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DIGITAL
EDITION

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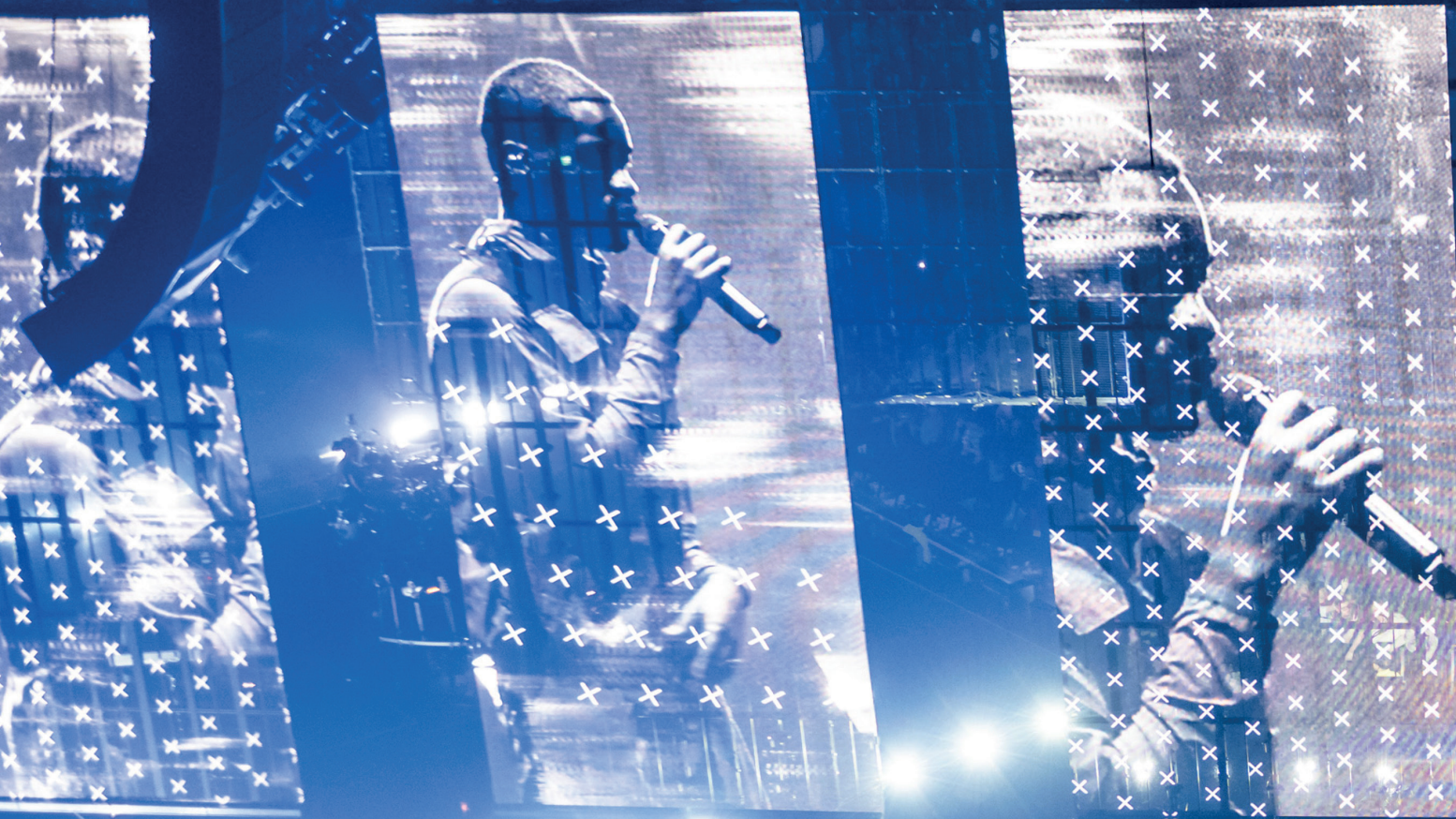
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All eyes on Dave

The Boy Who Played the Harp, live . . .

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The Boy Who Played



Dave's third studio album *The Boy Who Played the Harp* is record-breaking in that it positions him as the first British rap artist to debut three albums at number one in the UK's official chart. The supporting 42-date live tour began in Munich on 2 February 2026, before continuing through Europe, the UK, North America, Australia and Africa.

