22live invests in Sennheiser Spectera



22live has invested in Spectera wideband wireless and is putting it to work across a growing number of tours and productions. As both a rental company and a Sennheiser dealer, 22live is not only hiring Spectera out but selling it to end users and running training days for freelancers and prospective customers, too, making the ecosystem a part of every side of its business. In 2024, 22live was awarded Sennheiser’s Best Growth Dealer trophy, followed earlier this year by the Rental Partner of the Year award – a testament to 22live’s prominent role in the touring industry.

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Alex Penn, Commercial Director at 22live, explains what set Spectera apart from the outset: “It was fairly obvious that Spectera was different and a new way of thinking wireless, which puts it in its own category. It’s a system that we really felt would add value and become popular, and so far the evidence is showing that that’s correct.” Demand followed quickly. As soon as Spectera became available and stock was in place, interest ramped up, and it has continued to build. “It’s gaining more momentum all the time, and we’re seeing that this is a product that we need to keep expanding our inventory of, and we will do so,” Penn adds.

Spectera’s bidirectional design was a major draw, but so was 22live’s close relationship with Sennheiser. The team had previously worked with Marcus Blight, Technical Applications Engineer at Sennheiser. “We know him well and trust him, so if he tells us that something is technically good, we tend to believe him,” smiles Penn.

Being a dealer as well as a rental company also shapes 22live’s approach to new technology. “We see more advantage through being an early adopter of new products,” Penn explains, “because if we’re using it ourselves in rental, then it helps to stimulate sales opportunities as well.” The benefit to clients is clear on Rock Orchestra, which is currently on the road with Spectera. The production previously relied on a competitor’s system, with a bodypack transmitter and a separate in-ear pack receiver (see picture above). It now runs 38 bidirectional Spectera bodypacks for IEMs and mic/instrument inputs as well as six Spectera handhelds, where the previous setup would have needed almost double the number of mobile devices, and a much larger space in the rack.

Jack Bowcher, Senior Project Manager at 22live, sums up the difference: “All in all it’s made it easier for everyone in terms of rack build. There’s significantly less kit in the rack, and they’re down to two Base Stations rather than potentially 16U worth of kit before. The RF coordination is straightforward, and the performers themselves only have to wear the one item now as well.” With fewer bodypacks to distribute and recharge, the production also needs less time to manage inventory.

Spectera has recently come back in from Pussycat Dolls, and has also been out with The Australian Pink Floyd Show, as well as with Tori Amos. For Penn, the Tori Amos show is “quite a good case study” because the team there are “very much audiophiles”. Tori herself sits at a piano throughout and uses a headphone amp on the piano rather than a wireless pack, but for the rest of the band and the production team, it was all Spectera.

