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Q&A: JIM LENAHAN
The Many Faces of the First True Rock ‘n’ Roll Production Designer

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Now that the season is in full swing, many are trying to assess the status of our industry. It is clear that the big shows are still doing well and box office receipts are strong, however that fact does not seem to match with much of what we are hearing from our readers. While the statistics seem to be pointing in a positive direction, I think what we are experiencing is a situation of the strong getting stronger and the mid size businesses fighting to stay alive.

We have seen a clear break in the ability and willingness of venues, manufacturers and the mid-size production companies to promote their products and services. It is obvious if you look at most of our competitors that advertising has diminished in these areas to a striking level that I have not seen in my nearly thirty years of doing this work. The message I read is that companies are in a holding pattern, waiting for the ice to thaw or business to rebound to better levels. To that end, we are starting an exploration of the issues and the status of the industry. Our first installment is in this issue, and we will be calling on individuals, writers and observers to give their input in future issues.

Also in this edition, our front cover feature is a focus on three businesses in the UK and Europe that have found a way to collaborate and help tours save money, time and energy. One thing I really love about my work is that I can visit with old friends from time to time and see what they are doing and how they are using their experience to reinvent themselves. Phil McDonnell and I go back many, many years and through it all, he has persevered and evolved into one of the bright minds in our business. He has the vision and experience to be able to help any tour set up their logistical needs in a fast, efficient and economical way that has kept him as a leader in his business for many, many years. He is also a personal treat for me because of his witty, self-deprecating manner. This feature was indeed a pleasure for me to organize, and it gave me a chance to catch up with an old friend and renew an acquaintance that stirs many fond memories. I think you will appreciate his story.

Finally, I would encourage all of our readers to start taking a serious look at our new website and search engine: mobileproductionpro.com. We will be adding features and content to the site on an ongoing basis, but we need your input. Please register on the site and make any adjustments to your company and personal listings that you feel are necessary. Also, remember that you can send us press releases, news items and any pertinent information, and we will do our best to have it posted as quickly as possible. This site has the potential to be a prime tool in our business and certainly, that has been our goal from the beginning of this project. We do need your participation, however, if the site is to live up to the potential we designed.

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The touring industry is seeing a consolidation of personnel for budgetary reasons. These days, it’s not uncommon for a tour manager to also serve as the tour accountant, a guitar tech to handle two positions or a production coordinator to also handle dressing rooms. However, tours may be more inclined to hire personnel with extensive experience handling these jobs versus the inexperienced newcomers. It may seem less expensive to hire someone with less experience in order to save money, but it is a risk.

When Ross was asked his opinion on tour staffing, he shared, “Let’s say you hire a tour manager who is really green because you have to save money… then two weeks into the tour you realize the person is not appropriate for the job. You have to let that person go and take whoever is available to fill in. Then, you’re not in a position to negotiate salaries. The risk is very high.” In the long run, it’s more cost effective for a tour to splurge on a veteran. So where does this leave all of the new guys who are looking for their first gig? Ross feels the vendor side of the equation is quite different, “Tours may not necessarily see far in advance who is assigned to a particular vendor crew. It’s very possible vendors may be going for the less expensive and experienced personnel in order to save money, but it is a risk.”

Is the touring industry in the worst state it’s ever been in? Ross says no. Production quality isn’t a question these days. Production technology is thriving and expanding consistently.
Ross shares, “The production side of things is doing exactly as it has for many years. Decisions are being made much later in the season, but it’s not considerably worse. When you have tours like U2 and Britney out there doing great business, it has to be taken into consideration. I think you’re going to find you’ll see a lot of headline acts packaging themselves together, such as Jane’s Addiction with Nine Inch Nails or Weezer with Blink182… these are great packages, that will do strong business.” Additionally, as record royalties shrink, the one profit center still available to bands is touring. The question is more than ever, the balance between lavish production standards and healthy profits. In most cases, they can’t co-exist.

Ticket sales play a key factor in keeping the touring industry successfully moving. Concert goers are still buying tickets to their favorite shows but they are being discretionary. Ross pointed out that while the number of ticket sales is actually down, the gross is up. When it comes to the “must see” shows with huge productions (U2 and Britney) that only come through once every few years, people are buying. Acts that come through a city twice a year may not be getting as much action from ticket buyers.

