Sennheiser for The World of Hans Zimmer



The world premiere of “The World of Hans Zimmer - An Immersive Symphony. The Theatre Experience” took the audience at the Metronom Theatre in Oberhausen on an impressive musical journey through the works of this exceptional film composer. Presented by Semmel Concerts and accompanied by breathtaking lighting, sound and stage technology from Satis & Fy, this smash-hit show delighted more than 22,000 fans at 15 sold-out concerts from 23 January to 2 March. Hans Zimmer himself spoke to the audience in the form of a larger-than-life, three-dimensional projected image. Behind the scenes, monitor engineer Thorben Ströhlein and RF manager Werner Schmidl also welcomed a special technical guest: Sennheiser’s Spectera, which they used to provide some of the musicians with in-ear and line/mic signals as part of the Spectera Pioneer Program.

Contact with the Pioneer Program was brought about by Holger Schwark, who was the FOH engineer and, together with Colin Pink and Christian Steinhäuser, was also the sound designer for this unique music production curated by Hans Zimmer. This led to Per Witte from Sennheiser bringing a Spectera Base Station and a dozen bidirectional 1.4 GHz bodypacks along to the rehearsals in Oberhausen in January – together with a technical introduction into the system provided by Gerhard Spyra, Technical Application Engineer. Monitor engineer Ströhlein laughs: “You could say,

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perhaps, that we were thrown in at the deep end because we didn’t have all that much time to prepare. But actually, it wasn’t a problem at all, because the system was relatively easy to set up.”



L-R: Thorben Ströhlein, Holger Schwark

One notable feature of this Spectera test was the fact that it was Werner Schmidl’s first ever job as RF manager. “I’m normally responsible for the FOH system, which is something I did for Peter Maffay, for example, for many years. Of course, during my career I also had to take care of wireless systems now and again. But this is actually my very first major assignment as RF manager. At the venue, I scanned the RF environment using a Spectera antenna and finding the frequencies was no problem at all. It’s all very easy!”

“And that’s also true of the bodypacks: it’s all very user-friendly,” Ströhlein adds. “Just put the batteries in and off you go!” The four DAD antennas were placed directly at the LED curtains that gave the stage an immersive spatiality and drew both the musicians and the audience into fascinating worlds of light and video.

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Werner Schmidl

Schmidl and Ströhlein had first considered using Spectera only as an in-ear system. “But then we thought: why not make use of the bidirectional feature? After all, that’s one of the greatest advantages you can have,” Ströhlein explains. So Schmidl went on to equip violinist Alexandra Tirsu, bass player Malte Winter, guitarist Julien Castanié and woodwind player Saulius Petreikis with Spectera beltpacks for both in-ear monitoring and line/mic signals. The IEM-only function was used by Ströhlein and by vocalists Carla Chamoun and Futurelove Sibanda, as well as by percussionists Mareike Eidemüller and Benjamin Leuschner, Andreas Kurth on drums, and Christoph Bönecker, the keyboards player, accordionist and Musical Director of the production. Overall, Ströhlein handled a total of 22 monitor mixes.

The in-ear transmission performance of the bidirectional Spectera beltpacks immediately impressed those who had previously only been accustomed to using analogue in-ear systems. Thorben Ströhlein: “There's no noise, it all sounds amazingly good and the sound is incredibly wide on the headphones. The microphone signal is also very good. Everything sounds just as it should.”

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When asked about more of the system’s highlights, Schmidl is quick to reply: “I really like the fact that I can change the in-ear volume of the packs in the software. I’ve had a few cases where I noticed that the volume was too high and I was able to change it. I also think it’s great that I no longer need to worry about whether another frequency needs to be added.”

Schmidl and Ströhlein were also able to provide the Sennheiser team with valuable feedback to assist the further development of the Spectera ecosystem, for example with regard to the endless rotary volume control, the WebUI and their desire for a cue function. “Feedback like this is hugely important for us and enables us to further perfect the system – which works really well via firmware updates,” Witte explains. “This is precisely what the Pioneer Program was created for, and we are very grateful to the team for their honest feedback.”

As this was a test run, the Spectera production team had a full back-up system available in the background. But they never needed to use it, and they stayed with Spectera for all of the shows. Ströhlein adds: “With analogue systems, I have a lot more dropouts, but Spectera made the production much easier. Situations like ‘every time I turn my head there’s noise’ just don’t occur anymore. Once the green light is on, I know that everything is functioning properly. You can work much better like that.”

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The monitor expert also has something to say about the challenging frequency situation: “In the USA, it’s more difficult for an RF manager to accommodate a show within the frequency spectrum. I think Spectera will make things much more relaxed. Naturally, you also have to get the artists on board, because this system works in a different way from the ones they have known up to now. But the system’s footprint is absolutely unbeatable – and, of course, it’s great for the performers, too, as they now only need a single beltpack.”



With “The World of Hans Zimmer – An Immersive Symphony“, Semmel Concerts has once again created a feast for the eyes and ears, and from Oberhausen it will go on to conquer the stages of the world. Hans Zimmer’s unique film music combined with the theatrical format of the production, with its greater intimacy and immediacy, made a deep and lasting impression on the audience in Oberhausen. And the talented musicians, with their skilful artistry and their sheer pleasure in performing, provided a truly unforgettable show.

Excerpts and opinions on the concert experience can be found on Semmel Concerts TV's YouTube channel.

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