

Glastonbury Killers set Funktion One blameless

UK: The Funktion One PA system was not to blame for the hugely publicised "shocking" sound levels during The Killers' Saturday headline set at the Glastonbury Festival.

An unusual meteorological condition - or, as festival sound co-ordinator Chris Beale put it, a "whacking great temperature inversion" - has been identified as the cause of abnormally high off-site noise level measurements. This led to the sound for The Killers' performance being dramatically reduced by the FOH engineers and subsequent protests from the crowd, who either chanted "Turn it up!" or began leaving the Pyramid's reach in droves to find other entertainment.

But, as Beale revealed to PSNE, off-site levels were already registering above those stipulated by regulator Capita Symonds a long way in front of the Pyramid Stage, even when the Killers were not playing. Hence, as soon as the Las Vegas act struck up a note, the Pyramid PA was heading for trouble.

Funktion One's Glastonbury success was further compromised by complaints becoming public very quickly. The next day, organiser Michael Eavis incorrectly blamed the inadequate sound levels on the new sound system in response to accusations from the BBC, the *NME* and other media. After studying a report given to him by the environ-

mental team, and an emotional response from F1's Tony Andrews, Eavis later withdrew his statement and acknowledged the part of the atmospheric conditions in the unfortunate situation.

The sequence of events began early Saturday evening after a day of intermittent showers. "It was one of those eerie evenings where you prick up your ears because suddenly you can hear everything," says Beale.

Measurements by Capita Symonds at the periphery were reading 62dB (A weighted) - two decibels more than the licence permitted. And that was without the main stage's contribution, claims Beale.

"I guess the cold (continued on p4)



The muddy, trampled land around the dance tents was reminiscent of a battlefield at this year's Glastonbury. And the real story of what happened during the Killers set on the Pyramid Stage has turned into something of a battle for Funktion One (pic: Karl Christmas)

Glastonbury

(from cover) air made the sound bounce," comments F1's Tony Andrews.

When the Killers began, the level jumped to 65dBA - and hence Capita Symonds instructed the Pyramid (and other stages, including South West Audio's nearby John Peel tent) to drop from its working level of 98dBA to below 94. "I couldn't believe that the levels could be so low," says Beale. "We were aware of the Other Stage's sound by then." The Other Stage, featuring Iggy Pop, faces the opposite direction at least 250m away from the Pyramid stage.

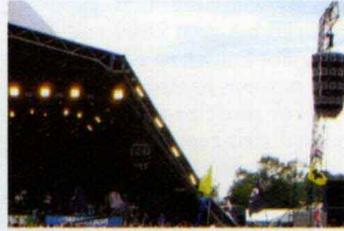
One could argue that the Capita Symonds team were reacting in a

way that preserved the licence, but did not serve common sense, as by now, the Killers crowd was becoming restless and potentially hostile. Several witnesses told PSNE the sound was "shocking" and "horrendous". "When you can hear the person talking next to you, that's not good," said Music Week staffer Nicky Hembra.

"We could hear people shouting," says Andrews. "We sensed it was going wrong. [F1 engineer] John Newsham said to me, we're going to have to break the rules, we're going to have to turn it up. It became a health and safety issue."

The FOH team took the decision to boost the sound back to 98dB for the last few numbers, so saving the night's performance.

Michael Eavis responded hastily



Funktion One hang at the Pyramid Stage

the next day to grievances about the system, saying the system was "not strong enough", but then changed his story following advice, noting in a statement, "the PA system and highly skilled team were in no way responsible or at fault for the complaints". PSNE approached Capita Symonds for a comment, but a spokesman referred us back to the same Glastonbury press statement.

Chris Beale further illustrates the weather's quirks: "The Who's sound on Sunday was 103dBA at the console, while the offsite levels were 5dBA lower than the previous night."

Both Andrews and Beale both agree that offsite levels at Festivals need to be reviewed. "If this goes on, we won't be able to hold events like this any more," says Andrews.

"When the sun goes down, noise levels go up, just as the headliners come on," says Beale, "So we need to accommodate these changes, either by a sliding scale or some other means."

On a positive note, Tony Andrews says of the F1 performance: "We didn't lose a single driver or amp. Nothing failed. That's an achievement in itself." □
DAVE ROBINSON