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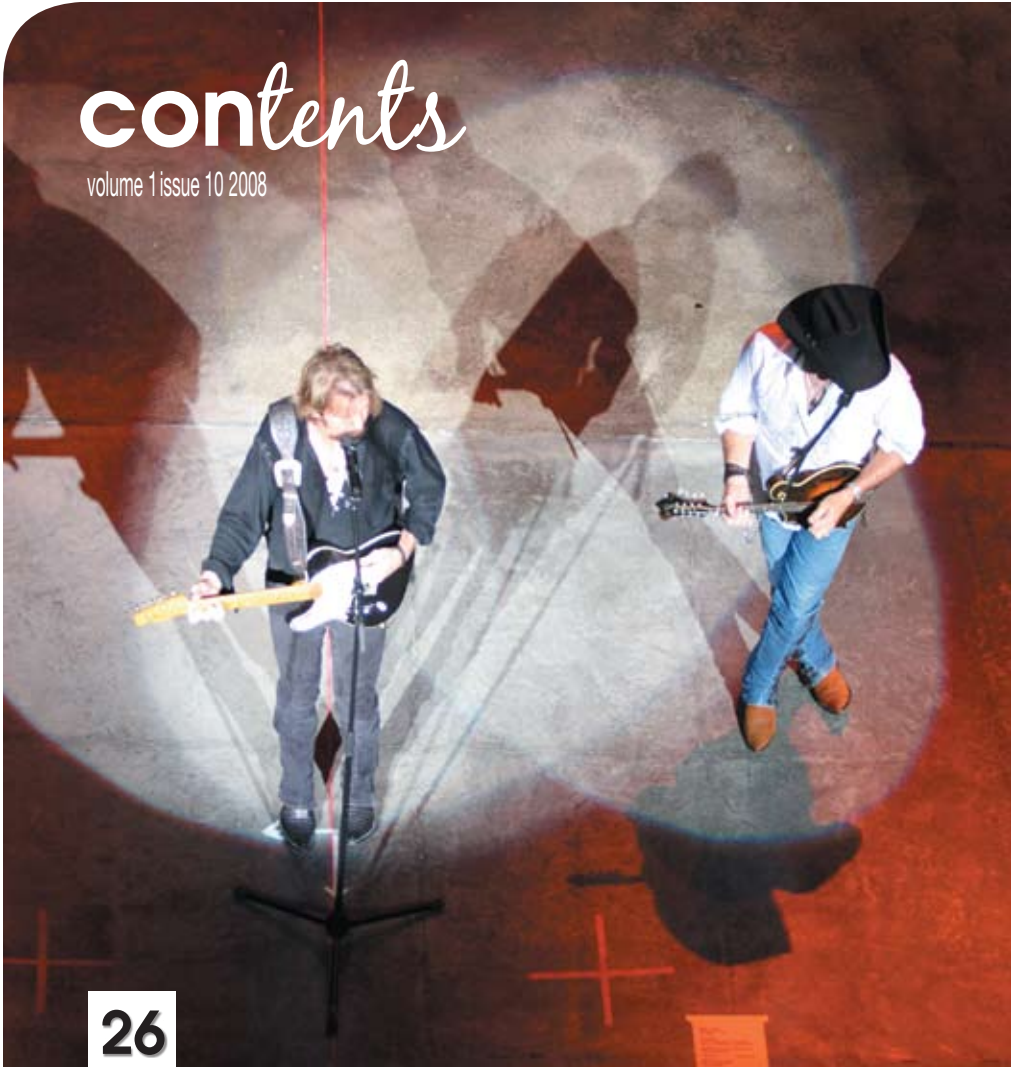
(* Alpha Spot HPE 300 and Alpha Spot 300 produce double the brightness of their best known competitors in the same power category. Alpha Wash 300 even beats them by approx. +20%. The brightness of Alpha Beam 300 is triple that of a standard 1200 W Wash projector.

