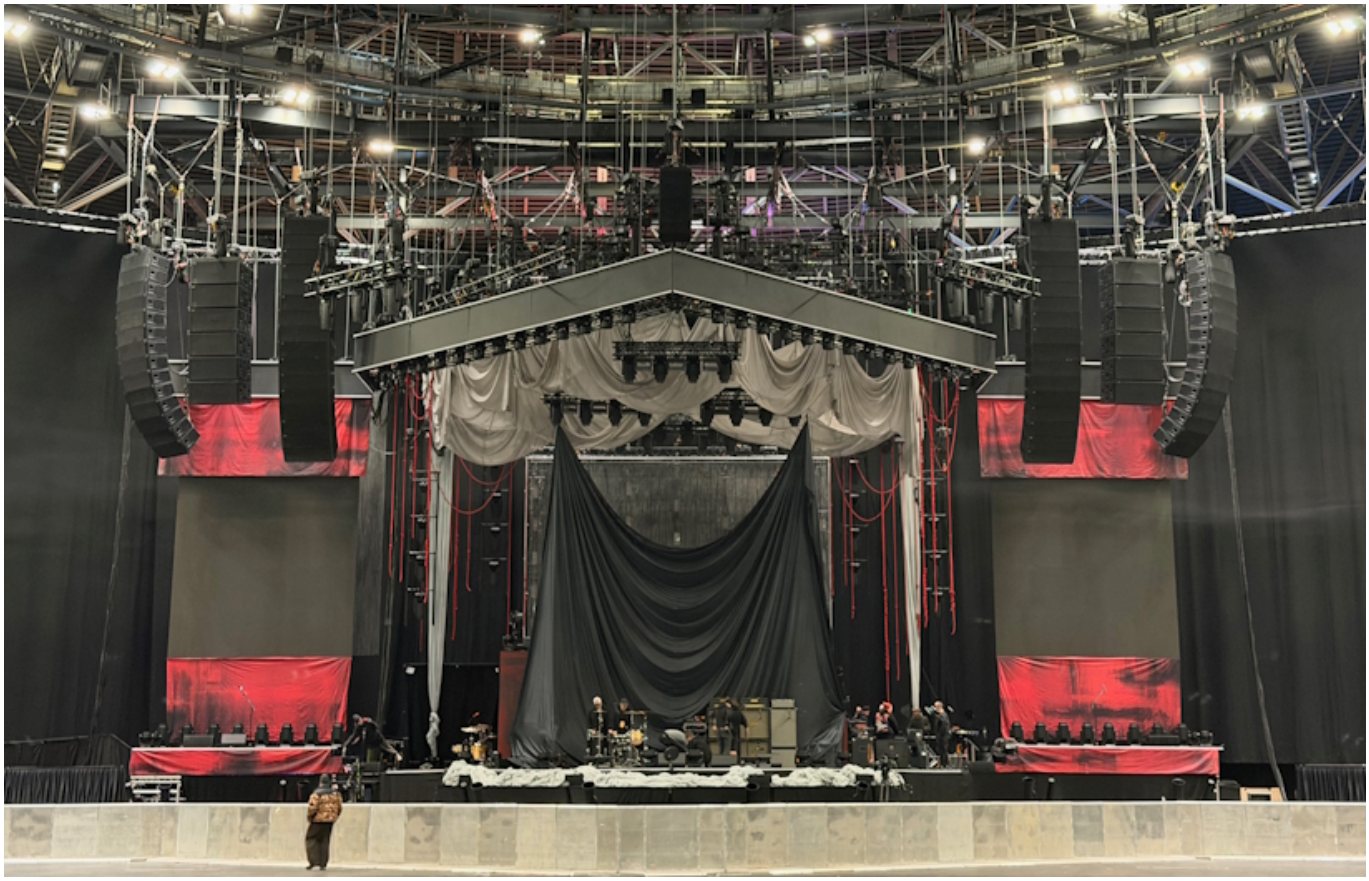
Skan PA powers Biffy Clyro's 'Futique' Tour



Following a sell out arena tour on home turf at the start of 2026, Biffy Clyro’s international appeal saw them head to Australia, New Zealand and North America before European festivals called them back for some (responsibly loud) rock n roll this summer, including their biggest- headline show at London's Finsbury Park. Skan PA has supplied audio services to the band for the past 14 years, seven of which have seen engineer Jon Burton crafting the band's huge FOH mix. "I have had great support over the years from the team at Skan," he begins. "It's been nice to reconnect with the company where I started my own career many years ago. Attention to detail has been key to Skan's success, and I'm glad to see that it has been maintained as they have integrated into the Clair Global ecosystem."