Overall, one can honestly say that the concert touring industry is doing well, despite the economy. Some sides are hurting more than others, but as a whole, it is going strong. mPm intends to continue this topic in other avenues of the touring industry in upcoming issues. Hotels, venues and transportation companies are invited to submit their input on how the economy is affecting their side of the business. To take part in this editorial journey, please contact Jessi Wallace for an interview. If preferred, interviewees may be anonymous in print.

Until next time....
Let’s start at the beginning. You started with Tom Petty right?

Yeah. We came out from Florida 35 years ago, but I’d already been working with him since 1965. That’s how long we’ve been working together, however long that is.

How much lighting work could you have done back in ’65?

I wasn’t a lighting guy then. I was a singer and drummer. I’ve been touring since I was five years old. I’m one of those born in a trunk kind of guys. My aunt had a live radio show back in Gainesville, Florida, and I was on that. We had a little troop of kids who would wander around and do live shows literally since I was five.

Where did Tom come into the picture?

I didn’t run into him until high school. We went to the same school. We were in two different bands and we wound up in the same band. I was the singer and he was the bass player. We went through several bands. One band would break up and we’d go off and find separate bands, they’d break up and we’d get back together in a new band. The last band that I was in with him was a band called Mudcrutch.

Mudcrutch? You’re kidding.

Yeah, Mudcrutch. I left that and went back to finish my degree in set design at the University of Florida. They went on playing, and while I was in college, I started lighting them and building little set pieces for them. When I got out of school in ’74, I went to work for Disney World and got laid off from there when the Arab oil embargo hit. Luckily for me, right about the time I got laid off, Mudcrutch got a record deal and we all caravanned out to California in our old beat up VW Minivans and as Tom always says, “We never went back.”

On a side note, do you still play or sing?

No.

Aw come on. Why not?

Well the funny thing is that Mudcrutch got back together last year and put out a record and toured, so I lit the tour. It was a club tour. We did the Troubadour, the Fillmore and places like that. And people would always say, “Wait a minute, you were a singer for Mudcrutch. Why aren’t you singing?” I would tell them that I’ve developed a very good relationship with Tom Petty, he’s the singer and I’m the lighting guy, and we keep it like that. It works. It’s been working for 35 years, and I’m not screwing that up.

Okay, so you did pretty well with Tom over the years. It sounds like you are a production designer before the term became fashionable, yes?

I didn’t start out to be a lighting designer. I didn’t even want to be a lighting designer. I originally wanted to be a make-up artist.
figured that.

J. L.: Yeah man, I wanted to be another Rick Baker or Stan Winston. That’s what I wanted to be. But then I got a degree in set design and that’s the direction I decided to go. You know when bands are starting out, and they’re little and just playing clubs, there is no set. You’re lucky if you even get a drum riser, but everyone’s got to have lights. At the school I went to if you majored in tech theatre you got the money for. However, as I came out here, I was only doing sets and then when video came along that became part of the deal too.

J. L. You know, I worked as a screen writer for a while and had the opportunity to work with one of the great production designers in the movies, Ken Adams. He designed seven of the first 10 Bond movies, Dr. Strangelove and Barry Lyndon. He did a lot of great work. I worked with him on a movie, and I really soaked up a lot of that kind of stuff. At the time, I was still doing rock ‘n’ roll and writing screenplays on the side. Back then nobody was called a production designer in rock ‘n’ roll. You were a lighting guy and there were set guys and that was it. There wasn’t video, and that’s just the way it was. The whole idea of a production designer calling out every visual aspect of the show just didn’t happen in our world, but working with a guy as detail oriented as Ken led me to take a lot closer look at every part of my concert designs. Now if someone asks me what I do, I tell them that if it can be seen, I design it.

J. L.: Well I’m doing a lot of work with Frank the Plumber as I did on the John Legend tour. We’re working on the Santana resident show in Las Vegas. I’m designing the Great American Food and Music Fest featuring Bobby Flay, Guy Fieri, Little Feat and Marshall Crenshaw (among others).

J. L. Everything. I’m doing the lighting for the music stages, but there are digital soft goods everywhere, including banners and video.

mPm: Are you designing the look and feel for the whole festival or only parts of it?

