

ROCK SOLID RELIABILITY

YAMAHA MIXERS SUPPORT SUBFRANTIC IN LAGOS

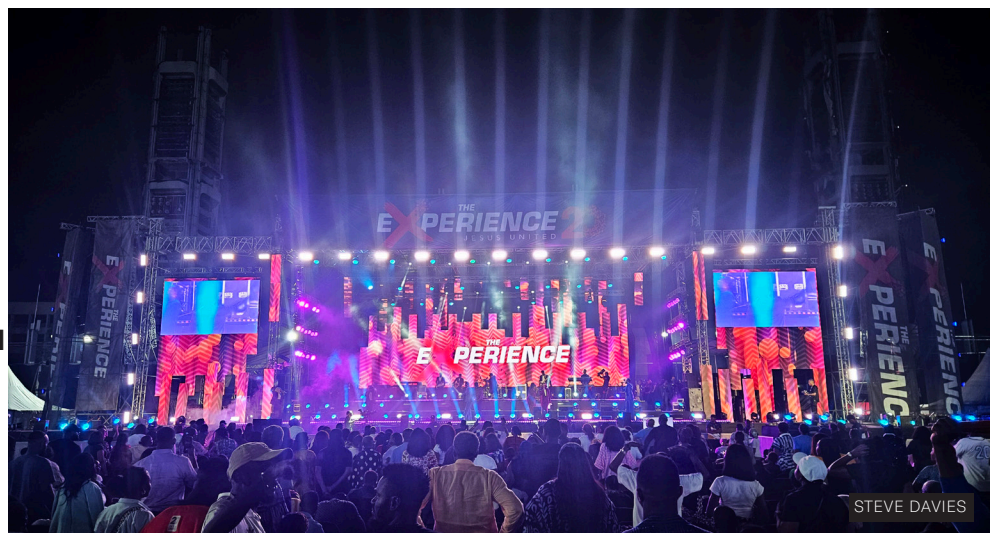
Attracting over 500,000 worshippers over the course of its 12 hour production, The Experience is a spectacular annual gospel music concert staged by House On The Rock, a church in Lagos, Nigeria. The church and London-based production company Subfrantic have used Yamaha digital mixing consoles for the live and broadcast mixes for 12 years, this year choosing RIVAGE PM10, DM7 and DM7 Compact systems to bring music, sermons and other performances to the live audience and thousands more online.

Held in Tafawa Balewa Square, Lagos, the 20th Experience was the biggest yet, with 60 separate performances and prayers in an uninterrupted show from dusk until dawn. Subfrantic has been involved since 2013, handling front of house and monitor sound, stage design, lighting, video, production/stage management and electrical safety.

Managing director Steve Davies is the event's production manager and oversees FoH sound.

The main house mix has used a Yamaha RIVAGE PM10 system for the past six years. Initially Subfrantic flew out their own system, but House On The Rock was so impressed that it invested in its own, which has been used at The Experience and in The Rock Cathedral in Lagos ever since. Meanwhile, this year Subfrantic took out a DM7 Compact as a continuity desk.

"This year, for the first time, we had two small sub-stages. The idea was that certain acts would perform on these while we prepared for the next



STEVE DAVIES

act on the main stage," says Steve. "While the local or guest engineers on the main RIVAGE PM10 were getting ready, I was on the DM7 Compact looking after the comperes, announcements and some of the smaller acts with backing tracks."

"While the continuity console increased the channel count, it gave the main act guys more time to prepare for their show, rather than having to push through a really quick changeover. On such a big, high pressure event with so many performers, it definitely made changeovers easier."

Monitors and networking

At the monitor position, House On The Rock's



recently purchased DM7 console was handling the main mixes. Six Yamaha Rio3224-D2 I/O racks handled around 110 input channels, mainly comprising drums, two bass rigs, four keyboard rigs, two guitar rigs, 12 channels of backing tracks, 16 channels of wireless microphones, plus eight audience mics for the broadcast mix. Outputs comprised 20 channels of in-ear monitors and 28 wedges and sidefills, distributed throughout the main and sub-stages.

“We were very pleased to see the DM7 added a couple of years ago,” says Steve. “Previously one of their two Yamaha CL3s was on monitors, but we ended up having to improvise workarounds to get more feeds and busses than the CL3 had available. This included repatching and sharing IEM packs, which was always a nightmare for the stage management team having to go backstage to retrieve them after an artist’s set, ready for the next one!

“The DM7’s vastly increased bus count has made this a much easier process, but we still have to busk and improvise certain things where other parts of the infrastructure don’t necessarily meet the standard that the DM7 brings to the table.”

Working alongside the House On The Rock technical crew, Subfrantic’s eight-strong team faced a number of challenges, with reliability being key.

“The humid Lagos climate is testing for the team and equipment alike. Ensuring a consistent, clean and safe power supply for the entire production also presents its challenges because, while the standards here consistently rise year on year, so does the demand on the local electrical team and their infrastructure,” says Steve.

