

THERE'S A NEW PLAYER IN TOWN



JBL VTX A Series returns the brand to the big stages and riders

JBL launched their VTX A Series of premium line array loudspeakers at Frankfurt's PL+S in 2017 with the flagship A12 dual 12" element. In the years following, they've released the A8 dual 8" and A6 dual 6" elements, and seven models of complimentary subwoofers. Designed by JBL from the ground up, including the HF transducers, the VTX A Series is a generational change in sound for JBL.

As I've written many times about the A series, this is not the JBL of the 90s and 2000s. Tonally, they are on par with any of the big-name rider-friendly line arrays. Their power to weight ratio is exceptional, and everyone who hangs one praises their rigging system.

Here in Australia, MadisonAV took on distribution of JBL's premium touring products back in 2022. Since then, they've been doing an exceptional job of introducing A Series to the market, including to engineers like myself with a long history of disliking the brand, and winning us over. They're doing

such a good job that they won 'Launch Event of the Year' at the Harman APAC Tour Summit in Singapore, for their A6 launch event at Sydney's The Star in 2023.

MadisonAV's Head of Tour Sound, Peter Kubow, has been taking their extensive demonstration inventory to festival stages around the country and putting them to work. Both a system tech and FoH engineer, Peter has been letting production companies trial A Series on live stages with their reputations on the line, and backs his product 100%. At every demo rollout, Peter and his crew are

there to install and tune the system, ensuring the best results.

It's a strategy that is working. It's simple, but so few do it – get your product in front of the right people, let them use it in the course of their work, and trust the quality of the product to make its case. It's seen A Series appear on major events across the country since Peter joined MadisonAV a year ago. We talked to production managers and sound technicians about their experiences with A Series, and the feedback has been excellent.

The International Perspective

Rodney Houston, Director Tour Sound APAC, Harman Professional Solutions

Working out of Singapore and servicing the whole region for JBL's parent company Harman, Rodney is in a unique position to view the rollout of A Series internationally.

"We've had a lot of success with A Series in South Korea over recent years," he divulges. "Artnix, who are one of, if not the biggest rental company in South Korea and are leaders in KPop production, came on board with A Series at the end of last year. New to JBL, Artnix bought a massive inventory of A12 and A8 plus subs, enough to do a full in-the-round indoor arena. That's had a huge impact on the market, both in and out of South Korea, because they tour regularly internationally. They go to Australia, the rest of Southeast Asia, the States, and Europe. They've got around 30 engineers, and they

run multiple tours at once; it's a serious enterprise. Because Artnix invested, other rental companies that already had orders in increased them, while others put orders in for the first time. To see a company of that scale jump on A Series really spoke volumes as to the movement we're seeing in the market right now. South Korea's also a huge worship market. There is an ever-growing list of A Series installations in South Korean churches. The impact and the halo effect of that is already being felt."

"There is huge market share for JBL in the Indian tour market and we're seeing shows and tours come out of India and go around the region, including Australia. On top of success in the major markets, we've even got A Series systems into very remote areas in Asia, as far as Mongolia and Cambodia, that are doing tonnes of local festivals and some international shows."

"In the USA, Clearwing, who operate out of Wisconsin, Arizona, and Colorado, invested in a substantial amount of A Series. One

of the bigger festivals they do every year is the SummerFest in Milwaukee, which at one point, according to the Guinness Book of Records, was the world's largest music festival. It runs for three consecutive weekends with 13 stages, nine of which are JBL A Series. With a big festival like that, so many bands, artists, and front of house engineers experience the product, which really helps drive rider acceptance. For the third year running at Coachella, there has been an VTX A12 system in the Gobi Tent, thanks to Rat Sound who also recently installed a VTX A8 PA in The Roxy Theatre, a famous music venue on the Hollywood strip. In terms of touring, Sound Image, now part of the Clair Global family, have just finished a huge US tour carrying a full VTX A Series system for the The Trilogy Tour, featuring Ricky Martin, Enrique Iglesias, and Pitbull as rotating headliners as well as other tours including Heart which just left on tour this month."



