



IBIZA CLASSICS

While electronic / orchestra crossover concerts seem to be all the rage these days, it certainly seemed to resonate that little bit extra with punters when The Heritage Orchestra, conducted by Jules Buckley, was chosen to provide a high-brow twist to a selection of club anthems curated and performed by the legendary Pete Tong and his hand-picked band of musicians and guest vocalists.



Production Manager, Keely Myers, was appointed relatively last-minute by Tour Director, Paddy Hocken, who has been at the helm since the start of 2017. Myers began: “Paddy appointed the suppliers earlier in the year, but they are all ones that we have a long history of working with. While they’ve been doing festivals in summer and arena shows in other continents already, this version of the show is quite different and certainly more evolved. The production has grown in size as well, particularly since the addition of the automated screens, extra cameras and a larger stage.”

Although Myers wasn’t that familiar with the recent wave of orchestra / electronic shows due to a busy schedule of her own, she soon learned both the idiosyncrasies of such a production and the market that now surrounded her.

She said: “Of course there are going to be surprises when 2 worlds collide but it’s not been too dissimilar from your usual rock ‘n’ roll show - the fundamentals are the same. It’s true there are certain rules that apply to the orchestra in terms of unions or working hours but that has been the case for other shows I have worked on, like *Children In Need Rocks*. Essentially it’s just a lot of people on stage and more of a challenge to move them around in the meantime. Between myself, Jules, Chris Wheeler and Orchestra Production Manager, Claire Wackrow, we make sure everything is running smoothly.”

Despite the size of the undertaking for Myers and her team, the crew were only afforded 4 days of production rehearsals in LH2 while the band and orchestra were in Music Bank. The entire production then only had a single day to rehearse under the same roof.

Myers remembered: “We were in a great position after rehearsals, even though we didn’t have much time. It’s always nice to have opportunity to finesse things but we’ve done so much in a short space of time.”

Cassius Creative was charged with refining the show’s look from the previous run, ably assisted by show content from Silent Studios; lighting, rigging and automation from Neg Earth; video by Video Design; lasers from ER Productions; and an imposing stage and riser package from All Access Staging & Productions. The show’s euphoria-inducing audio package came from Skan PA Hire, while orchestra-specific IEM came from Next Level Audio and backline came from John Henry’s and Frontline Music.

Logistical support for the tour came from Phoenix Bussing and Transam, the latter of which supplied 3 52ft ‘Big Boys’ and 6 45ft trucks, with Bittersweet Catering feeding 150 people per day for dinner. H&S backing came from Piper Event Services, while Radiotek ensured on-site comms ran smoothly and The Tour Company got the substantial crew from A to B.

Myers gave her take on the organisational challenges that faced her and the rest of the crew on this short but complex run of shows. “I came up with some interesting bus splits and a truck schedule to overcome hold ups on load-out,” she began. “One bus leaves for the next venue a bit earlier, so on their arrival next morning can start tipping trucks and markout. Stage Manager, Dave Murphy and Head Rigger Amos Cotter are part of the advance team allowing myself, asst. SM Mark Berryman and Rigger Chris ‘Karrit’ Harris to stay back to make sure the load out goes to plan.”

She continued: “Paul at Bittersweet has done a fantastic job as well - it’s not easy to feed this many people every day! We have a system down for that too; with allocated time slots to eat dinner for crew and orchestra.”

“Our Production Co-Ordinator, Amanda Davies, has been a constant on this run and fantastic to work with, as has our Production Assistant, Victoria Bunney, who assists on my other tours. Their support in the office really has been invaluable for the duration the tour. And I have to say a massive thank you to all of the crew and suppliers who, as always, offer consistent support.”

CASSIUS CREATIVE

Dates in Australia and the US marked the last outings of the previous Ibiza Classics look, leaving show designers Chris ‘Squib’ Swain and Dan Hill of Cassius Creative to conjure the ultimate Balearic nostalgia trip.

Squib explained: “We’ve been involved with Ibiza Classics since November 2016 and this is its third incarnation. It’s taken us a while to figure out what exactly it is; we deal with pop stars and bands that usually have quite a defined visual identity. We’ve taken things that worked before like the lasers and live video, but everything is more refined, more polished.