Another challenge with a production of this size was the need to bring in equipment from a range of sources. “It wasn’t just about getting it all to work, it was making sure everything had compatible, up-to-date firmware, because one supplier may have things up to date and others may not,” says Steve. “If we put out a system this



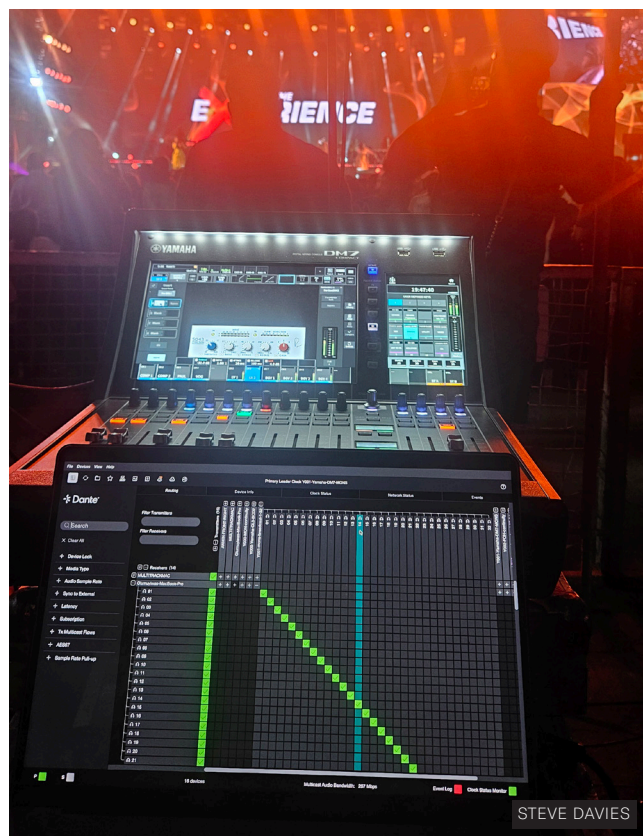
size in the UK, it would all be flightcased and pre-tested, but that's just not a luxury we have working on an event of this size in Lagos."

Although the audio network has been Dante-based for many years, this year for the first time it was moved on to fibre. "Last year we reached the limit of what we could do with the multiple Cat 5 and Cat 6 lines which had been in use for over a decade, so this time we brought the core infrastructure of the event up to date by bringing a multicore OM4 multimode fibre and switch network out from the UK," Steve notes.

"This allowed the routing of multiple Dante streams alongside multiple Artnet and NDI streams, plus comms, the production internet connection and other things from a Starlink dish we also brought out. It made a huge difference having a high bandwidth backbone between FoH and the stage."

Broadcast and streaming

Meanwhile, House On The Rock handled the event's broadcast / streaming mix and multitrack recording from a soundproofed booth. Using another newly-purchased Yamaha DM7 alongside a CL5 which has served the event well in previous years, Yamaha HS8 powered monitors also helped to ensure all listeners enjoyed great sound quality.



"People listen to The Experience on their phones, on TV, through different devices and in many different places. Our aim was to make sure everybody enjoyed the feel of The Experience," says broadcast mix engineer Muiyiwa Isiaka.

"Previously we used the CL5 for the master broadcast and streaming mix, with the CL3 to submix the audience microphones. This year we had the DM7 on the master mix, with the CL5

handling the crowd mics. In the past we hadn't always had enough channels, but this year the DM7's higher channel count meant we did. It was my first time using it and it's a lovely mixer."

"We plan to build on this in future years," adds Steve. "Adding the third DM7 to the network means that, by no longer needing the CL consoles, both sides of the splits can now be run at 96kHz,

which is an important milestone in the drive to make The Experience better year on year.”

He continues, “In addition, the extra processing power of the DM7 alongside the increased quality and quantity of its effects and dynamics give the broadcast team a lot more tools to do a progressively better job. Thinking back to 12 years ago, the broadcast mix was done on an LS9-32 - that’s a great illustration of how things have improved in the time we’ve been involved!”

Reflections

As Mr. M And Revelation brought the 20th The Experience to a rousing finish in the Lagos dawn, Steve Davies reflected on another successful event where the company’s trust in Yamaha digital mixing systems again paid dividends at this challenging production.

“The Experience isn’t an easy gig. Ignoring its size, we run into dozens of challenges every year which we have to overcome to make the event what it is, and that’s not just with audio, that’s with the entire production,” he says.

“I can’t explain how much peace of mind it gives me having Yamaha consoles all over this event. They are incredibly robust and the reliability is rock solid; they perform in the harshest of environments

in intense humidity, heat and occasional epic thunderstorms. They get left on for days with no complaints. When the power fails they come back on quickly in the exact same place you left them, everyone knows how to use them and they all speak

the same language. Oh – and did I mention how good the RIVAGE PM system sounds? That’s just something I take for granted whilst I’m spending my time dealing with other problems!”

He continues, “My team have done amazing work here in the last dozen or so years and I’m very proud of them for it. The local teams have been even more impressive and it’s been a huge cause of joy and pride for me to watch them

develop professionally - from needing our help with lots of things to taking the reins on others and even showing us a few things too. Knowing that we’ve been even a small part of their professional journey is a hugely positive thing.

“Our equipment partners have been every bit as important, and none of them have been as integral to the growth of the event as Yamaha. Huge thanks to them for their excellent products and their continual support, both in the UK and in Nigeria.”

