



WITH THEIR FIRST EVER SET LIST TO HAND AND A NEW SOUND ON THEIR SLEEVES, UNDERWORLD AND THEIR CREW FIND NEW WAYS TO IMPROVISE ON TOUR, WITH TRUSTED KIT AT THEIR FINGERTIPS...

NEW SOUNDS FROM THE UNDERWORLD

With a PAR 64 pointing up into his face, a sweaty Karl Hyde is throwing his limbs around the stage as if he might be trying to take off. Mostly wrinkled ravers, the crowd start cheering as a familiar beat creeps into consciousness. A retro look of moving lights in primary colours gives way to a lull in the music as Hyde breaks into, "Drive boy dog boy dirty numb angel boy..." and the PixelLines slowly light up and fade out.

Although Underworld's gig at Manchester Academy comes to a close with their most iconic single 'Born Slippy', much of the night has been dedicated to tracks from new album *Barking*, their eighth studio album which features collaborations with Paul van Dyk, Mark Knight and D.Ramirez, to name a few. This latest collection marks a shift in focus of electronic dance duo Hyde and Rick Smith, both musically and in their approach to the live show.

Underworld have been performing for over two decades and remained with many of the same crew members throughout, but their preference for live jamming over cue lists and set

lists, and absolute commitment to improvisation, means that no two gigs have ever been the same. Days earlier, before their Brixton Academy gig in London on November 20, I stole some time with both members of the band backstage. Said Smith: "Variety had become boring to us and we weren't actually jamming and responding in a way that was meaningful, so we nailed the set list down and explored what we could do within those constraints. The benefit to us all has been massive."

Some of the constants in Underworld's life on the road are Funktion-One with engineer John Newsham, Colour Sound Experiment with LD Haydn Cruickshank, artist manager Daniele Short and studio/stage manager Malcolm Corbett. "Malcolm builds all the equipment, most of which is custom modified, and he runs the stage," explained Smith. "Daniele is our right-hand woman."

"John Newsham does magic and is a master at what he does. Haydn is an absolute master and when you've got them two behind you when you turn up to a gig with different

production, you know it's going to be alright," said Hyde.

Underworld first came across Funktion-One in its Turbosound guise in 1983 when they headed to Ridge Farm — owned by F1's Tony and Ann Andrews — in search of a new recording studio.

The band fell in love with the "human" sound of the Turbosound boxes immediately. "I was hearing a sound that I had always wanted to hear," said Hyde.

Below: Underworld's Karl Hyde & Rick Smith find some unusual dressing room props.





"It wasn't just coming at you in loud slabs of sound hitting your senses, Funktion-One welcomed you in and said, 'we're going on a journey and I'm going to be on your side.' It sounds very poetic but F1 is poetic for me."

Added Smith: "If you stand in front of Funktion-One's boxes then listen to something else like a line array, it's incomparable, and I don't know why anyone would want to use anything else."

SET LIST CARD GAMES

Newsham has been the band's sound engineer ever since, first touring with them to promote the *Underneath The Radar* album. He said that up until this tour, he and Cruickshank never knew which track was going to be played next on a live show until the first note kicked in. "We had a pack of cards with tune numbers on and in the dressing room everyone would pick a card out to determine what we'd play that night," said Newsham.

Armed with a set list for the first time ever, and with a new sound defined by shorter, stripped down tracks that are "not so trance-like or sprawling", Hyde said he felt like he was actually in a new band.

Commented Newsham: "Like a DJ morphs together two tunes, Rick has all parts of the two tunes coming into his mixer; he has two completely separate Ableton set ups and can mix parts of the tune with real parts of the other tune so he gets new mixes of tracks."

On stage Smith uses a system custom built by Corbett which much resembles a recording studio. It's centred around a Midas Heritage console and six Apple Mac computers running various sequences, with everything locked to a central clock. This allows him to change the way certain sequences work with each other.

SWITCH AND JAM

Hyde spends the entire gig working the stage with a PAR 64 closely

following him and singing into his mic. The band do all their own monitoring, with Hyde using a monitor system built bespoke for his needs by Funktion-One's Toby Hunt. The switcher unit allows him to choose between stereo sources and listen to things without them going through the PA.

"I can select any of the instruments I'm playing and send them off through effects then select that instrument to monitor it," explained Hyde. "I've got a click track to keep me in time, a CD player, some poetry, sounds, noises and effects, which I can gate on my equipment desk. Then I have guitars, some that control vocoders and some that are just guitars."

"When we started this group in the early '90s you had to mix your own sound because we were playing from a DJ booth and there were no monitors, so we always had headphones on. But recently we've gone to in-ears and use Hand Held Audio."

The on-stage monitor system is a Funktion-One self-powered set up comprising two Res 2 speakers and two Infrabass 218s, which the band purchased years ago and take with them wherever they can.

