

Show Co. Pushes The Boundaries @ ZoukOut 2014

By Elissa Nadine



Before the party starts: (L-R) Nicolas Kirsch (NEXO), Jeremy Boon (Zouk), Jo Gan and Jon Sim (Show Company) with Mark Bollenberg (NEXO)



For a full weekend in December, over 40,000 ravers packed the Siloso beach on the island of Sentosa, for the 14th edition of the annual ZoukOut festival. One of the biggest dance festivals in South-East Asia, ZoukOut is organised every year by Zouk Singapore and has played host to some of world's most famous DJs such as Paul Van Dyk, Armin Van Buuren and James Lavelle.

Fans from around the world (The Netherlands, Germany, South Korea, Taiwan, Japan, Hong Kong, Australia, etc.) gather every year to party from dusk till dawn and 2014 was no different. With a stellar line-up of international acts such as Nicky Romero, Skrillex and Martin Garrix, playing alongside Zouk resident DJs and favourites like Hong, FORMATIVE, Ghetto, fans of the EDM (electronic dance music) genre were treated to high-energy sets that melded perfectly with visuals and effects that included pyrotechnics, laser beams, and confetti blasters.

Handling the delicate technical specifications every year is Jeremy Boon. The man responsible for defining Zouk's early sound, Jeremy was also Zouk's pioneer resident DJ who now doubles-up every year as the Production Manager for the festival.

"In true Zouk style, each year we always try to raise the bar to heighten the event experience for our customers, so that the

ZoukOut experience remains one that is unique yet fresh" said Jeremy. "Over the years, we've gained a lot of confidence from the different artists that have come through and based on that confidence, we always try to do something different. This year, we have even incorporated the island's coconut trees into our stage design just so we could get the most out of the festival space."

Entrusted with the immense responsibility of set-up and equipment supply was The Show Company. With over 25 years of experience in handling large arena productions, Show Company is considered among the top production houses in Singapore and has been handling ZoukOut for over a decade.

"I wanted a certain feel for the 2014 show and Jo Gan [Owner of Show Company] came up with the technical requirements that fit that feel," said Jeremy. Planning for the 2-day festival took 4 months and over 1000 hours with this year's concept considered the brainchild of both Jeremy and Jo. Together with his 40-man team, the entire festival area was set-up within a week.

"We have been working with Show Company for the past 13 years because they understand our vision of what ZoukOut should look and feel like," Jeremy pointed out. "On top of that, they also keep us up to date with the latest technology while Jo understands our vision of always looking forward and not back."



As with previous years, ZoukOut 2014 was celebrated between 2 stages – Moon and Star. Moon stage was the main platform for the show and catered solely to the EDM fans while Star was the smaller of the two and played host to House/Techno acts.

