



MANCUNIAN MARVEL

ALBERT HALL

WITH THE LIKES OF THE HACIENDA, SANKEYS SOAP, THE WAREHOUSE PROJECT AND EVERYTHING INBETWEEN, MANCHESTER IS SYNONYMOUS WITH MAGNETISING MUSIC VENUES. BAR CHAIN TROF, IS CONTINUING TO BOOST THE CITY'S LEGACY FOR INFLUENTIAL MUSIC SPOTS AND ITS MOST RECENT OFFERING RAISES THE BAR, AS HELEN FLETCHER DISCOVERED.



MANCHESTER, UK
EUROPE/MIDDLE EAST/AFRICA

Fight your way through Manchester's throng of tiki lounges, countless cocktail bars and never ending nightclubs and you might just stumble across the newest and most exciting entertainment venue to hit the north west - just sitting there unassuming among the chaos.

Albert Hall Manchester is a Grade II listed Wesleyan Methodist chapel designed by W.J Morley in 1910 for the Wesleyan Mission. While the ground floor of the building was home to Brannigans bar and nightclub up until 2011, the first floor chapel - thought to be haunted - has been hidden from view since 1969.

It has since been resurrected by Joel Wilkinson and his company Trof - a Manchester-based venue operator that has steadily earned a reputation for discovering spaces and turning them into buzzing entertainment spots such as Trof Northern Quarter, Gorilla and The Deaf Institute, which all have strong, yet individual identities.

Albert Hall, with its eclectic design featuring baroque and gothic elements, is the latest venue to join the Trof family and its magnificent arching stained glass windows, ornate ceiling, choir

vestry, and a century old organ provide the perfect backdrop for live events. The 2,000-capacity chapel was first reopened as a pop-up venue in the summer of 2013, as part of the Manchester International Festival (MIF) which featured a string of one-off, specially commissioned performances including: Mogwai, Goldfrapp with the RNCM string orchestra (Royal Northern College of Music), and Maxine Peake starring in a theatrical adaptation of 'The Masque of Anarchy'. Since then, Albert Hall has hosted numerous sell-out live events including: FAC51 Hacienda New Year's Eve party; Slint, Half Moon Run, Wild Beasts, Bonobo, Moderat and Anna Calvi, to name but a few and momentum at the venue is growing, as is the hype.

In order for Albert Hall to become Manchester's ultimate entertainment venue, a first class audio and lighting system was essential; however working with a Grade II listed building is no easy feat and brings with it numerous complications and considerations, and so it was essential the right team was in place. Having worked on earlier Trof projects, dbn Lighting's Stephen Page was the



VIDEO CONTENT

natural choice for the lighting design at Albert Hall, but this would come at a later stage. Before anything else, noise tests at the venue had to be carried out, and for this Tube UK, which is also based in Manchester and had an existing relationship with dbn Lighting, was called upon.

As the company's Melvyn Coote explained however, projects such as Albert Hall are rarely straightforward: "The venue was a mess, there was no lighting at all and we had to carry out sound tests in the pitch black. We brought a PA in, just a small test system and set it up so Joel could sit in various spots of the venue and see what sound was coming out of the building. As soon as we turned the system on plaster started falling off the ceiling... It was an absolute mess, it really was.

"Albert Hall is geared at being a multifunctional venue and the audio system needed to reflect this," continued Melvyn. "Anything from the spoken word, to drama through to hardcore trance, as well as everything in between takes place here and the audio system needed to be able to cope, without any issues and without needing to be significantly changed in any way - this is why we chose d&b audiotechnik. We use it in our hire stock and for me it is one of the only systems that can cope with both theatre and dance events without any issues."

As Melvyn and his team were already familiar with d&b audiotechnik products, when it came to setting up the system - as far as acoustics go, Tube UK hit it straight away. "We're used to working in unusual spaces and venues such as Albert Hall and d&b audiotechnik is a product we will always put forward first as it just works," he said. "We've tailored the system a little towards minimising reflections and so on, and while sound checking in here