"We did a Far East tour last year without them just to save on freight and we'll never do it again, it was awful. We brought sidefills in, these big black knarly boxes, and they don't make sense to me, they're slabs of sound hitting you in the face," said Hyde.

Except for Eindhoven where in-house production was used, and Glasgow where Ward-Steedsy provided the PA due to logistical reasons, Audio Plus was the exclusive supplier of the Funktion-One FOH rig for the tour, which varied in size depending on the venue — the biggest being the sold-out Heineken Music Hall in Amsterdam.

The F1 boxes can be flown or ground-stacked, and for this tour an extra row of speakers could be

Top: John Newsham on his Midas XL4 at FOH; Robe Colourwash 700 in the foreground whilst Karl Hyde jams in the background.

Bottom, clockwise from top left: Lights shine through the Colourweb at Brixton; Audio Plus system tech Mark O'Neill; video director Toby Vogel; the Funktion-One main hang at Brixton Academy; lighting engineers Richard Gilson & Haydn Cruickshank.



"If you stand in front of Funktion-One's boxes then listen to something else like a line array, it's incomparable, and I don't know why anyone would want to use anything else..." Rick Smith

added if there was a balcony. Audio Plus' Mark O'Neill was system tech for the tour, assisted by sound technician Mike 'Sticks' Steer. As O'Neill explained: "The nature of the way the system works makes it very scalable."

ANALOGUE VS. DIGITAL

At Brixton Academy, there were 10 Resolution 5s per side flown in two rows, with five Res 4Ds per side for downfill. Groundstacked were four F221A bass enclosures and a single Res 5 to cover the middle of the pit area. Amplification came from 16 MC2 E45s whilst processing and system control was handled by XTA DP448.

Newsham is a avid supporter of analogue consoles and used what he regards as "the best analogue board", the Midas XL4 at FOH. "I think digital is still a work in progress and sonically it's not up to the standard of analogue kit. I think digital will get there eventually, but it could be another 10 years before it catches up and the speed and latency issues disappear," he said.

"The thing I also like about an analogue

board is, and to a certain extent it's specific to Underworld, but I work the EQ a lot during the show and it's very easy to adjust and feel the EQ on the Midas XL4, it's instant for me."

He uses the onboard EQ, a TC Electronic D-Two as a spin echo for Hyde's vocal and Yamaha SPX2000s for chorus effect, as well as an old school DBX 160 XT on the vocal.

"Mixing Underworld is an unusual thing," mused Newsham. "Most of the mixing of the small parts is done by Rick on stage so he will mix four or five loops together to get a bassline and will feed me that as a stereo mix, which will be different for every tune, so I'm constantly re-EQ'ing the board."

Newsham runs 44 mono inputs on the board and four stereo mixes divided into bass, keyboards, percussion and an effects mix from Rick, which includes specials like the vocal sample 'everything everything' from 'Cowgirl'. "I've also got Karl's vocal straight off the mic to which I add echoes myself. He uses a Sennheiser EW550 G2 system with an MMD 935 capsule in

the mic. It's very sensitive, but it suits his voice as it deals with the variation in level and highlights that dark, deep sound he has," said Newsham.

VISUAL IDENTITY

The art of mixing on the fly (within the realms of the new set list) runs equally through the video and lighting aspects of the show.

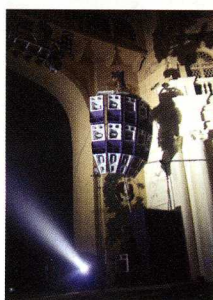
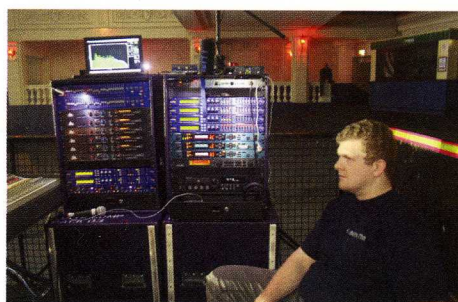
Visual innovation has characterised Underworld's shows since the early '90s, being one of the first dance bands to do big productions and take a VHS tape out on the road. "Visuals became important to us, particularly when we were playing to 14-18,000 people where you are a little dot on stage; we wanted to create that personal bond," said Hyde.

The driving force behind the band's brand identity is art design collective Tomato, of which Hyde and Smith are co-founders. "We wanted to create a total sensory experience out on the road with us," commented Hyde. "We always find different ways of tackling it, like the illuminated inflatables we had on the last tour."

Through early *Megadog* dance events, the band met the company's LD Haydn Cruickshank and later asked him to go out on tour with them. Cruickshank, who now owns Colour Sound Experiment, also remembered their first innovations with visuals and lighting: "On the first tours we used 16mm film and used loops."