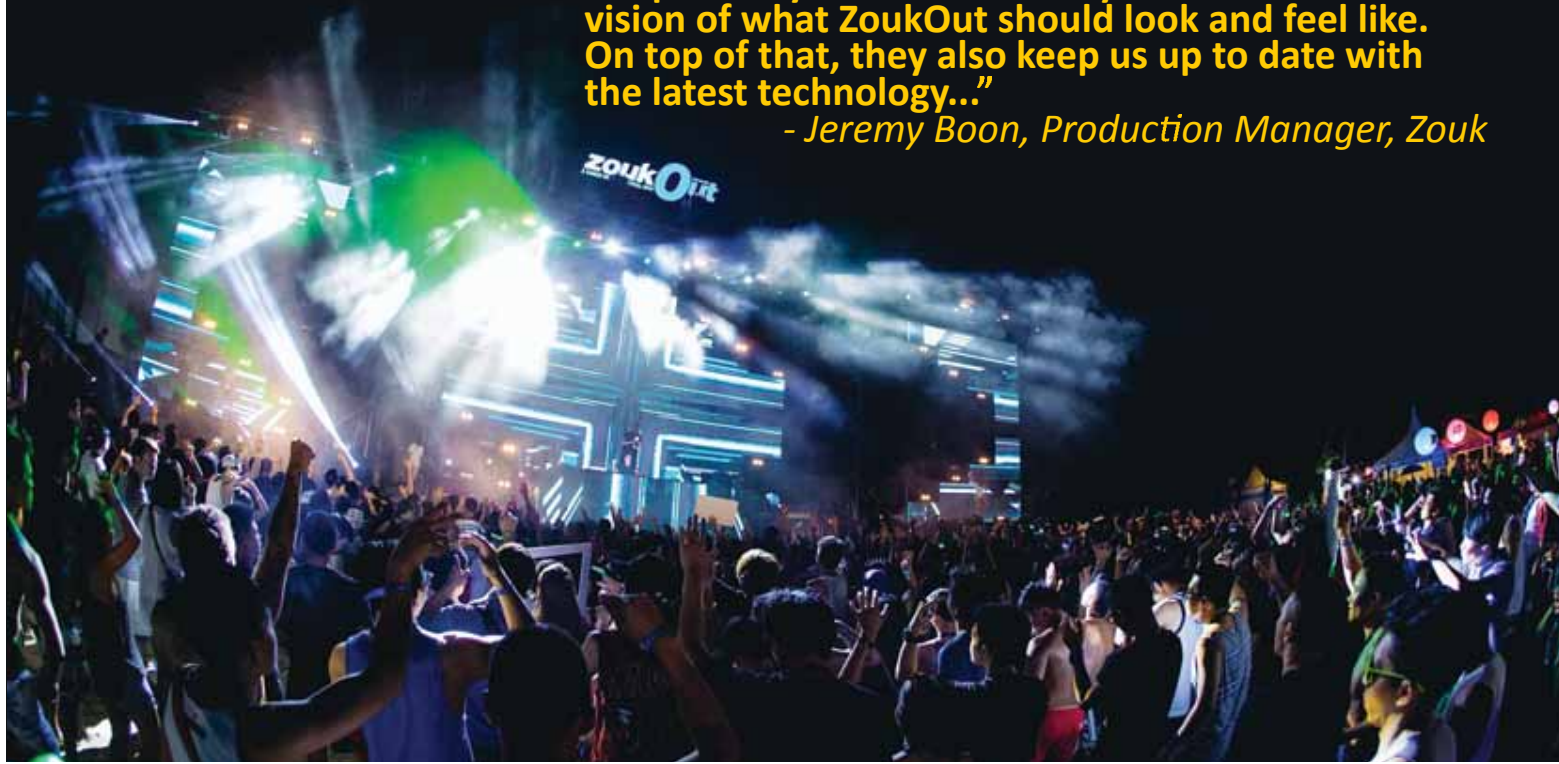
"Star caters to fans who are deep into the genre of House/Techno music," explained Jeremy. "We wanted to recreate the intimate space that fans of this genre feel comfortable in so we don't have the same effects like pyrotechnics or lasers as Moon but we've made it cosy like Zouk [club]. We also built a mega roof that covers the stage, dance area, VIP area and FOH control."

Enhanced by 4 aerialists who performed throughout both nights, decorations for Star were skeletal structures shaped like, none other than, stars. These allowed for the stage lights to shoot through and around the structures creating magical effects that played on the roof of the dance-floor. "We hung the props above the dance-floor so that when guests looked up, they could see the stars and get pulled even further into the music," said Jeremy.

2 clusters consisting of 16 x AIRLINE LA12 loudspeakers from CODA AUDIO made up the main PA. Providing the "perfect punch needed for house/techno music," according

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A full STM system comprises of: M46 (main), B112 (bass), S118 (sub) and M28, the latest release in the STM system that is an all-purpose 2-way cabinet, providing 90°/120° of horizontal dispersion and 0° to 15° splaying angle between modules. With the same width as the main M46 but 2/3 of the height, the M28 can be arrayed together with a B112 or used independently from other modules.

to Jo Gan, were 8 (per side) SC2-F sensor controlled bass extensions flown behind the main system. In addition to the main clusters were 12 x CODA AUDIO SC8 ground-stacked subwoofers that are equipped with quad 18" neodymium low-distortion woofers each.

While Star utilized ShowLED panels to showcase a variety of 'starlight' graphics, the Moon stage was set up with ShowLED HD LEDs with triple the number of panels used. Originally planned to be set in a diamond pattern, screens for Moon were split into 3, both left, right as well as centred behind the DJ booth.

On the left/right truss, the LEDs of Moon were placed slightly apart to allow for lighting and lasers to penetrate through.

Another detail carefully thought out were the view of the stage screens. "The LED panels we used were flat so they provide a panoramic view of the action on stage even if you were standing 200m away," said Jeremy.

Previous years have seen identical Moon and Star stages but under the intention of looking forward and not back, Show Company took ZoukOut as the perfect chance to debut their new STM system by French audio manufacturer, NEXO.