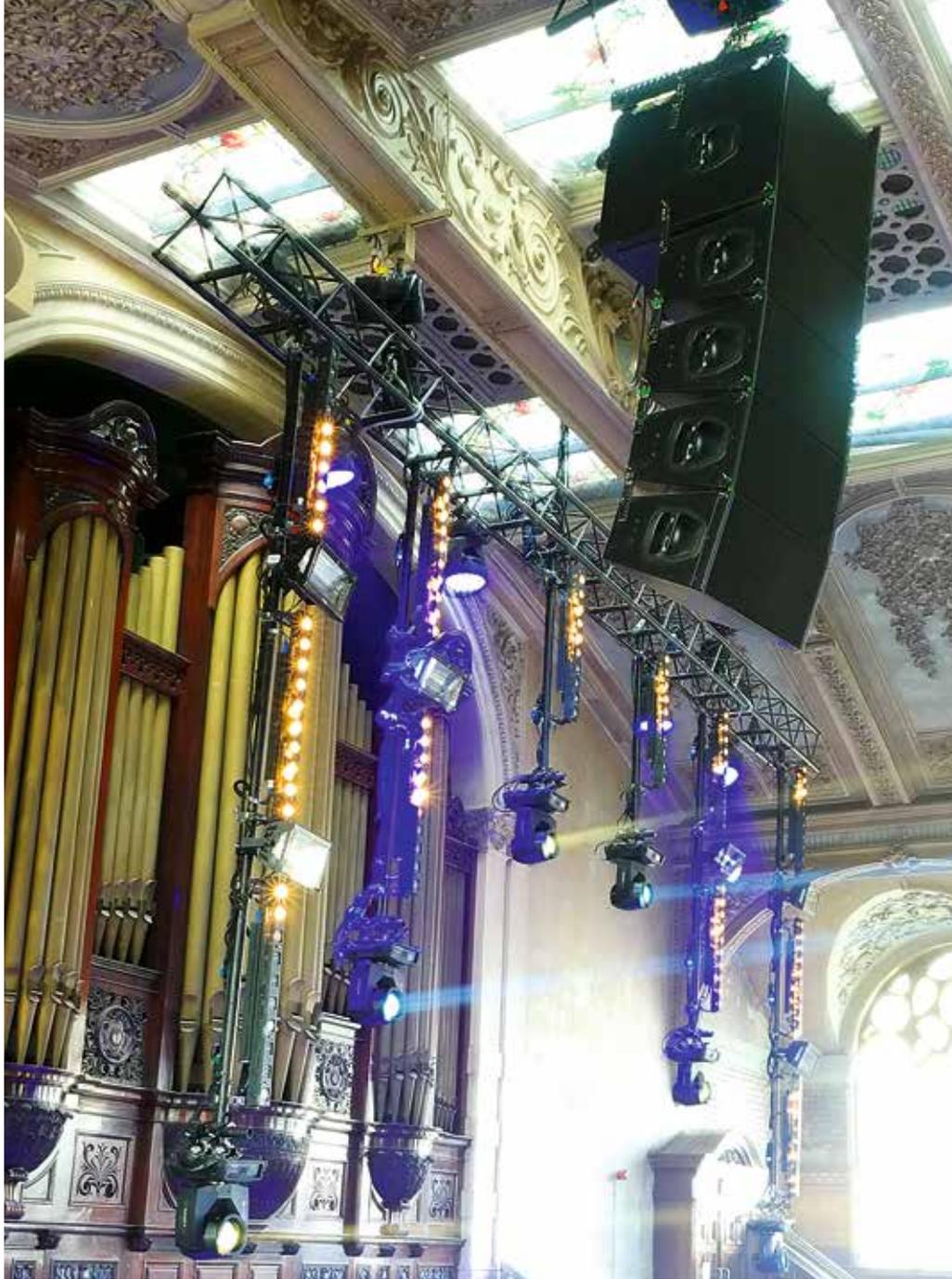
can be a nightmare, once you get the audience in, the room warms up and the acoustics change, it just works... You would think the room would retain some of the bounce but it doesn't. This is partly because the PA is properly focused so it's hitting the audience area rather than going up into the space."

With acoustics taken care of, the next challenge was hanging space. Normally in a venue of this size you would expect to see much larger line array drops from the roof for the main PA system, but because of the building limitations this just wasn't possible, another reason for choosing d&b audiotechnik as Melvyn explained: "d&b's boxes are small, lightweight, really efficient and loud. Other systems can achieve the same level of performance from a size point of view but not from a weight point of view."

The main arrays, hung left and right of the stage, are each made up of four d&b audiotechnik Q1 loudspeakers and one d&b audiotechnik Q-Sub bass reflex subwoofer. There are 10 d&b audiotechnik V8 loudspeakers groundstacked along with four d&b audiotechnik V-Sub cardioid subwoofer split left and right of the stage. Additionally, there are two d&b audiotechnik Q7 loudspeakers on stage, along with four d&b audiotechnik B2-Sub subwoofers, and eight d&b audiotechnik M4 wedge monitors, all of which is powered by 12 d&b audiotechnik D12 amplifiers.