The show features a series of signature design moments: screens that begin concealed before tracking dramatically into the arena; lasers embedded in a piano and triggered live by Dave's playing; a striking geometric stage and truss design; and an organic set-piece featuring 144 kinetic LED 'drones'. Anchored by an exceptional four-piece live band, surprise guest artists, a fluid setlist, and a commanding performance from Dave himself, the production balances huge spectacle with moments of real intimacy and connection.

PRODUCTION DESIGN

With Paddy Hocken as production manager, the visionary creatives on the project are lighting and co-production designer Tim Routledge, co-production

designer Ray Winkler of Stufish, and creative director Matt Askem.

"My initial meeting was with Dave and Ray Winkler from Stufish," begins Askem. "Tim Routledge had already been brought on as lighting designer - he'd worked with Dave before and is well known in the British rap and grime scene."

Askem explains a touring as well as design remit was essential to his involvement. "Dave likes to do different shows all the time; he doesn't just want to deliver the same thing over and over," he says. "That was a big frustration for him on previous tours - getting locked in to a timecoded show he couldn't change. So that was a prerequisite: he needs to be able to change things on a daily basis."

Understanding the audience experience shaped the fundamental design approach. "I established that Dave wanted to give the top floors of the arenas a really good show," Askem explains. "He didn't just want it to feel like a cheap seat. So when I got into talking about that concept

the Harp

Ian Cullen learns how British rapper Dave's global tour fuses music and visuals through dynamic staging, pyrotechnics, and a laser-firing piano . . .

Performance photography by Andrew Timms



with Tim, he came up with the extended thrust and the screens idea, so Dave could get out into the room."

Routledge picks up the story: "Matt and I had been at Abbey Road Studios and listened to the album before it came out. It was all under lock and key - not even collaborators had heard it yet - so it was quite a cool thing."

That early access, combined with previous experience working with Dave, helped shape the direction. "Having done Dave tours before, I kind of knew how he operated," says Routledge. "He wanted something that would come out to the fans - something that embraced the audience in the room. We came up with the initial tracking screen concept with the thrust and diamond stage and worked with Stufish to create it."

"I wanted to add all different kinetic elements, so I pitched the moving, morphing 'drones' and the tracking screens to Matt," he continues. "We did a render overnight - a video of how it all transformed and moved - he and Dave loved it."

"And Stufish came up with the brilliant idea of the laser piano," he remarks.

This moment ties directly into one of Dave's core creative ambitions: 'playing' visuals himself in real-time. Drawing on the harp referenced in the tour and album title, Winkler's vision was to suggest laser beams as harp strings - then integrate them with the piano itself, creating a dynamic, show-stopping moment where music and visuals fuse seamlessly, live.

"Initially, it was conceived as a harp made of laser strings that could be manipulated, but through the iterative process, it morphed into something more specific to the piano," explains Winkler. "In that moment, you have something very beautiful and very intimate."

Winkler emphasises the meaningfulness of the show in all the creative decisions: "Dave takes his audience with him on the journey. It's music that demands your attention; the lyrics are profound and deeply meaningful, both to him and to the people in the room."



1 Crew, from top: Tim Routledge; Morgan Evans; Cameron Dominey; Chris Purcell

LAYERED TRACKING SCREENS

"I wanted layers of depth, and to be able to transform the stage literally at the touch of a button," describes Routledge. "Something that gave us new architecture throughout the show so it wasn't static."

While elements of the system had been used before, the way they were combined here was entirely new. "We'd used the tracking system before - it's just a tool in your toolkit - and we've used transparent screens many times, but never in multiple layers," he explains. "I just thought it'd be really cool to layer them, move them around the arena, put Dave in a box or a corridor. It lent itself to all these different architectures."

One of the most effective aspects of the design was how it revealed itself. "You didn't know they existed at the start," he explains. "It just looked like a regular screen at the back, and then by song three or four they start moving down the room - slowly and purposefully. It felt really dramatic."

This approach also addressed that key concern: visibility for the entire audience. "End-on shows can be difficult for upper tiers," says Routledge. "So bringing content and IMAG screens out into the room meant there was always something for everyone to see. Any of the eight travelling screens could be used for IMAG or content at any point."