Rolling Sets Festival and Let the Good Times Roll Festival

Dec 2023, The Entrance NSW

"The VTX A system surpassed all my expectations," says Ryan Hazell of Roll In Production Services. "I was expecting it to be good but not 'that' good. We were able to compare it pretty much side by side next to the big German manufacturer's latest system on the main Rolling Sets stage. The VTX A more than held its own and covered the space beautifully with a perfect deployment. For eight A8s on the main hangs, I did not expect the fullness and quality of the sound image coming from such a small format PA. This is what makes the A8s so versatile; lightweight, small footprint and a huge sound. The A8s married perfectly with the A6 infills, the sonic signature was seamless between the two boxes. Those A6s pack a punch! The sub deployment was also super impressive, 10 G28 in array pattern and cardioid configuration. It's rare to get such even sub coverage around the entire audience area. There were so many comments, it definitely had the edge in this regard over the main stage."

"The clarity and efficiency is what makes this system stand out from the pack. The improved clarity means you don't need to run the system as loud to translate the impact to the audience. Pete Kubow was explaining the new driver technology and the super quick recovery time that translates into drastically improved transient response; more like a studio monitor. That is how I would describe the sound of the PA - the transient detail was something new to what I have experienced in a deployment of this size. You can hear the space between that is normally lost in a live setting."

"There were zero complaints received from any touring engineers with the system - this is rare! As we all know, us engineers love a good wing. The industry in Australia is dominated by a very few major brands and I feel engineers and production managers use this as a comfort blanket to specify on their riders. I feel after enough people use the VTX A here it will break into the holy grail of touring riders. The overwhelming positive feedback actually came from the festival promoters and the audience, noticing a drastic improvement on the stage from the previous year."

"I feel like there needs to be more players in the touring market in Australia and VTX A Series brings something unique. The Crown V rack takes care of all the processing you could need with a clean user interface. It sounds like there is heavy investment in R&D which makes me feel comfortable that there will be constant updates to stay relevant with emerging technology and user feedback. It's a clean system, well-thought-out with rigging, transport and storage. Most importantly, it sounds as good as anything out there. People are always going to have their personal taste in PA, but to me VTX A Series will match it with anything out there, giving me confidence to spec for future events."

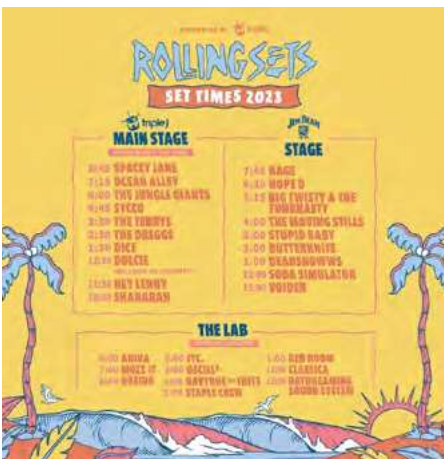
Tristan Forbes is the production manager for Let The Good Times Roll Festival, and is similarly impressed. "The efficiency of the VTX A Series system was demonstrated to be outstanding. Whilst in operation, I visited numerous locations and found it sounded



just as clear up front as it did further back, including with changing crowd numbers. Feeling very confident that the VTX A provided clarity in multiple listening situations, I walked away with a smile on my face. I could feel the full impact of a full range of frequencies and levels up past the FoH mix position when the headliner was on. I glanced around FoH position to see what other people's reactions were like, and it was a dance party with everyone really enjoying themselves, dancing around as though they were front row."

"I know that a production supplier for this festival has enquired about having it on their next festival. They are happy to leave their existing PA in the warehouse and go with VTX A Series now. I personally had bands approach me to say thanks for the awesome sound on this stage, to which I had to redirect the appreciation back to the VTX A Series. Having bands walk away feeling as though their mixes were actually heard correctly note for note has made our job so much easier. The international acts walked away knowing they were definitely looked after out the front. Thats huge for us."