Jon, who is also an esteemed academic, is helping to challenge what responsible sound means in live events. As a Senior Lecturer for the University of Derby’s BSc(Hon) Sound, Light and Live Event Engineering degree, his passion for all things live benefits the wider community, as his status as a founding member of the HELA (Healthy Ears, Limited Annoyance) initiative demonstrates.

The Futique tour is the first in the world to achieve certification under the initiative, which was launched to promote responsible sound management and hearing health across the live entertainment sector, providing online education for everyone

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involved in music events. Jon furthers: "The initiative grew out of work undertaken by the Audio Engineering Society Technical Committee on Acoustics and Sound Reinforcement. Speaker manufacturer d&b audiotechnik joined the initiative as a founding member and the tour's production team embraced the training over the summer festival season last year. We hope this tour represents the beginning of a more responsible, better-informed and sustainable touring culture, demonstrating how live events can deliver powerful experiences whilst also prioritising long-term hearing health."

Although he's known for mixing on analogue desks, Jon chose an Allen & Heath dLive console in this instance due to the walk-in, no prep time nature of his initial festival gig with the band. "It made sense to use an easily obtained digital board I knew and trusted. I felt confident it would both sound good and work for me, and up until this new tour, I used no external effects, and no plug-ins apart from desk presets. The great departure was adding a couple of external reverbs. I wanted a 'big tom' sound for a few tracks, so I added some old Yamaha reverbs: two Rev5's and a Rev7. I only use two, but they are 30 years old, so I carry a spare!"

He has an Eventide H3000 Ultra Harmonizer in his rig too, not for pitch change, but for the plate reverb setting. "It's great at giving a vocal a sense of place without being overly noticeable. It's only there for the gigs with an overly dry acoustic. I also added a dbx 100 Sub Harmonic Synthesizer, as you should always have something on the rig with wooden end panels," he confirms.

Biffy Clyro is the first ‘rock’ act Jon had mixed in some time: "They're great fun to work with. I've always tried to take guidance from the recordings and capture the feel for each of their tracks. For their album shows last year - where their first three albums were played across consecutive nights - I tried to re-create the 'sound' of each album. It was interesting as they all change in terms of production approach, and how the band were developing as studio musicians."

When it comes to PA preference, Jon says it was "always" going to be a d&b audiotechnik GSL gig, as he explains: "It's a good-sounding box, but it really comes into its own at the back of the room. Combined with the d&b Array Processing, I find the sound from the furthest or harder-to-cover seats is the best I've experienced. Sound pressure level, frequency, and transient response were prime considerations, especially further away from the source. We added a centre hang for this tour, primarily for vocals, which helps with clarity and sound source perception, especially given the challenging set design."

Helping to navigate the tour's FOH audio design is Systems Engineer James Coghlan, a graduate of the degree course Jon teaches. "I was so glad when he agreed to do the tour," continues Jon. "We discussed what I wanted to achieve and how we would overcome the diamond-shaped stage and lighting rig."

The FOH team set out to balance SPL variance from front to back, keeping it as low as possible, whilst not drastically changing the system tonality.

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"To maintain system audibility in the back, the front to back SPL variance needed to be low to enable the PA to be heard above background chatter in the rear seats," begins James. "Another element was working in our PA deployment around the show design, where Simon [Neil, lead vocals] has multiple mic positions. Working with Jon, who pays particular attention to the audience coverage in the sub domain, there was a lot of time spent finding a sub deployment that would work. We found a broadside array configuration worked well around the show design, supplemented by 2 x hangs of flown SL subs to cover the far field, sides and the upper levels of the arena shows."

