



PANIC! AT THE DISCO

Progressing from their emo-rock roots, the Las Vegas quartet now boasts a more refined sound, an energetic live show and an ever-growing fan base. TPI's Stew Hume headed to the band's Manchester show to meet the crew that have witnessed the change firsthand.

Back in the mid-noughties, the 'emo' genre was arguably one of the most popular musical styles of the day. By its very definition boasted 'emotional' rock that scratched the teen angst itch for scores of youngsters. A decade since emo's heyday and it seems several of the best and brightest bands have been able to remain relevant, adapting and honing their craft.

Many would argue that one of the champions of this era were Panic! At The Disco (PATD). Hits such as *I Write Sins Not Tragedies* rocketed them to the top of the pile. Fast forward several years and the Las Vegas four piece began to draw from wider influences, including Sinatra and Queen, to grow into an entirely different beast. TPI caught up with the band and crew as they were winding down the tour to promote their fifth album, *Death of a Bachelor*.

THIS CALLS FOR A TOAST...

Spencer Jones, Production Manager and FOH Engineer, talked TPI through the last year of touring with the band: "This whole run has been incredibly

busy," he began. "Last summer we had several festival dates and once we came off that in September we started putting together all the pieces for this world tour. We wanted to make sure we could hit the ground running once the album had dropped in January. We don't really stop in this band and if we are not playing a show you can bet we are planning one!" Following a successful co-headline tour of the US with Weezer in the summer the band crossed the Atlantic to play to European crowds, culminating with the UK run.

Jones has been involved with the band in various capacities since 2011, starting out as Monitor Engineer before making the jump to the dual role of FOH Engineer and Production Manager. "A lot of the production manager job is done before you get to the venue," he stated. "If you have done the job right then everything just falls into place. That being said, on this run I have been trying to focus slightly more on my FOH work as I have some new gear that I have been trialing." For this run of shows, Jones brought on several suppliers he had previous experience with, including Adlib, who provided the triple threat of lighting, sound and video alongside BPM SFX,

Opposite: Finishing off their busy year of touring, Panic! At The Disco performed several dates in the UK. Below: Adlib provided a complete audio, lighting and video package.



All Access Staging & Productions, Fly By Nite and Beat The Street. Jones said: "In this business it's comforting to have a list of suppliers you trust. Adlib has provided us with both audio and lighting across Europe. We have enjoyed a great relationship with them for many years."

Commenting on this relationship, Adlib Client Manager Phil Kielty added: "We've been incredibly fortunate to work with Panic! on and off for 10 years. Seeing their live show evolve has been quite incredible. Since January we've been with them from Moscow to Madrid and the energy put into their performance is something else. Spencer Jones and the rest of the production have created a great family atmosphere amongst the crew, and it's a huge pleasure to be involved."

Also out of the road with PATD was Tony Marino, Tour Manager, who has worked with the band for almost seven years. There are few that know PATD like him. Just before show time he introduced TPI to the *Death of a Bachelor* tour concept: "This was the first time that Brendon [Urie, singer] had trialed the new looks he has been desperate to recreate on the stage. There is no doubt that the show still has a rock feel but we have begun to add some bigger pop stylings that complement the newer material. During the early planning stages he was keen to make everything a bit flashier and what we have produced is really great."

Due to the varied venue sizes in the UK, one thing that had to be taken into consideration was the scalability of the show. Whether the band were playing to 1,000 or 10,000 people, the production wanted to make sure everyone would have the same experience. This meant that upon entering a new venue every day both Marino and Jones, along with LD Alex Specht, worked out how each show could obtain the maximum impact. "What is great about this design is that it can shrink but it doesn't look as though it has got any smaller. I don't want to have to drag the band in every morning

to check out the set. I have worked with them for such a long time they trust my judgment regarding what will look best," Marino commented.

