

productionprofile



jamiroquai

Mark Cunningham reports on the latest tour by 'the cat in the hat' Jay Kay and his eclectic band of funksters, which featured a stunning audio performance by Funktion One's Resolution system...

After a string of highly acclaimed shows in the Far East and Australasia, Jamiroquai's *Funk Odyssey* world tour finally landed in Europe in March, and was notable for a major change in the audio department.

Although Britannia Row has continued its long-running relationship with Jay Kay's band, as the main audio rental supplier, FOH Engineer Rick Pope, a former staff member at Brit Row, took up the option to field Funktion One's innovative Resolution PA system. If reactions to the Wembley shows are anything to go by, it is unlikely that Pope and the band will be using anything else for some considerable time.

John Newsham, who co-designed the system with Tony Andrews (the pair who founded Turbosound, developed Flashlight and then departed to reinvent the wheel, so to speak), spoke to TP about the factors which inspired Jamiroquai to choose Resolution.

"We've known Rick Pope for a long time," said Newsham. "He used to work with Tony and I in the early days of Turbosound, and we re-started our relationship with him after he left Brit Row to go freelance, moving from monitors to FOH. Rick started to work full time for Jay when he was building a home studio. They wanted a studio monitoring system which was ideal for listening to funky dance music, and Rick recommended Funktion One for the job. The relationship has blossomed ever since."

BEEFING UP

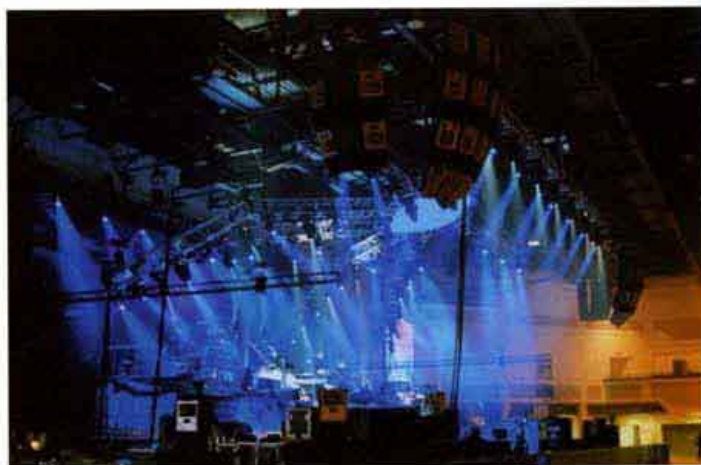
Jamiroquai already had an arrangement with Brit Row for the European leg, which Pope felt he couldn't break — the company ended up providing the control, most racks and a Turbo monitor wedge package. When it came to organising the Japanese dates, Pope had to choose a local PA company. Said Newsham: "We had just sold a large system to the

Japanese rental firm TryAudio [also trading as Funktion One Japan], so we built some more speakers to beef up the numbers and Rick was happy to use their service.

"The company is owned by Masaaki Azuma and he had been a fan of ours all the way through the Turbo era. He found us through the Internet and came to visit us, and left after placing an order for Resolution."

After the band's first Japanese show, Pope, who mixed on a Midas XL4, insisted on using Resolution on the UK dates. "We called GPA Hire, who at the moment own the largest quantity of Funktion One boxes in Britain, but all their systems were booked out," commented Newsham. "This meant that we had to build enough boxes, within a very tight three-week window, to furnish the UK tour ourselves. We already had the bass elements, but the high packs were created from scratch and we decided to use

production profile



self-powered, built-in PWM amplifiers based on those built for the Millennium Dome project. They add just two kilos to the weight of each cabinet, and each powered box runs a slave box because the amplifier is easily powerful enough to feed two high packs."

MILESTONE

The whole UK tour was a genuine milestone for Funktion One, but the Wembley shows were particularly gratifying. "We all had such a great time with the sound. Rick really got into it in Japan and then had a few shows using other systems around Australia and the Far East, so by the time the UK shows were going he was in his element."

