

Time To Be Great



Viraf Pocha, Director, Landmark Productions, on what it takes for the Indian pro sound, lighting, and audiovisual industry to make Lollapalooza India a great success

Lollapalooza is where music fans, food fanatics, and socialites gather under a single roof to experience the best of what culture, cuisine, and creativity has to offer. The two-day Lollapalooza India, held on 28th and 29th January, 2023 in Mumbai, India, in addition to featuring a vibrant artist line-up, mouthwatering delicacies, and other colourful extravaganza, was decked up with quality sound, visuals, and lights to mesmerize the visitors. Below, Viraf Pocha, Director, Landmark Productions, in his own words, breaks down the intricate audio, video, and lighting deployment by several big names in the pro sound, audiovisual, and lighting industry, and why, this collaborative, thoroughly planned and executed process made Lollapalooza a massive hit with the visitors.

Lollapalooza was here. Can it get bigger than this?
Probably YES. Next time, maybe?
But, we had never hosted a Rock Festival on this scale, until Lollapalooza happened in India on 28th and 29th January, 2023.
Countless bands, Countless fans, Countless technicians, Countless crew. Countless on-ground support. Huge off-venue staff. Countless kilometers of cable, strung around the venue.
Does it matter? Just thinking about the numbers boggles the imagination.
And yet – every person I spoke with - musicians, crew, fans, infrastructure guys – all speak of a calm energy that just pushed everything along and ensured everybody had a great time.
What else can a Festival hope for?
The scope of the event was huge. I'm sure there is enough material around there to fill a book. Here, I'd like to put a spotlight on the technical set-up that was the backbone of the ground event.

Lollapalooza was brought to India by BookMyShow. India's leading entertainment company spearheaded the India edition of the festival as the promoter and co-producer along with global producers, Perry Farrell, WME and C3 Presents.
The BookMyShow company has associated with Lollapalooza for the long term. As it was their first outing, both teams were committed to putting their best foot forward. Lollapalooza India had to match the Lollapalooza experience around the world, so that it can expose India to the best the world has to offer.
Lollapalooza around the world has a reputation of being a launchpad for some enticing new artists. So, it makes sense for Lollapalooza India to ensure all their artists are assured of a platform where they are encouraged to perform their best.
The Lollapalooza team that BookMyShow brought together was fortunate to have the experienced Vincent Samuel, Managing Partner, Greenstone Entertainment, available to put all the pieces into place. Vincent has served as the Production Manager to several foreign acts for their India concerts. His biography includes

Viraf Pocha, Director, Landmark Productions

names like Roger Waters, Bryan Adams, and U2. He has also managed the stages at several International Festivals around the world.
That experience proved invaluable. Every technical person I spoke with recognizes the value of Samuel's work.
In India, Jugaad is celebrated as a skill. We take pride in announcing, 'We set up all this in just a few days or even hours.' If you are talking about a family Sangeet – then it's worth applauding. To a paying audience, that sounds like a deep disrespect. You are selling yourself short and cutting into your audience's experience.
No Jugaad at Lollapalooza India. Samuel's team oversaw every detail of the planning. Vaibhav Kapoor, Director – Projects, Third Wave Services, who oversaw the electrical install said that every small power drop and every water station was planned for months before anybody stepped onto the venue grounds.

Kapoor could lay his electrical cables well in advance of the first sound, light, video, and food team arriving on the spot.
Anybody who drives on Indian roads understands the havoc caused by burying a metro below an existing road system. Kapoor had an open field to lay his cables. He had the advantage of knowing exactly where his generators would be parked and knowing the exact load that needed to be delivered at every spot, so his cable laying exercise was done in days.
Sounds simple. Remember, you only know your power requirements AFTER every stage's sound, light, video requirements are finalized with every band's tech team that's going to play on each stage. A slight miscalculation means – last minute angst OR massive wastage. None of that here.
Factor in backstage lights, working lights, hospitality areas, cameras and internet stations surrounding each stage. Then factor in demands of the VIP space with its own installations.
Now come to the food areas. Stages, you can plan. How do you plan for how many food warmers and mixers will be switched on at a time? Extra loads need to be made available. Redundancies need to be understood. Who knows how many pizzas will need to be served up at what time? Think about the upset guys who get cold pizzas – delayed!

The technology to be deployed to get something so simple, right.

The VIP zone, the food areas, and the experience zones form the center of the festival. From there, we can head to one of the FOUR main stages roughly laid out around the center.

Four huge stages. Roof Trussing provided by **Manish Mavani**, Director, **SNL Pro**. Manish applauds the planning that the Lollapalooza India team put into the project.

Each stage was sized and had its truss configured so that every band that would be performing would have ample space to be comfortable. Each stage was going to host between 10 – 15 acts over two days. Space was needed for both the installed artist – as well as the next artist's equipment ready to be rolled on.