Routledge emphasises the considered nature of the solution. "Neg Earth had a system of rotators and tracking trusses, so we designed it knowing exactly how it would work," he notes. "We weren't just designing something and hoping it could be built."

The LED system, supplied by Universal Pixels, comprises 330sq.m of ROE Vanish V8T panels - offering 50% transparency - and is powered by four Brompton Tessera SX40 processors.

Automation is programmed and operated by Jody Diaz using a Kinesys Vector console, alongside

a Tait Nav:Compass for a single Kabuki cue. Head of automation Ben Hammett outlines the screen track setup: "Each screen was hung from a Neg Earth custom assembly incorporating a Litec 900kg rotator, paired with a Kinesys Elevation1+. This was suspended from a Litec trolley via a pair of 1-tonne Liftket chain hoists."

The two Litec DST video tracks were originally 42m in length, later reduced to 36m after the European leg for artistic reasons, and are supported by 15 (then 13) 2-tonne EXE hoists at 3m intervals.

"There's Triple E tab track outriggered on both sides of each truss for cable management," Hammett adds. "Feeding each panel from upstage left/right and downstage left/right quadrants means the creative team have completely independent movement of every screen, giving maximum artistic flexibility."

CONTENT, CAMERAS AND MEDIA SERVERS

Within the physical design, Askem and the team had to carefully consider how and where the moving screens would perform best - both as layered surfaces and in motion. "It was about understanding how the content would read across multiple orientations," he says.

To realise this, Luke Halls Studio was brought in to create the content. "They're brilliant - a long-time collaborator of mine," says Askem.

"Whenever we have IMAG screens, they take care of themselves. But when you've got layers of screens, you have to decide how they're going to relate to each other," he expands. "Do you want all the surfaces facing one side of the room to join into one big image? Or do you treat them independently?"

Transparency became a key creative tool, particularly for moments requiring depth. "It works really well on tracks like *Screwface Capital*, where you've got the running figure - it gives a real sense of dimension through the layers."

"I wanted layers of depth, and to be able to transform the stage literally at the touch of a button . . ."

- Tim Routledge



Ensuring comprehensive coverage for IMAG, the camera package comprises six Panasonic UC4000 systems with Fujinon lenses, supported by five Blackmagic Micro Studio cameras and two Junior 5 Track and Dolly systems.

On the media server side, programmer and operator Richard Turner runs Disguise GX 3 servers in a main-and-backup configuration, both operating in solo mode. "We have a single UHD output mapped across all screens," he explains. "The multi-screen layout required quite a number of IMAG mappings, all handled within Disguise."

Content delivery follows a streamlined workflow. "Everything is built to a master pixel map, so in most cases it's a single content layer per track," Turner continues. This approach simplified playback while maintaining flexibility across the evolving screen configurations.

Turner also handles real-time balancing of screen brightness and IMAG looks throughout the show. Among the visual highlights, he points to *Raindance* as a standout moment - "a great example of multilayered visuals working together".

THE PIANO LASER HARP

Ray Winkler's dynamic laser harp concept represents one of the tour's signature looks and one of its greatest technical achievements.

"The tour is called *The Boy Who Played the Harp*, and when we had our very first conversation back in the summer, I instinctively felt there was a connection to be made between the harp as a symbol, something powerful that could

be woven into the show's narrative," describes Winkler.

12 lasers mounted within the piano - each corresponding to a specific musical note - are controlled in real-time by Dave's playing. As he performs, the lasers fire from the instrument across the arena to meet 12 overhead beams firing from a FOH truss. The beams intersect and terminate to create the illusion of singular, continuous 'strings' across the arena that respond dynamically to every note, fusing music and light in real-time.

"Dave rises above the stage as lasers shoot out in a fan-like pattern over the audience," he continues. "It ties everything together in a way that feels completely organic, and it's the moment that really defines the show as unmistakably his."

Cameron Dominey, laser programmer and operator of ER Productions explains the setup: "It's a custom fabricated mount built inside the piano created by Faber Entertainment Engineering, the fabrication department at ER. The laser heads inside are Beam-ER units. The lasers at front-of-house are battery powered and run over wireless DMX to keep the rig clean and cableless."

