



TradFest Temple Bar 2021

A live music festival reimagined for the COVID-19 era

CASE STUDY
Dublin, Ireland



As Covid-19 spread around the world, live music events everywhere were canceled or postponed. TradFest Temple Bar, an annual live music festival celebrating Irish music and culture, reimagined their iconic event with the help of Novaerus air dis-infection technology from WellAir.

Every January, Dublin's famed Temple Bar district erupts with music and joy, as TradFest — a five-day celebration of Irish music and culture — draws top bands and massive crowds to historic churches, castles, pubs, and other iconic venues.

TradFest 2020 beat the Covid-19 pandemic by mere weeks, wrapping up just before live music everywhere came to a screeching halt.

When it came time to plan TradFest 2021, the virus was on its second rampage, and prospects for live performances had worsened. Science had established that SARS-CoV-2 was airborne and that singing was especially risky.

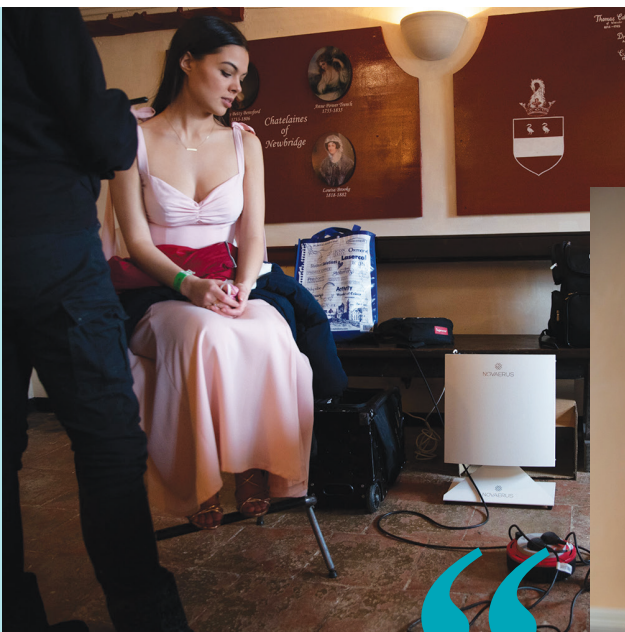
Worldwide, music festivals were canceled. But Martin Harte, CEO of The Temple Bar Company, the not-for-profit organiser of TradFest, wasn't having it. After all, Tradfest, Ireland's largest festival of traditional music, had run annually since 2005.

"I said, 'No, the show must go on,'" recalls Harte.

And it did. In the throes of the pandemic, TradFest delighted fans with a scarce commodity: music performed live and indoors.

The audiences weren't live, of course; the concerts were streamed. But the artists performed within the storied, stone walls of Dublin Castle, a fortress that dates back to 1230 and, just for TradFest 2021, was outfitted with Novaerus medical-grade air dis-infection technology from WellAir.

Over five days, some 50 musicians and crew members gathered to rehearse, pose for photos, and perform amidst rococo ceilings and portraits of Irish viceroys — all the while breathing air cleaned by sleek, white Novaerus devices parked on the floor, out of camera range.



"Novaerus isn't a hygiene product — it's something you'll find in an ICU, in a neonatal unit," says Harte. "That was the level of care we wanted. Our brand is too strong and our audience and performers are too important to put them at risk."



Protect 800

The devices featured prominently in TradFest's safety proposal to the Office of Public Works, the government agency that operates Dublin Castle. "The Novaerus devices helped us hugely in securing approval to use the castle," says Harte.

Of course, it wasn't just government authorities that needed convincing; the performers and crew — ages 18 to 80, emerging artists and folk legends alike — had to feel protected.

"Novaerus devices made the difference in getting people to agree to perform," Harte says.

During the event, artists, and staff noted the quiet presence of Novaerus devices, says Harte. "I pointed out that right on the back of the machine, it says 'infection control device.' People felt reassured and relaxed."

The technology helped foster a sense of normalcy in decidedly abnormal times.

"It was a lovely and very hopeful atmosphere," says Deirdre Devitt of The McGreals Group, a TradFest sponsor and Novaerus distributor. "You could feel the sheer joy the performers and crew were feeling."

The festival proved to be entirely Covid-free — "We had no illness, nothing," reports Harte — while the same could not be said for the rest of Ireland.

"During that week, Covid got out of control," says Harte. "Three days after we finished shooting, Ireland closed down. Dublin Castle was possibly the safest space you could be in the whole country."

When the pandemic struck, Harte knew nothing of Novaerus devices. He just knew he wanted TradFest 2021 to happen — somehow.

"People need culture, and artists need work, and there was the commercial opportunity for us to sell tickets worldwide," Harte says.



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Defend 1050

Harte delved into research on Covid-19 transmission and became convinced, early on, that the disease was largely spread via aerosol. He even read up on tuberculosis, another disease that was initially considered transmissible only via large droplets but was ultimately proven to be spread by microscopic viral particles.

Harte noticed, too, that businesses were scrambling to install plastic dividers and disinfect surfaces, disregarding the real threat: infectious aerosols.

"I could see we were making the same mistakes with Covid that they made with TB," Harte recalls.

Harte's global search for a solution led him back home to Ireland, where WellAir's Novaerus technology was being developed and manufactured for use in medical settings.

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Not only did Harte deploy Novaerus devices for TradFest but he also has encouraged bars and restaurants throughout Temple Bar, Dublin's primary tourist district, to do the same. In fact, Harte won't hold meetings in a room that is not continually cleaned by WellAir's patented NanoStrike technology, which powers all Novaerus devices.

"I don't feel comfortable breathing someone's contaminated air," he says.

The public, he believes, is starting to feel the same way.

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Covid is here to stay in some shape or form, says Harte, "and we need to adapt. We're not returning to normal any time soon."

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Protect 200