

Escape to victory

Alstubleift Audio provided logistics, production expertise and gear over one frantic weekend in Brighton – phew!

UK: Brighton's Great Escape Festival, now in its second year, has grown from strength to strength with its mixture of live performances from bands all over the world – over 200 in all this year – as well as a series of seminars across the city providing discussion forums for those in

the music business and those who want to know where to start.

At the heart of any successful venture such as this is the audio production and promoter, The Barfly Group, has taken the very positive step of utilising local companies and talent to pull it all together. The festival itself is held at venues across the city ranging from the large Brighton Corn Exchange and Brighton Centre East Wing through to the tiny Pressure Point and the bizarre Horiatio's pub at the end of the pier.

Pulling this all together, from an audio standpoint was, for the second year running, Giles Bristow and his ever-so-green Alstubleift Audio – also known as Brighton PA Hire. Alstubleift, which means 'please and thank you' in Dutch, is very much

the ethos of the company – providing clients with an unrivalled level of service – and being calm and polite is something that is required in buckets when organising something on the scale of the Great Escape: "Facilitating this festival is a job within itself. It is an experience that you don't normally get with a normal, single-site event," he explains. "With a regular festival you are on a site, in a big top or a main stage, and that is where you stay. However, an indoor festival is much harder because of the number and variety of venues that we have to deal with – it is a logistical nightmare!"

As well as dealing with health and safety aspects, door policies and other aspects of that often get overlooked in pro-audio magazines,



Bristow and his team had to work out how to move PA quickly, efficiently and logically from venue to venue as well as, almost literally, shoe-horning stacks into venues little bigger than the proverbial box: "We had to site survey every single venue and then pigeon hole PA for individual venues and work out how to get a system into venues that don't normally present live music. In some instances that was a challenge in itself," Bristow recounts.

Even before many of the bands had been confirmed, Alstubleift put significant effort into pre-production to ensure everything went smoothly over the three days. In addition Alstubleift followed the Barfly example and used, wherever possible, local companies to facilitate all of the technical and staffing requirements. These included Buzz PA, KSL and C3 Audio who provided additional PA and engineers as well as Out Post Sound who provided multi-track location recording utilising a Pro Tools HD system for the Magic Number and Captain: "So, just because I am a Noise Control Audio stockist didn't mean I would necessarily go straight to my Noise Control Audio partners in London. In addition, because I work closely with C3 and KSL and we all

sub-hire from each other we essentially have our own network. One of the main advantages of working with local companies is that they have inside knowledge of many of the venues across the city, which makes things easier and gives me greater confidence" he says.

Making Bristow's life all the more challenging was the capricious nature of the venues, some of which pulled out with short notice while others came onboard. Additionally, when T-Mobile joined the festival with its Street Gigs brand, as a major sponsor six weeks before kick-off, Bristow was faced with the additional task of supporting nine additional events: "There were three gigs a day, the biggest of which was The Happy Mondays on the pier. It was quite a lot of extra work," Bristow says with a smile.

In order to help with logistics, Alstubleift moved two 6m containers to a central seafront location in the city and filled them with PA: "We provided systems in nine major venues over the three days, some of which meant pulling gear out of one venue and putting it back into another in a very short space of time. For example we took a load of kit out onto the pier for The Happy Mondays then moved it into the

PSNE's Friday night at the Great Escape

It's 8pm, and Radar, a tuneful bunch of trying-hard Hard-Fi types from Bristol kick off PSNE's big night-cum-PA audit in Brighton. Small stack of NCA speakers here at the Arc club. Five songs down, and we hurry to the Honey Club to see the Magic Numbers. Superb (Void speakers and a Venice desk) but way too packed to be enjoyable – and some idiot journalist talking all the way through. A skip and a jump to Kabuki, and a one-minute burst of useless shouty sixth-form punk from **Untitled Music Project**. Christ Almighty! Past the Pavillion, where there are huge queues for Willy Mason, and in to The Heights in the Corn Exchange. Hey, it's Tim Shaxson from DiGiCo and Reay from Noise Control. Plenty of NCA gear and a D1 desk here, of course. "Don't stick around for Art Brut, they're awful," I tell Tim. A text message half an hour later ("You were right – they are!") confirms it. But we've already moved on to Hector's House, where Duran Duran/Bravery emulators Electric City (pictured) put on perhaps the best show of the night. The pub seems to be filling up with record company execs – well, there are several hundred delegates at TGE, so it's not surprising. 11pm, and we clamber into the Barfly to see Panico, bonkers Chilean electro through the house system (Turbo?) and a Soundcraft GB8. And I'm exhausted. Marvelous. n Pro Sound News Europe was expertly guided around TGE by Tony of the Brighton's Best Pubs guide (www.pubjury.co.uk).



