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SOUND REINFORCEMENT SPECIAL

IAN BROWN'S TOUR COMBINES CONTROL AND PA

Funky monkey



Ian Brown: "This is the best f**king PA I've ever heard."

UK – Ian Brown: former lead singer of the Stone Roses, role model for Liam Gallagher, monkey man. On his recent UK tour, the stars turned out to see him, including the Gallagher brothers themselves. Brown plays a set that built from a fairly low-key start to the anthemic F.E.A.R., surely one of his greatest songs to date.

On stage, monitor engineer 'Naughty' Howard Smart is mixing 33-band feeds into 15 mixes for this show – so the use of a 72-channel, 52-output Cadac M-Type monitor board is, he admits, a little over-the-top. "We are using it for the support band as well, and we were just as interested to try it out as Cadac were," he explains.

While some engineers have been a little flummoxed by the console (which was originally devised for very large-scale productions and landed the Rolling Stones' mammoth *Bridges to Babylon* tour), Smart says that there are several features that set the design apart from its rivals. "It's quite nice having engineers come up and be dumbfounded by the desk – but that's really just down to igno-

rance," he claims. "With the Cadac layout, the desk is a much better ergonomic experience than most."

The M-Type, he adds, also possesses the most comprehensive engineer's monitoring systems, with no less than five monitor busses. "There's even a pre-insert and pre-EQ listen point, right after the mic amp – which is very good for trouble-shooting."

The Cadac's outputs are fed via a rackful of XTA processing; audio supply company GPA Hire are firm fans and point out that the XTA/Cadac combination is well matched. "These XTA graphics are simply better than anyone else's," enthuses Smart of the GQ600 31-band equaliser, "and our wedges are driven by DP-224s. They might have a little less flexibility than other people's processors, but they are incredibly reliable and perform very well."

Amplification for the stage system comes from QSC; a mixture of PowerLight PL 1.8 and PL 4.0 models is used to drive a clutch of Turbosound TFM-350 wedges. Although these have served them well (GPA were among the first

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SPECIAL REPORT

customers for the 15-inch and 2-inch wedges), the company is looking to produce its own design from this summer, citing manufacturers' high prices for monitor enclosures as a reason.

Unusually, it is the band's drummer who has a requirement for in-

tour is another Cadac – this time the recently introduced R-Type. Supplied in three 24-slot sections, the console is custom-configured to suit each tour; removing the irritating restrictions of fixed subgroup and channel numbers.

The benefits of this concept

force the use of an additional conventional console.

However, by reducing the Cadac's output count (from 32 sends/16 VCAs to 16 outputs and a more modest 8-way VCA master section), the entire production fits into a sensible-sized single board without any doubling-up of channels.

The views of the artist are not often quoted in the pages of the trade press – and most performers would admit that they have little interest in the nuts and bolts of sound reinforcement. On this occasion, however, the views of the star are unequivocal. "This is the best f**king PA I've ever heard," Brown reveals to PSNE during soundcheck.

"It's quite nice having engineers come up and be dumbfounded by the desk."

"Naughty" Howard Smart

ear monitoring. Supplied by Handheld Audio, the Shure PSM-600 system is complemented by a wedge feed that handles exclusively bass guitar and kick drum.

Ian Brown himself is happier without IEMs; much of his show involves interaction with the audience, which he finds easier with conventional monitoring. One piece of audio gear that he does insist on, however, is a delay – used as an effect, rather than for time alignment. In fact, his on-stage vocal is swamped in it. "He won't go on stage unless it's there – and he's the boss," explains Smart. "There are no other effects – no reverb or anything – on his voice, but he likes delay splattered all over his voice."

Out front, the distinctive silvered horns of Funktion One's Resolution series loudspeakers form the main PA arrays. GPA has long been associated with the Surrey manufacturer, and now provides Res 5 systems for a diverse range of corporate, rock'n'roll and dance events, including the annual Homelands festival in Hampshire.

GPA's Gary Young, who is Brown's FOH engineer on tour, has been a fan of Tony Andrews' designs since his Turbosound days – and now believes that the Funktion One system has taken Andrews' earlier work a stage further. "They are amazing boxes," he enthuses, "very light, very powerful, and they really work when you array them – unlike a lot of speakers out there."

For this tour, Young is carrying just six Res 5 high/mid cabinets per side – and frequently muting one or more of those to tailor the coverage of the system to each venue. To emphasise the dance content of Ian Brown's set, however, no fewer than eight 21-inch Funktion One subs are employed either side of the stage. These sub-bass enclosures have been widely heralded as the ideal partner to the Res 5 system – and in array form provide a gut-trembling low-end response.

In the racks, XTA again features heavily – in fact, at the start of the tour, processing was exclusively blue-box, based around the DP 324 SiDD (Seriously Intelligent Digital Dynamics) processor.

To cope with the variety of support bands and their engineers, however, Young bowed to pressure to replace four of the units with conventional gating. "For Ian, we have SiDDs on lead and backing vocals, electric and acoustic guitars and the Bass DI and mic feed," explains Young.

Front-of-house console for this

were brought home to Young and his crew on this tour; the channel count for Brown and the support band reaches 62 (including three paired stereo sources), which would

SOUND REINFORCEMENT



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FOH engineer Gary Young finetunes the system
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