AUDIO

At Rock Festivals, sound probably needs maximum attention. All of Mumbai's leading companies were assigned a stage each, so their energies were focused on one area with minimum running between stages. Manish Mavani, Director, SNL Pro, **Warren Dsouza**, Founder & Managing Director, of **SOUND.COM**, **Dave Drego**, Co-Chief Executing Officer, **Electrocraft**,



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Herman Lobo, Owner, **Audio Dimensionz** along with **Sean Lobo**, Head of Operations, **Audio Dimensionz**, were assigned one stage each.

Each professional shared a healthy interaction with the rest. Each stage installed the house sound to cover every artist's audio requirement - from full rock bands as headline acts to the EDM artists. Each of the sound guys were enthusiastic about the project. They all loved their jobs and were all personally pleased to be included in this amazing project.

All four of these companies are experienced in managing multi-artist stages. Their teams are practiced in handling quick changeovers. Each one spoke of it being critical to know what comes next. No surprises to trip them up. Even one damaged plug or shorted wire can create an unpleasant cackle. Every cable needs to be checked and re-checked. Every time it is handled, it must be handled quickly and firmly so that it can be reused.

Festivals must run like clockwork. Every delay has a cascading effect. It's embarrassing to ask an artist to cut his set short due to a technical glitch. They have spent a lot of time getting their act right. Their careers and image are on the line. Nobody wants that to be sacrificed over a frayed wire.

Dsouza stressed on the importance of discipline of the whole exercise. That discipline created an awareness that everybody must work together. Lollapalooza India was marked by an absence of individual sound checks. The production team had a certain set of high standards that each sound stage had to meet. That created a scenario where each artist could plug and play.

The sound team also spoke of the need for each band to create a 'festival patch' that could easily be integrated into the House PA system. Bands recognized that they are part of a larger exercise and that the more time they take to set up – the less time they have to perform.

This in turn led to the bands understanding the need for a good monitor engineer who knows the band's sound and stage monitor engineers who know how to mix the sound and send it to the PA Desk.

The House system sounds great. If you mess up, your band may not sound as good as the others. This creates healthy competition and adoption of good hygienic practices. The result? Bands sound good. Festival sounds good. Audience is happy.

Dsouza also spoke of how wonderful it was for him to walk about and listen to all the different speakers brands and the configuration each stage had opted for. You rarely get a chance to go head-to-head in a 'real' environment. He learnt a lot, and that sentiment was also echoed by all three of the other sound companies.

Herman Lobo was particularly chuffed when a Lollapalooza International Official joined some of the acts to compliment the sound on his stage. They agreed that the speakers' systems were arrayed in a particular way to cater to the EDM heavy acts on his stage.

All four of these hugely experienced sound guys unanimously confirmed that this was a great and novel experience. Given the combined number of shows that lot has on their resume – that's saying something.

VIDEO

Joshua Dmello, Co-Founder, **Wolves Inc** along with **Jash Reen**, Co-Founder, **Wolves Inc** were assigned the responsibility of managing all the visual content scheduled to be played across the four stages' LED screens.

They were entrusted with two roles. One, to create all new video content that was needed for the festival, including filling the screens for the bands that did not have their own engineers and / or content; and two, when the bands had their own video content / engineer, their task was to facilitate each engineer to install, play, test, and playback the content across the Stages' installed screens during their set.

Both Dmello and Reen have a lot of experience working with Samuel and so, they are in the habit of completing each other's sentences.

The Wolves' teamwork was perhaps the most detailed and intricate work on the project. Each video screen had to be precisely detailed, and the tech specs were sent to each Video Jockey / Content Creator of every band on each stage. This enabled each band to work on their own visuals and create unique looks.

Each stage was set up to be plug-and-play. Each VJ could plug into their stages' video systems, and within a few minutes, check their entire set of visuals on the preview monitors. The system was robust, and each video engineer was confident that what he saw on the preview monitors during set up – was what he would see on the main screen during the show.

Joshua D'Mello raved about a bit of versatile equipment, the **Barco E2 switcher**, that had made their lives very easy, as it offers all the options needed for a visual



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guy to create magic in a festival environment.

Some bands did not have their own video guy, and one band's video technician could not make it to the city in time for the show. At the last minute, the team at Wolves was prepared to step into that role and create some wonderful images behind the band.

Dmello credited the Notch system that he's grown to love to be able to step up so quickly. Reen's passion for his work is also palpable.

The Wolves team also picked up whatever visuals and graphics they could get their hands on and created some wonderful visuals to be played on the screens when that was not active.

LED Screens were provided and installed by **Ashish Saxena** of **Spectrum Audio Visualz**. Ashish spoke of the challenges of flying almost two tons of LED walls on each stage.

