

X marks the spot: The Italian X Factor tour



The Nex Factor

An array of Nexo loudspeaker products were recently deployed for the Italian X Factor's latest nationwide live tour. **PSNEurope** hears from those at the heart of the production for a look behind the scenes at 11th edition of the pop extravaganza...

Born in Britain and evolved as a television music competition franchise, the X Factor has successfully adapted the format in many countries and languages around the globe, and is now one of the world's most watched TV music competitions. In Italy, where it has just completed its 11th edition, the show is produced by Fremantle Media, and broadcast on Sky Uno, the main channel of Sky Italy, attracting nearly three million viewers for its final show, which represented a 20% increase on 2016 figures.

As the show went on the road to meet its public, eight live shows were staged, leading up to the finals showcase in December, hosted by the Forum di Assago near Milan. AMG International was the full-service provider for each of the live events and broadcasts, deploying an arsenal of high-spec technology including a huge inventory of Nexo audio systems, much of which was purchased specifically for the X Factor.

The audio renaissance of AMG

With more than 60 years at the forefront of the broadcast industry, AMG International is gearing up in the youthful hands of Alex and Mirko Vinciguerra, nephews of the founder Gino, combining "innovation with tradition". Based in Rome, not far from the famous Cinecittà, with a rich past including three Oscars won for its productions, AMG is now expanding on a daily basis, providing 52,000m of trusses, 6,800 moving spotlights, 9,000m of LED strip, 30 generator sets, 4,000m² of LED screens and one of the biggest Nexo loudspeaker inventories in Europe with a total of 334 cabinets.

"We have three main buildings of 9,000 m² in Rome, a storage area for the 80 vehicles and the scaffolding systems, and a dry-rental company in Milan with two warehouses", states Alex Vinciguerra. "We number nearly 100 professionals under the same roof, starting with the key figures, such as Roberto Scioni in the audio

department, event manager Angelo Granati and video manager Claudio Renzetti."

AMG is relatively young in the audio market, but boasts in-depth experience in cinema, broadcast, staging and lighting technologies, with a growing client list that includes Italy's four main broadcast contractors: Sky, Rai, Mediaset, and La7. When asked about the recipe for success, Vinciguerra points out "the extreme agility of the company, and the modularity of all the materials in stock to improve the speed of set-up and load-out".

The company's experience on the X Factor 2017 required an all-inclusive inventory list: sound reinforcement, monitoring, broadcast technologies, lighting, trusses, video and LED walls, cameras, rail-cams and dollies, graphics (playout), production rooms, and generator sets.

Vinciguerra continues: "With the exception of the Sky



Going live: A vast range of Nexo systems were used on the tour

OB vans, we provided all the production, running to a total of 3,000 working days for the AMG team. Between the last elimination show at the Linear Ciak Theatre and the final event in Assago, we had to double the production, because there was no time to dismantle and rebuild the set. Only the floor equipment, such as mixers and broadcast cameras, was shipped to the big venue for the final."

Roberto Scioni was responsible for the sound system design for the fourth year in a row. Scioni describes the AMG production on the field of the Forum di Assago: "The set-up is short - 48 hours - and that comprises complex machines: whole bands playing on flying platforms, moving catwalks... I remember once when the scenographers had built a double-storey revolving stage, eight metres wide. Having those things coexisting with the huge amount of technology installed - video, lighting and especially broadcast cameras - has never been easy, the scenography is only ever limited by the director's imagination, putting the artistic cast at ease in their performances."



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ROBERTO SCIONI



The audio factor

Given the success of its previous show with AMG, the X Factor production team granted the company total freedom for the design of the entire stage in 2017, including the audio systems.

"This is not just a concert," Scioni explains. "It's more than that. Think of it as a TV show with the power of a live concert. It's not enough to have clear images and clear audio. People need to be surrounded by sound, moved and shaken. The more the public is involved, the more the show has power."

Intelligibility of spoken words is an essential ingredient of the show, as is the ability of the subs to provide plenty of audio power. The extended stage (270°, 800m²) of the 2017 final show was three meters tall, presenting the dual responsibility of having to deal with that height and also ensuring a clear view from the broadcast cameras.

Hidden Nexo cabinets - PS series and GEO M - were used to cover the first rows, with the rest of the 288 cabinets flown to reach the whole 10,000-capacity arena, leaving free sightlines to the stage from any seat. The system runs on a Dante audio network managed from the NEMO software and connected to the 56x NXAMP4X4 amplifiers packed in the Nexo Universal Amp Racks (NUAR).

"A peculiarity of the system design is in the low-frequency configuration: to obtain a uniform

low-end coverage without comb filters for the whole audience area, we deployed a single hang of 24 modules and 8+8 L-R clusters of STM S118 subs.

"While the artists' monitoring was conducted via IEM, the on-stage diffusion for Stage A came from the unobtrusive iD24 super-compact modules, plus two suspended clusters of GEO M1012 line array modules. For the Stage B, we had a bunch of Nexo's 45°N-12 floor monitors."

The audio team, guided by Scioni as the system designer and Valery Kot as the FOH engineer, required six full-time audio system technicians.

"AMG International develops audio projects from the smallest to the largest, trusting our qualified audio team, certified by Nexo with their high-level ETC 3 specialist training," explained Roberto Scioni. "Nexo systems have that flexibility and a light weight that is mandatory, given the traditional constraints in space and load capacity, especially in Italy.

"Here the problem is pre-electroacoustic-age theatres and tight medieval city centres, but we also have big arenas and wonderful outdoor venues, which provide the exact opposite working environment.

"Having a modular system like the STM helps the



WITH THE ENTRY OF AMG INTERNATIONAL TO OUR NETWORK OF PARTNERS, WE HAVE FOUND IN ITALY AN EXCELLENT COMPANY, ABLE TO DELIVER GREAT ACCURACY AND PRECISION IN ANY INSTALLATION.

SERGIO CAPRARA



system designer more than any equaliser."

Scioni insists that he was immediately impressed by the French loudspeaker manufacturer from their very first meeting. "We were invited to the Nexo headquarters in Paris, where Denis Baudier, the company's sales director, guided us on a factory tour and gave us a demonstration of the STM.

"Wonderful sound apart, I was particularly impressed

by the young and dynamic staff whose future-proof minds really reflect AMG International today."

Vinciguerra adds: "Despite our experienced audio crew, our relationship with Nexo is relatively recent; we already had some speakers, but we only started developing a full catalogue two years ago. The products are reliable and the company supports us, the outlook is more than positive."

Sergio Caprara, manager of Nexo Italy, confirms that, "with the entry of AMG International to our network of partners, we have found in Italy an excellent company, able to deliver great accuracy and precision in any installation. Of course, some merit goes to the audio systems too, which can deliver the goods in any work requirement."

AMG has also had its Nexo systems on other big events, such as the New Years Eve '18 at Circo Massimo in Rome, the David di Donatello Cinema Award and on TV studios for Italia's Got Talent, Guess My Age and Non è L'Arena among others.

Alex Vinciguerra concludes: "We are fond of our people. They are the brain of the company. Even the best equipment and technology demands human expertise, and I feel lucky to have this amazing team." ■

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