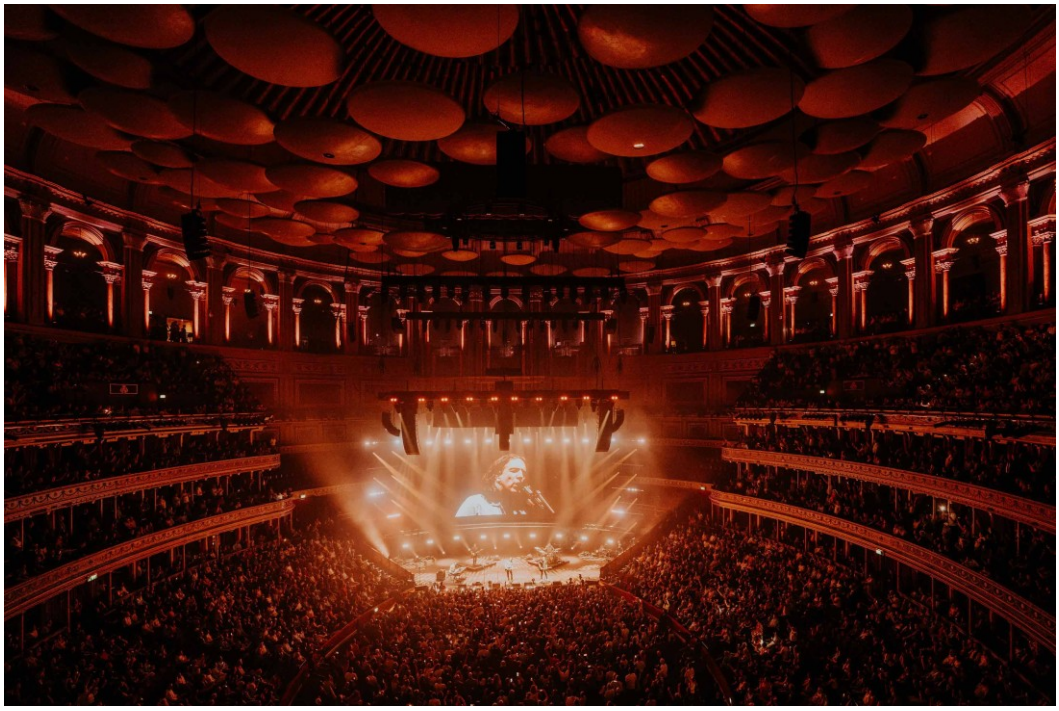


Photo credit: Bradley Quinn (www.bradleyquinn.com)

“It’s a different way of thinking about wireless.”

Monitor engineer Jamie Hickey and monitor tech Max Taylor on Snow Patrol’s switch to Spectera for IEMs and vocal mics

***Marlow, UK, November 2026* – In September, Snow Patrol played three epic nights at the Royal Albert Hall in London, transforming the venue into a glittering rock location for the occasion, with special guests and ecstatic audiences. Utilising Spectera SEK bodypacks for IEMs and the brand-new Spectera SKM handheld microphones for vocals has brought a new dimension to the band’s sonic environment, and as Jamie Hickey, long-standing monitor engineer of the band, explains, “I genuinely think Spectera is the best thing that’s happened to live IEMs.”**

After moving Snow Patrol onto the digital wideband system for in-ear monitoring, Hickey, who is also Co-Director of Production & Touring Ltd, added the new Spectera handhelds for the Royal Albert Hall performances.

“I originally came to Spectera thinking about what it could do for IEMs,” recalls Hickey. “But once you have IEMs, handheld microphones and potentially instrument inputs all existing inside the same wideband environment, you realise that it isn’t simply a different way of doing

in-ear monitoring. It's a different way of thinking about wireless. You start thinking about Spectera as the wireless platform for the production."



Jamie Hickey, monitor engineer of Snow Patrol and co-director of Production & Touring Ltd, and Max Taylor of Adlib Audio, monitor tech for Snow Patrol (left to right)

Photo credit: Bradley Quinn (www.bradleyquinn.com)

Max Taylor, Hickey's monitor tech, details the set-up: "Three SKM handhelds were used for the lead vocal, a guest/spare vocal, plus a tech talk microphone. All of the band's IEMs were on Spectera; we were running 24 packs for the show, carrying 14 unique stereo mixes. This was a mix of five band packs, five band copy packs, two guest packs, a load of tech mixes, a few management mixes, PFL, and a monitor tech pack."



