

Gravity Rigs link

The synth guru

A synth technician's remit covers a wide range, including programming, DAW playback, sync, MIDI and MAX/MSP programming.... Matt Cox has it all

Who are you and what do you do?

Matt Cox – I have worked for The Chemical Brothers, looking after their live synth rig, since their early success. My other clients include Air, Sub Focus, Snow Patrol, Jeff Lynne and I worked on Take That's 2015 world tour, programming and running Gary Barlow's synth set-up. My company is called Gravity Systems. We design, build and deliver reliable [Gravity Rigs](#), playback/music tech systems for both EDM and rock acts. There's a degree of bespoke software creation using apps like Lemur, and Max for Live or Max/MSP within our rigs.

How did you get started in the business?

I cut my teeth as a tape-op/assistant engineer at Manchester's now defunct Planet 4 Studios in the early '90s. The studio was designed with electronic music production in mind from the off and had a fantastic collection of analogue equipment including many classic synths from manufacturers like ARP, Moog, Roland, Sequential Circuits and Korg. Engineering in that environment was almost as much about programming the synths and samplers as it was about actual mixing so it gave me a great grounding in using music technology in general.

You have a really busy summer/autumn touring season with The Chemical Brothers coming up. What are your responsibilities?

I'm responsible for building the live set-up used on stage, maintaining it during the show and keeping on top of any sound/patch/programming changes that occur as we go. The guys are constantly refining the live show, trying new arrangements and sound ideas and pushing the mix in new directions so there's a degree of backing up and note-taking in addition to the DAW work. I'm also recording every show so

there's some work to be done checking our various mic and line feeds before and during the show, and managing the large amount of data that multitrack recording can produce.

The stage set up is a pretty extensive, with a varied collection of old and new technology. Quite a few vintage analogue synths, sequencers, drum machines, trigger pads and effects units, coupled with more modern performance-related controllers like NI Maschine and Ableton Push, all running in tandem and always 'on'. Everything is mixed live by the band through a 32-channel analogue mixer to FOH and monitors.

In the last almost 20 years things have shifted quite a bit in terms of how we re-produce the show although the main idea of a live mix has remained almost unchanged. That's always been the case and always will be, to keep the show fresh, it's not just a press play gig, but a live arrangement of the bands tracks with cuts/drops and extended sequenced sections all decided on the fly.

There's a massive reliance on MIDI clock with this rig. Now we are laptop based we've moved to sample accurate units that exist outside of the computer to provide this. There's also an extensive SMPTE capability to tie in lights and video which run in time with the set audio.

Festival changeovers can vary from two hours down to 20 minutes, so you have to be ready for anything and have systems in place to make it a quick turn around if necessary.

On the Take That 2015 run, what did you do?

That was quite a different role to The Chemical Brothers. There is a very theatrical feel to their live shows with dancers, live band and Take That all performing together to produce the show. Obviously,

something of this nature is quite heavily timecode-based so I was responsible for looking after a large offstage Pro Tools set-up, which provides timecode for lighting and video in addition to setting up two keyboard rigs for the players on either side of the stage.

We planned and built the playback side of things two months before rehearsals started, so that it was in place and fully functioning on day one of a six week rehearsal schedule.

What are the major differences between working with an EDM act and rock act?

Rock bands don't perform at 5am in a loud, dark tent!

What do you always take with you on tour?

These days, a waterproof jacket and wellies.

What is the issue that never seems to go away when touring?

You can't get a decent cup of tea outside the UK!

Your scariest moment ever on tour?

The Chemical Brothers played in a bullring in Madrid a long time ago and when the house lights came on at the end – at 11pm – there was a full-scale riot as the audience was expecting an all-night rave I think. It was pretty early by Spanish standards! We had stones, bits of floor tiling, batteries, even a bike thrown at us. One guy was gesturing cutting my throat at one point! We had to abandon the stage and barricade ourselves in a production office until it all calmed down as a stage invasion was imminent. The kit took a bit of a hammering but strangely nothing was stolen. Not so much scary, but a moment of concern, you could say! ■

www.thechemicalbrothers.com

NewBay

PSN LIVE

BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE MAKERS OF PSNEUROPE

VOLUME 11

www.psneurope.com

Jess the ticket... The PSNEurope annual report for the live sound business is back!



P24

LIVE HERE NOW

JUST HOW IS THE TOURING/
FESTIVAL MARKET IN 2016?



P28

EXTREEEEME!

THE DEEPEST, THE HIGHEST,
THE COLDEST GIGS... EVER!



P40

PIER PRESSURE

BRINGING LIVE MUSIC BACK
TO A HASTINGS INSTITUTION

PM. The new generation.

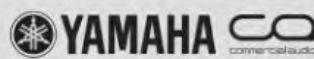
A new era of digital mixing has arrived.

For more than four decades Yamaha has been at the forefront of live sound mixing technology. Now we deliver the culmination of years of dedication to the art of the digital mixer, our new flagship - the RIVAGE PM10.

The future is here. Discover RIVAGE PM10 at yamahaproaudio.com

Expanding the Rivage family with RPi0222

RIVAGE PM10



For more information please visit www.yamahaproaudio.com

Connect with experience