Getting the look perfect across all venues required careful planning. "We sat down early with rigging and worked out the minimum and maximum angles - taking into account lift height, piano position and trim heights," he says.

Control for all the lasers is handled separately from the main show systems using Pangolin Beyond software. "The high-power on-stage lasers are

timecoded, but the piano lasers are driven in real-time via MIDI over Art-Net."

"The crowd reaction is huge. You've got these massive moments, like when guests come out, and then really stripped-back, intimate sections like the piano," reflects Dominey. "It feels like a journey. High energy, then intimate, then back again. It's quite special to be part of."

Another signature moment occurs during *Victory Lap*, as Dave is elevated on a lift where he freestyles and live-triggers samples from four Akai MPCs mounted in a custom, Tait-built 'plinth' that also controls the lighting rig in real-time.

Explaining the lift concept, used both here and for the laser piano moment, Winkler says: "There are moments when Dave wants to be deeply embedded in his band, as he's a musician at heart and values the sense of being surrounded by his players, who feed off one another. But when the time comes to separate him from the band, you have two options: he walks away to the B-stage, or he rises above them. In this case the lift made real creative sense, it's more impactful."

MIDI AND PLAYBACK

Alongside his audio responsibilities, playback engineer Chris Purcell also manages MIDI control distribution across all departments. "Yes there's a lot of MIDI flying around!" he says.

Inside the on-stage piano shell is a digital piano acting as a MIDI controller. That controller feeds multiple systems. "We're running a Kontakt piano instrument for audio, but also forwarding MIDI for the real-time lasers."



RTP MIDI over Cat5 via iConnectivity interfaces allows for the extended distances with ultra-low latency. "We're running under six milliseconds - so it feels instant," he says.

"For the freestyle section we load in different samples to the MPC each day, often with samples specific to the city. And we take MIDI from the drum pads and send it to lighting - so everything reacts live."

Purcell is also supporting specific vocal processing for Dave and his guests. "We're controlling UAD processing and plug-in parameters over the network - sending that to FOH so we can adapt to different guest vocalists."

"Dave doesn't want the same show every night," he confirms. "Especially doing multiple nights in one venue. So arrangements change, setlists change, guests come in. We adapt constantly."

To manage the show's changeability, Purcell built his own software control system. "I wrote a custom interface - an app called Conductor for Ableton Live - so I can jump to any point in the show instantly."

He has his favourite moment. "*Clash*," he says. "That's when the screens first move - it's a real production moment. And it's just a great song. It's a great show to be part of."

LIGHTING

Tim Routledge's lighting design is fully realised through his collaboration with programmer and associate designer Morgan Evans - a partnership that underpins many of the production's most striking visual moments.

One of the standout features appears on the B-stage, where kinetic LED 'drones' form a 3D structure above the performance. "We'd used them before on *Holiday on Ice*," says Routledge. "Normally you see them as white, frosted domes, so they're always visible. But these go completely black, so when they're off, they disappear - you only see the LEDs when they're on."

The execution, however, was down to programming. "Morgan did something really special with those. He'd never programmed them before, but created shapes like the angel wings at the end and had them interact with Dave. It's become this really organic, beautiful moment - especially in *The Boy Who Played the Harp*."

The system itself is based on an off-the-shelf winch-and-ball solution, comprising 144 DMX-controlled FOS winches fitted with LED 'drones'. For most of the show, the whole rig remains hidden in the roof to preserve sightlines, before being discreetly lowered in for a key sequence where the winches then extend to their full 9m travel.

"The whole system comes in on Kinesys," Evans describes. "The entire trim comes down, and then you've got individual control over each ball. It's not something you typically run into, so it was interesting and fun to create different shapes."

That level of control comes with its own hazards. "You have to be careful not to - let's say - bump into Dave," he smiles.

