

The 1975 live at Madison Square Garden (MSG) on the recent tour leg. The Adamson arrays are flying left and right.

INDUSTRIOUS REINFORCEMENT

Constant audio action on tour with The 1975.

by Kevin Young, photos by Arnold Brower

THE 1975 likes to keep busy. Even before the release of its second full-length album, *I like it when you sleep, for you are so beautiful yet so unaware of it* (2016), the Manchester, UK-based band has toured relentlessly, notes Jay Rigby, front of house engineer on the ongoing tour.

He adds that while he's based in Los Angeles, he's rarely been there since signing on with the group in 2015: "I was home for 11 days total in 2016. These guys really like to tour." His involvement with The 1975 followed a call from Roly Oliver of Eighth Day Sound, which is providing audio systems and tech support for the tour, while Rigby was out with progressive metal band Dream Theater.

"I was in a hotel room in Moscow and Roly called and said The 1975 were looking for a front of house engineer,"

he says, explaining that he took the gig based on Oliver's past recommendations and the fact the band was also bringing on monitor engineer Francois Pare, who's worked with Rigby regularly over the past six years. In turn, Pare requested that monitor tech Chris Hall join them as well. The team on this tour is rounded out by veteran front of house systems tech Dan Bluhm and PA tech Jon Dixon.

MAKING THE SWITCH

Carrying a name reportedly inspired by a Jack Kerouac beat poetry book, The 1975 consists of lead vocalist and rhythm guitarist Matthew "Matty" Healy, lead guitarist Adam Hann, bassist Ross MacDonald, and drummer George Daniel. Their style is usually labeled as "pop rock," with Scott Kerr of *AllMusic* writing that the band combines "the dark and youthful themes of sex, love, and fear with ethereal alt-rock music."

The band, which continues to strongly gain popularity, just concluded a run of arena/shed/theatre dates in the U.S. over the course of spring 2017, the seventh leg of the current tour, before moving on to a series of shows in Europe. It was on this leg when Eighth Day Sound, based in Highland Heights, OH with offices in LA, London and Sydney, suggested a switch of the main PA system to an Adamson Systems Engineering E-Series rig.

The company became an E-Series partner in 2013 as one of the first sound companies in the U.S. to join the Adamson network, and since then has substantially added to its Adamson inventory every year since.

"The reason we decided to add more Adamson loudspeakers to our rental inventory is that we have found that worldwide marketplace acceptance and demand for the E-Series continues to



grow,” explains Jack Boessneck, executive vice president, Eighth Day Sound. “It seems that every engineer that uses the system becomes an instant fan.”

It’s a statement backed up by Rigby. “We’d been using another system and had no issues,” he says, “but Eighth Day had invested in Adamson and we’d had some fantastic festival gigs using it, so Dan (Bluhm) and I thought we might as well take this stuff out and put it through its paces. And we’ve had really great results.”

THE RIGHT FIT

The sound team utilized Adamson Blueprint AV to help tailor and optimize the house system at each venue. It addresses issues such as hanging multiple arrays as well as offering the ability to simulate response with a variety of acoustic measurement tools, and provide an accurate rigging plot, and more. It also provides a variety of simulation options.

“The versatility and precision that Blueprint offers when measuring rooms and predicting the systems coverage within the space was excellent,” Bluhm states. “It was easy to develop a workflow that allowed quick and accurate predictions from day to day.”

Rigby adds, “We scaled the rig according to the seating area from venue to venue. The U.S. tour was interesting because it ranged from A-market arenas to large theaters, along with a cou-

ple of sheds. In some venues we wouldn’t use as many flown loudspeakers or wouldn’t deploy side hangs.”

The team chose to go with three-way E15 array modules, loaded with dual 15-inch Kevlar neodymium cone drivers, rather than the dual 12-inch-loaded E12. “We appreciated the low/mid presence of the E15 at a few festivals we did last year, and were also really impressed by how far the system threw,” Rigby notes.

Main left-right hangs generally consisted of a dozen or more E15s with three E12s beneath to handle the nearfield, flanked by eight or so E119 subwoofers, each with a single 19-inch Kevlar neodymium cone with dual 5-inch voice coils. Coverage to the sides was the responsibility of arrays of up to a dozen S10 (dual 10-inch) modules per side.