The flagship system from NEXO aims to change the way rental companies run shows. Without the need for various systems, the 'Scale Through Modularity' system enables contractors to design a wide range of systems with just the four core modules.

"We went through the different riders, crunched what the DJs needed and found that our new STM system was the perfect fit for all," said Jo. "Before the STM was released, we used to use the NEXO GEO-T & D system which served us well for many years, but when the new system came out, we jumped at the chance because our experience with the GEO-T & D was that good."

As the main PA for Moon, 24 boxes (per side) consisting of 12 x M46 and 12 x B112 were flown together complemented with 36 x S118 subs on the ground. Additionally, 6 x M28 made up the front fill, a first for Asia-Pacific.

Providing the DJs with the same audio quality as the guests, the DJ booth consisted of 6 x

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- NEXO Systems Specialist, Mark Bollenberg

S118 and 6 x M28 separated equally into L/R groups. Driving the entire system were 16 x NEXO Universal Amp Racks (NUAR) which provides users with a scalable, 'plug & play' amplified audio distribution solution that can configure systems of any size.

Since ZoukOut 2014 would be the first event in Singapore featuring a full STM system, NEXO Systems Specialist, Mark Bollenberg flew in from Australia to support the event.

"At NEXO, we are very hands-on. We were here when the system arrived at the Show Co. warehouse to help the team get settled and we always make it a point to support our customers regardless of the show size. For this show, I liaised extensively with Jon Sim [Show Company's Audio Chief] on the set-up needed to get the best out of the system," he explained. "The first thing we did was use the NS-1 Simulation software which showed us how many boxes we would need to achieve the sound we wanted. The SPL for Moon can reach 120 dB which means I'm sure the ships near the island will be enjoying the music as well."

Joining his colleague on-site was Nicolas Kirsch, NEXO's Sales Manager for Asia. "This is the best audio for any Zoukout I've ever

heard," said Nicolas, who has been attending the show for the past 3 years, but "just for work" he assured us. Standing near the shore of Siloso beach behind the FOH, Nicolas affirmed the quality behind the brand, stating, "You can feel the transient sound of the NEXO boxes. It literally passes through your body."

"Although the sub-bass system is set on the floor due to lack of rigging space, the low-end just runs through the extremely dense crowd of 20,000 people to hit you hard even at 60m. Due to the clever stirring configuration

designed by Jon and Mark the sub level is in fact the same at 5m and 60m," noted Nicolas. Adding, "similarly for the LF/HF/MF levels, which are evenly distributed and so crisp and clean with huge headroom and near zero distortion. Not only one can enjoy every bit





