

PARfiles

BY STEPHEN MURPHY

The Who 2002 North American Tour

ENGINEERS: Bob Pridden (Audio Production, Monitors), Robert Collins (FOH)

FRONT-OF-HOUSE CONSOLE: Midas XL4

MONITOR CONSOLE: Midas Heritage 3000

DYNAMICS PROCESSING: Summit TLA-100A, dbx 160 compressors

EFFECTS PROCESSING: Lexicon PCM-60, Yamaha Rev-5 and Rev-7

SPEAKERS: Clair Brothers Audio mains and subwoofer cabinets loaded with JBL drivers (as are Townshend's Fender amps)

STAGE MONITORS: Clair Brothers Audio floor wedges, Shure PSM 700 in-ear monitor system

MICROPHONES: Shure SM58 (all vocals), SM57 (all guitar amps, snare drum), Beta 52 (kick drum, bass amp), Beta 98 (toms); AKG 414 (drum overheads); Neumann U 87 (stereo drum pair — for recording only)

MICROPHONE PREAMPS: Midas (XL4 in-console)

DIRECT INPUTS: Countryman Type 85 (keyboards, acoustic guitar, bass guitar), Demeter VTDB-2B (Townshend's Fender Strat "acoustic" pickup output)



Photo by Stephen Murphy

Bob Pridden has literally been at nearly every show The Who have played. That fact does not make him an overly obsessive fan — it makes him one of the most respected, envied (and occasionally pitied) audio engineers in the business. Pridden started as road manager for the band in the early '60s and gradually began mixing live shows and helping Pete Townshend with his demo recordings. His first label credit was in 1972 as mixer and producer of his friend Eric Clapton's Rainbow Concert LP (the re-released Rainbow was remixed and remastered by another longtime Who associate, producer Jon Astley). Pridden is currently on the road with The Who's JBL-sponsored North American tour.

Historically, you have worn many different engineering "hats" — FOH, monitors, studio engineer/producer, road manager — describe your various roles on this tour.

In addition to supervising overall audio production, I am also mixing the monitors for the band. And from the monitor position, I control a lot of the live audio effects — guitar and vocal echoes and the like — which are then sent up to the front-of-house mixer and into the house. In addition, I cue and start the keyboard sequences for the songs that use them — songs like "Baba O'Riley" and "Who Are You." I am also recording and archiving all the shows on dual Otari RADAR IIs. Apart from the physical location, a lot of the lines between monitor and front-of-house mixing are blurred. I do a lot from the stage that is used directly in the house mix and vice versa.

One of your earliest studio roles with The Who was as a dedicated headphone mixer during studio tracking.

That's right. They used to have all kinds of trouble getting the live performance energy while recording in the studio, so I would come in with a board and help them get the live feeling they wanted, leaving them free to perform their best.

Which brings you back, full circle: mixing the in-ear monitors for the band.

Almost exactly. Though, on this tour, only Roger (Daltrey) and Zac (Starkey, son of Beatle Ringo Starr) are using in-ears. In fact, Roger uses a hybrid monitoring system: one in-ear monitor supplemented by floor wedges. Zac uses a full in-ear set. For songs with the sequenced keys, he wants the click on one side and most everything else panned to the other.



In Memoriam: John Alec Entwistle, 57, legendary bassist and founding member of The Who, died of a heart attack on June 27, 2002 on the eve the tour. Entwistle's innovative sound and unique playing style influenced generations of musicians throughout his four-decade career. Often referred to as "The Quiet One" — originating from his reserved stage presence and seemingly effortless playing — belied the fact that Entwistle was every bit a co-conspirator in the sonically pyrotechnic war that was The Who. Steve Luongo, Entwistle's studio partner (and drummer in the John Entwistle Band) appropriately summarizes: "Every time it thunders, I will think of John Entwistle."

For more information on The Who tour visit www.petetownshend.com and www.jblpro.com.