On the ground, 24 more E119 subwoofers were set up in 12 stacks of two, evenly spaced out across the front of the stage in a slight arc. Eight more S10s positioned equidistantly atop the ground subs delivered front fill. “Dan designed a sub array similar to our previous sub configuration, and we then did a slight electronic delay arc across them from inside to out to widen the coverage on the floor,” Rigby explains.

After trying a few configurations for the flown E119 subs, the choice was

finalized to locate them directly next to the E15 main arrays, facing outward at a 45-degree angle, which, he says, “Yielded the best low-end coverage up into the 100 and 200 sections of the arena sides without having a ‘power alley’ at the mix position.”

ANALOG & DIGITAL

All loudspeakers were driven by 26 rack-mounted Lab.gruppen PLM 20K44 4-channel amplifiers incorporating Lake digital processing. Overall system processing came courtesy of a Lake LM 44 processor offering a 4-input/4-output configuration as well as Dante networked I/O.

“It handled all EQ, system delay, time alignment, and control, and it was also the starting point for our Dante drive, which was our main way of getting signal around to all of the amplifiers,” Rigby notes, adding that the tour also carried an analog backup signal transport system in case of any glitches with the networking.

He delivered mixes on a Midas XL4 analog console. While touring with 30 Seconds To Mars about four years ago, he decided to switch to analog, taking a Midas Heritage 3000 out on a short U.S. run, and then he changed to an XL4 for the next 15 months with the band. “Since then I’ve moved between the XL4 and

DiGiCo desks, depending on the tour,” he states. “I don’t believe there’s one desk for every job; it’s about choosing the right tool for the right gig. The 1975 is essentially an 80s pop guitar band with a few keyboards, and for me that lends itself to the analog world.”

He notes that the digital domain does provide certain advantages, such as virtual soundcheck. Reproducing that function with the XL4 was critical on this tour: “The band is really focused on the way things sound. The drummer (George Daniel) and lead singer/rhythm guitarist (Matty Healy) were producers on the album, so they know exactly how they want every aspect to sound and often come out front when we work on new songs.

“That’s also why virtual playback was so important — for us to work together to achieve whatever sound they were going for. To have a band that really cares about the sound is refreshing. At the end of the day they’re four really phenomenal musicians, which not only makes my job easy, but fun.”

Together with Jordan Kolenc, project manager at Eighth Day, the two came up with a design integrating virtual playback with the XL4 that involves running all of the console’s direct outputs into three Focusrite RedNet 16-channel converters. “They (the RedNet units) have got 16 XLR inputs in the back, and we convert that to Dante,” Rigby details. “So that rack is 48 inputs and 48 outputs, analog to digital, and that then goes via Dante to a Mac Mini, with recording on Waves Tracks.

“Then,” he continues, “to get virtual playback from the desk, we come out of the Focusrite units into the line inputs of the XL4, which has two XLR inputs in the back — one mic and one line input. So we go into the desk and swap every channel from the mic to the line input, and it’s just like the band is playing on stage from the show the night before.”

Outboard gear includes dbx 160a compressors for general application and an API 2500 for drum compression. The rack also houses Empirical Labs Distressors, a



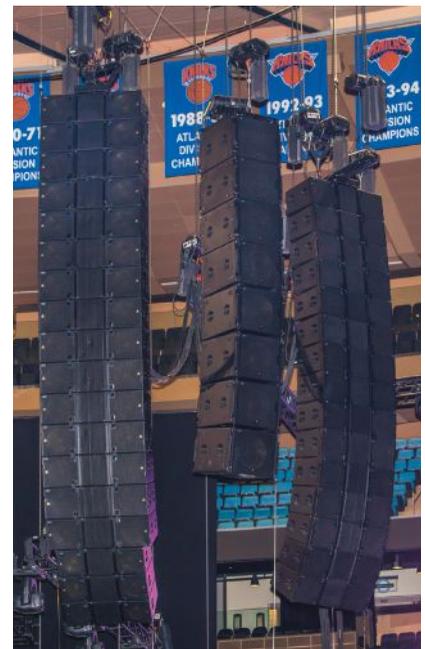
Sound team members with the Midas XL4 house console, left to right: Dan Bluhm (system tech), Jay Rigby (FOH engineer), Francois Pare (monitor engineer), Chris Hall (crew chief/monitor tech), and Jon Dixon (PA tech/support monitors).



