"It was interesting. Folk musicians are very particular about their sound, so they were listening closely for background noise – especially the finger-style players," reports Klotz. "Of course, the Shure systems are very quiet, so those who tried it came away quite impressed. Many of these artists had not even considered wireless before, so it was fun to show them how Shure can help their performance without compromising their sound. Plus, I got to hear a lot of great music!"

LINKS:

Sound Art – www.soundart.com

Shure – www.shure.com/americas

Winnipeg Folk Festival – www.winnipegfolkfestival.ca @winnipegfolk