

# Harvesting the World of Surround

Project Harvest is a round-the-world journey to record a top quality surround sound library. Jim Evans reports

Sound recordists Joss Gardner and Craig Loftus are travelling in a camper van under the guidance of Warren Hamilton and Johnnie Burn, co-owners of Wave Recording Studios in Soho, London, who are funding and Project Managing this endeavour. "We basically travel from country to country recording surround sound and stereo atmospheres and stereo and mono spot effects trying to capture the flavour of what is going on in each place," says Gardner.

The idea for Project Harvest came about because Wave's Warren Hamilton & Johnnie Burn have always been frustrated by the large gaps in the currently available libraries. Johnnie Burn explains: "This is partly because these libraries tend to be American and sound wrong for a European market, and partly because we wanted to record our own stuff to a much higher resolution. This new higher level of quality allows us to

not only be more versatile in how we can artificially manipulate the sound, but also gives us the opportunity to record everything in seven-channel surround sound."

Over the last 12 months the project has visited 23 countries recording sounds across Europe from Bucharest in the East, Lisbon in the West, Sicily in the south, and Norwegian Glaciers in the North. "Next year we will move further afield into more distant climes, visiting every continent on the planet (apart from Antarctica!). We hope that the project will take approximately another 12 months and we have been going for 18 months so far," explains Gardner.

The duo are recording everything onto a Zaxcom Deva V hard-disk recorder which they chose "because of its durability, stability," says Gardner. "It has eight XLR inputs which was compatible with the surround sound mics we wanted to use and a high sound quality and ability to run at very high sample rates.

"We then transfer the sound files onto Macintosh Powerbook laptops for editing on Nuendo software. Our surround sound microphone is the Holophone H2-Pro which records discreet 5.1 Surround and also has extra rear channel, allowing mixing for 7.1. It also has a mic on top of the head for overhead imaging. We chose this microphone system for various reasons, the most obvious being excellent mic clarity and response, great surround imaging, as well as "plug 'n' play" ease of use without need for worrying about phasing or unnecessary later mixing.

"Another reason we chose the Holophone H2-Pro is because of its use of an array of DPA omni mics – there is a huge reduction in handling noise allowing us to record in a greater variety of situations

without having to worry about cradle systems, for example recording on speed boats, recording while moving through crowds.

"The other microphones we use are a selection of DPAs and DPA wind protection systems. We chose to use a DPA 4011 mic which we use for close miking mono spot effects, particularly loud or mechanical noises such as power tools and car engines because it can handle very high dB levels.

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We also took a pair of 4060 miniature microphones with a miniature pre-amp. The capsules on these mics are about the size of a

match head so are great for sticking into small places – inside ticket machines, down pipes, and so on. We also use them for recording stereo atmospheres covertly. They are the same microphones as used in the Holophone H2-Pro, so sound really good too, even for close miking spot effects.

"As well as these we have a pair of 4028 compactics which we use in conjunction with the DPA Windpac wind protection system. These provide a really clear and crisp sound and are our workhorse mics for stereo effects and atmospheres. The most unusual mic we have is a DPA Hydrophone for recording underwater, which has provided us with some interesting sounds. We use an industry-standard Sennheiser 416 for mono effects where we need to cut out background noise and also have a pair of Neumann KM150s which we find provide a bit of warmth to quiet spot effects."

To date, the equipment has proved most reliable. "Amazingly we have come back with all our equipment intact," says Gardner. "Technical problems were mainly restricted to recording in extreme weather conditions, but we made up some

extra protection with Rycote fur and have got a few tricks involving speaker foam, women's tights, and tea strainers.

"We had a lot of problems with the van when travelling around the UK. It broke down seven or eight times and had to have a new clutch, alternator, fuel and water pumps. In Europe we only had one mechanical failure and one breakdown because of a wheel bending out, courtesy of Bulgarian potholes."

Requests for specific recordings are welcomed by the team, and have already been made from sources as diverse as advertising agencies, hypnotherapists, through to Hollywood. Obscure effects can be requested through the Project Harvest blog. Thus far sound effects requests have ranged from steam trains, laughing horses, and dog shows to flies hitting a windscreen at night. The boys also set themselves eccentric tasks such as recording the sound of Paris sewers, rattling goats' hooves, and an Irish farmer kicking his ducks.

The blog ([www.projectharvest.blogspot.com](http://www.projectharvest.blogspot.com)) serves an additional purpose: to record the duo's daily adventures and challenges, as well as showcasing some of their breathtaking around-the-world photography.

Wave's Warren Hamilton observes: "This is an amazing opportunity to travel and record the world. Joss and Craig will enjoy every bit of it. All we ask is that the lucky bastards get us a good range of sound effects whilst they're out there. We are trusting them to think on their feet, bargain with locals to achieve results, and organise passage between nations so that the operation runs trouble free." **EM**

## INFORMATION

[www.projectharvest.blogspot.com](http://www.projectharvest.blogspot.com)