J. L.: Everything. I’m doing the lighting John for a long time and he knew the music really well. So, when we would play back recordings in programming he would say stuff like, “They’re just playing around there. That’s not really what they’ll do, here’s what they’ll really do.” It would have been really difficult to do that show without somebody who knew it like John does.

mPm: What is your favorite venue to light?

J. L.: It’s got to be between a theatre and an arena. Both have great aspects to them. A theatre is the best place to see a show. There is a reason why they are built the way they are built and why they work as well as they do when they are built properly unlike some I could name. An old school stage house works because it evolved into that shape over centuries and even...
Our staff is very enthusiastic about the relocation from Whites Creek to Goodlettsville,” says Rose Baker, Nashville Branch Manager. Because the new Nashville facility is custom-built, everything was done to Prevost specifications, including the design of its service area layout, efficient parts warehousing and even to its customer lounge “welcome amenities” and conference or training rooms,” she added.

The new 58,000 sq. ft. facility, located at 800 South Cartwright Street in the City of Goodlettsville, is equipped with 13 service bays, 1 wash bay, 20,000 sq. ft. parts warehouse area, two story office area and great parking spaces (including some leased spaces available for long term vehicle parking for Prevost customers). It is easily accessed from Exit 97 off Interstate 65.

Prevost has been operating its service center in Whites Creek, TN for over 11 years, and the growing local demand has triggered the need to expand and relocate. Several customers and potential buyers have shown interest in the 22,000 sq. ft. Whites Creek facility, but the property is still available. Prevost’s new Goodlettsville, TN facility is one of six North American service centers where factory-trained experts provide a full range of maintenance services and mechanical repair solutions to get vehicles up and running quickly.

Guy French, Service Director said, “Our services are now up and running. The move more than doubled the size of our previous facility and now, more than ever, we are ready to meet our customers’ needs for routine maintenance, cosmetic upgrades or major accident repairs.”
Daimler Buses North America Strengthens Its Motorcoach Sales Team

Daimler Buses North America announced today the appointment of Juan Lepe as the West Coast regional sales manager. Mr. Lepe will oversee the new motorcoach sales efforts of the Setra S 417 luxury motorcoach along with Sprinter shuttle bus sales to the motorcoach market on the West Coast.

“Juan comes to our team with a strong background in the bus and motorcoach market with a specialized focus on sales and marketing,” said Tom Chezem, vice president of motorcoach sales for Daimler Buses North America. “Juan will be a true asset as we continue to grow and cultivate our sales on the West Coast.”

Mr. Lepe, a Chicago native, has worked in the bus and motorcoach industry for 14 years with the last 11 years coming on the West Coast. Lepe is a graduate of Rockford College with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Business Administration.

Juan Lepe
Customers located in California, Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Nevada, Arizona, Utah, Alaska and Hawaii should contact Juan Lepe by calling 949-636-6822 or via email at juan.lepe@dcbusna.com.

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Jay Sendyk, a 35 year entertainment industry veteran, announced as of April 1, 2009 that he has taken the position of COO for Saban Theatre in Los Angeles, CA. Sendyk will continue running his accounting and business management firm, Sendyk & Company.

The Saban Theatre opened in September 1930 under the name Fox Wilshire and was designed by architect Charles S. Lee. This theatre serves as a beautiful example of his early art-deco style using rich plaster work and heavy sculpturing. The Wilshire Theatre was originally built to house first run feature films, and for 50 years served as one the premiere movie palaces in Los Angeles, hosting such notable premieres as “How To Marry A Millionaire” starring Marilyn Monroe and Lauren Bacall.

In 1981, The Wilshire Theatre saw its first renovation when it was converted to a live performance venue. Since then it has hosted a number of theatre productions and concerts including Richard Pryor, Billy Idol, Laurie Anderson, The National Ballet Of Spain and Mighty Wind and Billy Crystal’s “700 Sundays” to name a few.

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Thirty-five years ago Sendyk graduated from college with an accounting degree and entered the work force as CPA. He wanted to service the entertainment industry with his talents and went about it by jumping onto his clients’ tours. He traveled with them, lived on the road with them and worked directly with them. “For 20 years I

“The theatre has a rich history of concerts, largely comics. We are now going to bring live music to the venue in force. Whereas many venues have a mosh-pit, we have an orchestra pit. Therefore, not all artists will work in here, but like Carnegie Hall, Ryman Auditorium or any other historical venue; we are the right fit for many acts.”

