

Eighth Day Sound Steps Up for Canadian Singer/Songwriter's *Illuminate* World Tour

By Thomas S. Friedman

Canadian pop music is a hot commodity these days, and it hasn't taken long for Shawn Mendes to put his name alongside those of Drake, The Weeknd, Alessia Cara and Justin Bieber when it comes to international demand and acclaim. That point is made perfectly clear when one considers the routing of Mendes' current *Illuminate* World Tour, supporting the album of the same name that ultimately cemented his status as a worldwide star.

The tour is a total whirlwind, comprised of 61 dates and taking Mendes, his band and crew from the U.K. and mainland Europe to North America, Latin America, Oceania and Asia, featuring a date at Brazil's massive Rock in Rio Festival and two hometown shows at Toronto's Air Canada Centre.

It's an impressive career trajectory, considering Mendes only came to fame in 2013, attracting millions of followers with short acoustic covers on Vine. A year later, he was signed to Island Records and in 2015 released his debut album, *Handwritten*, featuring the smash hit single "Stitches."

What's fitting is that, for the *Illuminate* World Tour, Mendes is carrying a production package anchored by a substantial loudspeaker system from Adamson Systems Engineering — another Canadian entity that has seen its stock rise significantly in recent years.

Cleveland, OH's Eighth Day Sound supplied the gear package, which features Adamson E-Series and S-Series loudspeakers powered by Lab.gruppen PLM 20K44 amplifiers with Lake processing. Control comes via a new Avid VENUE S6L digital mixing system loaded with Waves SoundGrid Server One.

» The Sound System

FOH engineer Tom Wood, a British expat who now calls Canada home, says one of his top priorities when mixing for Mendes is ensuring that every single fan is getting the full experience.

"The bar has been raised for what people expect sonically at concerts," he says, and as

such, he does his best to ensure that everyone in the back of the arena is experiencing the same show and level of excitement as those fortunate enough to be right up front. Of course, the choice of P.A. goes a long way towards achieving that.

Since the *Illuminate* World Tour hits arenas of various sizes and seating configurations in many international markets, the FOH audio system was built around the principal goal of sonic consistency.

"The bar has been raised for what people expect sonically at concerts." —Tom Wood

The typical configuration consists of main hangs with 15 Adamson E15 three-way, true line source enclosures and three E12 three-way, true line source enclosures per side. The complementing left and right sub hangs each incorporate eight Adamson E119 subwoofers. Also in the air are side hangs comprised of 12 E15s and three E12s each.

Wood is an accomplished pianist, and subsequently has a very musical mixing style that's well suited to the E15s — even at a high volume. "We have some of the loudest fans of any show I've ever been to or any artist I've ever seen. With the E15s, I feel truly confident that if I need six more dB after sound check to get up to a happy show volume, the sound will be consistent. That's so important."

Rounding out the system are eight S10 front fills and 16 more E119s, ground-stacked in eight pairs. "The E119 is probably one of the best subs I have used — ever," Wood asserts. "It is mind-blowing how much power consistently comes out of those boxes."

» Venue Versatility

For venues where the full system can't be deployed, Eighth Day Sound Systems Tech Ben

Smith can scale it down to any number of the E-Series or S-Series boxes as desired and ensure consistent performance thanks to Adamson's Blueprint AV software and Load Library for the Lake processors.

"[The E15s] are perfect for arenas and getting the throw out there and doing everything we need in [larger venues]," Wood shares. "But then when we transition down and think about some of the smaller shows we've done on previous tours, we've flown an S10-only rig

and had wonderful results as well."

While flexibility was a necessary consideration for the audio system on the *Illuminate* World Tour, considering how quickly Shawn Mendes' profile has grown in just a few short years, scaling down for certain venues is quickly becoming a thing of the past — and Wood and Smith would be more than happy sticking exclusively with Adamson's E15s.

"I really love the control we have over the system," Smith says. "It rigs incredibly fast, has tons of power, and the new E15 Lake preset is phenomenal. It adds the extra high frequency headroom exactly where we need it. Also, the technical support that Adamson provides its clients is second to none."