"I'd like to see VTX A Series on another few festivals to confirm what I already believe to be a real contender in the market of A-Grade PAs. I have heard numerous PAs handle all types of music in different ways over the years. With VTX A Series I was hearing extended, clear high frequencies when levels are pushed, an even coverage of sub frequencies, and both near and far field performance. I already have VTX A Series in mind for a few more festivals in 2024 where I know that the listeners will be expecting the highest levels of audio quality."





JBL A-SERIES

BIGSOUND

Brisbane, September 2023

"I've been Production Manager at BIGSOUND for 12 years," says Eddie Gresack. "Last year, Peter Kubow from MadisonAV and I walked around and looked at different venues and talked about what would be a good fit for JBL A Series. We settled on Soapbox Brewery, which was a brand new venue for us and a brand new venue in terms of offering live music, plus Blute's and The Sound Garden, which had existing PAs, but I wanted to make this special and was looking at ways to improve what was already a good space."

"The JBL A Series rolled out very well. I was really happy with the way the system sounded in Soapbox Brewery, and both Blute's and The Sound Garden were both huge improvements over their house systems. Tim Roberts, who is production manager for Blute's, Black Bear Lodge, and The Brightside, liked the rig in Blute's and he definitely thought it was an improvement on what they have. He was impressed enough to carry on the conversation about perhaps outfitting Brightside Backyard with JBL A Series. The Soapbox Brewery people were thrilled."

It wasn't just the product that inspired Eddie's admiration. "I was also impressed by the fact that MadisonAV had their own crew come in. Peter Kubow and the crew installed each rig and were there for me. When they were bumping in Soapbox, which is upstairs, they asked "Do you need any help with the other stuff that you are bringing in?" We had a monitor rig, front of house desk, and backline. They let us use their crew to bump in, which really helped, and is very cool. They are great staff with really good follow-through. It was very refreshing!"



St Kilda Festival

St Kilda VIC, 17-18 February 2024

The iconic St Kilda Festival in Melbourne's famed foreshore suburb takes over the entire area for a weekend in February. Local production company Light & Sound Solutions provide full production for six stages in total. One of these stages, the New Music stage, was graced with a ground stacked A Series system, installed, and tuned by MadisonAV's Peter Kubow.

"The PA did a great job of creating a nice rich sound across the listening area" comments Andrew Stanley, managing director of Light & Sound Solutions. "The size and weight are good, and I think A Series will fit into the market nicely"

"The rigging capability is great," he continues.. "It's all integrated, which makes it so much easier. We were ground stacked at the New Music stage, but whether it's hanging or ground stacked, you're using the same pins."

Having assessed the A Series' performance throughout the festival, Andrew is open to hearing more of it. "We're always looking for that new box," he explains. "In the recent past JBL hasn't been up there in the tier-one range of PAs. A Series is bringing them back into the market. It's a fresh look, fresh sound, and represents a return to form for JBL."