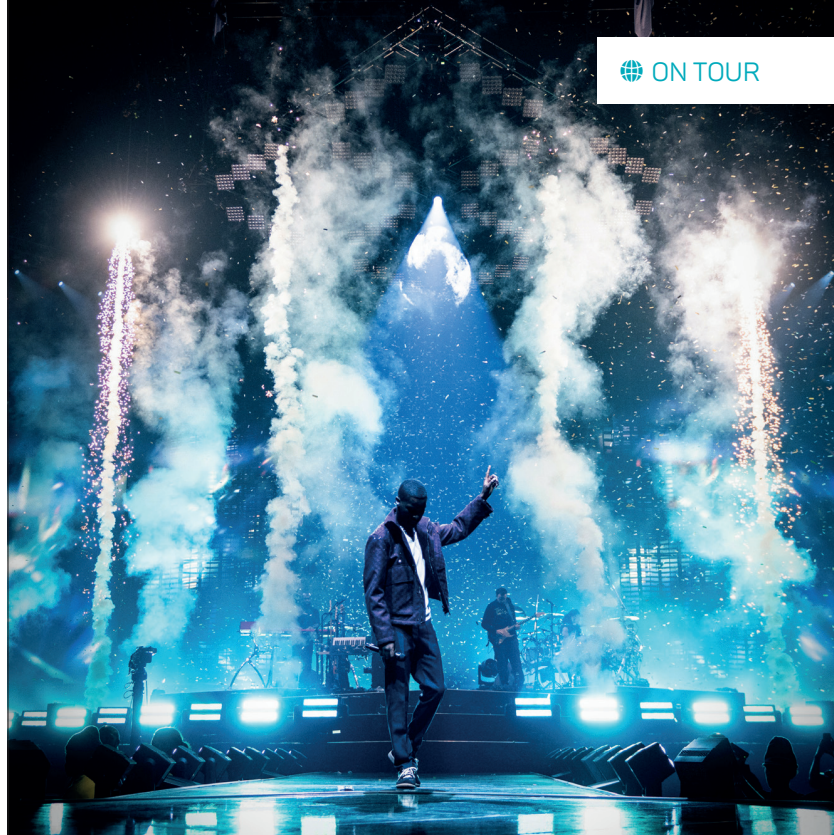
Elsewhere, the lighting design is equally considered. "The diamond stage (built by Tait) is like an island," says Routledge. "Lit on all four sides so it feels like it's floating - not quite in-the-round, but we are selling it as about 270°."

Above it, a diamond truss on Kinesys mirrors the geometry below. Inside that overhead pod sit 48 Ayrton MagicPanel Rs and 7 Ayrton Perseos. "The MagicPanels aren't new, but they're perfect for that diamond shape. It's about consistency - keeping that geometric language throughout," says Routledge.

A back wall of light is formed by 26 Ayrton Perseos. "It splits up the video screen but also fills in the space," says Evans. On the floor, 32 Ayrton Boras provide what Evans describes as "heavy backlight through the band and stage," while front light is handled by Robe Fortes. 38 Acme Pulsar S2s line the runway, and 48 Robe WTF strobes are positioned along the island stage edges. "The WTFs can pan, tilt, and zoom, so you can treat them like regular strobes or tighten them right in," Evans explains. "They can even do continuous pan and tilt, which looks really cool."

Rather than relying on large truss structures, the design leans into detail and integration. "We actually reduced the amount of traditional trussing," says Routledge. "Morgan came up with this great idea of putting Acme Pixel Lines along the bottom of all the screens. When they line up, it becomes one continuous line of light, and when they move, it creates accents that work with the video content."

A key part of the visual success is how clean everything feels. "Paddy [Hocken] has done a great job keeping backstage really



clean," notes Evans. "Everything's integrated, nothing's kicking about. That was the whole idea - that the island feels free. SFX and automation platforms are pushed way back, so the stage looks isolated."

To bring everything together, the team relied heavily on previsualisation. "Everything was previs'd in our studio using Depence," says Routledge. "Morgan programmed the whole show on an MA3 console before we got to site." The show is built on a recipe-based approach, allowing it to scale across different venues and configurations - no small feat for a project running approximately 53,000 timecode events.

Rehearsal time comprised eight days at Production Park, followed by a full dress rehearsal in Munich. "The show was actually too big to fully fit in Production Park," Evans explains, "so we needed that final time in a real arena to tidy up all the kinetics."

For Routledge, one piece of promoter feedback stood out: "The promoter said there wasn't a single seat kill in the arena - which is kind of the perfect outcome from a design point of view."