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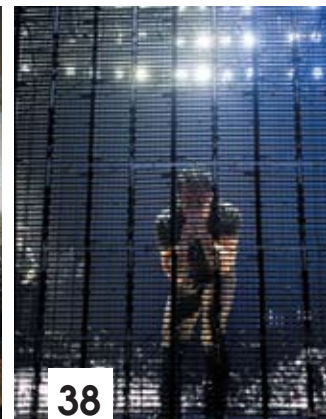
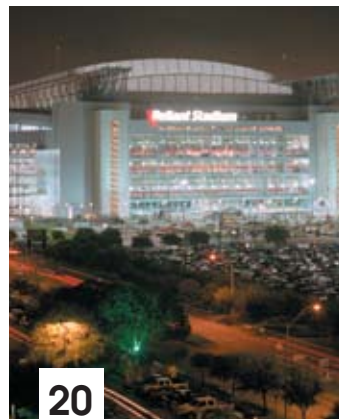
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The second leg of many tours are firing up. In the middle of this we are getting news of a major financial crisis that seems to be global in nature. First fuel cost soared and now this. Oh well, at least we have each other and our fair business. The one constant in this culture is that people want to be entertained and will pay for that luxury. Ticket prices may have to be re-thought, the size of productions may have to scale down a bit, but the shows will go on!

The thing I always remember regarding financial downturns is that there is a lot of psychology involved; group psychology, that is. Remaining optimistic and energized is infectious. The more positive you are in your day-to-day work and interactions with others, the more that energy is passed on. It may seem trite, but it is true that optimism is infectious. The "good vibes" that we put out can lift the spirits of others without our knowledge. So, keep up your own spirits, put on a happy face and to heck with the stock market. As one economist quoted on television, when your IRA quarterly statement shows up, open a beer instead of the envelope and keep working away.

Finally, this is the season for some of the big conventions and trade shows. My feeling is that there will be a few surprises this year for those events. There may be some scaling back of exhibitors due to the old greed factor and isolation. Sometimes event planners tend to think that their agendas are the only things that matter. A word to the wise – start listening to what your clients are saying – we are. Stay tuned.

Larry Smith



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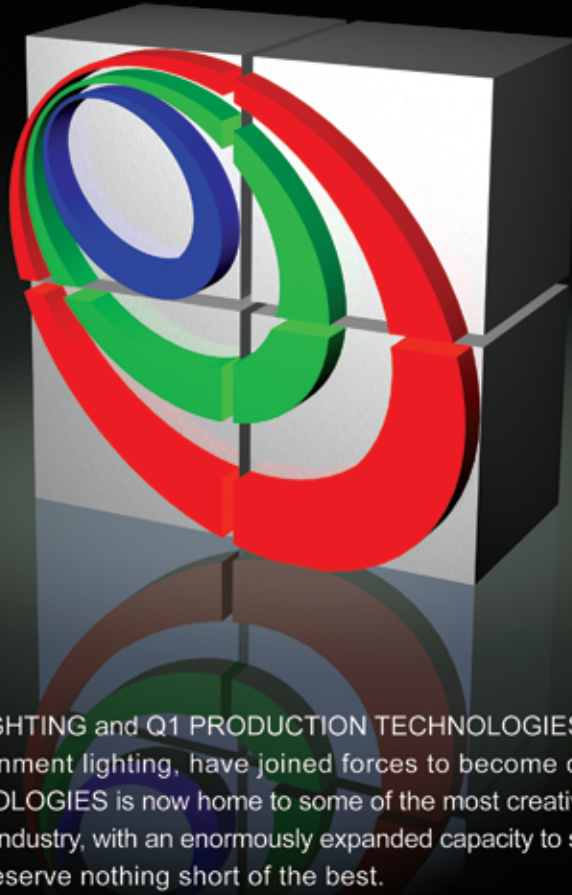
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OBAMA DELIVERS

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The world listened as President-elect Barack Obama delivered his historic acceptance speech to nearly a quarter million jubilant supporters at Chicago's Grant Park. Thanks to a superb sound system design and deployment by CLAIR Chicago, every word was heard clearly via an Electro-Voice X-Line PA and Midas mixing consoles.

Prior to receiving its historic weight, the rally at Grant Park proved to be an enormous and challenging event to cover. Ian Hunt, Director of Event Management for CLAIR Chicago, recalls the job: "Not only did we need to combine full coverage and vocal intelligibility on a massive scale in this deep, wide venue, we also needed to ensure signal feeds for the vast assemblage of press from around the world, and all with impeccable audio quality."

After mapping Grant Park venue area using LAPS (Line Array Prediction Software), both Hunt and Mark



Kishbaugh, Account Executive for CLAIR Chicago, determined that Electro-Voice's X-Line line-array system was the ideal choice to deliver the long-range, highly intelligible sound the rally would require.