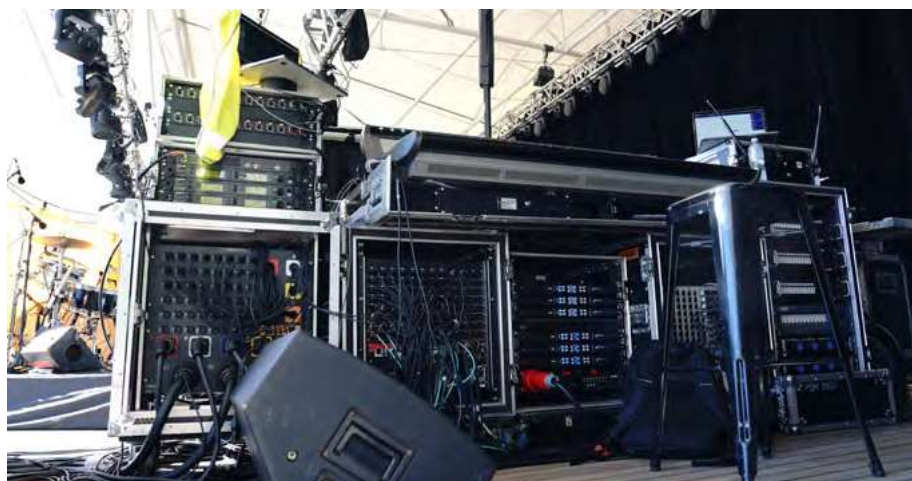
Enlighten Festival Canberra

Hoodoo Gurus with Canberra
Symphony Orchestra.
10 March 2024

Marshall Cullen is a music industry veteran with over 30 years' experience both locally and internationally. He's handled FoH and tour management for Lloyd Cole, Paul Kelly, Sarah Blasko, Ballpark Music, Sunnyboys, Violent Femmes, and more. Marshall found himself in front of JBL A Series supported by Chris Neale of Eclipse Lighting & Sound to mix Hoodoo Gurus with the Canberra Symphony Orchestra.

"We had about 80 lines off stage," reports Marshall. "Hoodoo Gurus were playing through smaller amps than they usually would, backed by the 38-piece orchestra. The show was about two hours long, with an interval. Peter Kubow was system tech, I mixed the Gurus and Chris Neale mixed the orchestra."

"We had 12 A12s per side, A8s as infill, and 15 subs in five stacks of three, run in cardioid. With just a single hang of 12s per side, it was very, very efficient PA. They expected 8,000 people to this free concert, and the final guesstimate was 15,000, almost double what they expected. It broke the record."





"I run an AVID S6L. After Peter had done his system tuning, I went to the graphic EQ I run across the left-right with my preferred little notches and flattened most of them out. I was a good 50 metres from the front of the stage, and we were metering 100dB-A, so it must have been 105dB-A down the front. It had tonnes of grunt, there was a lot more there if I needed it. I couldn't go crazy with an orchestra there, but I'd love to get the Gurus on their own on this system and crank it up! I just thoroughly enjoyed the whole system. It had really good imaging and was just so well defined."

Eclipse's Chris Neale concurs; "I had lots of gain before feedback with the orchestra. The

rear rejection was really good. It sounded nice as soon as we turned it on, and we didn't have to do a whole lot to it to get it sitting nicely."

"The rigging is sensational. This is definitely the next iteration of modern rigging design. A Series stores folded up in an arc. You put the pins in it while it's in the arc. Then, as you lift it, depending on where you put the pins, it clicks itself into those spots. On the way down, there's red levers on each box, and whichever boxes you pull the levers on, it allows those to fall down back into the arc. It's quite elegant and simple. A lot of boxes that I've used are often a lot fiddlier than that."



LIGHTWARE

USB-C CABLES



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- 3-4-5m USB Type-C Copper Cables
- USB3.2 Gen1x2 10Gbps for 4K60
- 60W Charging and eMarker



CAB-USBC-AOC800K & CAB-USBC-AOC1000K

- 8-10m USB Type-C Active Optical Cables
- USB3.2 Gen1x1 5Gbps for 4K30
- 60W Charging and eMarker

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Already in Inventory

Proud A-Series Owners

Rockstar Productions - Coomera, QLD

John Yost of Rockstar Productions boasts a stock of A6 and A8 line array elements, plus G28 and B18 subs. "We're using them every chance we get because they're so scalable," says John. "The amount of output that we get out of them means we need less boxes. Four months ago, at a James Reyne concert at Alexander Hills Hotel, we used two B18 subs a side and three line array elements a side for 1,000 people, which is which is unheard of. 10 years ago, if you said you could use four 18 inch subs for 1,000 people they'd say you had rocks in your head. We did 15,000 people for New Year's Eve at Broadwater Parklands with the A8s flown and A6s as front fill. We also used A6s on stands as delays, and that was pure magic."

"I can set up a ground stack by myself, which is incredible. With a four channel Crown amp, you can run 16 elements. All of the VTX A products are designed to work with each other and have the same voicing; they all play well with each other. I can't speak highly enough of A Series. I'm probably going to be selling off some of my other systems so I can buy more of it."



