

# Keeping the peace: a new night-time approach



Once a year deep in the heart of a Lincolnshire wood with its winding pathways, derelict buildings, abandoned cars, deserted junkyards, old relics and fairy lights, 18,000 revellers gather to immerse themselves in four days of live music, arts, performance, food, culture, wellness and relaxation. Welcome to the Lost Village.

With music and festivities continuing until 2:00 am, Lost Village 2022 with the help of Three Spires Acoustics, needed to find a new approach in dealing with the night-time music noise limits to provide the 'festies' with a good night out and the local community with a good night's sleep.



## CHALLENGE

To adhere to the night-time noise limits imposed by the local authority – where a regulatory noise reduction at 11:00 pm can result in a noise level decrease of up to 20 dB off site – without causing audience and artist dissatisfaction and ensuing crowd management problems.

## SOLUTION

In agreement with the local authority and with the help of Noisy's noise monitoring platform connected to B&K 2245 sound level metres, a staggered approach to night-time music noise levels was allowed. A gradual reduction of sound levels was applied at the seven primary stages between 11:00 pm and midnight, acclimatizing the audience over this one-hour period.

## RESULT

This gradual reduction of noise levels resulted in very few noise complaints over the weekend, full regulatory compliance and a satisfied and happy audience.

## IF YOU GO DOWN TO THE WOODS...

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It might be abandoned for most of the year, but for four days in summer, a secluded woodland near the village of Norton Disney, Lincolnshire, comes to life when 18,000 partygoers, DJs, artists and the beat of dance music pervade the bucolic environment throughout the day and into the night. With headline acts including Bonobo, Jamie XX and Tom Misch, the vibe is good, the dancing energetic, the energy electric. However, at 11.00 pm sharp, regulatory night-time noise level limits, imposed by the local authority, come into force and the volume is turned down. Imagine the disappointment and the dissatisfaction for both music fans and artists alike where a worst-case scenario could result in crowd management issues.

## FINDING THE RIGHT BALANCE

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Local authorities can issue a fixed penalty notice if noise from domestic or licensed premises exceeds a certain level between hours of 11.00 pm and 7.00 am.

For festivals such as Lost Village this poses the challenge of keeping the right balance between the optimal concert sound and reduced noise in the surrounding environment. Keeping noise levels below prescribed limits is also essential to maintain a Premises Licence (permit to operate) and gaining local community buy-in.

To get the balance right, Lost Village founder Andy George has been working closely with Three Spires Acoustics, an independent and leading consultancy involved with event noise management and regulatory control. Specialising in services and solutions for a diverse client base, they assess, resolve and manage noise and pollution issues for, among others, entertainment venues and outdoor concerts.

During their long-term relationship, Lost Village and Three Spires Acoustics have continuously tweaked their approach to the noise level restrictions, implementing the lessons learnt along the way.

One of the main causes of discontent has always been the hard level reduction at 11:00 pm, which can result in a significant decrease of allowable offsite noise levels of up to 20 dB. They needed to find a way of overcoming this issue, while remaining compliant with regulatory requirements.



## AN INNOVATIVE APPROACH

Lost Village and Three Spires Acoustics came up with a simple but innovative approach – to apply a staggered reduction in sound levels between 11:00 pm and midnight. The solution was only made possible thanks to the flexibility and support of the local authority, North Kesteven District Council, and the use of technological advances in hardware including B&K 2245 sound level meters with Enviro Noise Partner (a complete, focused toolset for environmental noise measurements), combined with Noisy's noise monitoring platform, integrated for use with B&K 2245 via the sound level meter's open application interface (API).

Once installed, the fully integrated Noisy platform allowed all stages to be monitored at front of house (FOH) or side of house (SOH) positions and provided a central control point displaying all onsite stage sound levels ( $L_{Aeq}$  and  $L_{Ceq}$ ), along with three permanent offsite monitoring stations (connected via 4G router). Real-time monitoring enabled the engineers to follow, prevent and correct the acoustic impact of internal sound and external noise levels and manage the staggered level reduction while remaining compliant with condition requirements.

Reducing the sound levels gradually at each of the seven main stages discreetly acclimatized the audience to the lower limits over a period of one hour, making the shift/change in volume less dramatic than the step change of previous years.

One of the main advantages of the Noisy platform is that it can accommodate SOH or back of house (BOH) mixer desk locations, by locating B&K 2245 sound level meters remotely at the back of a big top stage and Noisy tablet displays at SOH or BOH positions, both connected over a managed network. Traditionally, this was not possible without hard connection using long lengths of XLR cable. Power over Internet (POE) for both sound level meter and Noisy tablet displays also makes the system much more robust.

Jon Green of production company Engine No 4, says, "The system gives me the ability to keep an eye on all sound sources from my office and quickly reach out to any systems engineers who may be struggling with limits. The ability to schedule different parameters by stage and time and make on the spot changes reacting to off site readings is also invaluable."

Satisfied audience and artists, full regulatory compliance and very few noise complaints – the new approach was a huge success. In Andy George's words, "The innovative new approach to our music noise levels within the premises licence really improved on-site conditions... The local authority's collaborative approach and willingness to understand our aims made the process straightforward and we achieved both better levels on site and fewer issues off site."

Although the Lost Village is located in a dense wood, high technology, flexibility, innovation and reliable and efficient digital tools were crucial to the success of this event. Long may the Lost Village be a recurring highlight for both festival goers and the local community alike.



WITH SO MANY EXTERNAL FACTORS AT PLAY, HAVING THE ABILITY TO PHASE THE REDUCTION IN LEVELS NOT ONLY IMPROVES ON-SITE EXPERIENCE BUT KEPT LOCAL RESIDENTS HAPPY ALSO.

*Andy George, founder of Lost Village*

Thank you to Chris Hurst at Three Spires Acoustics for his help with this case study.

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