As the stages were outdoor and very close to the sea front, they had to prepare for high winds. Samuel's GreenStone team advised Ashish Saxena and **Jay Mathuria**, Co-Founder & Director, **Spectrum Audio Visualz** to import some specialized safety equipment. The area below the screens was kept clear. In case of high winds, the screens could be lowered, and the load taken off the Roof Truss and shifted onto the ground.

To bring the audience as close as possible to the stages, the **LED IMAGS** at the were cantilevered and flown from the front of the truss. The cantilever was balanced by a system of steel wires and water ballasts.

Saxena also was relieved to run the video signals through the servers and not directly onto the screens from each video engineers' laptop.

Different video playback softwares were used. A simple plug-in-and-screen resolutions could be adjusted to deliver a clean crisp image from every diverse



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input source a band carried.

LIGHTS

Always the biggest Element of a Rock Stage. However complex an audio or video setup is, the advantage is that usually all the technology is centered in two or three physical locations.

Consoles, speaker towers, and LED screens.

Lights are everywhere. Distributed over every corner of the stage. Sophisticated signal wire connected to each point and a separate power cable to each unit. One glitch and you lose a lot.

With love to my sound brothers – if one out of your many sound boxes decides to go to sleep – nobody really notices – apart from your feedback systems.

One light goes out – 10,000 people notice, all at once. Same goes for a video tile.

So, a big shout to the ever-smiling **Ashish Mehta** and his team for climbing up into every nook and cranny of the stage trussing, placing and wiring the lights.

Joyden, Akbar and Shamjyth set up the lighting systems and the two massive **IMAGS** that created the visual delight.

Cheers to **Vikas Dalia** of **Stage Engage** who set up lights on one of the four stages.

The first thing Ashish said to me (with an even bigger than usual grin), was that he wanted NO generic lights, only branded lights as per specification of the Lollapalooza India team.

All software matches. All color wheel and channel matches.

That means 50 odd lighting programmers can patch this up remotely on their visualizers in the comfort of their own studios and dream up looks thousands of miles and months before the actual stage goes up.

Possibly that's the first time this has happened on this scale in India. The lighting inventory was generous by any standards. Yet, some bands asked to install additional inventory to make their set look a little

different and stand out.

All of this was handled by

young **Naveen Deshpande**, Founder & Director, **Ground Control** along with his team. Deshpande's team designed the lighting layout over all the four stages. Then remained a direct point of contact for all guest lighting designers.

The lighting teams laid out kilometers of cable, labeled every one of them, and plugged every cable into the right universe and so, into the desk. Think about that – 300 odd lights multiplied by four stages.

Joyden spoke about the challenges he, Akbar and Shamjyth took up. They spoke of the risks and safety features employed to hoist some very heavy lighting high into the trusses. Some by brute force and some by using cherry pickers and other mechanical horses to reach the inaccessible spots.

GENERAL SUPPORT SYSTEMS

With so many people swirling about such a large venue, safety and security are at the top of the mind.

So, a shoutout to the planning and execution around the venue. The General Path Lighting from entry to the stage past all the food

stalls, interactive areas, and experience zones to the CCTV camera teams that kept a watchful eye over every dark corner.

To the safety teams, fire marshalls, first aid teams, and infrastructure teams for staying vigilant to ensure everybody stayed safe and smiling.

A mammoth exercise. Planned well in advance. Executed flawlessly.

PYROS

The SNL Pro team sent 100s of pyros, confetti blasts, and smoke flares to keep all of us engaged and hooked onto the stage.

What a massive exercise. So many talented, committed people coming together to do what they absolutely love on a scale that was bigger than anything seen before in this genre.

The one thing that totally stands out is the TIME so well spent on planning every detail and relentlessly following it through to execution.

Each experienced professional was contracted months in advance.

Samuel was very clear with me on one issue. From the day he started his career a few decades ago he has insisted on our local vendors using local equipment to meet international standards. The production team worked closely with the local equipment owners to list and approximate their gear, be it lights, sound, video, truss, power, pyro, and the like. They then created packages per stage and took them to Lollapalooza International. It is a tribute to this thoroughness that all equipment was approved by the foreign teams.

Contracts were negotiated, then came the mammoth task of figuring out where each piece of equipment would be installed. Drawings and layouts were made so that our local teams would know exactly where to place everything from generators – that would not move for weeks - which means refueling on site to dressing rooms for artists, restrooms and a conveniently located food tent that served the production staff on set for days. No precious man hours were lost as teams dispersed for food, and more importantly, teams felt cared for.

The same drawings and layouts sent to all the foreign teams and the bands, so every artist's team knew exactly where to find what they were looking for. When their tech teams plugged into the house systems - everything was exactly where it was promised it would be.

Across audio, video, sound, trussing, and pyros, these teams just did not have the luxury to say '*Mistake may – cable yahan se to nahi jaa payega.*'

Lollapalooza India was indeed a great event. The learning for all of us was this - All your skills, all your experience, all your talent can bite the dust.

Most of all, you need - **TIME to be GREAT.**



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