



# FUNKTION-ONE DELIVERS ON UNDERWORLD'S *DUBNOBASSWITHMYHEADMAN* TOUR

**ANNIVERSARY TOURS AREN'T NECESSARILY EVERYONE'S CUP OF TEA. ON PAPER, YOU WOULDN'T EXPECT SUCH A CONVENTION TO QUENCH THE THIRST OF A BAND LIKE UNDERWORLD, FORMED BY ELECTRONIC PIONEERS KARL HYDE AND RICK SMITH, WHO HAVE FLOWN IN THE FACE OF NORMALITY FOR MORE THAN 30 YEARS... TPi SOUNDS OUT THEIR COMEBACK.**

"We never wanted to be ordinary," admitted Smith. Yet here we are, 35 years later, in Manchester's Albert Hall, preparing for show four of the band's 13-date European tour. The subject of which is 1991's *dubnobasswithmyheadman* album - viewed by many as a period of shifting boundaries in the duo's musical output. While the album will be played in its entirety, this is anything but a re-hash.

Yet again, the tour sees Underworld subverting convention, with Smith suffering from a hospitalising eye condition and having only recently joined the tour. Unable to take to the stage, he joined FOH Engineer John Newsham, at Glasgow's Royal Concert Hall the night before, for what Newsham describes as: "The best show so far," leaving Hyde and Darren Price - who has toured with the band since 2005 - onstage. Something new happened in Glasgow - an awakening, of sorts. This is Underworld, after all.

For creativity to thrive, there has to be consistency. Newsham is one such example of this, as is his company, Funktion-One. Underworld's relationship with the company has roots in the early '80s and the synergy is clear: "Rick and I have grown up with Funktion-One, both as a PA and as a monitoring system," said Hyde. "They're a very important part of the Underworld sound. When the two come together it's very special."

Essex-based Audio Plus are taking care of the tour's audio requirements, which include the Funktion-One speakers and Lab.gruppen PLM Series amplifiers, plus two SSL L500 mixing consoles, supplied by SSL's UK distributor, HD Pro Audio. Coloursound Experiment is on lights and video, Fly By Nite is handling trucking and Phoenix Bussing is looking after the band and crew.

Each venue on the tour has different demands and requires a different audio solution explained Newsham: "We've been running a

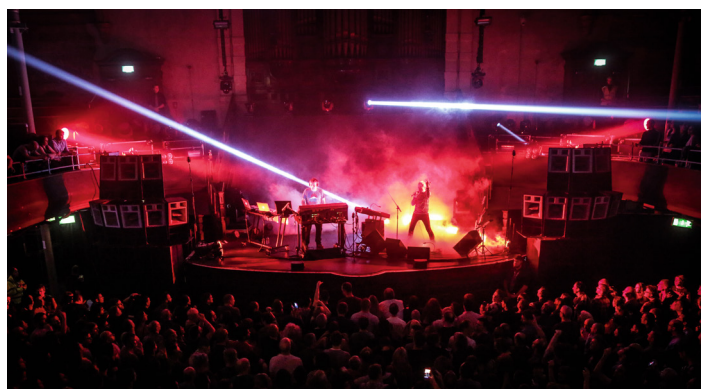
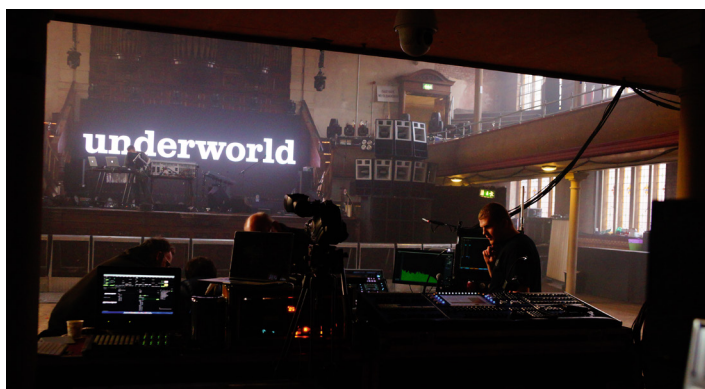
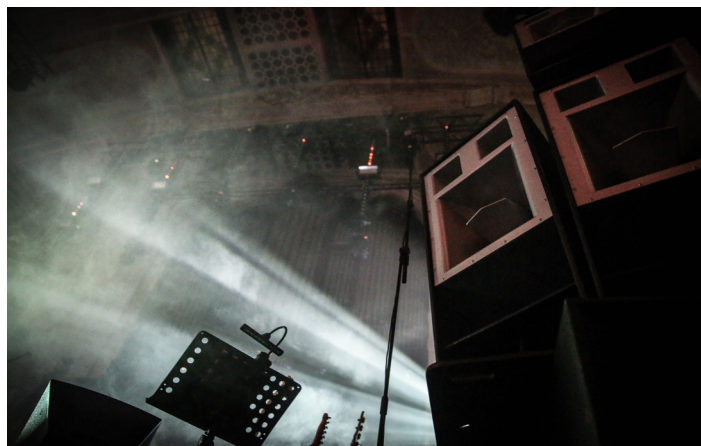
main left and right, which is either stacked or flown, plus in-fills to cover the area in front of the balcony. We've also been using F55s for lip-fill - we've got some of those at the front of the stage, so people who are leaning over have got something that's directly in their line of sight. You don't really hear them until you turn them off but they just pull the image down - like you get in theatre."