Toby Vogel has been Underworld's video director for around five years, after he was put in touch with the band through Des Fallon at XL Video, which supplied projectors and cameras for the tour. The inflatables and all previous film footage were entirely thrown out for their recent tour, and with the vague theme of body parts, both Vogel and Hyde began filming again in May, taking in different city scapes on the tour to provide the impression of a journey, playing with a microscope camera, and mixing their footage with images from Tomato.

Vogel designed a video look that evolves throughout the show, using a Rosco front projection screen upstage for the first half of the



gig, which moves up and down, and the Colourweb low res LED curtain behind it for the second half.

He flips content for both surfaces between graphics and live content with added effects, the latter coming from four Robo cams on stage and a couple of handheld cameras. He uses a Mac and a Hippo Critter to feed content to the Colourweb, with two Barco FLM HD20 projectors positioned at FOH for the projection screen.

LOVE FOR NEW LIGHTS

Behind the Colourweb and indeed in front of it on small vertical trusses, and flown on the three staggered trusses across the stage, are Robe 700 Washes, Mac 250 Beams and the new Clay Paky Alpha Spot HPE 1500s.

"It's the first time I've used the Clay Paky Alpha Spots. I bought them at the beginning of the year because we needed a new big moving light and we looked at other brands, but in a balance of features, support and cost it came out on top," said Cruickshank, who

is assisted by Richard Gilson and James Hind.

Cruickshank controlled the rig, which also included PixelLines and Martin Atomic Strobes, with a Wholehog III: "the only desk I know well enough to be quick enough to do what I do."

As the Manchester gig drew to a close, the duo came out to take their bow with their engineer/DJ Darren Price. Hyde must have been massively worn out after such an intense and high-energy show, but as he said backstage in London: "I still walk out and think it's great even when I'm tired. It's fantastic working with people who are passionate and good at their job."

Underworld revealed they were working on a project that will go live early next year, in which sound is very much an important aspect. They are also doing a global festival run next summer.

TPI

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LIVE NATION MAKES SOUND INVESTMENT

The audio for Underworld's gig at the Roseland Ballroom in New York on October 27 was provided by Funktion-One's U.S. partner, Sound Investment. The company has recently entered into a handshake deal with the venue's promoter, Live Nation, to exclusively provide F1 PA for all its events at the Roseland and Hammerstein Ballrooms, as well as other venues and events.

Live Nation first debuted one of Sound Investment's Funktion-One systems back in June for the *Work! NYC Pride* event at the venue, which featured Peter Rauhofer along with Marco Da Silva, Ana Paula, and Stephan Grondin, followed by the *Jonathan Peters Classics Party* in September, and three nights of Deadmau5 over Halloween, which was an epic trifecta of artists to include Skrillex, Busta Rhymes, Pete Tong, Kaskadee, Afrojack, Calvin Harris and Erol Alkan.

Live Nation senior vice president (New York), Jason Miller, said: "We have a perfect space in Roseland Ballroom which gives us a great canvas to be creative with both production and audio.

"Working with Sound Investment has been instrumental in elevating the dance experience in New York and together we have taken the party to a level which the city has never seen. We have come from a place of relative obscurity in electronic dance music to market leaders who are creating a new standard to which others are measured."

Underworld's Karl Hyde commented: "After our gig at Roseland Deadmau5 was doing some parties there and everyone said that night what an amazing sound it was."

The Roseland Ballroom, which has the biggest open dancefloor in New York City, has historically been dominated by independent promoters. "It is one of the last areas of the business that is still truly entrepreneurial," said Miller.

"As I immersed myself in the business of dance it didn't take long to figure out that the sound was the single most important component of the party and that there were a multitude of specialised audio systems that accentuated the dance experience.

"At that point all roads led to Funktion-One. To much of the industry, the artist community and the adoring fans, Funktion-One was known worldwide and stood head and shoulders above all other audio systems. Its name brings instant recognition because the quality of the product is second to none."

Following his own research, Miller contacted Daniel Agne at Sound Investment and soon realised there was potential for them to work together. Sound Investment has enjoyed a 10-year relationship with Funktion-One throughout which it has built up a strong awareness of the brand across the U.S.

With its head office in Chicago, Sound Investment also has branches in LA, New York, Miami and Vegas. "In the dance music community it's pretty much Funktion-One and then everyone else. In terms of fidelity I feel it's second to none," said Agne.

Sound Investment and Live Nation are currently "feeling out" a deal of exclusivity whereby the former will only supply Funktion-One systems to electronic dance music events that are hosted by the promoter. "I'd love to keep working with Live Nation across the board they're obviously the biggest player in the game," said Agne.

It's a team effort and I believe we make for great partners that are in it for the long haul together," added Miller.

Live Nation will feature the system for its New Year's Eve with Steve Angello from the Swedish House Mafia.

www.soundinvestmentav.com
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