Two main hangs of 12 X-Line line-array loudspeakers provided the main output (11x Xvls & 1x Xvlt), augmented with one delay hang of eight Xvls. Two more arrays of four Xvls were used as screen hangs, 12 ground-stacked Xsubs provided low end support, and eight X-Array boxes were used as stage fills and delays. EV's Xw12 floor monitors were seen on TV screens around the world, delivering the mix to the man himself. EV P3000 amplifiers provided power for the system.

"Aside from its excellent throw, X-Line offers great vocal articulation, making it perfect for an important speech event like this," Hunt adds.

CLAIR's system threw sound much further than the outer limits of Grant Park. It also delivered audio to televisions and radios across the globe via an unprecedented 720 press feeds. To make sure the rest of the world heard the best possible mix, CLAIR used a Midas Heritage 3000 (operated by Joe Keiser of CLAIR) at Front of House, and a Midas Venice 320 (managed by Bryan Farina) to monitor each of the 700 plus returning press feeds. Each worked alongside tried and true Klark Teknik DN3600 EQs. Warm,

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transparent vocals were ensured at every point in the signal chain; CLAIR also used two Midas XL42 preamps beneath the podium to split feeds to Front of House, the press system, and to ABC-TV.

“We used four consoles to send signals to the press,” says Hunt, “but on a stage as critical as this we needed to be able to monitor all incoming signals quickly and easily, so we sent everything to a Venice 320. We really needed the speed and reliability of Midas’ analog desks, as this was such a hands-on production. We needed to be ready for everything. This was an historic moment, and he really did deliver an impressive speech. Using analog was great because it really added depth to Obama’s voice, and imparted gravitas to his words. It was wonderful to hear him through the Midas preamps.”

Following the event, Hunt and his 22-person crew received praise for their production from all corners: “Everyone was extremely happy with the performance of the EV and Midas systems,” says Hunt; “we got great feedback from everyone, from the people who monitored the television side of the rally to people who were out there in the field—they all thought the sound was excellent. It was a great show. And, because of the nature of the event, it was an inspiring show to actually attend. The sound, the speech, the crowd—it was a truly memorable night.” ☺

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Tina Turner Brings Along Clay Paky... Baz Halpin Chimes In

Tina Turner, eight-time Grammy Award winner and Rock & Roll Hall of Famer, is currently making her long-awaited return to stages after an eight-year hiatus during the “Tina Turner – Live in Concert” Tour, spanning North America and Europe. There are currently 80 dates scheduled, with more being added as the massive demand for tickets continues to increase.

Turner’s new show features her entire career of hits, backed by a spectacular production including the singer’s high-energy band, original choreography, and of course, a jaw-dropping lighting scheme.

The stage includes a stunning array of 80 Clay Paky Alpha Beam 300 fixtures, as part of a massive LED wall grid upstage. The fixtures hide behind a motion-controlled video wall, which separates into sections, allowing the Alpha Beams



to shine through. The fixtures are hung from custom brackets on the sides of a total of 8 LED screens, with 5 fixtures hanging along each side, which become visible when the screens separate from each other.

Lighting Designer is Barry “Baz” Halpin, who lists Cher, Queen, Joe Cocker and Pink among his credits. “I chose the Alpha Beam 300 for Tina Turner because of their low power consumption and unparalleled output compared to anything else in its class,” said Halpin, “I was most impressed by their reliability, speed and effectiveness. They are lightweight, bright and pack a powerful punch.”

Some of the most stunning effects occur first during “Addicted to Love,” when the LED wall splits for the first time into four sections, revealing 40 Alpha Beams behind the split screens, then again during “Simply the Best,” when the four screens divide into eight, showing all 80 fixtures beaming

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between. Halpin says, "They look just beautiful – they make an incredible impact without overwhelming the other stage elements. We were able to use all of their features in different ways to get a gorgeous variety of looks."

The Alpha Beam 300 is the new 300W Clay Paky Beam Moving Lights that are having a very strong impact on the worldwide market, thanks to their "new concept" exclusivity. It recently won the Award for Innovation at PLASA08 in September. "The judges were impressed by this amalgamation of existing technologies which has created a new tool for lighting designers, offering greater versatility and flexibility," said Matthew Griffiths, Managing Director of PLASA.

Francesco Romagnoli, Clay Paky GM for the Americas tells us: "Alpha Beam is a winning and innovative product, conceived to complete one of the widest professional moving heads line in the world, the "Alpha Range." We have lit up some of this year's leading events with these products from Shakira's tour to The Cure's, from the Beijing Olympics to Cirque du Soleil's latest show.