Snow Patrol's Gary Lightbody and guest Martha Wainwright with the Spectera handhelds

Photo credit: Bradley Quinn (www.bradleyquinn.com)

Hickey adds: “The copy packs are particularly clever. We can have duplicate packs for band members and guests, plus additional copies of tech mixes, without those receivers consuming additional channel capacity. They’re simply receiving an existing mix.”

Taylor was running three Spectera DAD transceiving antennas, one on stage left and one on stage right, utilising a cross-stage CAT cable that he had loomed in with the other signal looms for the inputs that came off stage right. The Base Station and the main system were located underneath the choir stalls, so a third antenna was positioned here to help provide additional coverage for some of the backline techs who were out of line of sight of the main SL and SR antennas.

“Being able to add another antenna seamlessly and direct it towards those members of the crew, gave us additional coverage in an area that might have been difficult to cover with just the two main antennas we were using for the stage,” explains Taylor. “We also had a large video wall that, on a scan of the RF environment, showed low-level artefacts. Although the signal was so low that it didn’t cause us any issues, it was great to be able to monitor it in real time through the scan, and also the Spectera antenna readings.”

The low-level artefacts of the video wall were monitored continuously via Spectera

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Bradley Quinn
(www.bradleyquinn.com)



Small footprint

“We managed to fit the whole show into a single wideband channel,” says Taylor. “This allowed us to utilise all the antenna ports on the Base Station within a single RF channel, giving us enormous flexibility in how we wanted to run our antenna layout for the show. The ability to add extra antennas to supplement the system so easily is incredibly useful.”

Fitting the whole IEM package into one 8 MHz RF carrier was important for Hickey to also give the team flexibility when travelling. “When you’re bouncing around the world through very different RF environments, that’s brilliant,” says Hickey. “With a conventional narrowband system carrying that number of stereo IEM mixes, you could easily end up effectively block-booking a similar amount of spectrum. Here we can find a suitable 8 MHz channel, put the whole Spectera IEM system inside it, and we’re done.”

Hickey and Taylor mostly used the ‘Live Stereo’ Audio Link Mode for in-ears, with a few in ‘Live Link Density’ for some of the crew members. The mics were running in ‘Live’ mode, with the Tech microphone running in ‘Live Link Density’. “Once that’s decided, it’s as simple as putting our coordinated frequency into the Base Station unit and we’re good to go,” says Taylor. “Not having to sync 24 packs every day has freed up a lot of time in the day-to-day workflow.”



A ‘travel-ready’ set-up supplied by Adlib Audio: Spectera mobile units and chargers in their case

Photo credit: Bradley Quinn (www.bradleyquinn.com)

“Something meaningful has changed”

The band’s response to the Spectera in-ear sound “has basically been ‘Wow’”, says Hickey. “The first thing you notice is how open everything feels. There’s this huge soundscape, and you really hear every detail of what you’re doing. It’s such a joy to mix with.”

Hickey was surprised by the bottom end of the IEM audio, enabling him to lower some of the high-pass filters and let more of the fundamental through on kick drums, bass and toms, for example. “At one point during rehearsals, I genuinely had to check that there wasn’t a sub running in the room, because of the amount of low end I was hearing through the IEMs,” says

Hickey. “But it doesn’t feel hyped. There isn’t some enormous EQ bump creating artificial bottom end. It’s just this lovely, pure extension downwards. ‘Natural’ is probably the word I keep coming back to with Spectera. It feels incredibly natural.”

Hickey also noticed a change in the performance that came with the natural IEM sound. “What’s really interesting is that I think it has actually affected the way they play. Gary [lead singer Gary Lightbody] in particular has been exploring a much greater dynamic range. There have been moments where he’s singing incredibly quietly and intimately, and the whole performance feels very personal. He seems incredibly in tune with what’s happening around him. I’ve been with Snow Patrol for years and I’ve never really heard them play quite like this before. That’s when you know this isn’t the Emperor’s new clothes. When the musicians themselves hear the difference and it starts affecting the dynamics of their performance, then something meaningful has changed.”



“When the musicians themselves hear the difference and it starts affecting the dynamics of their performance, then something meaningful has changed,” says Hickey.

