

Artists

The Big Playback: Meet The Specialists Behind Your Favorite Live Shows

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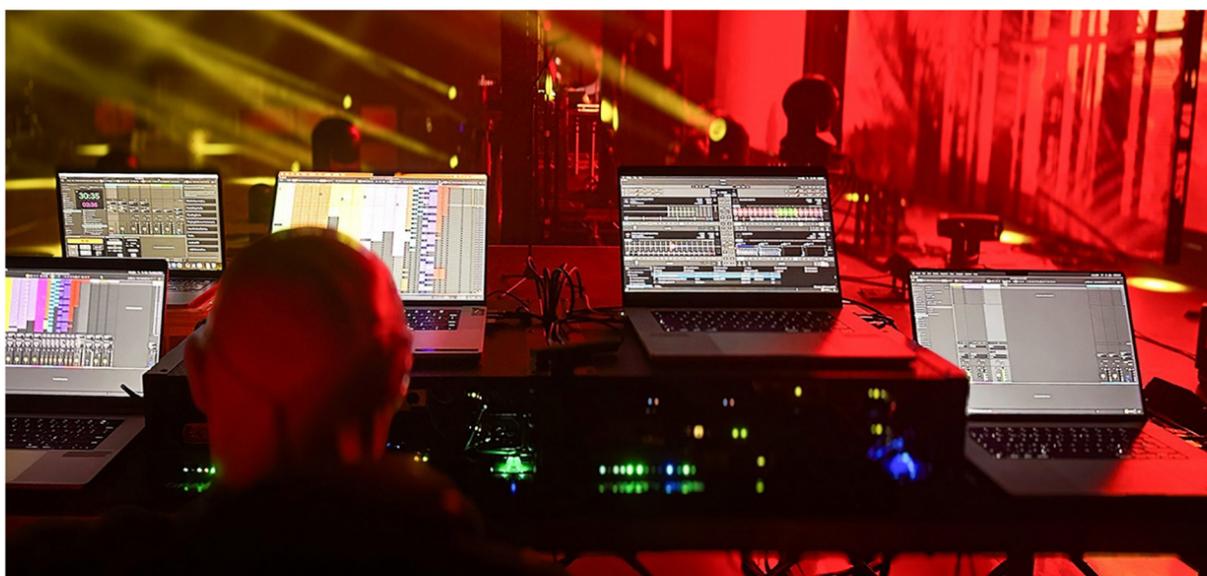


Matt and Alex at Gravity Rigs's HQ

Together with Alex Turner, Matt Cox runs Gravity Rigs, a company that designs playback and performance systems for live acts across the electronic spectrum, from Pet Shop Boys to Disclosure. A look at some of the rigs the pair have created demonstrates the huge range of forms that modern playback can take.

They devised a sophisticated live looping system for the Chemical Brothers, enabling them to switch seamlessly between a programmed show and live-jam transitions. They cracked a technical puzzle for DJ Luciano, synchronising Traktor, Ableton Live, and a modular synth in a highly stable setup. And they have devised plug-and-play performance rigs, for artists like Bicep and Ovemono, that are easy to fly with and a breeze to set up.

In each case, the rig was tailored to the vision and resources of the artist. Matt Cox summarizes: "We help electronic artists deliver their ideas the way they want to. We're there to help them realize [their music] in the real world."



Matt of Gravity Rigs overseeing four linked computers running Ableton for the Swiss DJ Luciano

"I think people are used to seeing a show with a certain level of production," says Matt Cox. "They're used to seeing a good multimedia experience. There's a real desire and a requirement to give them that. And it's made people have to step up their show production."

Cox works primarily in the electronic music world where, in a sense, all artists are playback specialists. But though they often work with stems, MIDI data and the rest, electronic artists may not be experts in playback systems.

"There's so much technology around now," says Cox. "Wading through all those choices and trying to make decisions about what's the best equipment to use, and what's the best way of doing things, is quite difficult for anyone on their own. That's how we help people. We've got experience of designing and setting up these systems and choosing the right gear for the right job. We help people make solid decisions that are going to work on stage."