Francesco also mentioned the importance of the partnership between Clay Paky and PRG Distribution, initiated at the beginning of 2008: "PRG Distribution's professionalism and market penetration capacity have been determining factors in Clay Paky product distribution in America. The two companies have high esteem and faith in each other and I am convinced they will bring mutual success on both the short and long-term."

Stay tuned, as *mPm* will feature the current Tina Turner tour (say that fast 3 times) in our December issue. ☺

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FAMILY FORCE 5



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FAMILY FORCE 5

RAWRs Across America

by BILL ABNER

When Family Force 5 went looking for production support for this year’s “Dance Rawr Dance 2” tour, they began building their team with the folks at Show Star Nashville. The lighting and sound company came in on budget and provided the group with a professional sound system that would be flexible, simple to use and meet their needs in the type venues in which they were booked.

The tour saw mainly theaters and smaller venues, and used each venue’s stacks and racks. Family Force 5’s music by nature uses a lot of low end, so Show Star Nashville added six Powered A-Line Acoustics LS-218A, dual 18 inch subwoofers to augment those house systems.

In addition to the subwoofers, Show Star Nashville also provided the tour with the monitor system and on-stage package. Again, A-Line Acoustics was called on for their powered Usoniq 112A wedges. Show Star Nashville also included the workhorse Yamaha M7CL 48-channel digital console to control the systems, both of which were run from the FOH position.

Mike Vaughn of Show Star Nashville summed it up, “They needed a system that delivered the same results night after night. The A-Line Acoustics rig is plug and play, and that allowed us to just hand the systems off to them and let their techs do their jobs.” Chad Sterling, FOH and Production Manager for Force Family 5 agrees, “The best thing about this tour was how easy Show Star Nashville made it for us night after night. It was definitely a plus

having the same basic system to rely upon regardless of the room we were playing.”

The lighting system was designed with the same thought process. 44Designs, also from Nashville, provided the lighting rig. Designed and programmed by Dan Schultz, the show was extremely detailed. “Timing was the key here,” remarked Schultz. “The programming and design process were interesting for me because I’m usually a Hog3 guy, and we only had a day and a half to program the whole show on a Vista. I gotta say, that’s a pretty slick console.”

In the driver’s seat at the console for the shows was Cale Wetstein, an up-and-coming LD at 44Designs who, “really nailed it” according to Schultz. “It was a great learning experience for both of us.”

What’s up next for Show Star Nashville? Vaughn explains, “We did such a good job of meeting their needs, and providing great dependable gear, that it looks like we’re going to be the go-to guys for Force Family 5. We’ve begun building a great relationship and look forward to a fantastic future.” ☺



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PRODUCTION PLUS 5 STAR

5 Star Cases has just delivered 4 Panasonic TH-50P plasma screen trunks to Hertfordshire-based production/event management and technical services company, Production Plus.

The new Tour Grade trunks each house one 50 inch screen display, and include separate compartments for detachable speakers plus an integral space to incorporate a fitted mounting bracket.

The plasma screen trunks were finished expediently in a week, finished with the usual Production Plus black laminate exterior, complete with corporate branding via screen printed logos.

Managing Director Andy Miller says that they keep returning to 5 Star because of the design and build quality

of the products and - once again - the wonderful service and backup. Speed and quick delivery are other defining factors that impress them about the Wisbech-based company. "Not many suppliers that can meet this delivery criteria with 5 Star's continuity" he states. He also thinks 5 Star has a great attitude, always making the client feel welcome – whatever the size or nature of the order or event.

These latest Production Plus screen trunks join the hundreds of 5 Star supplied cases that Production Plus uses day-to-day to house its extensive range of sound, lighting and AV kit.

Over years of building a fruitful relationship with Production Plus, 5 Star has supplied all its standard case ranges, from Lite-Flite through to Super Tour in a wide variety of shapes and sizes including briefcases, TFT cases, cable trunks, mixing console housings and special designs.