✦ Honey Club for the Saturday and Sunday as well as two days for another system in the Corn Exchange and then pulled it all out and re-installed it into the East Wing," Bristow says.

One of the things that makes The Great Escape such a unique event in the festival calendar is that at its heart is the music conference and the opportunity for new and up and coming bands to perform alongside the more established crowd-pullers. Alstubleift and Bristow were also responsible for facilitating all of the conferences, which included interviews with Brighton's own Fat Boy Slim, Bestival organiser and DJ Rob Da Bank, Shaun Ryder and Howard Marks.

For the duration of the event, FX Rentals offered all participants and

associates a special Great Escape discount rate on the rental of backline, instruments and recording packages, resulting in the hire of top-brand equipment from Sony, Roland, Korg, Ampeg, Fender, Ashdown, Pearl, Yamaha and Nord. In addition, FX supplied a PA system for the industry conference held at The Founders Room at The Brighton Dome, and for live music venue the Red Roaster, which were utilised and supported by Alstubleift. Both systems were based around Mackie SRM450 self powered speakers with Mackie 1604VLZ 16-channel desks, and included peripheral gear such as AKG 480 condenser mics with VR61 extension tubes, Shure SM58 mics, Denon DN-360 CD players, Tascam MD801R minidisk recorder/players,

TC D-Two delays, multicores, stage-boxes and mic stands.

Yet, special discounts is not all that made this year's festival unique. Giles Bristow, ever one for a new challenge and opportunities to help him develop the company had considered using a digital desk for the festival but with few positive comments from various engineers he had spoken with. Simultaneously, the team at DiGiCo heard rumour of an up-and-coming PA company based in Brighton. Tim Shaxson, DiGiCo's technical sales manager, arranged for Bristow to use a D1 Live in one of the bigger venues, the Corn Exchange.

The D1 Live, coupled with Alstubleift's instantly recognisable green Noise Control Audio FOH



(L-R): Reay Grant, FOH engineer and NCA designer; freelance engineer, Phil Boutle; Paul Fyfe FOH for Art Brut; DiGiCo's Tim Shaxson

loudspeakers and stage monitors made a significant impact on the bigger gigs allowing bands all of the advantages of instant recall for their sets on an amazing sounding point source system: "As far as Giles was concerned, at the end of the three days, he had some excellent comments from the festival organisers and I think he realises now the advantages of using a digital desk in that environment," Shaxson concludes.

Indeed, Jon Mac one of the festival organisers from the Barfly Group comments: "Giles and the Brighton PA Hire team were instrumental in delivering international showcase quality PA, lights and staging in a number of challenging spaces throughout the Great Escape Festival. This included numerous set-ups and pack-downs under significant time constraints and in venues from 80 to 1,200 capacity. Brighton PA Hire has become an indispensable part of the festival team." ❏

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Engineer begins round-Britain trip

THE SEA: Steve Cooksey, an intrepid live sound engineer from Cornwall, began his round-Britain sailing adventure on behalf of the RNLI on Sunday July 1st.

Dubbed 'Around Britain with a Sound Crew', Cooksey's plan is to circumnavigate the entire mainland coastline in an anti-clockwise direction in his 10m Westerly GK29 'Gamaldansk' – that's 1,800 nautical miles – with a small and interchanging crew made up of people from the lighting and sound industry. The editor of *PSNE* is due to crew for three days around the Kent and Suffolk coasts.

Cooksey's wife reports that he left in heavy rain and 'big seas' but made it safely to the first point of call, Salcombe, on Sunday night.

All donations are welcome – go to www.justgiving.co.uk/soundsailing to submit your gift. ❏

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