

A double first for Adam Rhodes as he experiences the wonder of L?ISA with Angus and Julia Stone at the Royal Albert Hall



Angus, Julia and the band take a bow at the end of an outstanding night with L-ISA.
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Adam Rhodes has been folk/rock duo Angus and Julia Stone's Front of House engineer for the past ten years. He is also a long time L?Acoustics user, favouring the French manufacturer's K Series systems for his general touring rig. This June, UK and European production supplier for the Stones, Britannia Row Productions, gave Rhodes the opportunity to expand his audio horizons by trying out L?ISA Hyperreal Sound technology. Not only was he to take on this new experience with little time to learn the L?ISA system, he was to do it at the notoriously challenging Royal Albert Hall, a venue he had never worked in before. It was, he says, "a revelation".



The L-ISA system, which comprised a frontal 15 system with additional Kara side hangs, X8 and SB18 as front fill, and X8 as fill for the stalls, worked 'fantastically' for FOH engineer, Adam Rhodes. Copyright James Adams

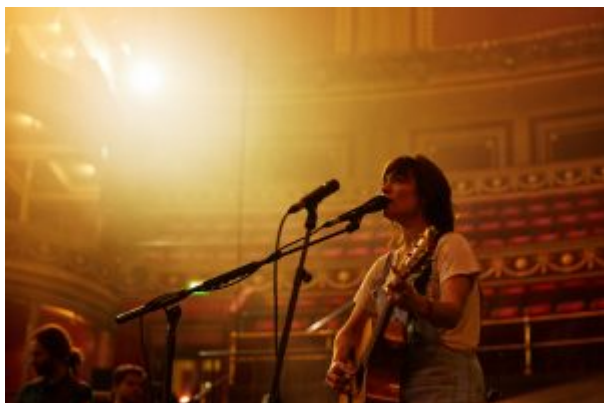
"I was offered the chance a few months before the show," says Rhodes. "Brit Row's Lez Dwight told me that there would be an L-ISA system in place for the Classic Brits at the RAH and, if I wanted to use the system, he knew that with my experience with multiple stem mixing—I have done a lot of mixing for film, the clarity of which

I try and present with Angus and Julia—this would be a perfect gig for it and he thought I'd enjoy it, so I agreed to give it a go."

Although Rhodes was excited to use L?ISA, he also felt a certain amount of trepidation. Only knowing little about the system and trying for the first time at the notoriously tricky Royal Albert Hall was a daunting prospect.

"I had heard tell of how challenging the RAH can be; with its extended reverb times it can be a struggle to get clarity across the whole venue," explains Rhodes. "But I trust Lez and thought, let's do it, let's find out!"

Before the show, Brit Row invited Rhodes to spend a day getting to know L?ISA in one of its production suites, where they set up a small mock rig, enabling him to program his Avid S6L console, do a mock set up and play with the system. He found this preparation session incredibly useful. "Even though it was an office suite, getting the patching done and understanding how it all works was great. In hindsight, it was very easy as the entire system is so intuitive, if a little time-consuming setting it up for the first time. That time was really valuable and stepping into the Hall itself, I felt very comfortable with what I was about to do. Once that was up and running, it was a breeze."



Julia Stone sound checks before the show.
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The L-ISA system, which was also used for the Classic Brits later that same week, comprised five arrays of 15 Kara each positioned above the stage as a frontal system, with additional side hangs of two arrays of ten Kara. Six X8 and four SB18 provided front fill, with a further six X8 providing additional fill for the stalls. The entire system was driven by a total of 27 LA12X Amplified Controllers.

This was new ground for Rhodes and he went into the show keeping his own expectations in check. "L-Acoustics' Sylvain Biguet was with me on the day," Rhodes remarks. "As we were a month into a tour and I'd never used L-ISA before, my main goal in the production suite was to have a show that was similar to the one I already had, so that I didn't feel I was going backwards."

"Adam is a great engineer and has a tried and trusted methodology for his mixing," adds Biguet. "Our main aim is always to help engineers get the most out of our technology, without becoming intrusive. With just a little help, he was able to experiment with L-ISA and work out how to translate his existing approach to the L-ISA workflow."

Rhodes regularly works with multiple groups and parallel compression, utilizing those groups for multiple streams of drum kits and other instruments to place them in the physical space, working in a similar fashion to how he would with multichannel soundtracks. His main concern about using L-ISA was gain before feedback and being able to get enough gain out of the PA on the vocal, as Angus sings quite quietly.



Angus and Julia Stone performing at their sell out show at the RAH. Copyright James Adams

“With L?ISA, I didn’t need to worry. I had way more gain before feedback than I usually do as I was able to bring things forward in the L-ISA Controller interface, *literally* forward in the sound stage without actually turning up the volume,” he smiles. “So I could pull whatever I wanted to the front of the mix and utilise the physical space, which meant it didn’t seem louder, just more forward. To me, it felt like in does in Bluegrass, where the vocalists all stand round one mic and someone simply steps up to the mic to perform their solo. That’s a game changer and something that I’ll always want from this point on. I wish I could do it daily.”

Although Rhodes had no reference point for the venue, he didn’t find reverb times an issue, experiencing a natural amount of reverb in the room and not feeling like he was fighting the room.



FOH engineer Adam Rhodes in the studio

“It worked fantastically,” he enthuses. “I loved having the phantom centres of hangs two and four and being able to use the centre hang to cut through the phantom like a blade was fantastic. It wasn’t until a week or so after the gig that the enjoyment of using L?ISA had really sunk in and I think we achieved much more than my original goal.

“The whole concept of immersive audio is fun and exciting. We’ve had massive advancements in lighting

technology over the last 10-15 years. It's so good to see a new step forward in audio presentation. I don't listen to a stereo anymore at home, I listen to the surround sound system and now, hopefully, I can do the same thing in my working environment. This is game changing."

About L-Acoustics

Founded in 1984 near Paris, France, L-Acoustics is a leading manufacturer of solutions for the professional sound industry. Part of the L-Group, which counts 400 team members, L-Acoustics is present in over 80 countries either through subsidiaries or via a network of certified providers. Twenty percent of L-Acoustics' team-members are dedicated to research and development.

Recognized for pioneering the modern line array, L-Acoustics continues to lead the industry with L-ISA, a multichannel technology combining sound system implementation and object-based mixing to reconnect artists and audiences. L-Acoustics systems can be heard in places like the Hollywood Bowl, the NFL Cardinals University of Phoenix Center or the Philharmonie de Paris as well as the world's top-grossing festivals, the London, Sochi and Rio Olympics, and on the Depeche Mode 2017/2018 Global Spirit tour.