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Skann PA provides d&b package for Muse tour

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UK - For the current Muse tour, which opened with dates in Stockholm, Oslo and Copenhagen on three consecutive nights, production manager Chris Vaughan reports that packaging the PA was all important. "Actually Skann [Skann PA Hire] make it incredibly easy for me. Before the tour started we focussed on how the PA would be packaged," says Vaughan. "We knew in advance that we'd overnight between three to four hundred miles of back-to-back shows." There wasn't even time to work up efficiencies.

"We have 17 trucks in all, two and a half truck-loads of PA. Our first 'out' took just over two hours, now we regularly load out in one and three quarter hours." That might not sound too impressive until Vaughan points out, "That's in-the-round lights and LED system, with the main stereo PA, flown subs, side-hangs, and rear PA system. While playing 360° has its own problems, what Skann has put together for us is very quick and very neat."

The system in question is the J-Series from d&b audiotechnik. For Marc Carolan, Muse's house engineer for many years, the choice of PA system is a significant change. "My first impression was the sub arc actually worked." This is an audio array developed by d&b for their J-SUB that exploits time alignment and physical spacing to provide optimum even coverage in the low end, while avoiding the unwanted back lobes on stage. "We used it on Snow Patrol earlier this year," said Carolan. "It worked very consistently for us and it didn't take a lot of time to set up."

Carolan continues: "Because we're playing 360° I wanted a single enclosure solution; I wanted that consistency all round. The boxes really need to work in harmony and having the same enclosure goes a long way towards that. How do I like it now we're well into the tour? Sonically it's a fantastic system; headroom for days and it's so precise.

"I like to use the dynamics of the music. With Muse the information can get quite dense, yet the J Series line handles that well. I'm using lots of layers of sound and the J can get that across effortlessly. Skann has put a great system package together for us. That speed of set up I experienced with the subwoofer array I have also found applies to the system in general."

It is Skann's Chris Fitch (MD) and Matt Vickers, with support from crew chief for the tour Paddy Hocken, who devised the system packaging. "Paddy came to see Take That in the summer," explained Vaughan. "We used similar amplifier carts on that, but as is Paddy's way, he's improved on them. What Skann has built for the stage subwoofers is fantastic; J-SUBs, amplifiers and cables all in a unit that fits to the stage."

The sub arrays are two high J-SUBs in a custom built cart with amplifiers and the cabling riding within the cart behind the cabinets. There are two master carts that have staggered cable looms that ensure it's just not possible to miss-wire the array each gig. It's the same with the flown front, side, and rear J loudspeakers.

The Muse tour is currently in Europe, with visits to the US, Japan, Australia and New Zealand in the New Year. Vaughan's advance planning obviously brings the benefits of speed to a pretty intense touring schedule, so much so he's taking Skann's system and crew to the USA.

(Jim Evans)

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Muse on tour with d&b J-Series system



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