TIME TO DANCE

After supplying an audio control package for the European run, Adlib provided the PATD crew with a full PA for the UK dates along with Tony Szabo, System Tech, and Gavin Murray, PA Tech.

The PA in question was an L-Acoustics set up consisting of 20 K1 boxes backed up with 16 K2's, 16 KARAs and eight ARCS. "There were also 16 new KS28 subs which run off the new LA12X amplifiers," said Szabo. "We also had the LA12X running the K2 arrays as Adlib are slowly moving from the LA8 amplifier stock to the newer LA12X." Jones went on to express his admiration for the L-Acoustics set up: "We had already used L-Acoustics several times this year. For the summer tour with Weezer it was used throughout. They are my go-to speaker provider. Everything they produce is such high quality and works so well for these guys."

At FOH Jones was using a DiGiCo SD10, a console he is still relatively new to. He elaborated: "It has been a bit of a learning curve but I feel I've got my head around it now. There are certain features that I really like, one of which obviously is the sound quality. As this is only my 12th time behind the desk I still have more to learn but so far I have been enjoying it." Jones went on to describe the mixing style he had adopted over the years with PATD: "These guys let me have free rein with the sound on this show. It's great! Obviously I listen to all the albums and try and recreate certain elements but you always have to remember it's a rock show so it has a different feel. From my perspective I'm also able to accent certain elements that may not have been in the album." One thing that cannot be taken away from the PATD fans is the sheer volume they create. This fact was not lost on Szabo:

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"The PATD crowd are very vocal, signing along at the top of their voices and screaming at 112dBa on many occasions. This meant that Spencer had to try to keep the mix articulate in a way that could get through the crowd's enthusiasm. It's a hard task but Spencer has developed the execution over the years he has mixed for them."

The system also utilised Adlib's Lake control rack with fibre-based Dante backbone, delivering a 96k AES signal to the amplifiers with the help of Focusrite's RedNet D16R AES units. At FOH they used a Meyer Sound SIM3 system for time alignment and tuning, complemented by the new Rational Acoustics SMAART v8, controlled via a Lake and L-Acoustics Network Manager.

BEHIND THE CURTAIN

With the PA working overtime to go toe-to-toe with a screaming audience, your average PATD show is an incredibly loud experience. However, stageside it was a rather different story as the Shure-endorsed group has opted for a complete IEM setup for the last three years. Holding down all monitor duties is Jeremy 'Spud' Groshong. Originally brought on to replace Jones (who then mixed FOH) Spud has observed the development of the four piece firsthand. "It's certainly grown a lot since my first time with the band," he began. "Back then it was literally four dudes on stage and I only had to worry about guitar, bass, drums and vocals. Now we've got a whole brass section, a second drum kit, Brendon's piano and a whole array of talkbacks. It's been a really nice progression." When Spud took over from Jones he inherited the control package, which he still uses to this day. The set up consisted of an Avid Venue Profile mixing console, a system that Spud cites as his "go-to." He continued: "I learned everything I know on the Avid consoles and it works really well for this tour. At the moment even with the second drum kit and the horn section we are only working with a 59 input show."

All the PATD team were on the Shure PSM 1000's IEMs while using Shure's UR4D+ for all the instruments wireless transmission. Shure also supplied the band with its latest KSM8 Dualdyne Vocal Microphone. Jones talked about his experience with the latest Shure release: "For years we have used the Shure KSM9 but earlier this year they got in touch asking if we'd like to give the new model a test. From the first show I thought it had a crisper sound and clarity. Brendon has an incredible range but we have always struggled with keeping his low end under control. The KSM8 has handled it really well. The sound we are getting from it is really cutting through the mix." As well as providing stellar sound quality, the fine folks at Shure also provided a custom gold casing for the microphone to bring a touch of class to proceedings. Wireless transmission came courtesy of Shure's UX4D.



LD Alex Specht started with the band back in 2013 and has been at the helm of lighting design and operation ever since.

I AM THE TIME CODE...

