

Escape! Home & Away

A State of Trance 550 Invasion

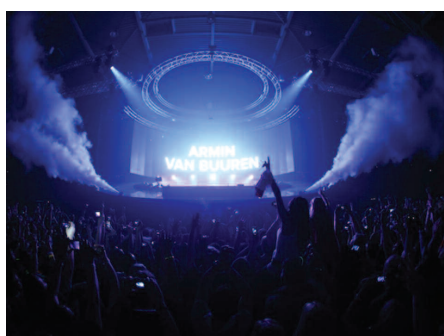
By Petty Officer 1st Class Christopher Versandi (USA – N)



It was just about a year ago that I wrote my last article about Armin Van Buuren's massive celebration "A State of Trance 500" which was held in our own BENELUX region. Held once again in Den Bosch in the Netherlands! This year, Armin Van Buuren had picked six lucky cities to celebrate the 550TH episode of his weekly radio show. This year the cities were London, Kiev, Moscow, Los Angeles & Miami, with the grand finale in the huge Brabanthallen in Den Bosch, Netherlands.

Arriving early, we had warm-up tickets, which allowed us to get into the venue and hour earlier as Armin had planned to play three sets for the evening, the first set being the first hour; the venue was opened to get everyone warmed up for the night. The lines for getting in went pretty smoothly, as we got into the hall and could hear the thumping bass lines coming from one of the halls. Once again, Armin had planned the event with five rooms with different colour themes for each room. "A State of Blue and Green" were the biggest of the five rooms. "A State of Yellow and Red" were a little bit smaller, and this year Armin decided to do something different - he chose to make a room with all women DJs, singers, and stage manager and called it "A State of Pink". It seemed that compared to last year a lot of the bugs were worked out and all the room's decorations and sound were much smoother as well!

After looking at the set times for all the DJs,

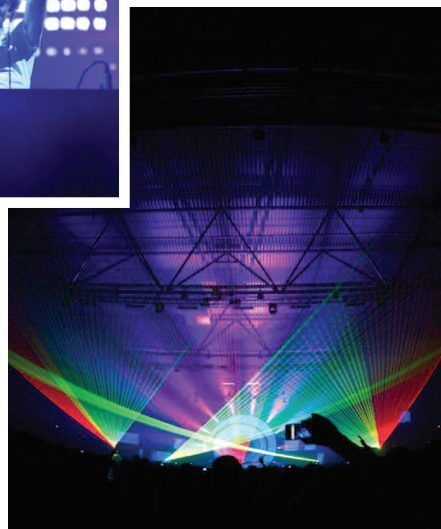


we decided to go to "A State of Green" to watch Super 8 & Tab's set. Hailing from Finland, they played a very nice warm up and played some of their classic tunes such as "My Enemy" and finished with their new dance floor smash "Awakenings". Next up was Norway's Orjan Nilsen. His productions have been aired on Armin's radio show and he has produced numerous trance smashes over the past 3 years. We watched about minutes of his set and made our way to the "A State of Yellow" stage.

Upon arriving at the "A State of Yellow Stage", we were just in time as Stoneface &

Dresden were already playing and had the crowd in a frenzy as they played there trance classic "Tracking Treasure Down" and motorcycles track "As the Rush Comes".

Next up was Armin with his second set of the night! The room was now at maximum capacity and at fever pitch! Then flashes of pyrotechnics and thunder of fireworks as Armin was introduced! He started out with one of his newest productions with the Dutch female vocals of Ana Criado's "Suddenly Summer". The crowd instantly had their hands in the air! Armin made a note earlier in the day that when he was



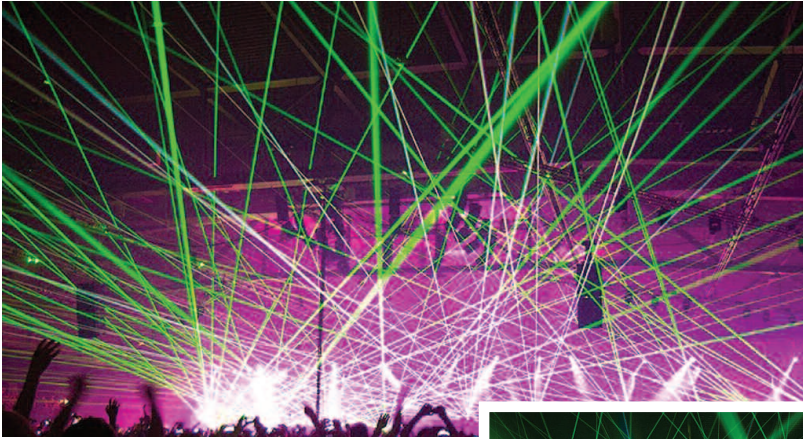
playing in "A State of Blue" he would play newer tracks and that when he played the "A State of Green" stage later in the night that he would play trance classics. Armin was playing and epic set here on the blue stage, but I had to leave to see an old home town hero for me - Kristina Sky from California - who was selected by the fans to play on the all female stage of "A State of Pink".