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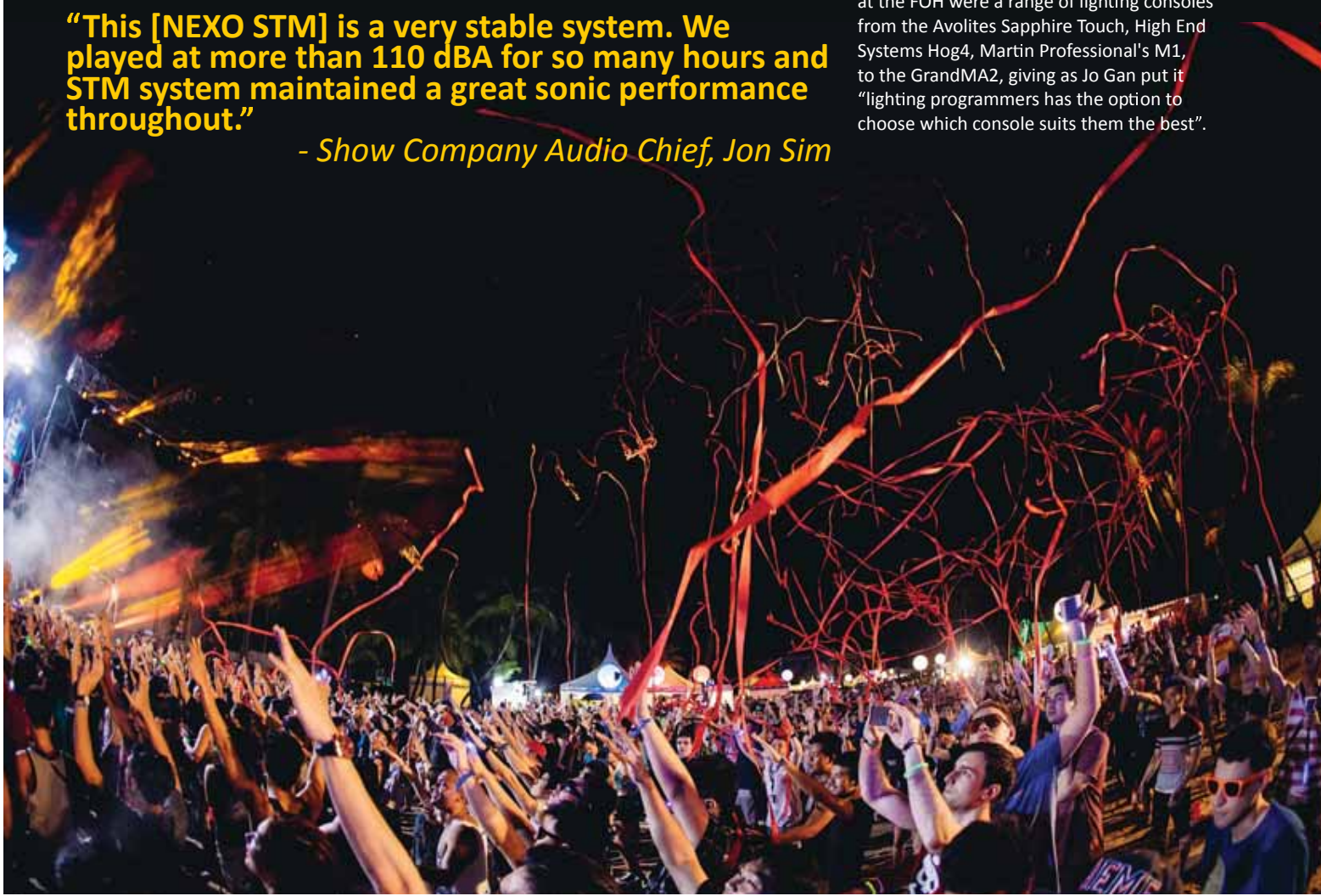
- Show Company Audio Chief, Jon Sim

of the music and DJ voice and appreciate the most intricate details in the program, but after over 10hrs of such high SPL you leave without any numbness or any signs of ear pain whatsoever. And you feel fresh and ready for the same treatment the following day. This is absolutely unique and will let the audience rediscover what is true high fidelity for live shows, albeit at unseen levels."

At 5am on the first day, the system was still going strong, confirming to Show Company Audio Chief, Jon Sim that the team had chosen the right system for the world-class festival. "This is a very stable system. We played at more than 110 dBA for so many hours and STM system maintained a great sonic performance throughout."

Describing his experience as the engineer together with Mark for most of the stage acts, Jon added, "We definitely played louder this year as compared to other years. In the past, we would cautiously push the sound levels, bringing them up slowly but this year, from the second act, we went full throttle."

Seamless mixing for the system was via a Yamaha CL5 board, the same console used for ZoukOut 2013. Accompanying the console at the FOH were a range of lighting consoles from the Avolites Sapphire Touch, High End Systems Hog4, Martin Professional's M1, to the GrandMA2, giving as Jo Gan put it "lighting programmers has the option to choose which console suits them the best".



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Besides the hi-quality audio gear and panoramic LED screens, another feature which set Moon apart was its open-top concept. This allowed for confetti, fireworks and pyrotechnics to be shot through and behind the mega main structure, captivating and fascinating guests at the same time.

This was a trade-off as explained by Jo because "exposing the systems to the elements is what festivals try to avoid but we wanted to push the boundaries for ZoukOut 2014."

However, one could not help but wonder what would happen to the systems if Singapore's unpredictable weather decided to rain on ZoukOut. According to Jo, "If it rains, we party on!"

Already looking forward to ZoukOut 2015, Jo also shared the unique relationship between Show Company and Zouk: "It's the passion for music, and I understand what is needed for ZoukOut. And at the end of the day, Zouk is a business driven by passionate people, so it makes working together all the more seamless and enjoyable. Every year, Jeremy

challenges us to do something different and I'm sure next year will outdo this year, the same way it does every year."

Luckily, it was clear skies for 2 whole days which allowed ravers at the world's only sunrise beach festival to party harder than

ever backed by deep rich bass and heart-thumping music and the promise that no matter what happened, they would party on.

nexo-sa.com
show-company.com
www.zoukclub.com.sg