TPI caught up with LD Alex Specht to talk through the conceptual aesthetic of the show. Jumping on with the band back in 2013 he has seen the quartet change their visual look. "The band's songs have definitely matured over the years. They've moved on from their pop punk sensibilities," began Specht. "Brendon is a big fan of Sinatra and other big band acts from back in the day, which has really inspired the look of this show. This year through the various runs we have incorporated a lot of Art Deco visuals to the set. But with Panic! it's really a balancing act of class and entertainment; we need to ensure it is still a fun show for the younger members of the audience. Personally, from an LD's perspective, it's a lot of fun as I have so many different avenues to explore."

For the UK shows Specht added to the rig that had been out on the European run. Adlib's Tom Weber took up the story: "Adlib provided a floor package before for the PATD guys but this was the first time we'd sent techs. I personally looked after Alex and the floor package that was toured in Europe. Then when we got to the UK Adlib sent two more techs, Mike



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As well as an impressive vocal range, it appears that singer Brendon is quite the acrobat; Tony Marino, Tour Manager; Spencer Jones, Production Manager and FOH Engineer.

Summerfield and Peter Lea.”

Specht said of the lighting rig: “I have always been a big fan of Martin products and on the rig we have 16 Martin by Harman MAC Quantum Washes. I love their colour not to mention the beam and zoom. Due to the multiple rings within the fixture you can really mess with the look of them to avoid it looking like a circular wash light.” Also representing the Martin brand were the Atomic 3000 DMXs. Additionally Specht spec’d 16 Claypak Myths, six Sharpy Washes, 10 Sharpys and 30 Ayrton MagicDot-Rs. The LD also gave special mention to the Chauvet Professional Strike4’s: “I am sold on the Strikes! They have a great reaction time and they look like a traditional halogen light. Through the set I mainly use them as a mole light but they do have an impressive range of effects. On top of that, it’s great not having to carry around a dimmer rack!”

For control Specht used an MA Lighting grandMA2. This is a recent change for the LD who before this year had not programmed on an MA console. “Through my career I think I have used almost every brand but MA. For these tours starting at the beginning of this year, I finally got one and started using them. I really like it. It is so powerful. It has become a standard in the industry and it was time to get to grips with it. This became evident on our festival run last year. Nearly every show had one on hand as well, as using the MA Net system and the connection to another brand of console always means there is a slight delay, which I never want in my show!”

For the UK tour the creative department opted to bring video screens into the mix. Most of the content that was used during the tour had been created for the band’s summer tour dates by Lüz Studio with Specht adding

in a few additional elements during the run. For the tour Adlib provided the crew a total of 96 of Creative Technology’s Absen A3 Pro 3.9mm LED screens as well as two Absen Processor drive racks all of which were controlled by two Hippotizer V4 Karst media servers (primary and back up). Specht commented: “The video is the only part of the show which is time coded and is triggered via the MA Lighting grandMA2. Other than that, for the lighting side of the show, I am the time code! My show is completely manual and it keeps things more interesting. You can never turn your nose up at job security,” Specht joked. “For this show we have brought on a video tech, Jon Priest, who gets the show up and running then the video runs its self. I have an in-ear mix with a click track and the last thing I want to do during this show is have to speak to another department and give commands, so this set up we have right now is perfect.”

Weber added: “The Absen A3 Pro made the content look incredibly clean and crisp.” Specht concluded by offering his thoughts on the lighting and video supplier: “I met the Adlib guys during my first tour with PATD. Over the years we have really got to know the company and we love working with them. The techs they send over are always fantastic and this run has been no different with my lighting tech Tom Weber.”

NO NEED TO PANIC!

Another past supplier that jumped on the *Death of a Bachelor* tour was BPM SFX. Representing the special effects giant was Mick Fletcher. The Special Effects Tech had actually been out with PATD last time BPM worked with the band and was more than happy to be back in the fold. Before