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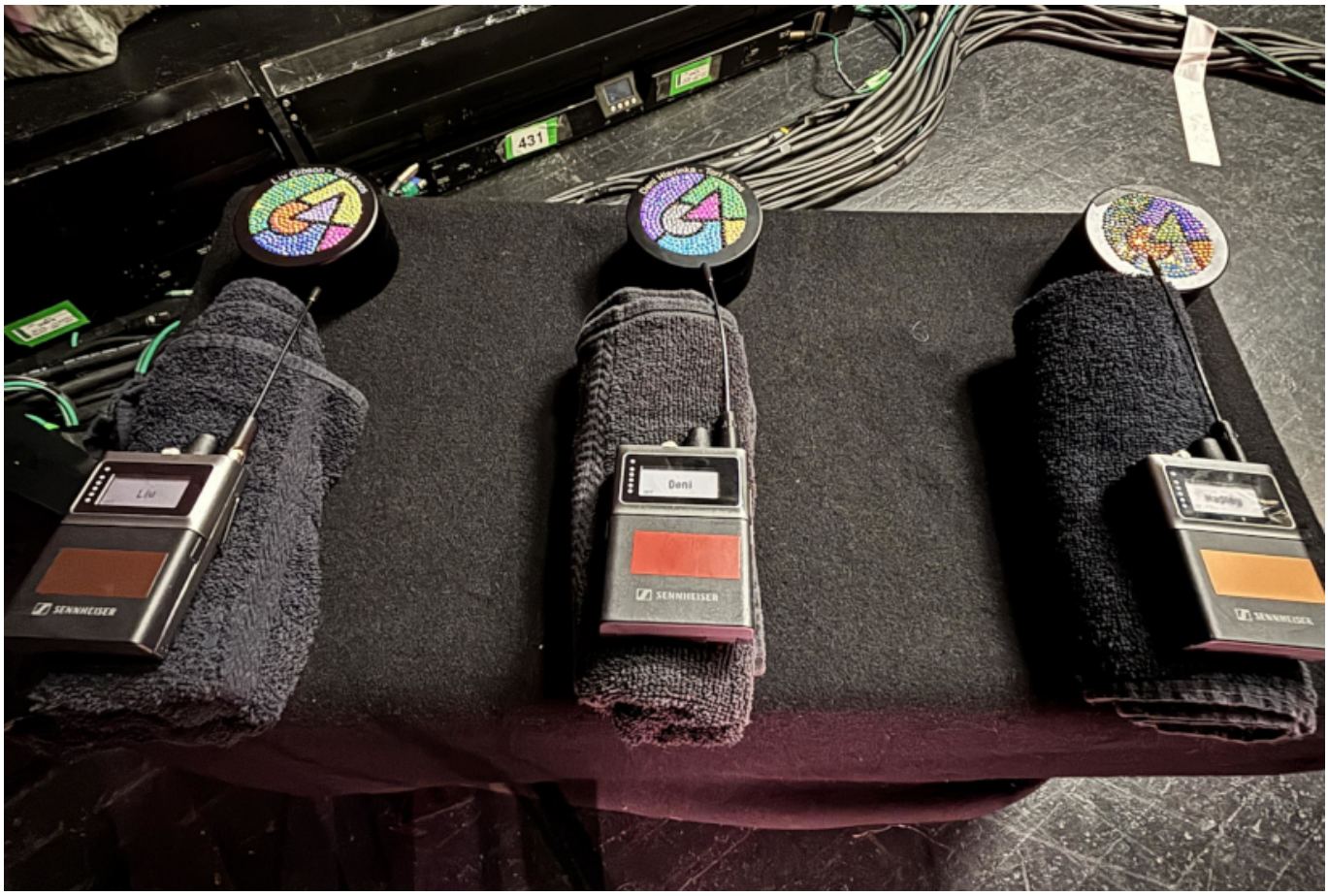

Spectera has also proved its value as a sales product. 22live sold a system to Ezra Collective, who had a large number of dates; facing the rental cost for a six-month period, it made more sense for them to buy. 22live packaged the system in fly racks, together with a Ferrofish unit serving as a Dante bridge so the band could use analogue I/O to get in and out of Spectera. 22live has also specified Spectera for Enter Shikari's in-ear requirements, marking the company's first RF-over-fibre deployment.

Feedback from musicians has been consistently positive: the upgrade in audio quality over older analogue systems is noticed straight away. "That's definitely been noted by everyone when they first put it on," says Penn, who adds that in terms of channel capacity, "it's a very competitive system". The manufacturer-agnostic SoundBase Pro RF management tool is also helping 22live raise the standard of its service. "It enables us to give customers more information on the RF planning," Penn says.

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Training has been a key part of 22live's Spectera plans, with five training days run so far: two at the start of the year, an open drop-in session over the busy festival season in the summer, and another block of two just a few weeks ago. All were well attended, with roughly half of attendees serious freelancers, alongside interested parties from venues, rental companies, and a few keen students. "With the training days we're covering two bases," Penn explains. "One, it helps us to promote the brand and the product, and hopefully find users that may want to purchase it, but it also helps us to upskill our freelancers so that they can specify it, take it out, and be comfortable with it."

"22live recognised early on what Spectera could offer the rental market, and they have backed that belief with real investment, from growing their inventory to running training days for the freelance community," concludes JP Cavaco, Business Development Manager EMEA at Sennheiser. "Being named our Rental Partner of the Year was a reflection of how closely we work together, and it's great to see how Spectera is helping 22live deliver more for its clients."

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