“We realised there were three key elements that were important. The first was Ibiza itself - our crowd are mostly a bit older and have probably spent some time there, and all the songs are an homage to that place. There’s an element of nostalgia we wanted to introduce, without being corny. As management said during production rehearsals; the star of the show is Ibiza.

Tong was particularly keen to ensure that all aspects of the island were displayed throughout the night, with almost as much screen time given to the nature and beauty of Ibiza as to its iconic nightspots. Squib revealed: “If we started this in May we would have sent a filmographer to Ibiza with a shopping list of shots to get for us but we couldn’t get over there before closing parties. We still managed to get some drone footage of the beaches and old town that’s quite contemporary. We also offset this with the footage we used for *Yeke Yeke*, which was sourced from a Channel 4 documentary from 1992; that’s probably the ‘clubbiest’ bit of the show.”

The second factor for Squib to consider was the sheer visual impact of having so many musicians on stage. “That dictated how much live footage we used on the screens,” he said. “We wanted to a crowd that might not necessarily be used to a live orchestra just how each component works. This ties into the third aspect; which is lighting the show practically. We have some orchestra moments, some clubby moments, and a few that are a mixture of both. It’s all about using the lighting to balance those

components and making sure the audience can see them.”

Although there wasn’t a cut and dry narrative that ran throughout the show, Cassius Creative made sure to add a handful of touchstones during the set. Squib said: “We start off with footage of a plane landing in Ibiza, then the second song is of the sunset. The content is a bit more fluid until the final song, which sees the sun coming up again. It’s not very rigid, more like little bookends for the show.

“There are no gags during the show as we knew we didn’t need any - we have the ultimate gag just by having a full orchestra on stage. Even so, we’ve been conscious to purposely turn the video off a few songs, just to allow the lasers to breathe and the audience’s eyes to rest a bit.”

The show designer went on to discuss the thought behind the commanding video presence that loomed large behind Tong and the scores of musicians below him. He explained: “It always had to be big, but we wanted something more architecturally interesting than just a massive slab of video. We ended up going with 4 horizontal screens that could move to give us some flexibility. We can hide and reveal lights with it and the surface area means we can make good use of the Notch looks.”

The automated components of the lighting rig consisted of 34 Robe BMFL Spots, 2 BMFL Followspots, 32 LED Beam 150’s, 31 Claypaky Mythos, and 72 GLP impression X4 Bar 20’s. Cassius Creative also specified a number of effect features including 32 SGM Q7’s, 18 TMB Solaris Flares, 5 Martin by Harman 32cm Sceptrons, and 6 100cm Sceptrons.

Lighting Crew Chief, Adam Morris, commented: “It’s quite a straightforward rig to be honest; we have 4 straight trusses over the stage, as well as a front truss and side hangs. We have to play nicely together with all of the other departments during the rig and de-rig because everything is moving and there’s video and lasers intertwined with the lighting. We’ve got a nice system going by now, which means that everyone can get on with it quickly and safely.”

He continued: “Without the rolling stage we’d be working up until doors

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Above: Becky Hill lends her vocals to one of the evening's subtler moments, *Sing It Back*.

every night but we fly the rig early and can run out the floor lights before it rolls. The side hangs and front truss are pre-rigged and all stage Claypaky Mythos and X4 Bars are outrigged, which saves time again. It's all clicking nicely now - when it gets to that point it's great.

"Interdepartmental cooperation is something that I very much enjoy. I don't like gigs where everyone doesn't see the big picture; but you have to on this because there's so much stuff in such a small space. We've all said we'd love to tour this for longer than we are as it's such a nice crew and a great-looking production."

He continued to describe some of the more complex aspects of this inter-departmental cooperation: "I've never seen this amount of integration with video and the Kinesys system before. The video guys are taking all of the positional information from the Kinesys software and feeding it into the disguise media servers in order to map the video content. This makes all of the on-screen content stay in the same position, relative to the movement of the trusses - kind of like projection mapping but with LED screens!"