Whilst not needed for coverage, a centre hang provided a central source, which brought the auditory image central to the audience, especially in the pit. "From there, I designed the mechanical deployment around the set design, and at each step, collaborated with Jon to make sure he was happy," James adds. "During that design process, we added the flown sub elements to better the low frequency coverage, and a fill system to cover the barrier line."

For James, who has worked both with, and for, several brands within the Clair Global Group, he knew what to expect with Skan: "From the very start, I was able to supply a spec and they met it without a single hiccup. The support and communication from both Chris Fitch and Dan Foster, has been brilliant all the way through. It was my first time prepping out of the new warehouse in Weybridge, where they have clearly spent time to think about how and what we need to prep a PA deployment efficiently. The support from the technical team within the group has, as always, been brilliant, and knowing that they are on the end of the phone for any support needed is a blessing."
In addition to noting the equipment comes out to a very high standard, James says the tour had three "brilliant" PA techs: "They made my job very easy! One of the techs is a recent graduate of Britannia Row’s Live Audio Technician Apprenticeship, and this was his first tour, although you wouldn't know it! This level of experience and professionalism from someone out on their first tour shows how comprehensive the training program must be. We also had a group of four more apprentices at our London show, which again shows the emphasis of getting apprentices out there to get hands-on experience."

Monitor Engineer Dan Speed's aim is to refine the mix for each musician to the point where few, if any, changes are requested, allowing them to concentrate on performing. "I have seven musicians on stage, each with their own stereo IEM mix, four tech IEM mixes for backline crew, and a general production mix for anyone else that requires it. I also have a few wedges and subs dotted about the stage," says Dan.

"For IEM mixes, it's standard; everyone has a full mix of all the instruments and vocals with their own instrument and vocal louder in their mix. I try to make each mix sound as natural as possible by using a combination of stereo ambient microphones, panning and reverbs. At this level, the band frequently doesn’t soundcheck, so it's vital that they have confidence that when they walk out onto

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stage, it will sound exactly how it should, night after night."

Dan has swapped his "trusty" DiGiCo SD10-24 for a Quantum 326 from Skan's inventory and has been using the brand on Biffy Clyro tours for 12 years at this point. "I like a small footprint console where possible and felt it was time to upgrade to a Quantum while sticking to a similar scale. It's proven to be a worthwhile upgrade”

Everything is mixed 'in the box' with no external outboard or plug-ins. “I'm using Shure PSM1000 IEMs, d&b audiotechnik C7 subs and M4 wedges, which run passive," he adds. "And we've been using d&b C7 for sidefills as long as I've been touring with Biffy Clyro, which is 18 years now. These days we only use the subs, and they work perfectly in their chosen position as an extension cab of the guitar rig, reinforcing the lower octaves."
Dan also says that Skan remains the "perfect fit" for Biffy Clyro due to the aforementioned attention to detail offered. "I know that the equipment they send us will be well maintained, well prepped, plug and play with no issues, which means I can actually concentrate on mixing the show. With Skan now part of the Clair Global Group, their ability to source - at short notice! - anything we need from the global inventory, no matter how unusual, such as a Crown CM310a microphone, is a massive bonus to us. "Thanks to everyone at Skan who plays a part in getting our gear out of the door and making our shows happen every day, as without them, my job would be a lot harder!"

Under the gaze of Production Managers Toby Johnson and Andy James, and Tour

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Manager Neil Anderson, the audio crew is completed by Monitor Minder and Audio Crew Chief, Tim Miller, and PA Techs Lee Saddington, Conor McSherry and Patrick Boyd. The festival season ended with Mick Eggett taking over the reins from Dan Speed, whilst Adam Boole stood in for the European leg for Jon Burton at FOH.

Closing, Neil confirms: "We have worked with Chris Fitch and Skan for many years - they are now our longest-standing technical supplier, and to this day, they have never let us down. That attention to detail is unparalleled, and their constant push and desire to help us achieve the high standards we require, takes a great degree of work, which they always undertake calmly and professionally. Their integration into Clair has enabled our global touring to be simpler, yet they still retain the personal touch and degree of attention that they have always had."

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