In the next few months, the theatre will continue to undergo its second major renovation which began earlier this year, adding a new marquee and entry-way. There are more planned additions to the Theatre in the near future, but Sendyk is keeping it close to the vest for the moment.

Thirty-five years ago Sendyk graduated from college with an accounting degree and entered the work force as CPA. He wanted to service the entertainment industry with his talents and went about it by jumping onto his clients’ tours. He traveled with them, lived on the road with them and worked directly with them. “For 20 years I
was on and off the road,” he said. “I did this because I wanted to see first-hand the workings of a tour. I lived with the bands and crews, travelling with them and staying in the same hotels with them… I lived it.”

“This gig with the Saban came up and I thought it was a great opportunity to use the expertise I have acquired over the years with managers, agents and promoters.” Sendyk continued, “This is nice because it’s something new, and it’s truly rejuvenating.”

His business management firm Sendyk & Company handles all financial aspects for its clients specializing in the entertainment industry. The clients are both individuals and companies involved in music, recording, publishing, television, film and sports.

The firm continues to provide a full range of accountancy, production accounting, auditing, taxation, business management, investment management and consulting services.
The Tennessee Performing Arts Center begins to sell its own tickets this month, concluding 29 years of sales through Ticketmaster as of July 1.

Customers can continue to purchase tickets for TPAC performances in ways they always have—online and at the box offices within the arts center and at Davis-Kidd Booksellers.

What’s new? TPAC is dedicating a telephone line to ticket sales and TPAC tickets will no longer be available through Ticketmaster outlets.

Ticketmaster has made a special arrangement to continue to sell tickets for TPAC events which are already on sale, including several concerts this summer and the Broadway tour Wicked, playing Nashville September 2-20.

“This is a business decision. The Tennessee Performing Arts Center greatly appreciates the dedicated service and support from Ticketmaster’s leadership and staff over the years. We enjoyed a great partnership over a time of tremendous change in the ways that people purchase tickets. We’ll miss Ticketmaster staff who worked closely with us,” said Brent Hyams, TPAC’s executive vice president and general manager.

“Especially with the dramatic increase in online ticket sales, it makes better business sense to sell tickets on our own system. The new model supports direct relationships between TPAC and its customers, who will pay less handling fees and communicate directly with our staff during transactions. On a number of levels, this system will be more efficient and cost-effective for TPAC and its customers with software which was designed specifically for performing arts centers and has been customized for our operations,” he said.

The following performances at TPAC are now on sale through Ticketmaster and can be purchased on-line, by telephone, calling 615-255-ARTS (2787), and at the TPAC box offices, downtown and Davis-Kidd Booksellers in The Mall at Green Hills: Les Claypool, July 6; Sonic Youth, July 11; The Dead Weather, July 30; Tommy Emmanuel, July 31; the Nashville Public Radio broadcast of Says You, August 22 and 23; Mike Birbiglia, September 17; and Wicked, September 2-20.

All other future performances will be sold only through TPAC, which began using the new system for season ticket and group sales in April.

From July 1 until July 15, TPAC’s call center will be taking orders by telephone at 615-782-4040 from 9 am to 5 pm, Monday through Friday. On July 16, the hours of operation for this phone center will expand to 6 a.m. to 9 p.m., daily. Through the transition, both Ticketmaster and TPAC staff will redirect customers as needed.

“Our web site – tpac.org – links customers straight from our calendar to the point of ticket purchase, whether that’s Ticketmaster or our new system. The web site also contains...
information on how, where, and when tickets can be purchased. It's the best source for TPAC information, from browsing the site to signing up for RSS feeds and e-mail bulletins,” said Hyams, noting that on-line purchases accounted for over 50% of TPAC sales this year.

TPAC box office hours will not change. The box office within TPAC is open from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday and 90 minutes prior to any public performance. The box office located in the lower level of Davis-Kidd is open from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday and from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturday.