Armin really hit all the marks this year with "A State of Pink" as it was packed as Kristina Sky was playing a heartfelt set that melted the crowd and Kristina into one. People were just taking it making heart symbols with their fingers as they danced with their hands in the air! You could not imagine the energy that was emitting from this room as she belted out floor smashing tracks and classics as Kristina dropped her own remix of Nalin & Kane's "Open Your Eyes". I think the track that really stuck the most with me during Kristina's set was Paul Oakenfold's track "Full Moon Party". This night was still young and we loved every minute of Kristina's set. Next up on the Pink Stage was one of the most anticipated acts of the night with the Australian singer Emma Hewitt. She sang her heart out and the crowd felt it in unity when she opened up with "Be Your Sound". This track was in collaboration with German duo Cosmic Gate. During the evening, she sang

Terminal were getting started. They opened up with a Vangelis Track "Tears in Rain" from the classic sci-fi movie "Blade Runner". They soon dropped some beats and started to build their set going. The room was not very crowded but was filling up quickly as the beats picked up. They played in my opinion one of the best sets of the night (new track "Breaking") through with the soft dreamy vocals of Ellie Lawson and completed their set to an amazing finale with William Orbits "Adagio for Strings".

The "A State of Blue" stage was the next stop where the recently-reunited Gabriel &

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us a new one called "Miss You Paradise" and her own release of Colours! She finished up with waiting as she left the crowd begging for more as she left the stage!

I was lucky enough to get the chance to interview Kristina, and her take on the festival and what it means to Trance really said it all.

"It means a lot to me to play A State Of Trance 550, and even more so to play the grand finale in Den Bosch!" she said. "The ASOT radio show has definitely had one of the biggest impacts on the worldwide trance scene over the past decade and it was awesome to be a part of celebrating Armin's 550th episode. Not to mention, the record label "A State of Trance" has been a massive part of my musical fabric since their first release, with over 200 ASOT vinyls in my collection and tons more in my digital collection – I've just always been a huge fan and supporter. Next to Coachella, ASOT550 is one of the coolest gigs of my career thus far and I was super honored to be asked to play."

She also noted that Trance has been a continually-evolving animal throughout her career, and that she's just as excited by it now as she was when she started.

"When I came into it, there were fewer genres - more hybrid sounds, then came the sub-genre wave craze, and finally we're circling back to blending the genres," said Kristina. "Yes, there are still purists out there, but more often than not nowadays, artists are blending elements of other genres to create their own sound, whether it be in their productions or DJ sets. In 2001, I started as a 'Trance' DJ, but over the years my sound has evolved quite a bit to where it now includes progressive house, techno, breaks and even electro. I'm still a trance DJ at heart but I've really broadened my



taste, and in the end it allows me to share the music with a larger audience, which I love."

After talking with Kristina we made our way back to the "A State of Blue" room as Ferry Corsten was just getting started. Ferry played a lot of his new tracks from his new album "WKND". The two tracks that really stuck out to me were his last two tracks "Not Coming Down" and "Take Me". These tracks really hit the restart button for the crowd and got everyone's hands in the air cheering! We now had to cross all the way back across the massive Brabanthallen to get to see Armin play his trance classics



△Emma Hewitt 550



△Kristina Sky ASOT 550

set in "A State of Green". The place was packed like a can of sardines! Armin opened up with the Belgian trance classic of Push's "Strange World" and some of my personal favorites like RAM's "Ramsterdam", Alex M.O.R.P.H.'s "An Angels Love", and lastly Gaia's "Tuvan". We then made our final hike back to the Blue room to finish the night off!

Aly & Fila were playing as we entered the room and were playing one of their new tracks from their new CD the "Future sounds of



Egypt". Aly & Fila are Egyptian producer/DJs and have really been producing some incredible uplifting trance tracks. Highlights of their performance which were "We Control the Sunlight" voted as the A State of Trance Favorite of 2011 and the new "Coming Home" sung by Jwayden Moyine and "Need to Feel Loved" by Reflekt ft. Deline Bass. This set was a perfect complement for who would be closing the night for us!

The closer of the evening was by Ireland's John O'Calaghan. The man, already a legend within the Trance world, played one of the most amazing sets I've ever heard him play! His set didn't plateau at all! My two favorite tracks were his own track "Mess of a Machine" from his CD "Unfold" and finished the night with a really massive mash-up of Armin Van Buuren's classic "In and Out of Love" mixed together with another amazing tune from O'Calaghan's called "Raw Deal". After the song ended the lights soon came on in the Brabanthallen and it was time to go get a good day's rest; it was 0700 hrs and we wondered how the night went so fast. The night flew by and A State of Trance 550 was complete! We made our way to our locker and then to the bus and were swept away to our hotel to dream and anticipate A State of Trance Episode 600!

A few upcoming events that you might be interested in:

Luminosity on the beach 2012 - 23-24 June 2012 - Zandvoort - Netherlands
<http://www.luminosity-events.nl/2011/10/luminosity-beach-festival-2012-date-change/>

Electronic Family - 30 June 2012 - Amsterdam Bos - Netherlands
<http://www.electronicfamily.nl/>

Global Gathering - 27-28 July - United Kingdom
<http://www.globalgathering.com/>



△Trance family Belgium at the A State of Trance