



PA People Hits Top Gear with Australian Grand Prix

THE P.A. PEOPLE ARE NO STRANGERS to large sporting events, counting the Olympics, Commonwealth Games and the FIFA World Cup as clients. But, there's something special about the Formula 1 Australian Grand Prix. Planning in the lead up to the event commences months in advance with the company's on-site activities commencing four weeks out from race day.

As Des Williamson, Project Manager for The P.A. People, explains, "Our involvement with the F1 event not only includes the distributed audio system, but we also provide numerous smaller PA systems for the corporate stands, press conferences and localised entertainment activities that occur around the F1 site.

"We also provide the audio system that supports the anthem singing and presentations on Pit Lane as well as a 12 screen video-wall system that is installed within race control; this allows all race officials to monitor the track in real-time during the Race."

One of the biggest jobs for The P.A. People was the deployment and maintenance of almost 450 speakers fitted to the race barriers around the entire 5.3km circuit. As these barriers can sometimes suffer a vehicle impact, some simple engineering has gone into keeping the system functioning.

"Every second speaker is on a separate circuit. So, in the case of impact, rather than losing an entire circuit, chances are one of the two cables will remain intact," explains Paul Barrett – Project Engineer for The P.A. People.

The speakers are powered by seven amplifier locations around the track in custom designed 'huts'; portable structures purpose built to house track equipment racks. There is full redundancy in the system and each hut contains a rack fitted with UPS, amplifiers, network audio bridges and FM tuner backup that can be activated in the unlikely event of a failure to the main system.

Signal distribution to the huts is achieved via the use of the AGPC's fibre optic network that surrounds the track.

All audio distribution is via the network. A Peavey MediaMatrix sits in The P.A. People (hub) heart of operations in the Main Compound, directing audio traffic to and from other MediaMatrix nodes in the seven amplifier huts around the track and network interfaces mounted in Yamaha LS9 digital mixers in the F1 Press and National Press centres. Other network pick-up and drop off points include the National Media Tent, Camera positions, The Action Zone and the V8 Supercars area.

Paul Barrett, Project Engineer, Grand Prix – for The P.A. People, is responsible for all networked audio.

"It would be challenging to an event like the GP without using networked



DSP," says Paul. "We can pre-build all of the audio routing and intelligence into the system. The MediaMatrix rack is then dropped into our operations room in the Main Compound and it's all up and running pretty painlessly."

The main pit building is home to Race Control, where F1 officials, safety and medical staff monitor every section of the track to ensure a smooth event. A huge video-wall provided by The P.A. People dominates the control room, with cameras covering every inch of the track.

Pit Lane, aside from housing the F1 Teams themselves, hosts the Podium PA, a large-scale system for the ceremonial presentations and National Anthem. Long-throw Bose LT4402 Series 2 cabinets hang from the Main Compound, projecting to the stands on Pit Straight. Supplemented by Bose 9702s are a number of other Bose cabinets mounted under the podium, this PA has its own dedicated Yamaha LS9 digital mixer and SB168-ES remote stage-box.

Despite extensive team radio communications, the entire pit and garage areas are fitted with PA horns throughout for emergency paging and relays. Some medical services are located in this area, making emergency coverage critical. Like the Main Compound above, all wiring is permanent, and The P.A. People fit horns to the existing lines during bump-in.

The main race day starts early for the team, with full system checks, anthem sound checks and fine tuning of all the peripheral corporate systems all to take place before the general public arrive en masse.

Throughout the day, the P.A. People team operate and manage all systems and additionally roam the site to ensure all systems remain functional and are meeting the needs of the tens of thousands of race fans in attendance on the day.

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