TPAC’s four distinctly different theaters are home to three resident groups, Nashville Ballet, Nashville Opera, and Tennessee Repertory Theatre. TPAC presents an annual season of “HCA-TriStar Broadway at TPAC” and special engagements, while serving a wide variety of rental clients who use the diverse, multi-purpose space in the facility for concerts, comedy acts, receptions, recitals, corporate functions, and other events. TPAC also administers one of the most comprehensive arts education programs in the United States.
Editor’s note: When I am not working, I spend most of my time with people outside of my industry. One such friend is Tom Kemner. While Tom isn’t in the mobile production business, he is in a business that has him traveling as much as any entertainment road dog I know. Though Tom doesn’t know the details of what goes into putting a twenty truck show on the road, he does share a common tie with us. He has a consummate understanding of the constant search for the perfect road meal. The good news that he did indeed find the ideal Texas Barbecue. The bad news is that the joint closed down forever on the 26th of June. While I was in the Dallas area on an assignment recently, Tom took me this fading of the BBQ universe a week before it closed. I can personally attest to two things, it was indeed the best Texas Barbecue I’d ever had and there’s no such thing as brisket or barbecued pork in Texas (don’t ask me how I found that out).
During any given lunch hour, your conversation may have to pause while they serve “Mr. Chuck”, a man in his seventies who has been struggling for years with a severe arthritic condition. Every day, he pulls up in front and they serve him their version of “drive-thru.” Knowing how painful his every move is, they will take out his order to the aged Chevy pickup—the same way he asked for it years back. Lunch and ice tea are served with the Fort Worth Star Telegram they have bought for him. “We figure that’s one less time he has to get out of his truck… although he hasn’t stopped complaining since the cost went up to a dollar,” says Dee Ann. “We haven’t found a way to tell Mr. Chuck we’re closing yet. I worry about him.” You can almost detect a tear when Dee Ann adds, “I just can’t see Mr. Chuck going through some drive-thru. He’s like a lot of older folks who come in here. We try our best to take care of them.”

Mr. Chuck’s favorite waitress is “that girl”: his term for Miss Angie (a mother with two grandkids). In his mind Angie is the only one that can get the ice in his sweet tea just right. And, for that, she can count on a one dollar tip every day—even if someone else carries his lunch out.

This is real pit barbecue with homemade sides including a pea salad that is worth the trip alone. Delbert will tell you, “Dee Ann’s father taught me how to cook the meat. It really is the easiest part of the whole operation. Two secrets: never poke it with a fork, and don’t raise the cover until it’s done.” (Somewhat, I think it’s a little more complicated than that, but that’s all he is sharing.) The show-stopper is the Buttermilk pie—a closely-held family secret recipe.

Probably the most striking endorsement of the restaurant came on day when an elderly was on her way to a hospital. An ambulance pulled up to the front of the building with its lights on and an EMT hurried in to place an order for food. It seems that the patient refused to be taken to the hospital unless they would stop and pick up some of the best BBQ in the area.

In mid-Summer the restaurant will close. The sisters are ready to retire. I have a sense we are losing a national treasure here. And if some chain restaurant doesn’t bid for their Buttermilk pie recipe, they deserve to suffer the full effects of the recession. Would Dee Ann sell the recipe? Her reply, “Oh, if you promised to make me fabulously rich I may think about it.”

Thank you Odom family. You have made the road a little more tolerable. Thanks for welcoming us into the family reunion, and for feeding us so generously. Godspeed.
Complete, Far and Wide

By Michael A. Beck

A great concern when touring internationally is always, “Will my gear be in London, Paris, Japan, Rio or New Jersey when I get there?” Plenty of time is built into the process of getting a show where it is supposed to be in the event that something goes wrong. However, given that every tour is distinctive and has its own needs, just moving across the pond isn’t enough. Indeed, that is just the beginning.

Depending on the scale of a production, it might call for limousine service, staging, security, air charter, catering, lighting, sound, pyro, backline, trucking, bussing and then some. The job of putting that all together is time consuming, and while it is what production and tour managers do for a living, help in the process is always appreciated.

To that end, there is a group of companies in Europe that have formed a powerful international alliance which is headed up by long time touring veteran Phil McDonnell. McDonnell is deeply set in the center of this group. The three companies are McDonnell’s Horizon Entertainment Cargo in the UK, Trucking Service in Wehnrath, Germany one-hour east of Cologne headed up by twin brothers Elmar and Hanno Lamberti and Coach Service, which is run by Clemens Behle, also located in Wehnrath.