Assembling an Adamson E-Series array prior to the show at Madison Square Garden.

UBK Fatso Jr and an XTA D2 multiband compressor.

Rigby applies plate reverb from a Lexicon PCM 92 for Healy’s lead vocal, an Eventide Eclipse for vocal doubling, and TC Electronic D2 delay: “The delay I had to manually program, setting the preset



One of the sets of Adamson E-Series and S-Series modules, along with an array of E119 subwoofers, in place at MSG.

for every song they’re playing.” A Yamaha SPX 990 supplies gated reverb on snare to get an “80s-type” sound.

A BUSY PLACE

Francois Pare’s choice for mixing monitors is a DiGiCo SD5, and he notes that

CREDIT: ARNO LDBROWER.COM



Jay Rigby at the Midas XL4 analog console he selected for his work with *The 1975*.



Francois Pare in the monitor cockpit with a DiGiCo SD5 digital desk.

CREDIT: ARNOLDBROWER.COM

either it or the SD7 are his “go to” consoles. “On monitors it all has to be quick and the SD5 is a fast, good-sounding, reliable board you can get everywhere,” he states. “We’ve got the band, two guitar techs, our playback guy and a drum tech, all with their own mixes. Lighting also has a mix and there’s a general production mix for security, management and everybody who’s not a tech.

“When you have the amount of things I’ve got going on, you have to be able to access them quickly,” he continues. “I don’t want to have to go through menu after menu before I get to something I need.” The band was also joined on this tour by two additional two additional

session players and four to six backing vocalists for certain shows.

Pare and Rigby assembled the microphone package together, both enjoying a close relationship with Shure. A BETA 91A and BETA 52 combo handled kick drum, with BETA 56s on snare top and bottom, BETA 98s for toms, an SM81 on hi-hat, a KSM 137 condenser for ride, and KSM32 condensers for overheads.

Bass came direct from Radial J48 DI boxes, with a Radial SW8 passive auto-switcher for playback and keyboards. Guitars were captured with SM57s, with a KSM32 also added for Healy’s cabinet.

With the exception of drummer Dan-

iel, who sings with a BETA 56, all vocalists utilized KSM8 condensers. And to capture ambience,

Pare deployed a KSM32 and a VP89 shotgun per side.

Pare applies Bricasti M7 reverb to Healy’s vocal reverb as well as a Yamaha SPX 990 on snare and toms. “I always have two effects on drums — a gated verb setting and then a plate, or hall, depending on the song, on snare and toms,” he explains, adding that he also takes advantage of roughly two dozen effects provided internally by the SD5.

His mixes are delivered via 18 channels of Shure PSM 1000 wireless personal monitoring, with an additional four channels of Shure P9HW hard-wired packs. The entire band is on JH Audio Roxanne in-ear monitors, with dual subwoofers per side on stage on hand to provide extra “weight.” RF coordination is assisted by a Shure Axient scanner and Wireless Workbench system control software.

Efficiency is clearly key to the crew and band’s workflow, and it’s something that’s also reflected in Rigby and Pare convincing the band to invest in Fischer Amps rack-mounted battery chargers. “The initial investment was about \$3,000 for each of our A and B (keyboard and playback) rigs,” Rigby says, “but we use over 100 AA batteries per show and, when you think about the cost for the 243 shows we’ve done on this album cycle as well as the environmental impact, it’s something we’d suggest to any act.”

Pare also offers high praise for the efforts of the worldwide Eighth Day Sound team. “They’re the real unsung heroes here, making sure our rigs show up in the far corners of the world, ready to turn on and go,” he concludes. “Finally, the entire crew on this tour is one big family. If we all weren’t so close with each other, it would have made the experience far less enjoyable.” **LSI**

Based in Toronto, Kevin Young is a freelance music and tech writer, as well as professional musician and composer.