

United Kingdom

# Gotta patch 'em all

An Allen & Heath dLive console took on a central role as 20 years of Pokémon game music made its European stage debut, writes **Erica Basnicki...**

**T**he unstoppable cultural phenomenon that is Pokémon has, over the past 18 months, extended its reach to the live arena with Pokémon: Symphonic Evolutions.

Featuring orchestrated music from the franchise's video games from the last 20 years, Pokémon: Symphonic Evolutions made its European debut in December last year at the Eventim Apollo Hammersmith in London.

The event was presented by Princeton Entertainment and U-Live, and performed by the Royal Philharmonic Concert Orchestra.

Taking responsibility for the show's audio was FOH engineer Ian Barfoot: "I was contacted by production manager Mark Dawson, for whom I had worked earlier in the year on Classical Quadrophenia," explains the man who can often be found mixing sound for Rick Wakeman.

For that Quadrophenia production, Barfoot used an Allen & Heath iLive system. A similarly complex Pokémon: Symphonic Evolutions gave him the occasion to take one of the company's latest dLive series consoles for a spin.

The main audio requirement for the event was the Royal Philharmonic Concert Orchestra, which comprised 38 strings, nine woods, six French horns, eight brass and a great deal of percussion along with harp and piano. Additionally, there were six tracks of audio from the video content and two vocal mics for the presenters.

"The brief was to create a big film score soundtrack

feel to the production, so close micing of all the instruments was the order of the day. The channel count was never going to be small! Around 90 microphones were used," says Barfoot.

"The production also required the cleanest, most natural sound possible, so the choice of mixing console is paramount for me. For a long time, I have been a great fan of the iLive series, so when there was the opportunity to try out the new flagship dLive, I was intrigued."

The dLive system comprised an S7000 control surface with DM64 MixRack, utilising approximately 70 physical inputs that fed the L-Acoustic K2 house speaker system, a relatively new system installed by SSE Audio Group in July 2015.

"Our mission was to get everything up and running as quick as possible with minimal rehearsal, so it made complete sense to use the installed system rather than waste time, effort and money bringing another one in," says Barfoot.

"The K2 system seems quite warm, which I like. The coverage was even throughout the room with very good imaging, plenty of detail too. Another positive is the K2 does not sound over processed like some systems these days; they can strangle the sound no matter what you do. All in all I think the system designers/installers have done a very good job indeed."

Microphone-wise, Barfoot's preference was to close-mic the majority of the instruments using a combination of DPA, Schoeps, Audio-Technica and AKG microphones.

The biggest challenge, he explains, was miking the percussion, which he did using a combination of Lewitt, Audio-Technica and Line Audio microphones.

"This show had so much of it (percussion). I think just about anything that could be hit, banged rattled or

dLive test drive: Ian Barfoot says the new console is a "game-changer"





Mics from Audio-Technica, DPA, Schoeps and AKG featured in the show

shaken was in there, so a kind of very wide overhead style was used.

"I must also pay tribute to the two guys on stage in the team: putting out 90 odd microphones takes a great deal of time and thought. Erik Jordan (EJ) and Steve McManus (Mac) know me so well now I rarely have to look what is going on. If the audience and client liked the sound then it was as much down to those guys as me, I just stick the faders in a straight line and go for it."

EJ and Mac's excellent work on stage also afforded Barfoot the freedom to really listen to the sound of the new dLive desk during the show's brief rehearsal period: "My first impressions of the desk was the stunning mic amp, which is very analogue in nature but with amazing detail and clarity. Listening to a single source is one thing but as you add more signals to the mix sometimes it can start to blur; not in this case – as each section of the orchestra was added to the mix, the warmth and lushness came but the individual clarity and detail could still shine through when required.

"The ability, as with iLive, to lay the console out the

way I want it is wonderful. However, the number of custom views available on dLive takes this to the next level.

"I firmly believe that iLive was one of the great innovations in the world of live digital consoles, and dLive is all this and more. I honestly believe this is the finest digital live sound console I have used to date. It seems to have a three-dimensional sound, certainly with an orchestra, that is not there with other consoles. It's going to be a real game-changer." ■

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