When I decided to come off the road and do something to keep me in the business, I chose entertainment freight as my direction...
McDonnell began in the entertainment industry as a performer at the age of 14, and when he was 19 he went out working with the crew for Fleetwood Mac. In a very short time, he had achieved the position of production/tour manager with them as well as FOH engineer and from then on he worked as a tour/production manager for such names as Rory Gallagher, Van Morrison, Clannad, Gin Blossoms and Psychedelic Furs in addition to the fore mentioned Fleetwood Mac as well as working on band crews in the earlier pioneer touring days for The Kinks, Yes, Grateful Dead and Steely Dan.

So, as I’d done production for 28 years I decided to offer my industry clients full service production support as well as global transportation.”

The company that McDonnell started was Horizon Entertainment Cargo, and from the beginning his goal was not only to be able to arrange for full service “soup to nuts” production support but also to be able to do it on a worldwide scale.

While it’s very important to note that turnkey production support is readily available through his company, McDonnell concedes that it is rare for a production to come asking for full production, “That doesn’t happen very often because most productions have their relationships in place. It’s more likely that it will happen in the case of a record company bringing a new band into Europe to test the market.”

In addition to being able to supply productions with gear, transportation and rehearsal space, the team is also able to supply highly experienced crew as well.

“We have a huge book of personnel,” McDonnell told us. “When the people who we do business with are off the road, we like to return their loyalty by finding them work if they are looking for it. We do business worldwide, and we hear when someone is looking for a good tech i.e. stage or front of house guy or a lighting guy or a production manager.”

While such service does indeed keep good people working and helps tours out when they are in a jam, the fringe benefit for Horizon Entertainment Cargo is that it ingratiates everyone to the company and keeps them coming back for more.

Of all of the service that this group provides, the nucleus is always transportation. While there is not an area of the business where...
Moving Music and Productions Around the World.
the focus is less than 100 percent, transportation is job one. That means trucking, bussing and overseas freight. The bussing arm of the group has a fleet of 50+ coaches. The company’s coaches, all interiors built from new, exclusively by Coach Service can be found on upwards of 5,000 shows a year with a client list too long to mention. With that kind of volume, there is going to be the need to cross rent coaches to fill whatever gaps might occur.

Bussing Services boss, Clemens Behle talked about how that works, “When we have to subcontract a coach, we only rent equipment that we sold in the first place. Then we bring it back into our shop and thoroughly inspect it before it ever goes out on the road.” Behle went on to explain the backup protocol for the company, “Here in Europe we have a 24-hour emergency response network that stretches from Moscow to Lisbon and beyond. Let’s face it, anything technical can break down, but with cell phone technology and the Wireless Internet capability that our coaches have we are able to respond to any situation very, very fast. The last thing we want is to be responsible for a missed show.”

The company promise is that the tour will never be on the side of the road for more than a few hours. Anyone who has ever aged in dog years waiting on the side of the road feeling more like being stranded on Gilligan’s Island than on a high tech tour bus, that’s a promise to have in your back pocket.

The trucking arm of the group, aptly dubbed Trucking Service, realized great benefits out of joining the alliance because of the immediate extension of services that were available out of aligning with McDonnell. Company co-owner Elmar Lamberti enthusiastically heralds the virtue of joining forces with McDonnell, “Because Phil has such long reach with overseas shipping we can now offer container shipping to our clients whose tours start here in Europe. The benefit is fantastic.”

All of this sounds great, but it must be noted that so far we have talked with the three primary players in the company. But the proof is in the product, and that can only be truly measured by how the client talks about it. That in mind mPm caught up with Journey’s Production Manager Rob Kerns. Journey (to be featured in a fall issue of mobile Production monthly) just finished up the European run of its ongoing world tour, and Kern had nothing but the highest praise for Horizon Entertainment Cargo (et al). “I’ve been working with Phil on and off now for 10 years, and we’ve not only built a great working relationship but a wonderful friendship as well so the pleasure is all mine.”

Kern went on to explain why he has such a high comfort level, “I started using Phil as my freight agent in

When I make them a promise and say, ‘don’t worry, go home and go to sleep, your gear will be there when you get there,’ that’s a personal thing with me. That’s all about my reputation. I find that very hard to delegate that promise out for somebody else to fulfill. ~Phil McDonnell
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Europe, and as the company kept getting bigger and bigger I was able to use him worldwide. The great thing about Phil is that no matter where in the world you are contracting his company’s services or what service you’re obtaining you are always dealing with Phil. You never get the feeling that he’s handed you off to another company he found in North America or Japan or Asia and called it ‘part of his network’ just to sound like he bigger than he is. Phil is personally involved all the way through. I know he gets twice the email that I do whenever he is moving me.” (Journey also contracted HEC’s full tour production facility in Spich Germany for rehearsal space at the front end of its European leg).

