

Live from Outside Lands

HOW SPRINGBOARD PRODUCTIONS STREAMED THE
SAN FRANCISCO MUSIC AND ARTS FESTIVAL

by JENNIFER WOLFE



PHOTO BY JEFF KRANITZ

Paul McCartney was the headliner at the Outside Lands music festival.

This summer's Outside Lands music festival, held in August in San Francisco's historic Golden Gate Park, was a big-ticket event, with acts ranging from Paul McCartney, Hall & Oates and Willie Nelson to the Red Hot Chili Peppers, Nine Inch Nails and the Yeah Yeah Yeahs.

Now in its sixth year, the three-day festival saw 65,000 daily attendees, but music lovers around the world were able to get a taste of the spectacle—including McCartney's epic three-hour set—via Ustream, which provided two free channels of live streaming and VOD content to any mobile phone, tablet, computer or Internet-connected TV.

San Francisco-based Ustream has not released numbers for Outside Lands, but for this year's Bonnaroo Music & Arts Festival, the streaming company reported more than 11 million viewers, including ad-driven

syndication feeds, marking the event as one of the most-viewed live-streamed festivals to date.

"Our main goal is to ensure that the quality is going to be up to par," says Ustream sales engineer Gilad Gershoni, pointing to the viral nature of many music events. "The biggest challenges are *scalability*, deploying our resources to handle both expected and unanticipated loads, and *quality*, optimizing our platform to ensure that viewers in a range of situations—mobile, tablets, computers, connected TVs with any size screen—have the best possible experience, even if at a lower bit rate."

Springboard Productions, led by Grammy-winning producer Hank Neuberger, specializes in producing multichannel webcasts from some of the largest music festivals in the country, including Austin City Lim-

its, Bonnaroo, Coachella and Lollapalooza. For Outside Lands, Neuberger worked closely with Ustream to ensure a seamless online experience, which included two channels streaming a mix of live feeds from the concert stages and video-on-demand programming, and a customized interface integrated with Facebook and Twitter so fans could watch and chat at the same time.

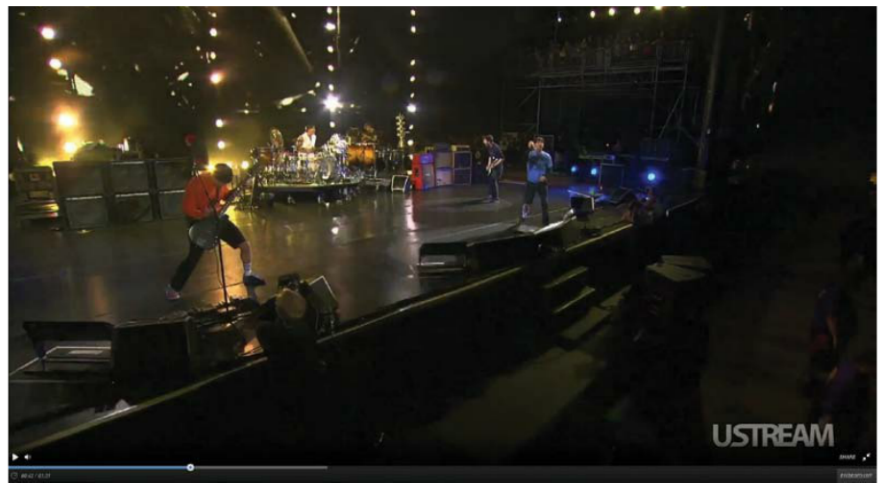
“At the end of the day, it really comes down to making sure we’re doing the best job that we can for the artists and ensuring they are presented in a flattering and attractive way,” Neuberger relates. “We have the privilege of working with Paul McCartney and the Red Hot Chili Peppers and Nine Inch Nails and 60 other bands, so we want to make sure we do right by them.”

Springboard delivers an experience Neuberger believes to be superior to HD television. “We want to provide viewers with something that is comparable to HD because, viscerally, that’s what people expect,” he says. “People today have lots of ways to get Internet programming to the big screens in their living rooms, so when they are watching Paul McCartney or Nine Inch Nails, we want it to look as good or better than an NFL or NBA game.”

The multichannel format helps re-create the layered, simultaneous nature of the festival experience in a way that linear television cannot. “These festivals are multi-stage, multi-day events, so they already have a lot of content spread out on the ground. To deliver this experience online, we believe the richest experience is a multichannel event tied to a social media component,” says Neuberger, who has witnessed the evolution of the industry since Springboard’s launch, in 2005.

One major shift is the move from satellite to IP-based transmission. “It’s more affordable, but more importantly, it’s more reliable,” says Neuberger, who has suffered weather outages at more than one festival while relying on satellite transmission for program delivery. “We’ve developed our own transmission equipment package for festivals that allows us to transmit at a very high quality. We also include a tremendous amount of backup, not just for our encoders but also for power so we’ll never miss a second even if the power at the site goes down, as it frequently does

Red Hot Chili Peppers performance on Ustream



Inside Brands at Outside Lands

San Francisco’s iconic Golden Gate Park was transformed into a labyrinth of stages and side shows for the Outside Lands festival, which ran August 9-11. Included in the transformation was the Polo Field, home to the social media playground environment of the Lands End stage.

San Francisco-based insurance company Esurance sponsored the giveaway of 10,000 “Insider Bands,” free cloth wristbands embedded with a near-field communication (NFC) chip. Designed by ClearHart Digital, the wristbands were synced to the wearers’ Facebook accounts and mobile numbers, allowing them to check in at key spots, instantly upload photos, and locate and send messages to other Facebook friends at the festival. The highly coveted devices were also able to download performers’ set lists and track beverage consumption.

Festival sponsor AT&T deployed additional equipment to provide extended wireless broadband to customers at the event. The wireless carrier installed five mobile cell sites (called COWs, or cells on wheels), and activated 32 temporary cellular antennas to serve the park. The company also offered the official Outside Lands mobile app, free for iPhone and Android users, which included a customizable calendar and festival map, along with sharing capabilities.

Verizon Wireless deployed three COW trucks of its own to increase wireless capacity at Outside Lands.

at these types of events.”

Springboard’s festival package comprises the 53’ Tango video truck from NEP Broadcasting’s Trio Video division outfitted with a Grass Valley Kalypso HD switcher and 16 Thomson LDK 6000 mk II WorldCam multifunction HD cameras; an American Mobile audio truck to handle multitrack audio captured and mixed live on Avid ProTools D-Command platforms; and a custom mobile encoding suite built around Elemental Live encoders that can publish multiple profiles to the Ustream CDN (content delivery network).

Profiles, which determine how users receive content across various devices, are defined in advance, and Springboard collaborated closely

with Ustream engineers to refine the user profiles created for Bonnaroo before they were deployed for Outside Lands.

“The key demographic in the webcast world is Average Duration Time, and we’re starting to see some really high duration times, in the 25, 35 and 40 minute range, much higher than the average two to three minutes typically seen on the web,” Neuberger adds. “People enjoy getting this content online, which is really where music should live. It proves how unique music is online, and almost proves that music *deserves* to be online, because that’s where music really scores. That’s where it’s most comfortable, rather than on broadcast television.” **VE**

FOR OUTSIDE LANDS, SPRINGBOARD PRODUCTIONS WORKED WITH USTREAM TO ENSURE A SEAMLESS ONLINE EXPERIENCE, WHICH INCLUDED TWO CHANNELS STREAMING A MIX OF LIVE FEEDS FROM THE CONCERT STAGES AND VIDEO-ON-DEMAND PROGRAMMING.