

Noise Control Audio rocks Newhaven Fort

UK: August 12th 2006 at Newhaven Fort, saw Giles Bristow and his company Alstubleift Audio (roughly translated from the Dutch as "Here you go!") giving its latest acquisition a run for its money – the NCA I-Fly point source system from Noise Control Audio. The atmospheric venue hosted mini-music festival Fort Rox, the first of what Lout Promotions and well-known live music venue The Pressure Point hope to establish as an annual event. Headlined by local Brighton act, British Sea Power, the band invited an eclectic range of performers to play alongside them.

Bristow elaborates: "Fort Rox has been an ideal opportunity to get the I-Fly system out on the main stage of a festival and show people what it can do. Noise Control Audio (NCA) products are relatively new and delivering a new pro-audio product into a brand-led market can be a tricky business."

Ground-stacked – although it is designed to fly – the main PA comprises four Noise Control Audio VSB 218i subs, four RGW 112i bass units and four TMT 600i mid tops



Local Brighton act, British Sea Power headlined

left and right – it delivers 32kW of power. Driven by QSC amps using BSS processing the bands are mixed FOH from a Soundcraft MH3 48-channel desk and on monitors from a Soundcraft Series 2 40-channel console.

It certainly packs a punch, delivering a strong bass along with total clarity on vocals. Given that these were young bands, not always with the best mic technique, the PA conveyed a very clear natural sound. FOH babysitter was Reay Grant, also head of R&D for NCA.

Bristow explains: "Reay designs all the kit for NCA, to me it seems sensible to have him with us as often as possible, after all, nobody knows the systems better. Alstubleift Audio's philosophy in taking NCA to market is that our clients always get the very best service from us. To me, that is having the guy who designed the boxes at every gig."

FOH for British Sea Power was seasoned engineer Shan Hira, he says: "This is the first time I have used a Noise Control Audio PA and, indeed, done a gig in a fort! I was fortunate to get the chance to EQ

and get a quick soundcheck in the morning, which is a rarity at a festival. I also engineered a couple of the support bands, so by the time British Sea Power came on I had a feel for the system and what was in the tank. The FOH platform is about 30m from the downstage edge and I am impressed with the SPL and the vocal clarity at the mix position. A quick wander into the audience early on put my mind at rest and told me that the coverage was even. This left me free to concentrate on the mix. I was pleased with the results and wouldn't hesitate in using NCA kit again."

Hira has previously worked with acts such as New Order, Public Image Limited, The Chemical Brothers, Basement Jaxx, Oasis and Swing Out Sister, so this is praise indeed. Bristow is thrilled, he says: "At this stage in the game it is essential for us to get respected engineers talking about and spec'ing the equipment. No large PA company will entertain buying boxes unless this is happening."

NCA's philosophy is design over processing; the company manufactures horn loaded point source systems, amplifiers and processors. Grant elaborates: "What makes our cabinets distinct is that we have chopped the sound up in a slightly different way to other manufacturers. The mid-top units are non symmetrical so that when used indoors, with a low ceiling, the system doesn't point sound upwards, this ensures the resulting output is as clean as possible. For increased throw outdoors, we use two pairs of mid-tops with the second row upside-down so that they couple together. With the tops right next to each other you also still get the benefits of point source technology."



The Duke Spirit on stage at Fort Rox

Bristow adds: "For Alstubleift Audio, what is great is that NCA systems are infinitely scalable. This means we can service any size gig with different configurations of the same system. Also for the little guy at entry level, his initial set up is relatively inexpensive. At present aside from Alstubleift there are two other UK hire companies carrying NCA, PF Events Ltd and DI Audio, both based in London. If necessary we can combine our systems in any configuration and service events of any size."

Apart from Bristow's very obvious passion for what he does, what is noticeable about Alstubleift Audio is that everything the company owns is green! The company trucks, its crew clothing – even the flight cases and the speaker cabinets have a verdant hue. Bristow explains: "The idea has always been that Alstubleift gear should be instantly recognisable. We want to ensure that every client we work with recommends and rebooks us for both the quality of sound and the service we provide."

At least half Bristow's role at Alstubleift is selling NCA products, he explains: "Initially this was a struggle, as most of our clients had never heard of the brand. When it came to sending out tech specs, having learned that production companies are particularly brand-led, I abbreviated Noise Control Audio down to NCA. For some reason

people think they should know what NCA is, it sounds familiar. Trust me it works!"

Introducing pro-audio speakers into such a heavily subscribed business is more than a little challenging. It requires a tough skin, resourceful marketing, and the ability to network at all levels plus plenty of staying power. Tim Giddings, director of Noise Control Audio clearly thinks Alstubleift Audio has what it takes. He says: "We've been working with Giles since day one and when building awareness of a new brand it is invaluable to have someone who is as passionate about our equipment at we are. Alstubleift Audio is a highly valued part of our family." ■

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The Alstubleift Audio team