

Divinyls cream it

...while support band self destruct

It wasn't the wall of feedback during the first song, or in fact anything offered or proffered by the 2000 steaming punters, who had just endured the worst intro tape imaginable - a scratchy, unintelligible rave seemingly taped from a portable T.V. set, which ran for at least 5 boring minutes. It wasn't even the fault of the crew - but still the proceedings came to a crashing halt after just 90 seconds. "My guitar amp is F—ED, and we're going OFF until someone F—ING fixes it!"

This is rock and roll anarchy at it's pinnacle, would the Divinyl's support band Maybe Dolls pickup the pieces and resume, or was it certain death? The crammed media cage rubbed their hands together, tomorrow's copy certainly an epitaph. Some minutes of frantic guitar rig surgery later, and guitarist Chris Morrow returns to the stage, whipping off some crashing chords while his colleagues look on with uncertainty. "I'm not like I used to be", he shouts, alluding to something in the past.

They resume, the feedback continues to bug the mix, and somehow it all comes together. It's way too loud, which keeps the elusive 4k scream happening right through three more numbers. I think it's actually the main vocal mic feeding through the FOH, and my method of tracking it down would be to turn down each channel - or momentarily mute the FOH to eliminate it from blame. It appears neither FOH or Monitor engineer has the solution. The problem diminishes, the set concludes, the Divinyls crew changeover.

Myself, I think the Maybe Dolls planned the whole thing. It's the Gun's & Roses syndrome, where thrash reviewers write in respectful tones about how THAT band are late, break the rules, play too loud, and don't really have it together. They allude to problems they have, and problems are fashionable, right? Gee I'm glad Channels isn't in the business of reviewing the art of performance, rather we stick to the technical stuff behind the show, don't we? But you can't let this pass by without comment.

This cameo in no way detracts from the Divinyls impact, which is both powerful and calculated. A class crew operate with slick efficiency, the first song is right there, with Sound Engineer Bruce Johnston shaping the mix over the top of what is obviously a very loud stage sound. At soundcheck earlier the monitors were clearly discernable at the FOH position, and Monitor Engineer Paul Kennedy had the most blistering centre vocal foldback

I've heard in a long time. It's essential, because Christina Amphlett is a whisperer by style.

To get the results Paul Kennedy had a pair of Tasco Concert Wedges in front, then a pair behind, and a sidefill that comprised 2 Turbosound TMS-4 per side. (The TMS-4 is a composite, 1 x 18" bass, 1 x 10" mid, and 1 x 1" JBL H/F, in this case driven active 3-way & crossed over with 2 x BSS FDS 360's.) The P.A. was provided by A1 Audio, who have the only Soundcraft Series 4 consoles in the country. The monitor example that Paul Kennedy was driving offers 40 inputs to 16 mixes, with full 4 band (true) parametric EQ per channel and on each mix output. Paul had 9 mixes running, each equalised via a Court 3rd octave equaliser, crossed over with SG Engineering DCX-3 2 way crossovers and then run to Perreaux 6200B amplifiers. At drumfill a pair of Tasco wedges (which each contain a 2225 JBL 15" speaker and a 2445 2" JBL h/f driver) were sat atop a TSW-124 subwoofer, which has a single 24" speaker inside for pulverising bass.

Bruce Johnston delivered the goods at



Bruce Johnston- see the Wendal sampler?



The Soundcraft Series 4 40 channel console, & effects racks

F.O.H. on the Series 4, which in FOH format offers 40 in, 8 stereo subgroups (16 in all), 8 mute groups, and 8 auxiliary sends, with full parametric EQ. The Series 4 is in common use throughout major S.R. firms in the Northworld, and was only recently replaced by the Europa as Soundcraft's top-end concert console. Bruce has used a Series 4 before, and likes them.

A1's lighting was operated by Brian O'Connor, who drove a Jands 60 channel Instinct console, with 100 odd chrome cans connected to the Jands dimmer racks. The lantern breakdown was 20 NSP & 40 MFL Par 64, 20 Ray's - all chrome plated, plus 12 Leko's and 2 White Lightning strobes. A working, no frills lightshow, but within constraints it was well run by Brian. There were no darkies, if you know what I mean.