Looking back, the pride is evident. "We're super proud of it," he says. "And for me, seeing Morgan step up into the associate role and take ownership of the programming - that was a really nice moment. We had a solid idea from the start, everyone was on board, and it just fell into place."

PYRO/SFX

Contributing to the visual design is significant pyro and SFX, also supplied by ER Productions. "We've got 24 MagicFX

Flameblazers on large nozzles, all the way around the diamond stage," explains operator Eleanor Waller. "Then 10 pyro positions with Comets, Mines and Jets. Six confetti Stadiumshot III units. And six low smoke machines - four on the risers and two on the B-stage."

It's a substantial setup, but used with restraint. "The flames are only used in two songs," she says. "Matt [Askem] didn't want to over-use effects. We built it over time and found where the moments really land."

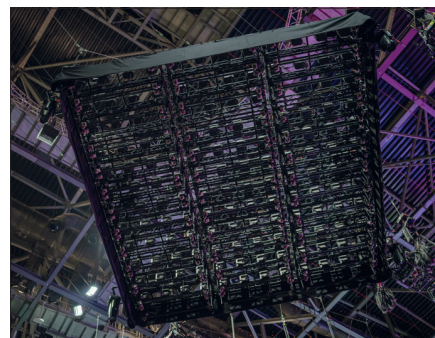
The scale also introduces practical considerations. "24 flames is a lot - so safety becomes a big factor. There's a lot of heat, a lot of other departments involved," she explains. "We've got e-stops on both sides of the stage, and everyone knows they can hit them - not just me. That's really important."

Communication is equally key, especially given the fluid nature of the show. "I've got a mic, so I'm calling cues. The band hear it, and Dave hears it as well - he's used to that. You'll see him take a step back before certain moments."

"For me, the highlight is getting those flame moments right and seeing the crowd react. It's so visceral - you feel the heat. I'm proud to be part of it."

FOH SOUND

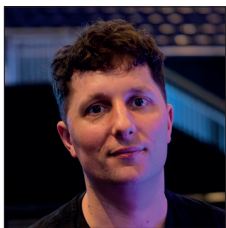
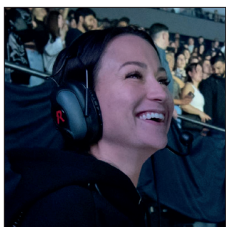
"I've worked with Dave since 2017, starting with the *Game Over* tour," recalls FOH engineer Charles Bidwell of HZ Audio. "Our London headline then was Koko, the following 2019 *Psychodrama* tour sold out two nights at Brixton Academy, then the 2022 *We're All Alone In This Together* tour was here for two nights, and now we've got four nights at



↑ Top left: Kinetic LED 'drones' form a moving structure above the performance

Top right: A substantial SFX setup requires clear comms with both Dave and his band

Above: The drone rig, concealed in the roof; Line array hangs comprise d&b's SL-Series



↑ Crew, from top: Eleanor Waller; Charles Bidwell; Megan Collier; Harry Dilloway; Paddy Hocken

the O2. It's an incredible progression - the audience seems to double in size every time we come back."

That growth has been matched by Dave's evolution as an artist. "His journey as a musician has evolved throughout. He started predominantly rapping, now he's shredding guitar and playing a piano that shoots lasers! It's great to support his growth as a performer from this end of the multicore."

The technical foundation for the tour is an Allen & Heath dLive infrastructure. "We have an S7000 and DM32 at FOH, with a fibreACE to monitors. We're using DX digital stage boxes around the stage for drums, guitars, and keys. Monitor engineer Megan Collier patches those inputs on stage and fires the tielines up to me."

Bidwell uses a mix of outboard gear and dLive emulations to achieve what he describes as a polished 'for the AirPods listener' sound. "I've got an Avalon 737 on Dave's vocal, and an SSL Bus+ and Fusion on the mastering chain. Inside the desk, I'm using 1176 and LA2 styled compressors and the new 'CompStortion' - which is like a Distressor - to saturate those transients and keep everything controlled."

Vocal intelligibility is a clear priority. "Dave is a lyrical artist; fans come to hear every word. I use a Source Expander to reduce crowd spill - especially when he's on the B-stage - and the Dyn8 to shape the vocal. Then it goes through the 1176 and the Avalon for analogue warmth. It really helps the vocal sit above the instrumentation."

