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Lieberberg Snubs Top Industry Awards

Top German promoter Marek Lieberberg didn't bother collecting any of the Live Entertainment Awards he won in Frankfurt April 5, having already told the organisers he didn't want them.

The Frankfurt-based promoter of the Rock Am Ring and Rock Im Park festivals' already strained relationship with the annual awards ceremony appears to have snapped.

"We want our achievements to be taken seriously and not ridiculed by this dubious conglomerate," Lieberberg told *Pollstar* on the morning after the awards bash at Frankfurt Festival Hall. "That is why we said no, not only to these awards but to LEAs for years to come."

He said the awards are "randomly created" and "absolutely obsolete," as is this "so-called award show with obscure categories and c-grade prominence."

He said he turned down The Jury Prize, which an independent panel of journalists awarded him for his safety procedures at both his major festivals, because "nobody ever bothered to even look into our security concept at the Ring."

He said the organisers simply wanted to make "a questionable reference to the sad events in Duisburg."

The LEA audience was shown a short film clip of the disaster at Duisburg followed by another detailing Lieberberg's safety plan at Rock Am Ring.

He said his winning of the lifetime achievement award was "merely a deflection, trying to cover up for the fact that MLK was not even nominated in other categories."

He said he sincerely feels "the LEA organisers lack the knowledge, seriousness, and professional background" to properly evaluate his decades in this industry.

He said the distance from his Frankfurt office to the awards ceremony at the Festival Hall was "a mile too far."

The writing looks to have been on the wall for Lieberberg and the LEAs since March 10, when Matt Schwarz – one of his firm's promoters – attended a press conference to pick up the "New Style Event Of The Year" award his company won for its 30 Seconds To Mars dates.

It was the only LEA the company accepted and also the only one of its three awards that was decided by a public vote.

Last year Lieberberg did attend the LEAs and his company won best promoter. A year earlier

he took best promoter and best festival.

He's had a stormy relationship with the LEAs since they started at Hamburg Fliegende Bauten in 2007. He and his staff stormed out of the building because neither Rock Am Ring nor Rock Im Park had won the best festival award.

That year he also won best promoter but had already left the building with no one left to collect the award.

At the time he referred to the LEAs as the "golden pineapples," although things looked to have calmed after his company won and accepted LEAs in the following three years.

When he failed to show for this year's ceremony, it was left to LEA organiser Jens Michow to go to the podium and explain to the crowd that Lieberberg wasn't there to collect his Jury Prize and lifetime achievement awards.

Michow told the crowd that he evidently wasn't the winner of the awards but the bringer of the bad news that the winner hadn't shown.

Michow said Lieberberg obviously doesn't understand the LEAs and that Lieberberg's opinion stands against that shared by the majority of German promoters. Michow said the LEA committee won't be making further comments on his opinion apart from saying it respected it.

Despite Lieberberg's non-appearance, Michow said the LEA ceremony was the best in its five-year history as new sponsor Production Resource Group spent an estimated euro 1 million on it.

The company brought 18 trucks of equipment to the building, which is also currently staging Prolight & Sound, the leading international trade fair for the event-technology sector.

Apart from the three awards that went to Lieberberg and his company, CTS Eventim's Medusa Group's five-gong haul – which equaled the record it set last year – included Folkert Koopmans' FKP Scorpio winning best festival for M'era Luna, which last year attracted 24,000 to the former Flugplatz Hildesheim-Drispstedt British Army airbase near Frankfurt, and Dieter Semmelmann's Semmel Concerts taking best arena tour for its Helene Fischer dates.

Fischer also provided part of the LEA entertainment, performing a duet with U.S. singer Michael Bolton.

Striking a double blow for the independents was Ossy Hoppe's Wizard Promotions, which won best promoter and also took concert of the year for last August's Jamie Cullum show at Hamburg Stadtpark.

The other LEA winners were SSC Group (club tour), Michael Lohmann's Hannover Concerts (best local promoter), Oliver Wirtz's Sundance Communications (best manager), while Hannover Congress took arena of the year.

The show of the year went to Kulturbureau and S Promotion for Bülent Ceylan.

The LEA for promoting young talent went to Hamburg's Reeperbahn Festival.

-- John Gammon