Centrestate Sound & Lighting - Orange, NSW

Allan Brown's Centrestate runs 16 A8s and six B28 subs on Crown I-Tech 4x3500HD amps. "We're typically flying the whole system on the big festivals we do," explains Allan. "There's the Elvis Festival in Parkes, which is huge and just added another day. There's other themed festivals we supply too; there's ABBA, Dolly Parton, and David Bowie festivals. There's a big festival over in Forbes called Frost and Fire, right on the winter solstice. Dunedoo have a mini 'Day on the Green'; they call it 'Tunes on the Turf'.

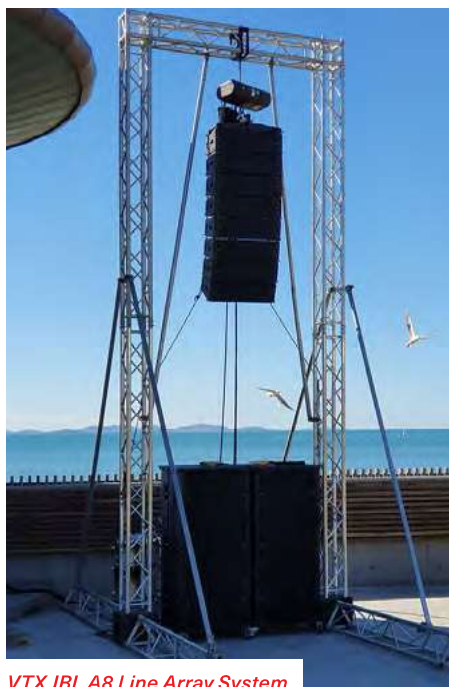
"The A Series is a huge improvement on JBL's previous products. It takes up less truck, it's lighter, and more efficient. It goes up and down easy. In sound, it's smoother than older JBL; it hasn't got that bark at 2kHz that everybody used to talk about—that's definitely in the past."

"I can't fault MadisonAV as a supplier. When they found out they couldn't deliver



the subs I ordered for quite a while, they loaned me six G28s to keep until my order came in. How many companies do that? I've

really got to say thanks to them, they got me out of a tight spot when it really mattered."



VTX JBL A8 Line Array System

Stage & Audio - Rockhampton, QLD

Stage & Audio own 24 A8s and 18 B18 subwoofers. "In addition to running production and Hire as Stage & Audio, we put on our own events under the brand Capricorn Events," explains Head Technician Aaron Buchholz. "We put on our own festivals in Rockhampton, Bundaberg, and Emerald this year, with plans to expand that into other cities in coming years."

"We often split this system into three, with four tops and three subs aside, ground stacked. It goes out all the time. Over the Easter weekend, we split it in two, with half at Gladstone Harbour Festival and half at Rockynats here in Rockhampton. Because we wanted six subs a side at each show, we borrowed six more from MadisonAV, and just had to pay the freight, which was awesome. It's good to have that kind of support."

"We love how compact the A8s are, and how efficient it is with amp channels. We

run a Crown I-Tech 4x3500HD and an-Tech 12000HD in a 7RU rack with a patch panel on the front. That can run three tops per side, plus subs."

Richard 'Al' Weller-Boyes is a full-time sound technician at Stage & Audio, and is often in front of their A Series rig. "Most of our gigs are ground stacked, but three times a year or so we'll fly the whole rig for big events like The Village Festival at Yeppoon and Carols by Candlelight at the Music Bowl in Rockhampton," explains Al.

"I really enjoy the A8s, they're very clean. If you're in an outdoor venue, you really don't need to EQ them. There are no obvious frequencies missing, and they're very Hi-Fi sounding for a speaker capable of its outputs. The A8s are flawless, both in sound and durability. We've had no issues with any drivers needing replacement. Everything's been rock solid."



Village Festival Yeppoon Stage for Hoodoo Gurus