Bidwell speaks of 'marginal gains' throughout every stage of the signal chain, including the drum bus. "The kick is a blend of the acoustic mics and a sub-synth 'woofer' triggered from playback to add weight. The snares are layered with track samples in real-time. I delay drum mics according to the overheads and then time-align the kit with the playback to account for MIDI latency. Every stage of the way, we're cleaning it up a little bit more."

For a grime artist, the low-end is paramount. "We definitely have more sub than is needed, but for the genre, the transients have to be super tight and

controlled. It's rarely a straight hi-hat pattern; there are lots of trappy, percussive elements. In an arena, you need a very tight box to enunciate those transients."

SOUND SYSTEM

The sound system, supplied by Skan PA, is built entirely around d&b's SL Series. The full arena configuration - seen at The O2 - features 16 GSL8 per side for the main hangs, 16 KSL8 per side for the side hangs, and 12 XSL12 per side for the 270° rear hangs, with additional delays of 12 KSL8 per side. Low-end support comes from 20 SL-Subs, arranged in 10 ground-stacked pairs beneath the stage, while 16 Y10Ps are deployed as fills. GSL arrays and subs are powered by d&b D90 amplifiers, with KSL, XSL and Y10Ps driven by D40s.

A key challenge came from the moving video system, as system engineer Finlay Watt describes: "When the screens track out, they sit between the GSL mains and the audience, which can obscure the listening experience - both for the crowd and for Charles at front-of-house. That's the main reason we introduced delays at the end of the automation tracks - only about 16.5m from the main hangs - so there isn't a sudden shift in the sound when the screens move." Those delays remain active throughout the show, not just during transitions, maintaining a consistent sonic image.

System configuration has adapted on a venue-by-venue basis. "I'm very flexible with box counts and always use what's required," says Watt. "In Dublin, for example, we didn't need a 270 hang or delays. In other European arenas, we also scaled things back - maybe a 15-box main hang or an 11-box 270. It's always about responding to the space."

A DirectOut Maven.A handles sub and fill summing, distribution, and some processing. "The Maven feeds the amps via Dante into d&b DS10s in the amp racks, then AES from the DS10s to the amplifiers." The network runs on Netgear AV Line switches over a redundant fibre backbone. "I've also implemented an automatic analogue fallback at the amplifier end, bypassing the drive system entirely. Because all EQ and delay is handled in the amps

using d&b's R1 software, there's no loss of processing if we ever switch over."

With Dave and guest performers often positioned in front of the PA, system design required careful attention. "That meant using additional filtering on certain boxes in the main hangs," Watt notes. "And with the stage set at a 45° angle, I had to be precise about where the bottom boxes were aimed - using the mains to cover from the downstage corner, and the side hangs to address the angled front rows, keeping as much energy off the stage as possible."

"The d&b SL performance is second to none," he adds. "And the cardioid design makes a huge difference, especially in difficult rooms."

Low-frequency performance is a defining element of the show. "It's a very sub-heavy production, but it's not just rumble - there's a lot of fast, detailed low-end content as well as very deep, clean energy. The SL-Sub is ideal for that. It goes incredibly low, stays fast - especially for a triple 21" - and being cardioid makes it extremely versatile. Plus, there's so much headroom you're never worrying about running out of low end or hitting limiters."

System tuning is carried out using Smaart Suite v9. "I use Lectrosonics digital RF for measurements and run everything from a tablet," he adds. "That way I can listen as I tune and get the imaging right by ear. It's a fast workflow, which is essential given the scale of the production."

MONITORS

"This is my first time working with Dave," says monitor engineer Megan Collier.

"Though Charles and I work together on many shows," Collier runs a dLive S5000 with a DM64, keeping the signal path digital as early as possible, utilising the Allen & Heath DX protocol over Cat5 with a DX32 sending and receiving AES for Shure ADPSM and microphones.

"Dave likes a very record-like mix," she explains. "He doesn't want his voice too processed in his ears - just a nice compressor to balance and a bit of reverb." The band follows a similar philosophy: "We spent a lot of time in rehearsals with the musicians making sure the sounds were right at the source."