The UK PA configuration was 15 Res 5s and 15 2 x 18s per side, flown five wide and three deep, with a row of downfill boxes underneath for the front rows. There were also four Res 4s and two 1 x 18s flown each side for the side bleachers. Eight Res 2s were installed as front fill to bring the audio image down for the people close to the barrier.

"We can cover Wembley easily with that main

front system, but Rick likes to bring the sound close to everyone, which meant that we installed two fly bars behind the mixer, fitted with six Res 5s to liven the sound at the back. In addition, we had a ground stack of six bass and two Res 2 high packs for a little boogie area behind the desk," said Newsham.

"It all ran on XTA. All the crossovers were local to the stacks, and I ran Audiocore on a laptop to control everything. In the past I've always been against running crossovers local to the speakers because I like to be able to see what the speakers are doing. But with AudioCore you can see what everything is doing on your PC laptop screen at the desk and adjust the whole system quickly and easily.

"Funktion One brought the XTA processing along with Resolution. We have a great relationship with XTA and love their products. We've done lots of listening tests with other digital processors, and XTA seem to come out on top every time for us."

Newsham reported that it was the low end of the mix which made Pope's ears prick up. "With our previous designs of Flashlight and Floodlight, you always

felt that there was a dynamic gap between the bass and the low-mid in the 100-200Hz area. When we started developing Resolution, we looked at that area first, particularly with the 12-inch driver in the Res 5 and Res 4 which is designed to fill that gap, and so the crossover point between bass and low-mid is lower than before, at around 100Hz.

"As Rick has observed, this results in a lovely, clean bass, full of punch, and you can hear so much more detail in the bass playing, rather than the fairly unmusical 'rumble and twang' you can often otherwise experience. The high-mid is more powerful, controlled and flatter, and covers a broader band, with no crossover point in the main part of the vocal range. The HF is also similarly improved. Separation of detail in the mix, such as the percussion and the layered backing vocals has been astounding, we've had some great audio moments. As a package there are improvements everywhere."

**Photographs & additional material
by Louise Stickland & Funktion One**

JAMIROQUAI VISUALS...

The live video requirements for the *Funk Odyssey* world tour have been furnished by XL Video. The six-camera show (four operated and two MiniCam) is directed by the ebullient Mark Antoniuk.

XL supplied a versatile package for the stunning, fast-paced show, comprising a Digital PPU complete with Grass Valley GVG1200 switcher for the mixing, and a Magic DaVE video effects generator.

For the vast majority of the set, Antoniuk relied on the sheer presence, energy and charisma of Jay Kay's performance to mix an exciting video show. He used the DaVE's strobing effects only twice, once at the top of the show and again during 'Deeper Underground'. He commented: "You need minimal effects with a performer of this calibre. The show is good in its own right — it's fast, furious, full on and great fun to mix."

The camera feeds were beamed on to two portrait format off-stage screens — made up of 5000 15mm LED modules — either side of the stage. The mix was completely live each night, varying as much as the set and the length of the songs often did. This is the way Antoniuk likes to work: with an element of unpredictability and in an atmosphere where improvisational skills and quick thinking are paramount.

Video was a vital dynamic element of the overall show aesthetic, working in harmony with Vince Foster's colourful lighting design (operated for the tour by Rob Gawler).



Jay Kay takes his shows extremely seriously, and each night the video department make VHS and SX copies for him to analyse. He often threw his own ideas into the creative mix, whilst simultaneously giving Antoniuk a free rein to do 'his thing'.

The XL Video crew members were Roger Nelson (Crew Chief), Jerome 'My Way' Marain (Engineer), Mark Cruickshank (Camera) and Frederic Torreele (Screen Tech and Camera). The fourth camera operator was Andy Barr from trucking company Redburn Transfer.