

Optimus Green doesn't miss a beat at urban festivals

When event manager and noise consultant Chris Selkirk goes onto a festival site for the first time, in his own words, he is looking for a “win-win-win” scenario on noise measurement and compliance.

For many years Chris has been brought in by Festival organisers for his expertise in noise measurement and acoustic understanding at large outdoor events.

From the planning stages through to the round the clock cover on the day, Chris has to ensure he has the right equipment and data to assess the risks and quality of noise from the minute the first festival goer comes through the gate.

“I really want to achieve a win-win-win situation at every event where we can get more volume onsite, less volume off site but still stay within the limits of noise legislation. Getting that balance right means everyone's happy but it isn't easy,” he said. “You have to be able to analyse data in a live situation and respond immediately, relaying instructions via mobile phones or two-way radios.

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optimus[®]
sound level meters





“Even when I’m taking a live LAeq recording, it’s possible to quickly switch back and forth between screen views (DBA / 1:1 or 1:3 octave graphic/data views for example). This enables me to make quick and multiple decisions, act immediately to advise a sound engineer in a live situation and record the data too. The fact that I can do this on a pitch black country lane in the middle of a night is also very useful!”



“I would be onsite 24/7 during an event, taking constant noise measurements. The data is used to either confirm or adjust the acoustics onsite and this could be in various places.”

To help Chris achieve this, he works with Cirrus Research and uses its Optimus Green Sound Level Meter - most recently at the urban Electric Eden Festival in the North West and, in contrast, at the more rural Ravenstonedale Festival.

“Simply put, Optimus Green is the easiest device to use and get the information I need quickly.”

One of the most important features of the Optimus for Chris was the visual and graphic displays that could be seen at night when he was taking measurements onsite and during live events.

“There are quite a few things that make it the best device for me but, simply put, it’s the easiest device to use and get the information I need quickly. I can use the Optimus to see all types of sound data on the screen with only a quick cursor move.

Supporting Software

Another big advantage for Chris is that the Optimus simultaneously records everything, whatever measurement is being taken, and he also uses the Noise Tools supporting software to analyse and report on any type of measurement later on. Voice Tag and live audio recording that instantly switch on and off is also a must-have as far as Chris is concerned.

“The data can be used as evidence that the event met all necessary legislations and noise limits when it comes to local residents and noise nuisance issues. It also allows us to monitor live event acoustics and adjust settings for the listening audience, he added.

“It can be seen and stored real time for later analysis but it also allows me to advise throughout an event that the sound levels are correct or if they need adjusting due to changes in the weather, for example. I use all this evidence to then write a full report after the event to show we met all the legal requirements.

“The Optimus measures both the dBA and the frequencies of noise levels so we can see what is permissible. This ensures that noise levels don’t go over certain limits at certain times, something that is important for nearby residents.”

Chris is already looking ahead and plans to use the Optimus Green for future events.

“It’s an important part of forward planning to look where we can use techniques and the site infrastructure to try and set up acoustic barriers and alleviate problems in advance. Having the right data is all part of the process.” he concludes.

Noise legislation governing festivals:

Local Authorities’ Environmental Health departments generally adopt the example conditions set down by the Noise Council’s Code on Environmental Noise Control at Concerts (1995).

These conditions are placed with the Premises License Conditions for the Festival/Music Event, which event organisers must fully adhere to. In order for an event to have live or recorded music performances, it must have a Premises License, or for smaller events (up to 500) a TEN License (Temporary Event Notice).

What is a noise consultant?

A noise consultant is someone who communicates and has authority with all parties - the sound system suppliers, stage managers, bands/DJs, the Local Authority, the Police and local communities. He or she supports them all in delivering a successful event and meeting any noise legislation.

They are instrumental in the creation of a reliable, effective and practical Noise Management Plan to enable the organisers to gain a Premises License achieved through reliable data predictions for noise propagation from the planned event. They do this through demonstrating how an event can minimise any nuisance and effectively manage its noise levels. They then must deliver and adapt the Noise Management Plan throughout the live event to ensure success and collate data evidence of that.

Cirrus Products used in this case study

- Optimus Green Sound Level Meter
- NoiseTools software

(Free with the Optimus Green Sound Level Meter)

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