This somewhat complicated the networking side of things for Morris and his crew, with their Kinesys data being sent to the video crew and an ArtNet feed coming the other way. "Our rig is being controlled by the MA Lighting grandMA2, using SACN, and then video is sending an ArtNet feed, which we merge with some of the universes to control the X4 Bars above the screens. They are pixel mapped to match the video content underneath, which gives a really tight beam to bridge any gaps between the screens as they move. Unfinished Sympathy, for example, has this water scene on the video content and the X4s make it look like its tricking down the trusses."

Another standout in the rig for Morris was Robe's RoboSpot system, which was used in conjunction with BMFL FollowSpot. He said: "As well as making things safer by negating the need for crewmembers in the air, it also means we don't lose people on the load-in; not to mention the fact that it gives the guys at FOH full control."

The lighting crew was completed by Lighting Operator, Jordon Cooper;

Automation, Andy Beller; Andrew 'Jurgen' Munford, Tom Bailey, and Tim Spilman.

VIDEO

The video content was displayed on a set of moving LED screens immediately upstage of the on-stage musicians. Veteran Video Director, Mark Davies, was shooting the show, with all video equipment and camera system provided by Video Design.

"This was no ordinary arena show," began Davies. "In simple terms, there was no room for a camera track in the pit as the subs needed to be placed in advance of the downstage edge to help isolate the musicians from low frequency energy. Despite this, a track-based system in that position was essential if I was to be able to convey all the visual dynamics of this high-energy show. Fortunately, Video Design has been working closely with Bradley, using their excellent robocams to produce just the solution I needed. The new Bradley tracking camera proved a great alternative. In fact, the experience was so good that if this situation occurs again I would use even more of them."

A standard 48mm diameter scaff pipe rigged to the front stage edge was all that the camera system needed. "It's that easy to rig," said Davies, "And that makes it really useful - it takes up almost no room. Luke Collins from Video Design operated the cameras remotely for me and he was excellent. That took care of the pit shots, but the other big difficulty with shooting an orchestra is that there are music stands everywhere, which blocks angles. To get clean shots you need to be up high, but a tower camera or a jib of some size on stage was just not a practical consideration. Again, tracking robocams rigged high up the sides of stage were a perfect alternative. Unobtrusive, they were barely visible on stage by comparison with the conventional alternative. You can also control the cameras using DMX so it's a simple thing to hook them into a BlackTrax system for sophisticated programming of motion and focus if you need to."

Cutting for such a wide screen format also provided its own



conundrums for Davies. “The screen surfaces were essentially in 2 parts; IMAG to either side of stage, to which I fed 100% of the show; and an upstage set of 4 tracking landscape LED screens that moved under Kinesys control. There were 4 songs where IMAG was used on the stage screens so, in effect; I needed to think about 2 distinct cuts simultaneously, which took a while to get my head around!”

He continued: “Otherwise the rear LED ran content, which I have to say was beautiful. Programmed by Jack Banks and Nathan under the direction of Dan and Squib from Cassius Creative, the result was really slick. Luckily for me, between the 2 different cuts, the framing stayed the same, which made things easier. A lot of what was used on the back screens needed to be more mid-shot to work, so it was not exactly straightforward. It all went very smoothly, particularly considering we had just 1 day of rehearsals. We went straight into 5 flawless shows in 4 venues, back-to-back. That’s a measure of how good the delivery is from Video Design and the great crews they put together.”

LASERS

Laser system design specialist, ER Productions, has a long history of working with Pete Tong and his management team on a variety of projects. Cassius Creative visited ER in 2016 to check the out company’s latest innovations and flesh out the creative direction for the show. “Having collaborated with Cassius on countless projects in the past, we instinctively knew the technologies that would whet their appetite and our latest fixture Kinekt didn’t disappoint,” said Ryan Hagan, Co-founder of ER Productions.

Impressed by its compact size, capable output and versatility, Cassius specified 28 Kinekt fixtures to create a central laser feature, which surrounded the scores of musicians on stage.

To create the look, the Kinekts were split into 2 groups, with 14 attached to trusses above the stage and 14 rigged across the downstage edge. A third zone of lasers was installed using 4 of ER’s newly launched Storm fixtures, which created larger and more detailed aerial effects. With such

a versatile rig at his disposal, ER’s Andrew Turner, who programmed the lasers, created a range of unique looks for each track in the set list.