The production company, A1, provided a P.A. System Engineer, Andrew Rodd, and Craig Martin from A1 looked after and rigged the lighting rig. The tour manager was Larry Ponting, with stage duties shared by Dave Edwards and Joe Turtur.

In terms of assessing the quality of a production, the sum of the whole says it all, but there are a few little giveaways which I look for. One is when you first walk into the room before anything's happening, and listen to the P.A. for hum and buzz. This one ran quiet. The other is the general presentation of the gear, are the boxes presentable, is there any unfilled gaps in the effects and amp racks? (A pet hate, where a \$12 blank panel makes about 100% difference!) Generally speaking, A1 achieved a pretty good standard with this production, certainly a whole lot better than last time I looked, which was New Years Eve a year ago.

-Julius Grafton

Bruce Johnston - Divinyls FOH Engineer, P.A. Owner, Truck Mechanic and surfer

Bruce Johnston is a sound engineer with a lot happening at any moment - because he owns a quad JBL modular PA, a lightrig, and a pair of 8 tonne trucks, and yet he still goes touring with acts like Divinyls who use different production. He's also a truck mechanic by trade, which comes in handy.

Last year Bruce, along with David Edwards, Paul Kennedy & Joe Turtur toured the USA doing Theatres and Clubs for the Divinyls, using house P.A.'s - requesting 15kw at each venue. "If they questioned that, I told them we were bringing a 12kw monitor system. When I told them that, it was OK! We travelled the Monitor rig, backline and FOH desk in a 5 tonner, riding in the truck or the tour coach."

Some of the drives were real long, a driver was hired for the tuck, the crew hunkered down on the coach then tried to get a morning's rest in a Motel at the destination. The last gig was a Texas outdoor festival with 5000 people or so, and an absurd 80dB limit at the FOH desk. "The Police hassled me, so I turned the whole PA off except the vocals, and it was still 89dB - then they told me to turn off, it was still 85dB from monitors and stage, so then the police stormed the stage and closed it down! Only in America!"

The system Bruce owns is a quad modular JBL system, the same as used by McLeans Audio in Melbourne, and one of Jands Production Services various system types in Sydney. The amps are Phase Linear (Series II) for FOH, and Jands 920's for monitors. "Ian Rumbold rebuilt the Phases, they never go wrong, in fact I took them all in to get re-earthened a month ago, he changed the caps, I assume they were leaking. They're so warm, with a lot of power. Mine have steel chassis, they're in steel racks, I look after them."

Bruce's two trucks are an Isuzu JCR 22' 8 tonner, which the PA usually goes with, and an Isuzu FVR 26' 8 tonner which he hires out. "What with tyres, motors, clutches - I'm really only a bit ahead with the trucks. If I wasn't a mechanic it wouldn't be worth it, but you've got to have a truck or it isn't viable to own a PA."

"I work with a lot of Mushroom acts, like Weddings, Roxus, Debra Conway, Boom Crash, Big Pig. I like to work with bands that play to full houses, you get your adrenalin rush - once you've had a taste it's hard to go back. I don't get bored, on this tour I brought my surf board!" Sure enough, the aforementioned 'plank' was cluttering up the pack in the semi!

Challenge in mixing the Divinyls? "To get them to sound clear and Hifi (they're loud 112-113dB off the stage at the desk), to get Christina Amphlett over the band really clear makes you feel good! Paul (Kennedy, Monitors) & I work together - if I'm having a problem I go up on stage and say "maybe you can do this, we always have to have the PA forward a metre from the monitor rig. Christina's a whisperer. To get her over the stage volume, I keep the centre vocal well back from the FOH horns."

"The first 2 row's don't get the PA, so the 2 sidefills per side get them. FX wise I use a (Lexicon) 224XL, an SPX, SRV, PCM70, a Delay, 8 Gates, 8 Compressors, a dual insert graphic equaliser, then I always ask for an analyser, CD player, cassette deck & compression over the system. I'm using Wendell Junior drum samplers which are 16 bit, made in the early 80's for kick & snare. I mix them in triggered off the mic's from the insert point. I have a lot of success from them, I can tune the pitch up a little to give the illusion the snare pitch is rising".

"After this I'll start Nick Barker". Busy boy, our Bruce!

-Julius Grafton.

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