For mixing there are two Yamaha CL5 mixing desks available and according to Melvyn, so far the response from sound engineers has been positive with only the odd person requesting Profile consoles from Avid. "So far all of the touring engineers have loved the in-house system we have installed at Albert Hall," he said. "So we've not had to add to it in any way, just the odd desk on request."

For microphones, Albert Hall has a selection of wired microphones



from Audio Technica, Shure and Sennheiser, while wireless microphones from Sennheiser can be provided. "For me, what's so special about Albert Hall is that it's not just another 'black box,'" continued Melvyn. "It's the most exciting venue space in Manchester to be involved in right now and every show so far has been sold out. The vibe you get back from people is incredible, it has such character and history." When it came to designing the lighting rig, weight loading restrictions in the roof also saw the dbn Lighting team having to think outside the box. Stephen commented: "Having the chance to work in such a fabulous space was incredible enough. Trof always put production values at the top of the agenda and my challenge was to come up with a design that complemented the amazing architecture and is harmonious with the environment as well as working well for the wide variety of events that the hall hosts." dbn Lighting specified and installed a series of Slick OV40 spreader trusses with a particular strength to weight ratio to create a more flexible rigging arrangement and maximise usable capacity and Lift Turn Move's (LTM) LoadGuard hoists are used throughout. These Category A motors are certified to operate without ▶

TECHNICAL INFORMATION

SOUND: 2 x d&b audiotechnik Q-Sub subwoofer; 8 x d&b audiotechnik Q1 loudspeaker; 10 x d&b audiotechnik V8 loudspeaker; 4 x d&b audiotechnik V-Sub subwoofer, 4 x d&b audiotechnik B2-Sub subwoofer; 2 x d&b audiotechnik Q7 loudspeaker; 8 x d&b audiotechnik M4 wedge monitor; 12 x d&b audiotechnik D12 amplifier; 2 x Yamaha CL5 mixing console, 2 x Yamaha RIO 3224 I/O digital stagebox; 1 x Shure Beta52A microphone; 1 x Shure Beta91A microphone; 4 x Sennheiser e904 microphone; 6 x Audio Technica AT4041 microphone; 2 x Audio Technica AT4040 microphone; 12 x BSS AR133 DI box; 4 x Shure SM58 microphone; 4 x Shure Beta58A microphone; 6 x Shure SM57 microphone; 6 x Shure Beta57A microphone; 2 x Sennheiser e906 microphone

LIGHTING: 6 x Clay Paky Sharpy profile; 4 x Clay Paky Alpha Spot 575 moving head; 8 x Robe Robin 600 LEDWash moving head; 8 x Chauvet Professional COLORdash white LED fixture; 8 x Martin Professional Atomic 300 DMX strobe; 12 x Showtec Sunstrip Active DMX batten; 6 x High End Systems Trackspot lighting fixture; 1 x Martin Professional Jem ZR12 smoke machine; 1 x Avolites Tiger Touch lighting desk; 6 x James Thomas Drop Bar; 2 x Lift Turn Move LoadGuard hoist; 9-metres Slick OV40 truss

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needing additional safeties, which is essential as roof access at Albert Hall is difficult given the height and construction of the venue. The motors are top hung and LTM has down-rated the clutches to further protect against overloading of the roof structure.

There are two lighting trusses above the stage, a 12-metre one at the front and a nine metre one further back upstage, leaving the organ pipes as the backdrop. The back truss is rigged with six Clay Paky Sharpy moving heads, four Robe Robin 600 LEDWash moving heads, six Martin Professional Atomic 3000 DMX strobes and 12 Showtec Sunstrip Active DMX battens. These are all hung on six drop bars at three different lengths, longest offstage and the shortest onstage in a mirrored configuration.

This flourish of ingenuity with the positioning adds an enormous amount of depth to the whole space - it amplifies the size of the lighting rig and also increases the scope of where the different fixtures can be focused.

On the front truss are another four Robe Robin 600 LEDWashes and four Clay Paky Alpha Wash 575 moving heads, which provide for further effects, front and key lighting. For control, Stephen specified an Avolites Tiger Touch desk and dbn Lighting also supplies any extras or specials as required by the different artists. The less-is-more approach brings real clarity to the rig and more than enough lighting dynamics for the event in hand, the units have been thoughtfully selected to offer both the house lighting operators from dbn Lighting and also any touring / guest LDs plenty of options, and the whole system has been carefully installed so as to maximise impact while working with the space and structure of the building.

