

PLAYING ACOUSTIC – LIVE

John Goldie gives us an additional slice of acoustic wisdom in this issue with his run down of his 'ideal' live setup.

Words: Rob Kelly

As some of you may know I was involved with a recent Martin guitars/AER amp demonstration evening to launch the new acoustic section of a local music store. It was a great night with a mouth-watering display of desirable Martin guitars on show

alongside the full range of AER amps pick-up systems. The store was packed out and the audience reaction was fantastic. The evening kicked off with an informative and fascinating chat about Martin guitars by Tom Harrison from Westside Distribution, then it was up to yours truly to play some tunes and answer questions about the equipment I was using on the night, and that brings me to why I'm on this page as well as my usual spot elsewhere in the magazine (page 60 as it happens).

There were so many questions on the night – I was still answering queries around 2 hours later! – that everyone thought it would make sense to follow up with an article about the equipment I used on the night and why I chose that particular set-up, so here we are!

First up – weapon of choice – Martin OM18V acoustic guitar. For me these guitars are not only aesthetically pleasing and sound great but are easy to deal with which for me is crucial.

What I mean by easy, are several key factors – weight, size, playability, sturdiness - necessary for constant touring/flying – and natural acoustic sound for recording. To give you an example of how comfortable I was with this guitar, my last CD was recorded using it, only four days out of the box! It is the easiest guitar I've used in the studio in terms of getting a great sound quickly and not using any EQ.

As for amplification, I have used AER amplifiers exclusively for many years and once more it's the combination of quality, ease of use and reliability that do it for me. I have used these amps all over the world and never had any problems. I use either an Acousticube 3 which is the latest cube with great quality effects alongside a killer sound or the Compact 60 – the cheeky little brother, both of which I would link up to the PA system using the post DI option at the back of the amp to the PA via a DI box. This means that you are more in control of your sound since the sound engineer should only be amplifying what you send from the amp, which is essentially your own EQ and reverb settings. Obviously on smaller more intimate gigs the amp would be great on it's own and you could use it as your monitor also. I usually set the amps flat and take the mid out – again this is just my personal preference.

Last but by no means least is the final link in the chain for a live set-up and that's the pick-up system. Everyone who has a great acoustic instrument that sounds wonderful in the house knows that the trouble starts when you want to replicate that sound in a live situation. Obviously you don't want someone drilling holes in your pride and joy or have appendages hanging off or sticking out from the body of the guitar. With the AER AK15 system there is a piezo pick-up under the bridge and a mic inside a foam cube which is stuck inside the instrument. There are two small wheels which nestle just inside the soundhole for volume and mix between mic and pick-up.



My main reason for using this system is that having tried several systems over the past few years, I find this to be the most natural piezo sound, which is unusual, combined with a high output – very useful in the live situation especially if you play single lines sometimes as well as chords.

The system also allows you to use the mic – I normally have the mic up nearly all the way which is something I could never achieve with other systems without feedback – this means every little percussive nuance will be there in the final sound. Also by backing off the volume a little you can get a great rhythm sound – again something I found difficult to get easily on other systems. So that's my set-up, I hope that's been helpful and answered a few of your questions.

More technical advice...

If you have any questions on a more technical level you should get in touch with Jimmy Egypt at www.guitarrepairshop.co.uk. He's the guy who maintains my instruments and fits the pick-up systems etc. Jimmy is a big fan of this pick-up also and has fitted systems for many people including Robbie Williams and the Darkness.

