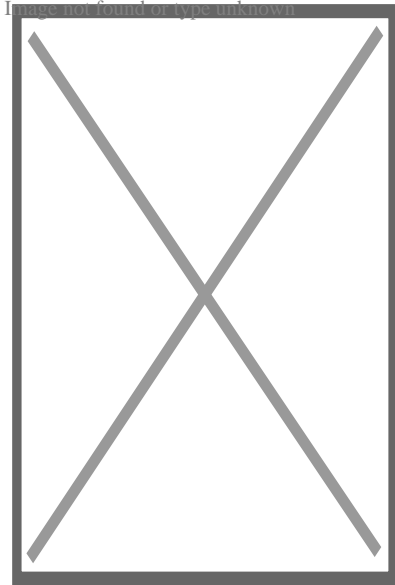


Roger Waters hits North America with DiGiCo

Roger Waters' Us + Them tour is proving to be one of the must-see touring shows of 2017. Armed with a 10-piece band, the former Pink Floyd frontman has been treating sell-out audiences to epic tracks from the band's back catalogue, performing hits from Dark Side of the Moon, The Wall, Animals, and Wish You Were Here, to name just a few. At side of stage sits monitor engineer Matt Napier, working from his trusted DiGiCo SD7 console.



Napier started working with Waters last year for his shows in Mexico and Desert Trip. Waters' previous engineer, Ian Newton, unfortunately passed away a few years ago, so it was an honour for Napier to fill such shoes.

"I felt a lot of responsibility to do Ian's memory justice, and make the gig work as smoothly as possible," Napier says. "We didn't have a lot of rehearsal time, so it was intense, but the shows went really well. You just have to do this music justice."

The production for Us + Them is epic, to say the least – and this is down to a strong emphasis on the synergy between the music and the aural/visual experience.

"The surround system installed in each venue makes the aural experience very immersive for the audience, and the visuals are absolutely stunning," Napier explains. "Roger really is the captain of the ship, and steers its direction, but he allows the musicians to explore their creativity and add their own flavour. He is always fair, and very professional; if there's a technical problem, as long as you're honest, he understands."

With 10 people on stage to look after, it gets pretty busy in monitor world, which means Napier needs a fairly monumental channel count. Enter the SD7. Napier is running 130 inputs (many of which are stereo), 21 mono auxes, 16 stereo auxes, three mono groups, seven stereo groups, 32 matrix inputs, 14 matrix outputs, and 24 control groups.



"I keep playing with other consoles, but the SD7 is still the only really serious choice for a show of this complexity; and actually, it's not just about the channel count," Napier insists. "The SD Series sounds fantastic, too, and the flexibility of the SD Racks and SD-Mini Racks, the redundancy, and user flexibility means nothing else comes close. I also have two SD Racks dealing with stage inputs and IEM outputs, and a Mini Rack, which takes care of some analogue inserts."

In addition to the musicians, there are a number of techs under the stage, and that is where the majority of the IEM mixes get eaten up.

"Most of the musicians are multi-instrumentalists, and also sing, so there are a lot of things going on; at the last count, we had about 70 different guitars in play," Napier laughs. "We also have a few discrete wedges around the stage to add a bit of weight, and we need a bit of extra stage volume for when we get to Another Brick In The Wall; we have a local kids' group join us on stage, and they need to hear, as well."

To help deal with this vast setup, Napier uses snapshots on his SD7 quite extensively: 53, to be precise.

"I run them all in 'relative' mode so that any changes in soundcheck can be adjusted across the board," he explains. "All the snapshots are fired via SMPTE. All the music is live, but we also have a lot of sound FX running for the surround PA, which I also feed into the IEM system. Due to the massive visual element and video content, the SMPTE is always running. It's actually a godsend for me, as once programmed, I can let the snapshots/SMPTE control all the mutes, major level changes, guitar changes, vocal mics; that frees me up to actually listen to, and actively mix the show for Roger. Well... it's a godsend now, but it took quite a few late nights programming to get it all running so smoothly!"

The North American leg runs until October 29th, and the Us + Them tour will descend on the UK and Europe in 2018.