Currently dbn's Chris Phillips is overseeing everything day-to-day on site, he told *mondo*dr*: "This project was particularly interesting as we really had to think about what we were going to hang because of the limited space and Stephen came up with a design that gives ▶

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more depth and level. It's a really nice venue to work in and pretty cool... It's definitely attracting the right kind of attention and the momentum is really building.

"We chose the Robe Robin LEDWash 600s because they give a great wash and having them split between the two rigs means all of the stage is covered. They're also lightweight and use low levels of power, which is a bonus. Then we've got the Clay Paky Sharpys, which everyone loves, they're very bright and everyone's favourite.

The set up we have allows for a lot of different options and looks and we can always add to it if necessary, depending on the show." A small lighting system has also been integrated into the bar / restaurant and smaller performance space downstairs, originally home to Brannigans. dbn Lighting supplied six original High End Systems Trackspots from the '90s - the company still have a closely guarded stash, treated with reverential amounts of TLC - and they are still going strong after nearly 20 years of active service. These are hooked in to a special analogue controller plus there are a couple of Martin Professional Atomic 3000 DMX strobes and a Martin Professional Jem ZR12 smoke machine for general use, but the system can easily be reconfigured with a console added when operators are required.

"They are still a great fixture with a proper choreographed sound to light function which has never been bettered," said Stephen, adding that the lamp also gives the trackspot a unique colour rendition compared to more modern discharge or LED fixtures. Their high vintage value also hits the aesthetic button for blending classic and contemporary elements, which permeates the renovated Albert Hall - a venue with a past looking to the very bright future.

The final word comes from owner Joel, who told **mondo*dr**: "Albert Hall is a venue for Manchester, that is owned by the people of Manchester, offering amazing architecture. It was built with viewing events at every angle in mind - with its raked floors, capacity and acoustics.

"In working with dbn Lighting and Tube UK I found people from Manchester who are passionate and are experts in their field. They have been extremely flexible and were willing to do anything to get the project working. The audio and lighting systems implemented are amazing and use some of the world's leading brands. The audio in particular is very flexible and can cope with anything from spoken word events, to international club nights and live music artists, to classical - amazing." 

FRANÇAIS

Basé à Manchester, dbn est le spécialiste de l'éclairage et des systèmes de gréement. L'entreprise a conçu, fourni et installé une plate-forme d'éclairage extrêmement efficace pour le Albert Hall de Manchester. Cette fabuleuse salle datant de 1910 est située directement au cœur de la ville dans un ancien lieu de prières méthodiste absolument charmant et peut accueillir jusqu'à 2 000 personnes. Le magnifique espace a été soigneusement rénové mettant en valeur sa splendeur d'antan avec notamment des ornements d'origine tels des fenêtres à double hauteur avec de beaux vitraux et un magnifique orgue aux tuyaux apparents entièrement restauré. Récemment ouvert au public, Trof en a fait l'espace événementiel et musical live le plus cool de Manchester. Stephen Page de chez dbn a travaillé sur d'autres projets du propriétaire indépendant Trof auparavant et fut ravi d'être invité à nouveau pour créer le concept d'éclairage du Albert Hall. Deux poutres d'éclairage sont placées au-dessus de la scène ; une de 12 mètres à l'avant et une autre de 9 mètres plus loin en fond de scène. Il a aussi choisi de laisser les tuyaux de l'orgue comme toile de fond. La poutre arrière est munie de 6 Clay Paky Sharpies, de 4 Robe Robin LEDWash 600s, de 6 stroboscopes Martin Professional Atomic et de 12 Showtec Sunstrips. Ces appareils sont tous accrochés à six barres verticales de trois longueurs différentes, la plus longue étant placée en coulisses et la plus courte sur scène, formant ainsi une configuration en miroir. Le système audio PA d&b audiotechnick est utilisé conjointement avec un appareil de mixage Yamaha et les micros sont de chez Sennheiser.

