

# ALPINE ALMANAC

PATRICK HOCKEN TALKS TO TPI ABOUT LIFE ON THE PISTE  
WITH THE PRODUCTION OFFICE...



Since leaving his full-time post at Skan PA Hire last September to join Chris Vaughan and Keely Myers at The Production Office (TPO), Patrick Hocken's world has been diverse to say the least. And just to prove that TPO's workload isn't all about stadium and arena rock tours, Hocken's recent weekend in the Swiss Alps was about as far away from Take That/Muse-size spectacles as one could ever imagine.

In March, Hocken production managed two private parties in the playground resort of St. Moritz. The first, held on Friday 25 March, was in the notorious Dracula Ghost Riders club, which has the start of the famous Cresta run located behind it. Twenty-four hours later, the second party was at the Hossa Ski Bar (2079m) which is only accessible by ski, skidoo, piste basher or helicopter.

Due to the first event running until 6am on the Saturday morning, and plans being compromised by regular skiing times and another unrelated event at Hossa on the Friday, it was necessary to bring complete sets of equipment, as Hocken explained.

"When we arrived in St. Moritz on Thursday, I took all the crew up to Hossa to do a recce — we

all agreed this job more than ever highlighted the similarities between touring and the military!" said Hocken. "Neg Earth's Dave Ridgway used a good analogy; he said we should approach it like the Barrowlands — go in and have a look and then work out which gear you're going to put in rather than drag it all up the mountain in this case.

"At 9am on Friday we unloaded the truck [provided by Stage Truck] at Dracula Ghost Riders club, did the load in there with 'Red Crew', who were later joined by the 'Blue (show) Crew' headed by Josh Williams. We left the Blue Crew at Dracula to do the soundchecks and show while the Red Crew went to cross-load using a helicopter, getting as much in at Hossa before the unrelated event started at 8pm.

"We then had between 9am and noon to finish off at Hossa as it gets very busy there from lunch until they close at 5pm. Guests started to arrive at 7pm, which gave us just enough time to soundcheck the band, Mode, who are led by Sony Music's Peter Hammerton."

One of the main challenges was the crew's work/rest scheduling. Some of this was achieved by hiring a Beat The Street sleeper to take the crew back to Zurich Airport after the very late load-out at Hossa. Beat The Street also supplied



Above: Production manager Patrick Hocken.





coaches for the airport transfer from Zurich and coaches for the musicians playing the event.

#### LIVE AT DRACULA'S CLUB

The crew set up a small stage at the Dracula Ghost Riders club, dressed with high shine Marley flooring and Foamex borders provided by Brilliant Stages.

Skan supplied a d&b C7/Q7 system for the main room and some L-Acoustics 108P loudspeakers for the dining room. A Yamaha M7CL-48 console was in control of the mix,

and the spec also included four Sennheiser G3 IEMs, 10 radio mics (eight Sennheiser e965s and two Shure Beta 98 brass kits) and four d&b M4 wedges for the various acts. Skan also supplied three Shure Super 55 vintage design microphones for vocal act, the Langley Sisters.

In another part of the club where the guests were dining, a 40' Barco plasma screen from XL Video was set up to show pictures submitted by friends of the birthday girl when she was younger. The screen and stand were dressed to match the theme of the venue, as fabricated by

Brilliant Stages.

For lighting, Neg Earth provided James Thomas PixelLine 1044s, Martin MAC 250 Washes, MAC 250 Spots and MAC 301s to light the room and the stage, as controlled by LD Dan Hill on an Avolites Pearl Expert.

Outside, Neg Earth also provided a Vari\*Lite 3500 Spot for gobo projection and some Philips Color Kinetics ColorReach LED floodlights to make the front of the building look as impressive as the guests' mostly vintage cars as they arrived.



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**RIISING TO HOSSA HEIGHTS**  
“Hossa was the fun party!” said Hocken. “Originally I had Matt Wright at Rock-It Cargo look at

dropping a 20’ container at the venue using a very large helicopter, but this was before I knew all the details of the event and had

completed a site visit. This option proved to be too costly and would have given us more lifting capacity than was required for equipment we needed to get up the mountain.

“Another idea was to use the cable cars as there is a large gondola that goes up to a central station and then a cable car down to where Hossa is.

tented part of the venue and surrounding trees.

In addition, a number of Clay Paky Alpha Beam 1500s scanned the mountain and caught the skiing guests’ attention as they journeyed down the mountain.

Other members of the overall crew included lighting techs Mark ‘Scratch’ Hitchcock and Ben Hammett, sound tech David

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## “This job highlighted similarities between touring and the military...”

“However, aside from being a tricky option due to the number of steps involved to get to the first cable car, and the 80m of snow between the two lifts at the top, this option was ruled out as the cable car that goes down to Hossa cannot except any freight cars, only seating cars — not really suitable for a double V\*L case!”

Hocken eventually elected to hire the services of a local helicopter company which had freight nets capable of carrying 700kg — this proved to be the quickest and most cost-effective method.

For the Hossa Ski Bar, Skan provided a second dB C7/Q7 system with a Yamaha LS9 desk and a further selection of Sennheiser G3 IEMs and radio mics. PixelLine 1044s and MAC 301 were again put into service, while ColorReach units lit the

McPhee, and set carpenters Sam Augustus and Scott Turnball.

As well as the forthcoming Take That *Progress Live* tour, The Production Office is also working with Paul van Dyk on his latest worldwide tour which is designed to enable the DJ to continue appearing at major venues from one corner of the world to the other in the short time frame between his gigs.

In closing, Hocken said: “Whilst technically not the most challenging job in the world, the environment in which we had to work in made it interesting. Walking through snow all day and working at altitude really takes it out of you!”

TPI

*Photography courtesy of  
The Production Office &  
Benjamin Hammett  
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