“The Kinekts are great, we’re really happy with them,” commented Squib. “Andrew and Seth [Griffiths, Laser Operator for ER] both did a great job of programming and the lasers themselves are a big step up; we used to have just 4 standard heads but now we have them, plus 2 rows of Kinekts. It’s made the laser looks huge; Pete and his management both commented how incredible it looks.

“I’ve seen people try and use lasers alongside lights or video, but they are really at their best when you turn everything off. We light *Insomnia* in the classic green - which we wouldn’t usually do, but it’s meant to feel nostalgic. Kind of a nod to the pre-RGB lasers and that era rather than something cheesy.”

Griffiths looked after the laser show on the tour, which ran to timecode using Palgolin software. He explained: “The Kinekts are good for this as they are so small and compact, and the cabling allows them to be linked up together, rather than running individual lines to each laser. This means it’s quicker to rig them and their size means they are less likely to move around on the truss.”

While laser shows can occasionally be an cause of anxiety for performers on stage, the Ibiza Classics show had the added twist of someone on stage [Conductor, Jules Buckley] that was facing the units for the duration of the evening. Griffiths said: “I zone them up over the orchestra and terminate on downstage edge, just underneath shoulder height on Jules. I tweak them so they don’t go too high and, as long as the person is aware there will be a lot of lasers hitting them, it’s always fine. I’ve had chats with a few of the musicians that weren’t used to it, to make sure they don’t move and they are reassured at all times. It’s important that people feel safe on stage, so they can perform to the best of their ability.”

He continued: “The lasers are always the fun moment and you know you are always going to see a lot of them on Instagram. I like how balanced and well thought out the show is; video, lighting, and lasers all have their



Above: Production Manager, Keely Myers; Skan PA's Lee McMahon; Stage Manager, Dave Murphy; Cassius Creative's Chris 'Squib' Swain; ER's Seth Griffiths.

moments. Squib is great at keeping the room dark and pumping loads of smoke in for the laser moment. It's nice to work with someone that appreciates what we do."

A hefty smoke package comprised of 6 ER Viper deLuxes, while 4 Unique Hazers provided the all-important atmospheric effects. Hagan concluded: "This show is a trip down memory lane for many of those involved in the production. It has been loads of fun and we are very proud to be on board during 2018."

STAGING

Stage Manager, Dave Murphy, was tasked with making sure the complex load-ins and outs went like clockwork each day in spite of the variables thrown his way. "During the summer we had 47 people on stage, and to make sure we had a show, sometime back-to-back, with this level of production was quite bonkers at times. You have to ensure that people who aren't used to touring feel comfortable going on stage and performing in front of all these. The 47 has now risen to almost 70, with a brand new look, but we don't do this job for the easy gigs do we!"

Murphy was first on floor each day with Head Rigger, Amos Cotter, to arrange the trucks, set an unloading order, and coordinate the rigging process. "We then start bringing out the lights and divide up crew," he said. "On this we have a lot of automation, video, and lighting so there's quite a lot to manage. We had to work out a system for the 4 moving video screens as it requires a lot of people to be working in close proximity.

"We decided to stagger them so the lighting and video departments could leapfrog each other but there are so few shows that there's not much chance to develop a rhythm. We've had to find where the pinch points are in a short space of time but it's been really smooth so far."

Once Murphy has overseen the build, he then prepares to hand over to Orchestra Production Manager, Claire Wackrow. Murphy commented: "She brings the orchestra on in sections, all in space of 15 mins, so it's a case of making sure we stick to that. She has a minute-by-minute plan of the show, and then as soon as Jules and Pete are off stage it's back over to me.

"As well as the intricate audio gear on stage, there are instruments on

there that are sentimentally important to the musicians and sometimes worth as much as a house! It's a daunting task, so we have started letting the audio boys get on there and take care of it uninterrupted."

Head Carpenter, Joe Cottrell, gave a more detailed analysis of the 72ft wide x 40ft deep rolling stage: "As well as the sheer size of it, we have tiered orchestra platforms ranging from 8ft to 1.6ft. We come in the morning and build back to front all the way down, at the same time as rigging call. We are one of the first in and the last out of the arena, as usual!

"The on-stage stuff is where it gets more complicated because of the height we are working at. There's a real focus on safety. It was just a case of doing everything slower to get technique right, then refining the process each day.