One of Collier's most active roles during the show is managing Dave's connection with the crowd. "He really likes hearing the audience, so I've got a DCA for the

"Dave likes a very record-like mix, he doesn't want his voice too processed in his ears - just a nice compressor to balance and a bit of reverb . . ."

- Megan Collier



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room mics that I constantly ride. I know the moments where they sing along the most, so I push them up to help him feel that connection - while still protecting his hearing."

Microphone switching is also her responsibility: "We switch between his main wireless, a spare, and a wired mic for certain sections - when he's at the piano, wired is better for consistent positioning. I handle the input switching so Charles at FOH always gets a consistent signal."

For Collier, the appeal of monitor engineering lies in the direct relationship with the performers. "I enjoy the communication. You get to have a proper conversation about what they want and really help them deliver the best show. I really like that interaction." And even from her position sub-stage: "It's a spectacular show - even from down here, seeing the screens move and the crowd react, you know it's something special."

RF

"I worked with Dave on his 2022 tour," says RF engineer Harry Dilloway. "And I've worked with Chaz [Charles Bidwell] and Meg on and off for a few years now, so we all know each other well."

The production runs 10 channels of Shure Axient Digital Wireless via an AD4Q receiver, with Dave's vocal mic featuring a Nexadyne 8 supercardioid capsule.

The mic features a push-to-talk button, which Dave took time to feel comfortable with but is now a vital element during his performances. "The talkback feature has become a useful tool. He's able to talk to us - particularly the playback guys - to cue the next track, or just say 'pause' if he wants to take a moment to interact with someone in the crowd."

Shure Axient Digital is also in action on the monitoring, a total of 12 channels via three ADTQ transmitters. "They run into the new AD8C combiner and then up to two RF Venue CP Beam helical antennas on the rear stepper truss," says Dilloway. "We're running all the IEMs in wideband spatial diversity - WMAS technology."

Dilloway describes the all-digital system as a game-changer. "The idea is that you only have to find one frequency for all four channels per unit. I'm only finding three frequencies around the world for the entire IEM system, which is absolutely brilliant. In a crowded spectrum, that's a massive boon. If I have an issue, I only need to find one more frequency instead of nine."

Beyond frequency management, the data feedback has proven particularly useful. "We're using the AD610 ShowLink access

point. For the first time, we can see live information back from the packs. For example, I can see (keyboard player) David Davis' RF level, his volume setting, whether his headphones are plugged in, and his battery level. We're no longer just giving packs to artists and hoping for the best."

This live feedback is especially important given the team's below-stage physical location. "Because we're in this 'underworld' bit, we lose that human connection. The traditional stage-left position where people look over to you when they have an issue is gone. Being able to see this live feedback has transformed my workflow."

In terms of antenna placement, the movement of the screens required planning. "The Shure RF is so reliable that the B-stage doesn't give us issues, but the moving screens took some thought. The stage is very dynamic - everything moves. We had to find antenna placements where they wouldn't be affected by those changes. It took a few run-throughs in rehearsals to nail it down, but we managed a discreet solution that works perfectly."

CONCLUSION

Offering his own reflection on the tour, Paddy Hocken says: "I was personally very pleased to be working with the TRD [Tim Routledge Design] team again - their workflow is unrivalled and allows them to react to things in a very timely manner. It was also great working with Matt Askem again, this time with his creative director hat on rather than as a concert film director."

On a tour that has delivered on every ambition - a scalable show with the flexibility to change the setlist each night, all within agreed budgetary parameters - he expresses equal pride in the whole team and the end result: "I'm very proud of the almost entirely new team I put together, how clean the finished product is, how good the show's sightlines are despite its controversial footprint, and that Dave has enjoyed the production so much."

And, as Ray Winkler concludes: "The ultimate test of anything you create is always the reaction of the audience, and how the artist manages to draw that reaction from them through stage presence, stagecraft and musicianship."

"For me, there's always a joy in standing amongst the audience and looking around, seeing how many people are completely engrossed, how many know every word, how many are singing and dancing along. That's the moment you realise it doesn't matter what your own opinion of the work is. You've delivered something meaningful, and both the artist and his audience feel that. That's everything." ✖