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**IN THE SPOTLIGHT**

BY MILIČA LEWIS

SPOTLIGHT

**O**n the rare occasions that he gets any time off from his busy schedule as Lighting Designer / Technical Manager at Exeter Phoenix, he works large arena shows across Europe as well as big UK festivals such as Glastonbury, The Big Chill and Womad. It may be understandable that Jon Curtis (a.k.a. JC) prefers this way of spending his free time to relaxing with a book at home, but considering he freelances for the likes of De La Soul, David Byrne, Jarvis Cocker and the Spice Girls, why does he always loyally return to Exeter Phoenix?

**A:** My family and friends are here, Devon is a great part of the world and, especially considering the size of its auditorium, Exeter Phoenix is actually quite a unique live venue. For many artists, we are the smallest venue in the UK they include in their tour, but we often hear that in spite of this they prefer playing here to anywhere else.

**Q:** What is that due to do you think?

**A:** Well, many artists feed back to us that our audiences generally tend to be very warm and

positive and make them feel very welcome. Our Front Of House staff always gets big compliments too and so do many other people on our technical team. Rick Wolkers, for example, Deputy Technical Manager and in charge of sound at Exeter Phoenix, is highly talented and very well-respected in the industry for his skills and the live albums he has recorded for many big name artists as a freelancer.

**Q:** It must be quite a challenge though, to cater for the needs of all these well-established artists Exeter Phoenix programmes and match the kind of service they get from larger venues with much bigger budgets and teams?

**A:** I wouldn't deny that. In order to keep up with our competitors and keep artists happy, we have to be constantly on the ball in terms of sourcing the latest equipment and updating our knowledge. As a charity, depending on public funding, this can be very hard as the money often just isn't there. Having said that, this is one of the things that makes working here interesting and exciting – it certainly requires a lot of creative thinking!

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