"The 8ft tier requires platforms to work on, as it's right at the back of the stage, so there's a falling risk. We are lifting a 4ft x 8ft deck over the top of our heads so there's a risk of that slipping and going the wrong way. We just have to be conscious of where we are and who is around us.

"We have 10 local crew guys for the in and out and we have got a good rhythm going now. Nick Breen and myself are both experienced enough and it's been really good

Murphy concluded: "It's only been a short and sweet tour but it's been great to work with and learn from people from different backgrounds. Seeing how the orchestra managers - what we call the backline techs, even though they are so much more than that - go about things has been particularly interesting."

AUDIO

FOH Engineer Tom Gelissen's experience of the tour began on something of a sour note; if only for the fact that he was forced to miss the first day of rehearsals thanks to the combination of a cancelled plane and the near shutdown of transport across Europe. He said: "It was a long first day for me but we caught up thanks to some hard work from everyone involved. The audience are dancing every night and that's the important thing!" Gelissen, something of a specialist in electronic / orchestra crossovers, gave himself a further challenge when he decided to swap consoles at



Above: Head Carpenter, Joe Cottrell; Tom Tunney, Tom Gelissen and Ron Peeters; The Ibiza Classics lighting crew; Video Director, Mark Davies.

the last minute - subbing in an Avid S6L only 2 days before we met him at Manchester Arena. "I primarily did it for sound reasons," he said. "I've reprogrammed everything now so it's all working great. We have a full orchestra to look after, as well as Pete and the band, so it's a lot of channels to say the least.

"As well as sounding great, the S6L is very fast and easy to navigate, even with this amount of channels. You can lay everything out many different ways and you don't lose any sound quality if you go to the groups, with everything staying time-aligned."

The engineer's mantra for mixing the show was: "Balance, balance, balance." He added: "I create a pyramid in how I control everything; from channel level, to groups, to the full orchestra. It's all about the layers of detail. On one hand you have to make everything audible but you also have to create a certain impact. We still want to make people dance, which is a special thing about this show.

"Some people expect to sit down and watch the orchestra but our crowd want to move, and to help facilitate that you need kick drum and you need bass. With that in mind, you still can't get carried away chasing a loud groove because you want to hear all the details; both from the orchestra and the additional specifics that are key to each record. I programme more and more but I like to balance on hand because it means you are still creating music and push things on the spot, particularly if the crowd react to a certain theme."

The majority of these iconic hooks were either triggered by Tong or the live band, who were armed with a selection of Roland SP-DSXs, drum machines, synthesisers, and a hard-working Ableton rig.

With the new show design came a number of new songs, which pushed Gelissen to be more economic with his time. "It's so expensive to rehearse with an orchestra that you have to be very well prepared. Mixes are already done on monitors before they play the first note. Lighting, video and lasers are all running to timecode but we just have the musicians going to a click; which is enough of an achievement in itself."

Audio Crew Chief, Tom Tunney, gave a rundown of the system: "We have a full d&b audiotechnik SL-Series, with main and side hangs of 16 boxes, and an additional 4 GSL12's on the bottom of main hangs to get wider

coverage in the centre. We also have some Y10P front fills and 16 SL-GSUBS in the pit, underneath the stage in a sub arc.

"With the new boxes you get a wider usable dispersion than with the older ones because it's the same frequency response all the way around now, as apposed to being a bit more woolly round the sides. We use ArrayCalc and ArrayProcessing to sculpt the room more than we have before.

"The subs are brilliant as well; I love how smooth the top end is. This is nice and smooth throughout without ripping your head of. It might sound a little less sparkly, which some people might have to get used to, but it's definitely more accurate."

Gelissen interjected: "I like it for that reason! Most PAs sound really bright and that impresses you at first, but you start mixing and have to take things out or clean up the top end because there's too much happening. Now you have a nice smooth PA and if you want to boost one source like a vocal or specific instrument, you can do that."

He continued: "A great feature of this new system is that it's a cardioid box, so it cancels more sound on the back, which in turn benefits all of the stage inputs. We have 140 mics open on stage, so everything in the room is being picked up by them - including the crowd noise - so whatever we can cancel on stage is a plus."

