

Date: April 2007

XTA FLIES HIGH WITH GUILLEMOTS

When chirpy pop-rockers Guillemots winged their way around the UK on a bill-topping 10 date tour in February, the flying visits to venues from Aberdeen to Bristol were characterised by a sound which always soared but, thanks to XTA processors, a sound crew who never got in a flap.

Supplied by audio hire company Concert Sound, six XTA DP226s using AudioCore via a WISER wireless network took care of system control for the tour's Adamson Y-10 / Spektrix line array PA.

"The combination of the Adamson PA and XTA processors was really good," says Concert Sound system tech Aron Ross. "It was a system that looked complex on paper, but it was very straightforward. We could make physical changes to the system very easily."

Indeed, it was the ideal solution for this tour, as the PA had to be reconfigured fairly extensively from venue to venue. "In some venues, for the more awkward balconies we needed to both fly and ground stack the Y-10," says Aron.

Two DP226s were used for each side of the main system, one set up for the ground stacked and one for the flown elements, while a fifth was used for the Spektrix cabinets used for infill or outfill as needed. The sixth DP226 was plugged into the laptop for controlling the wireless network.

Aron did most of the system EQ within AudioCore, although he also had an analogue graphic for FOH engineer Jonnie Lucas to grab if necessary. "It made it easier for him to make immediate adjustments rather than having to change it on the laptop or ask me," says Aron.

However, it wasn't long before the XTAs proved their worth, as Jonnie Lucas points out: "After the first few shows, the EQ on the graphic was proving very similar," he says. "So we decided to mirror that curve in the processors and run the analogue graphic almost flat."

"The XTA processors worked really well for us," he continues. "It was good to know that Aron and I had so much reliable control over each part of the system. We would usually begin sound check with just the main hangs/stacks, then Aron would tweak the front fills and infills while the band was playing. Using AudioCore on a remote tablet and gave us all the flexibility and control we could ask for."

Aron agrees. "I've used XTA on quite a lot of shows and there's a vast amount of EQ in the DP226s. I have never found myself 'wanting more' from them," he says. "They have a great, straightforward interface and the Wiser system works really well."

Meanwhile, despite having a Yamaha PM5D beside the stage, monitor engineer Pete Abbott preferred the sound of XTA outboard for his mixes. He had five GQ600 graphics and a D2 dynamic EQ in the system, helping to ensure the band were all happy.

The D2 was used for double bass player Aristazabal Hawkes's IEMs. "For bass players, the upper harmonics often sound louder in the monitor mix than the fundamental note," says Pete. "So I used the D2 just to keep everything even across the mix for her."

Interestingly, Hawkes's double bass had an XTA SiDD processor on stage, running as a parametric EQ to highlight specific frequencies. "The double bass is a very tricky instrument," says Jonnie Lucas. "The SiDD worked really well to get enough useful signal to the amp."

The GQ600s were used for the entire band, keeping the mix smooth. "I prefer outboard to the PM5D's effects, to me the outboard sounds better," says Pete. "And GQ600s are my favourite EQs, I really like the way they work, which is why I specified them."

The varying venue acoustics meant that the GQ600s were perfect for rapid changes to the monitor mixes, ensuring that they were kept consistent for each band member throughout the tour.

"I always work with what's coming back from PA, rather than trying to fight it. So, for example, in a venue like Nottingham Rock City which has a parabolic roof, I used the XTAs to ensure the monitor mix wasn't radically different to how it sounded in others," says Pete.

"They have fantastic sound quality," he adds. "I've used them a lot with Athlete. I'm huge fan, you can really hear the smallest change that you make."