DEUTSCH

Der in Manchester ansässige Beleuchtungs- und Riggingspezialist dbn hat ein äußerst wirkungsvolles Produktions-Beleuchtungsrigg für die Albert Hall in Manchester entworfen, bereitgestellt und installiert... Ein fabelhafter neuer Treff mit einer Kapazität von 2.000 Plätzen in einer charismatischen ehemaligen Methodisten-Versammlungshalle aus dem Jahre 1910 mitten in der Stadt. Der atemberaubende Bereich – ursprüngliche Merkmale umfassen doppelt hohe Fenster mit gebeizten Glasdetails und einer komplett restaurierten wunderschönen Orgel mit Pfeifen links offen – wurde liebevoll renoviert, so dass er seine alte Pracht wiedergefunden hat und als der neueste und coolste Livemusik- und Eventbereich in Manchester durch den unabhängigen Besitzer Trof eröffnet wurde. Stephen Page von dbn hat bereits an anderen Trof-Projekten gearbeitet und war begeistert, als er gebeten wurde, ein Hausbeleuchtungsdesign für die Albert Hall zu kreieren. Über der Bühne gibt es zwei Beleuchtungstraversen – eine 12 Meter lange vorne und eine 9 Meter lange im hinteren Bereich... Die die Orgelpfeifen als Hintergrund lassen. Der hintere Träger ist mit sechs Clay Paky Sharpies, vier Robe Robin LEDWash 600s, sechs Martin Professional Atomic Strobes und 12 Showtec Sunstrips ausgerüstet. Sie hängen an sechs herunterhängenden Balken mit drei verschiedenen Längen, der längste hinter den Kulissen und der kürzeste auf der Bühne in einer Spiegel-Konfiguration. Audio stammt von einem d&b audiotechnick PA System, das zusammen mit Yamaha zum Mischen und Sennheiser für Mikrofone eingesetzt wird.

ITALIANO

L'azienda dbn sita a Manchester, specializzata in illuminazione e impianti, ha progettato, fornito ed installato un efficace impianto di illuminazione per l' Albert Hall di Manchester... Una nuova favolosa sede di 2.000 posti in una carismatica ex sala riunioni metodista risalente al 1910 nel cuore della città. Questo posto incantevole, le quali caratteristiche originali includono finestre a doppia altezza con vetrate colorate e un magnifico organo completamente ristrutturato con le canne lasciate a vista, è stato amorevolmente restaurato riportandolo al suo antico splendore e aperto, diventando il posto più nuovo e più cool di musica dal vivo ed eventi di Manchester, dal proprietario indipendente Trof . Stephen Page di dbn ha lavorato ad altri progetti di Trof ed è rimasto sorpreso di aver ricevuto la richiesta di creare un progetto di illuminazione da interni per l' Albert Hall. Ci sono due tralicci per le luci sopra il palco, uno di 12 metri nella parte anteriore e uno di 9 metri nella parte posteriore del palco... Lasciando le canne dell' organo come sfondo. Il traliccio posteriore è attrezzato con sei Clay Paky Sharpies, quattro Robe Robin LEDWash 600s, sei luci stroboscopiche Martin Professional e 12 Showtec Sunstrips. Queste sono tutte appese su sei barre a gocciola di tre diverse lunghezze, più lunghe dietro le quinte e più corte sul palco, formando una struttura a specchio. L'audio proviene dal sistema PA di d&b audiotechnick, utilizzato insieme a Yamaha per la miscelazione e a Sennheiser per i microfoni.

ESPAÑOL

dbn, especialista en iluminación y servicios de montaje y con base en Manchester, diseñó, suministró e instaló un montaje de iluminación altamente efectivo para el Albert Hall en Manchester. Un nuevo y fabuloso espacio con capacidad para 2.000 personas en una sala de reuniones de lo que fuera una iglesia Metodista del año 1910 en el corazón de la ciudad. El imponente espacio - con características originales que incluyen ventanas de doble altura con detalles de vitraux y un magnífico órgano renovado por completo con los tubos que fueron dejados a la vista - ha sido cuidadosamente restaurado en su esplendor anterior y fue inaugurado como el espacio para música en vivo y eventos más nuevo y sensacional de Manchester por Trof, propietario independiente. Stephen Page, de dbn, ha trabajado en otros proyectos de Trof y estuvo encantado de que se le solicitara crear un diseño de iluminación para el Albert Hall. Sobre el escenario hay dos estructuras metálicas - una de 12 metros en el frente y otra de 9 metros más atrás en la parte trasera... Dejando los tubos del órgano como fondo. La estructura trasera se encuentra equipada con seis Clay Paky Sharpies, cuatro Robe Robin LEDWash 600s, seis estroboscopios Martin Professional Atomic y 12 Showtec Sunstrips. Ello se encuentra todo colgando sobre seis barras a tres alturas diferentes, más largas por fuera del escenario y más cortas dentro del escenario en una configuración en espejo. El audio proviene de un sistema de d&b audiotechnick PA, utilizando Yamaha para la mezcla y Sennheiser para los micrófonos.