

Salisbury Christmas Lights 2008 – a note from the Production Manager

We did our first SCL show in 2003 with the same kind of template as 2008 albeit on a smaller scale. The Council wanted a wow factor after years of low key events, so we duly obliged with the PA on a crane concept, big screen, TV cameras etc. and in 2006 we actually had a real talking reindeer! We took a break in 2007 as the Council didn't have a budget available, but this year we were back again. Even though this is a free show and attracts 10,000 people expectations are always high.

The concept is built on two basic fundamentals, everyone has to hear what is going on and just as importantly see all the action. So this was quite easy and straightforward to achieve. I used the L-ACOUSTICS Soundvision software to model the SPL coverage of the PA system and brought in an LED screen OB truck and TV cameras. So, wherever you were in the market square you could feel involved in the show. It's great to see people over 100 metres away responding to the audio and imagery. We usually use an L-ACOUSTICS dV-DOSC line array which has a much more even coverage pattern and reduced building reflections, but as our system was out on a long term rental we had to use ARCS. Even so, the system projected really well and delivered 101 db at the back of the square. We also used 4 x TANNOY 2x18 powered subs, 2 x L-ACOUSTICS I15XT outfills and 4 x L-ACOUSTICS HiQ monitors. The ROLAND V MIXER system controlled all the feeds to FOH, Stage, OB Truck etc.

Basically, we produced the whole show, booked all the acts, hired in all the staging, lights, crane, screen, and provided the PA from our own stock. We coordinated all the H&S requirements from the contractors including the Firework company and fairground rides. Risk Assessments and Method Statements along with Public Liability documents were required from all the companies working on site. We also took care of on site security with an extensive barrier system, provided access / working passes, and we worked with the local Police, Ambulance, and Fire Service to deliver a really safe event. We also employed a professional security company who brought 12 stewards to site. We also worked with the Council regarding road closures around the city centre so that the crowd could attend in safety. We also had evacuation plans to hand just in case of accidents or emergencies. The PM, Police Chief, Ambulance, and Chief Steward were all linked by radios.

We also chose and recorded the fireworks music, wrote the presenters scripts, and sorted the entertainment licence, PRS forms, and artists' contracts. The whole event went into the planning stage back in June and even though we have done this many times, it's still a very hands on event and requires a lot of pre-planning. You can't leave anything to chance.

This year was a great success once again (apart from ABBA GOLD's guitar amp tripping the power). We were on site from 6.15am hauling fireworks onto Debenhams and then onto the Guildhall and we were off site at 10.30pm. There were 24 technicians and crew on site during the day and we fed them all, but as usual the production manager missed his late afternoon pizza!

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