But regardless of the model or configuration, Smith says Adamson's consistency across the board is of significant benefit. "When I walk the room, I really have to look up and see where I'm standing in relation to the box, because I can't feel that on-axis beaming I get from a lot of the other [manufacturers]," he says.

» At the FOH Position

Wood has been enjoying his experience

behind the Avid VENUE S6L, which he adopted ahead of the *Illuminate* World Tour and says is "quite a jump" compared to the Avid VENUE Profile, his previous console of choice. "The changes in workflow have taken a little getting used to," he admits, "but from a sonic point of view, it's been 100 percent worth it."

One of the main advantages is the boost in fidelity that comes with running at 96K. He's also been making use of the customizable layers. "We've added a considerable amount of *non*-musical lines since the last tour — comms, time code..." he shares. "Balancing that with more cues and a B-stage means that things can get a little busy, so I like to keep my miscellaneous channels within custom layers for quick access but also to keep them out of the way."

Since he's running the SoundGrid Server One, the only outboard gear Wood has on the road is a pair of Avalon VT-737SP channel strips for "money channel" vocals — one main and one backup. The unit features a combination of tube preamps, an opto-compressor, sweep equalizer and output level and VU metering in a two rackspaces.

"I can remember Tim Colvard [FOH engineer, Madonna and Macklemore & Ryan Lewis] talking about the importance of making sure you have a really good reason for utilizing equipment, and it really resonated with me. I don't need a double-wide full of toys on this gig," says the engineer. "The Avalon really complements the natural warmth of Shawn's vocal. It's something I just can't replicate without the real thing."

» The Canadian Connection

As Wood says in closing, the Canadian connections on this tour make for a unique kind of synergy. "It means a hell of a lot to be doing this with a Canadian box with a Canadian artist and be a proud near-Canadian, as it as at the moment for me," he says, with a laugh. "So this is very special." **FOH**

Shawn Mendes

Shawn Mendes getting close up and personal with his fans.

PHOTOS BY JOSIAH VANDIEN



FOH engineer Tom Wood at Avid S6L



Audio crew, from left: Adam Field, Andrew Thornton, Ben Smith, Mike Flaherty, Duncan Ladkin (hiding below center), Tom Wood, Greg Horning, Anthony Levato.

Shawn Mendes *Illuminate* World Tour

CREW

Sound Company: Eighth Day Sound
Account Rep: Jason Kirschnick
FOH Engineer: Tom Wood
Monitor Engineer: Mike Flaherty
Systems Tech: Ben Smith
Monitor Tech: Adam Field
P.A. Tech: Greg Horning
Production Director: Andrew Thornton
Show Stage Manager: Anthony Levato
Production Stage Manager: Duncan Ladkin

Front Fills: (8) Adamson S10
Amplification: Lab.gruppen PLM 20K44s
Control/Routing: Lab.gruppen LM44 (at stage left transmitting Dante to amps)

FOH GEAR

FOH Console: Avid VENUE S6L
Outboard: (2) Avalon VT-737SP channel strips; Waves SoundGrid Server One

MON GEAR

Monitor Console: DiGiCo SD10
Outboard: (2) DiGiCo SD-Racks (192 kHz)
IEM Hardware: Sennheiser SR 2050 transmitters; EM 2050 receivers
Wireless Mics: Sennheiser SKM 2000 with EM 2050 receivers

P.A. SYSTEM

Main PA: (15) Adamson E15/side, (3) Adamson E12/side
Side Hangs: (12) Adamson E15/side, (3) Adamson E12/side
Subwoofers: (8) Adamson E119 flown/side, (16) E119 ground



Systems engineer Ben Smith



FOH engineer Tom Wood



Mike Flaherty in monitor world

Adamson's E12 and E15 systems were ideal for the tour.



Adamson E-Series & S-Series arrays supporting Shawn Mendes' *Illuminate* World Tour