Photo credit: Bradley Quinn (www.bradleyquinn.com)

The transition to a new handheld transmitter was completely “uneventful”, as Hickey puts it. He introduced the handheld during rehearsals, and it never became a conversation with Lightbody, who has been using a DPA capsule for a long time. “Gary loves and knows this capsule, and being able to use an adapter meant we could bring that familiar capsule straight across to the Spectera handheld. Tonally, I immediately thought it sounded more open than the wireless systems we’d previously used. There seemed to be more natural extension in the top end. I wouldn’t describe it as ‘brighter’, because that implies something has been boosted. It wasn’t that. It was familiar, but somehow elevated – we had the sound and behaviour of a capsule we know extremely well, but it felt as though more of what it was producing was getting through.”

RF management and monitoring with SoundBase Pro

Hickey and Taylor mainly used SoundBase Pro for RF management, which allowed them to coordinate all wireless seamlessly, including the other wireless brands that were used for the guitars. “SoundBase Pro made it simple to have the systems running alongside each other, as well as coordinate and send frequencies to those units and monitor the guitars as well,” notes Taylor.

Taylor likes the ability to connect on a web browser over IP: “For this show, Jamie was in a remote position, with the racks around 15 metres away from his monitor desk, so he could monitor and change settings via the IP control – it made everything quick and straightforward.”

The remote view options that SoundBase Pro offers proved very handy as well. While Taylor as the monitor tech has configured SoundBase to give him the detailed view he wants for managing and monitoring the whole system, Hickey uses a customised remote view containing only the band’s IEMs and handhelds, while he is mixing the show.

Spectera Base Station and screen with SoundBase Pro software underneath the choir stalls

Photo credit: Bradley Quinn (www.bradleyquinn.com)



“I don’t need every parameter of every device filling a screen next to me while I’m mixing,” says Hickey. “I want the important information immediately visible, and Max can simultaneously have his own SoundBase view configured with all the information he needs. And rather than the microphone system being another separate island of information, the SKMs are simply part of the same environment we’re already monitoring. That combination of Spectera, SoundBase and the additional things we’ve built around it is beginning to change the way I think about monitoring the whole RF system.”

One of these extras the team built is an exact copy of the artist IEMs using Companion and Open Sound Control: “That’s one of my favourites,” Hickey says. “Spectera allows us to see the headphone output level of each individual SEK. We’ve used that information so that when I solo an artist from the console, my PFL pack can automatically match the headphone output level of that artist’s pack. So for the first time, I can genuinely listen to their mix on the same earphones, through the same type of pack, at the same listening level as the artist, in real time. That is a total game changer for me. It’s the most accurate monitoring of an artist’s IEM mix I’ve ever had.”



PFL has never been more accurate than with Spectera

Photo credit: Bradley Quinn (www.bradleyquinn.com)

Peter Craig, Sennheiser’s Artist Relations Manager, has worked closely with Hickey and the team throughout the rollout. For him, Snow Patrol’s experience reflects exactly what Spectera was designed to deliver. “What Jamie and Snow Patrol have achieved is a perfect example of why we built Spectera,” Craig says. “It was about removing the compromises engineers and artists have learned to live with for decades, be it on in-ear sound, RF footprint or system design. Hearing Jamie say that the band hears more and they respond differently is the most rewarding feedback we could ask for, and we are proud to be part of that journey with them.”

Hickey concludes, “I’ve probably been singing and dancing about Spectera for the last 18 months to the point where some people might wonder whether I actually work for Sennheiser! But that enthusiasm comes from actually using it. The fundamental platform is incredibly solid. It’s dependable, it’s reliable, and it sounds fantastic. Whatever evolution it takes from here, everything is being built on top of those fundamentals. That’s what makes me excited about where it goes next.”



Photo credit: Bradley Quinn (www.bradleyquinn.com)

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The high-resolution images accompanying this media release plus additional photos can be downloaded here. Please make sure to credit Bradley Quinn (www.bradleyquinn.com).

About the Sennheiser brand
We live and breathe audio. We are driven by the passion to create audio solutions that make a difference. This passion has taken us from the world's greatest stages to the quietest listening rooms – and made Sennheiser the name behind audio that doesn't just sound good: It feels true. Since 1945, we have stood for building the future of audio and bringing remarkable sound experiences to our customers. While professional audio solutions such as microphones, meeting solutions, streaming technologies, professional headphones, automotive audio solutions, as well as wireless microphone and monitoring systems are part of the business of Sennheiser electronic SE & Co. KG, the business with consumer devices such as headphones, soundbars and speech-enhanced hearables is operated by Sonova Holding AG under the license of Sennheiser.

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