Other new toys included in the crew's SL-Series package were humidity and temperature sensors attached to the flying frames. Tunney explained: "Directly above the first few rows it gets hot and sweaty but above that it's completely different. ArrayProcessing relies on temperature and humidity for its algorithms so this addition has made life a lot easier. There is also a laser from the top of array that shows exactly how high in the bowl it is firing."

As single racks were unlikely to cut it on a gig of this scale, everything was built up into carts that both simplified and sped up load-ins and outs. The patch cart itself was 4ft x 6ft x 2.5m and contained all stage racks for the consoles, all 144 channels of patch in the middle, and all of the sat looms on top, coiled up and ready to deploy on stage. The substantial RF inventory and additional amp racks were housed in a separate cart.

Skan PA's Lee McMahon, who looked after the carts, RF, monitor world



and served as stage fire-fighter during the show, gave an insight into this intricate set up. He began: "We build the stage right from the load-in; get every mic and stand out and work our way down from the top tier. There are about 50 DPA 4099's just in the first 3 rows - we leave that until last where the foot traffic is the least. There are so many inputs, mics and stands that it becomes a team effort to get it all ready, but once the stage rolls I can focus on looking after the RF, mic handling and spotting for Ron [Peeters, Monitor Engineer]; essentially trying to pre-empt any issues that might arise."

He continued: "I don't have a tech mix during the show so I just listen to Ron; we've got a really good working relationship now. As soon as we hear a squeak, pop or rustle, and providing I can get in there, we can respond accordingly. He'll mute the channel, inform FOH and I will try to isolate it."

"I have a box of spare DPA clips, 4099 preamps and XLR cables, but sometimes, if the problem is right in the centre, it's just physically impossible to get to it. Then it's a case of waiting until the load-out to try and resolve the problem."

He concluded: "You just have to say hats off to the team at Skan for designing a really efficient system that makes this gig easy. I've done similar shows where a standard line system configuration has been ratchet strapped together and it's a pain - you've still got multiple racks, multiple splits - it's just chaos. Obviously there's always room for refinement but a lot of that is based on muscle memory and, unfortunately, we're nearly finished already!"

MONITORS

Monitor Engineer Ron Peeters, who works for the Heritage Orchestra year-round, was already well tuned in to how the show was going to work. The keystone of his setup was the orchestra's use of the myMix system - a decentralised, network-based, audio mixing system for up to 500 audio channels that is based on having a dedicated user interfaces for each musician. The system, provided by Next Level Audio, allowed each orchestra member to fine tune their individual IEM mix from their own chair, and meant Peeters could channel his attention.

He said: "There are a lot of people on stage but the myMix system means I can focus on the band, Pete, Jules, and any soloists or guest vocalists. The orchestra are used to it now as we introduced it 2 years ago and use it on other projects besides Ibiza Classics. The great thing is that it enables us to deal with so many channels; not many systems are capable of handling this many."

Peeters opted for a DiGiCo SD7 at monitors with an additional SD11 to

pre-mix the strings and orchestra. "I feed a few stems and they can make their own mix, dial in their own instrument and click to each section on the interface," he said.

Peeters continued: "It's around 140 inputs and maybe 70 mix buses. We have the 2 desks in an Optocore loop so I can send mixes from the orchestra into the SD7 and also have direct outs from all the DPAs on the string section over fibre to the desk, and then merge them into the monitor system."

The band and guests were on Sennheiser SR 2050 IEMs, while a smattering of wedges were used for Tong and Buckley. For Tong in particular, an ingenious method was used to mimic the iconic (and neck-straining) headphone swapping that is synonymous with the DJs in Ibiza's prime.

Peeters said: "For Pete we have a radio pack that he can switch to engineer mode in order to pre-listen to a separate channel. It's a nice feature."

He continued: "The band's mixes aren't that specific; it's just a case of striking a nice balance. It's more the whole setup that is complex, but the component parts are relatively simple. I'm really familiar with the SD7 and it's fast, efficient and flexible; not to mention the fact that it sounds great."

The audio crew on site was completed by Onno Ooms, Alvin Russ, and Fred den Dulk, who managed the myMix system.

TPI

Photos: Anthony Mooney, Carsten Windhorst and Ryan Johnston

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