Tonight, the system is ground stacked - eight Funktion-One Resolution 5s on top of four F221 double 21-inch bass enclosures on either side. Two F55s, as described by Newsham, provide lip-fill, while a Resolution 4 and F218 are positioned on both sides of the upper balcony: "for the corners you can't reach with a stacked system."

Onstage, Hyde's monitor system looks magnificent. Newsham explained: "A pair of Funktion-One F1201's for stereo, a single PSM12 for his voice and a Minibass212 sub so he's got some bass."



Below: The band's FOH Engineer John Newsham on his SSL desk; Underworld have been working with Funktion-One speakers since the early '80s; Underworld performed live at Manchester's Albert Hall as part of their *dubnobasswithmyheadman* anniversary tour. .



Hyde loved it: "For something like this - this album, in this kind of environment - it's imperative that I'm able to hear as much of my voice as is humanly possible, while at the same time hearing the space of the room. This new system that Funktion-One has created for me is fantastic. It's the best I've ever heard my voice sound. I've never ever had such control over the image of my voice - it's like I've been given a new lease on life."

The SSL L500's - one on stage and the other at FOH - have gone down well too. In this new configuration, with Smith joining Newsham at FOH, they have been especially important.

"For the first three shows, Rick wasn't well, so he wasn't with us and the channels that were

available to FOH were quite limited. Yesterday, with Rick there, we increased the feeds that I was getting. He was feeling better but not up to being on stage, so he sat with me, we did the sound check together and then he stayed for the gig.

"He got a unique opportunity to hear what was going on in the room - for him that was an amazing thing. For him to hear it like that and try and get his head round what actually happens when you're out in the room, live, when it's full of people. He's been at FOH before, during a sound check, but never for an entire show. He could actually feel what happens on the fader when you change the sound of some of the parts of the music."

Smith added: "It was a new experience for me last night - it was fascinating. It's difficult to talk about, it's not even just the sound. Seeing and feeling the show, observing and watching my partner perform from a different perspective. It's amazing.

"On a personal level, it's a new experience. I was saying to John, I felt a little bit melancholy last night, I was thinking 'I should have done this 20 years ago'. But having said that, I don't know where thinking that leads. It is what it is. It's just looking backwards and regretting having a great time over the last 20 years and not being something else. I could've been an architect - I didn't do that either. But it's great. I'm a happy man.

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Below: Rick Smith, a founding member of Underworld, joined Newsham at FOH to better appreciate the band's sound; The system at The Albert Hall was ground stacked, with eight Funktion-One Resolution 5's on top of four F221 double 21-inch bass enclosures on either side; Newsham specified Lab.gruppen PLM Series amplifiers for the tour.



"It was interesting watching John. In that way, it was surprising similar to being on stage. There's a dynamic, a level of energy that's there in a sound check, where people feel engaged and are working hard, but when the gig is on things really sharpen up. It was amazing seeing John in that mode."

"Everything about his body language and the electricity - it was like he'd dropped 20 years," he joked.

The way that Underworld perform, surrounded by trusted technicians and technology, allows them to explore new things. Though this was an album recital, each

performance has the freedom to move along to the flow of the moment, with well-known tracks being played and remixed live. This was a brilliant gig, driven by no-holds-barred sound. And the crowd weren't bad either - there was barely a camera-phone in sight.

**TPI**

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