McDonnell spoke specifically to the hands-on approach that Kern alluded to, “I built this company off of the relationships that I built over many years of touring. My clients are more than clients, they’re relationships. When I make them a promise and say, ‘don’t worry, go home and go to sleep, your gear will be there when you get there,’ that’s a personal thing with me. That’s all about my reputation. I find that very hard to delegate that promise out for somebody else to fulfill.”

Today, HEC manages freight logistics and charter services for such well-known clients as David Copperfield – moving his 60 tons of equipment from USA to Europe and back and anywhere else in the world he has to perform. At the drop of a hat, HEC regularly provides clients with private charter passenger aircraft, executive and touring coaches, tour trucks, hotels, executive cars and any required special entertainment production service to the personal spec of the client. Services offered extend beyond those mentioned heretofore in this article to TV, film, exhibitions, conferences, industries and the list is, for all intents and purposes, endless.

On the HEC website (entertainmentcargo.com), in addition to HEC, there are the company names IMEX, New Direx and JTB, all of whom figure into the long arm of McDonnell’s global capability. His reach includes offices in Australia, New Zealand, the east and west coasts of America, Canada, Japan, and Europe. Indeed, through partnerships and growth HEC now exists in 120 countries with over 430 satellite offices at its disposal around the clock.

All of this will be consolidated under one umbrella and will trade under the world network name of Entertainmentcargonetwork as of 2010. mobile Production monthly will take a much closer look at that later this year.

There is a story about a guy who sat down in a dentist’s chair. As the doctor approached him with a Novocain syringe he commented that he’d never had so much as a tooth ache even once in his life. The patient immediately got up and left the office in a dead run explaining over his shoulder that he didn’t want anyone who’d never felt pain dealing with his pain.

McDonnell, Elmar Lamberti and Clemens Behle have all felt the pain of touring from within the industry. They know what it takes to make a show happen, and it’s more than just hauling people and gear. They realize that the bricks of a wall aren’t what make it strong; it’s what is between the bricks that matter. They’re not cargo experts who’ve come into the entertainment market. They have been down the road, and they’ve had their share of toothaches (as it were) and the sum of their experiences makes it possible to advance their work with complete empathy.

These network companies of the soon to be christened Entertainmentcargonetwork know where you’ve been because they’ve been there too. They know where you’re going because they have the map.

Phil McDonnell, Elmar Lamberti and Clemens Behle have all felt the pain of touring from within the industry. They know what it takes to make a show happen, and it’s more than just hauling people and gear. They realize that the bricks of a wall aren’t what make it strong;
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Winfield W. “Buz” Ward III, age 59, passed away Saturday, June 20, 2009. He was born on November 9, 1949 in Detroit, Michigan, a son to the late Winfield Webb Ward II and Louise Newton Ward. He was preceded in death by his little sister, Jeanne W. Sauban and brother in law, Martin L. Johnson. Buz spent 30 years in the music industry, traveling the world and making friends wherever he went. Buz settled in Jefferson, Michigan in 2003, in his ideal home, an antique in a small town. He is considered the county historian and advocate for preserving the history of Jefferson. Most recently serving as vice chair of the Jackson County Historic Restoration Committee and the chair of the Jefferson historic Preservation Commission. True heroes, like Buz, strive and labor daily in anonymity against the world’s inequities, as we spectators watch safely from the bleachers.

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UK-based automation experts Kinesys designed and supplied the bespoke motion control system that moves and shapes the ‘transforming’ video screen for U2’s 360° world tour.

The system consists of 40 Kinesys Evo zero-speed chain hoists and 8 custom built winches, all controlled by their K2 3D software control package.

Kinesys’ Dave Weatherhead comments, “This was the heaviest, most complex and interconnected system we have undertaken to date, with 48 motors following unique motion profiles to allow the deployment of over 52 tons of video screen.”

The screen was originally conceived by Willie Williams and Mark Fisher, long term creative collaborators on U2 shows. New York based designers/architects Hoberman Associates assisted Innovative Designs in engineering and realising the revolutionary centerpiece for the show, which consists of 888 individual hexagonal panels which support 500,000 Barco LED pixels. The entire structure can ‘stretch’ from its 7m compressed height to over 22m at full extension forming a conical shape as it expands.

The screen structure hangs in the middle of the giant 4-legged “claw” structure that sits centrally in the stadium with the stage below allowing the audience to surround it and offering superb sightlines from all angles.

It weighs 52 tons including the supporting trussing and this is what Kinesys was tasked with moving into its different shapes and sizes. Kinesys worked closely with Nick Evans, who was co-ordinating all the technical aspects of the tour for promoters Live Nation, and Jeremy Lloyd of Stufish to ensure the seamless integration of the automation element into the overall structure.

The 40 Kinesys Evo chain hoists – 16 x 2 ton and 24 x 1 ton – are connected to the screen structure at equal intervals and at four different heights. These then move, following pre-defined non-linear paths to ensure that the screen is deployed in a fashion that is both structurally sound as well as visually pleasing. Hoberman supplied Kinesys with the movement profiles in the form of a spreadsheet which was then imported directly into K2 and referenced by each of the 40 chain hoists. Millimeter accurate tracking of the profiles was essential to maintain the structural integrity of the screen, and complex algorithms were employed within K2 to ensure that the real world followed the theoretical at all times. The hoists associated with the different levels within the screen move at notably different speeds. The uppermost hoists at times travel at less than 1 mm a second, while the ones nearest the bottom of the screen move at over 160 mm
a second when the screen is deployed at full speed.

The screen is flown up and down by 8 x 7.5 ton winches running synchronously. These are capable of speeds of up to half a metre a second - although some of the moves involve traveling just 2m over 5 minutes, resulting in the very slow and smooth movement required.

The winch design resulted in large numbers all around. The winch self-weight is 2.5 tons with the gearbox alone weighing over 1 ton. A single ultracompacted 28mm diameter steel wire rope provides the connection to the screen with a breaking load of over 75 tonnes, giving a 10:1 safety factor for each rope. Each winch is driven by a 37kW motor powered by a 45kW drive unit.

The same safety technology is employed in both the winches and the hoists. Four limit switches, dual encoders, dual brakes with monitoring and a load cell make up the comprehensive safety package implemented in each device.

Additionally, Kinesys is supplying the tour with control for 10 fixed-speed chain hoists controlled by an Elevation 24. These hoists fly 4 lighting trusses bordering the screen into position at the start of the show.

Nick Evans comments, “The K2 system is the ideal tool for controlling the U2 screen, the operator only controls 2 parameters; the degree to which the screen is opened and the overall height of the screen, K2 does everything else. Kinesys has provided the tour with an excellent service, and working with them reminded me of why I enjoy my work so much. Nothing seemed to faze them, even when the requested safe working load increased by a ton per winch .... it was all considered and taken in their stride. All this, plus they were on time and on budget, who could ask for more?”

Jeremy Lloyd of Stufish adds, “It’s again been a pleasure working with the Kinesys team. They always deliver high quality, innovative products that are well packaged for the touring environment. There’s only a handful of automation suppliers with the experience and technical expertise to deliver a system as complex as was required for U2 360, and on this occasion Kinesys proposed and delivered the most appropriate package at a competitive price.”

J. L.: I always want to do acts that are willing to be theatrical. I got pretty lucky with Tom. Don’t get me wrong, he’s a musician’s musician, and it’s always been music first. But he believes in putting on a show. He believes in getting theatrical. I’ve gotten to do stuff with him that just wouldn’t have worked with other acts. Over the years, I’ve also gotten the reputation of doing these “legit” acts that really don’t want to go too far afield with production. They want to keep it pretty straightforward. It’s kind of hard to get past that. You know, I would love to do a big metal act, but those guys are never going to call me because they see the acts I’ve designed for, and they don’t see me as the guy who can design for Metallica. That’d be fun because it’s theatrical. I would love to do something like that!

mPnc: The intimacy of the hall is at the heart of that. Wouldn’t you just love to see Paul McCartney in the Landmark Theatre in Syracuse?

J. L.: Absolutely.

mPnc: So what’s next for you? Have you reached the goals that you set for yourself?
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