5 Star's Managing Director Keith Sykes says, "We enjoy working with companies like Production Plus who follow the same basic ethos and principals of excellence that we do. Consequently there are many parallels between the way we run our respective businesses, and we all strive to complete projects to the highest standards." ☺



Production Plus's Andy Miller (R) takes delivery of some of their new 5 Star cases 5star-cases.com



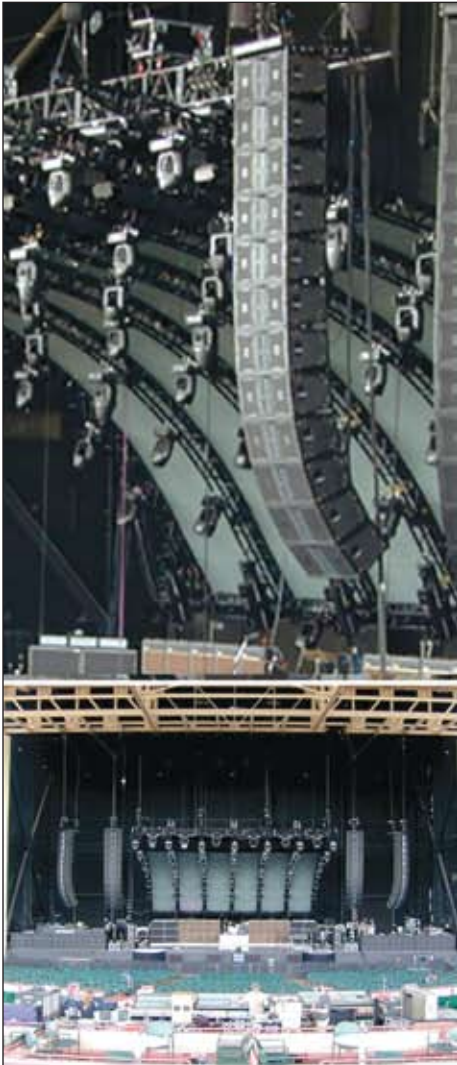
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for MTV Europe Music Awards



The MTV Europe Music Awards at the Liverpool Echo Arena this month required not only the most stringent crowd safety standards but immaculate production values, so Mojo Barriers provided the highest quality black aluminium barrier system to meet the needs of the security and television teams.

The company installed 155 meters of aluminium stage barrier, 100 meters of cable ramps and 200 meters of pedestrian barrier, for the ceremony, which saw Paul McCartney receive an Ultimate Legend Award, with other honours going to Britney Spears, Kanye West, Pink and Lil' Wayne.

"It was important that the barrier fitted in with the overall look of the production," says Kevin Thorborn, Mojo Barriers' UK Manager. "We were delighted to be able to respond flexibly when MTV Europe specified a black aluminium barrier. Meeting the production values of our clients is a key part of our service." ☺

CONTACT

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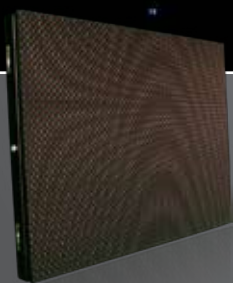
The system was built on the Monday, prior to rehearsals of the Thursday evening show, and removed overnight following the ceremony.



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ON TOUR

BUSINESS AS USUAL AT RELIANT PARK

by MIKE WHARTON

Nearly 2 months after Ike, a category 2 hurricane, hit the Houston Area and tore through Reliant Park, it's "business as usual" enthused Nina Jackson, director of Marketing and Public Relations for the facilities.



Assessing the damage was a huge endeavor stated Shea Guinn, President of Reliant Park, in a press release, as the four facilities on the property encompass over 3.7 million square feet. With over 350 acres to cover, the task of this assessment took tremendous and sustained effort by their personnel, but administrative offices were reopened within the week.

Though no flooding occurred, numerous trees and signage were uprooted throughout the park. "Traffic flow and park transportation is back to normal," Ms Jackson said. "All loading docks are

fully operational with no obstacles to hinder productions booking events. Shore power is available as well."

Ms. Jackson reported that preliminary inspection by the engineering firm Walter P Moore, which designed Reliant Stadium's structural system, indicates there is no damage to the primary roof structure. The hurricane did tear the cloth-like fabric material of the stadium roof. 5 of the 9 retractable roof sections were tore from the building with some pieces falling into the stadium. Clean up of the debris has already taken place and the roof is currently being repaired. The Texans games will be played in the stadium the rest of the season without the roof in place.

Both Reliant Center and Reliant Arena sustained roof, wind, and wind driven water damage, but a repair solution by local contractors was implemented. Both facilities are now fully functional.

Ms. Jackson further stated, "We are currently posting and holding events at both facilities as scheduled." She also noted that the Jeff Dunham Spark of Insanity Tour, the Weezer Concert, The ISA Expo, and the International Gem & Jewelry show were all well attended. ☺

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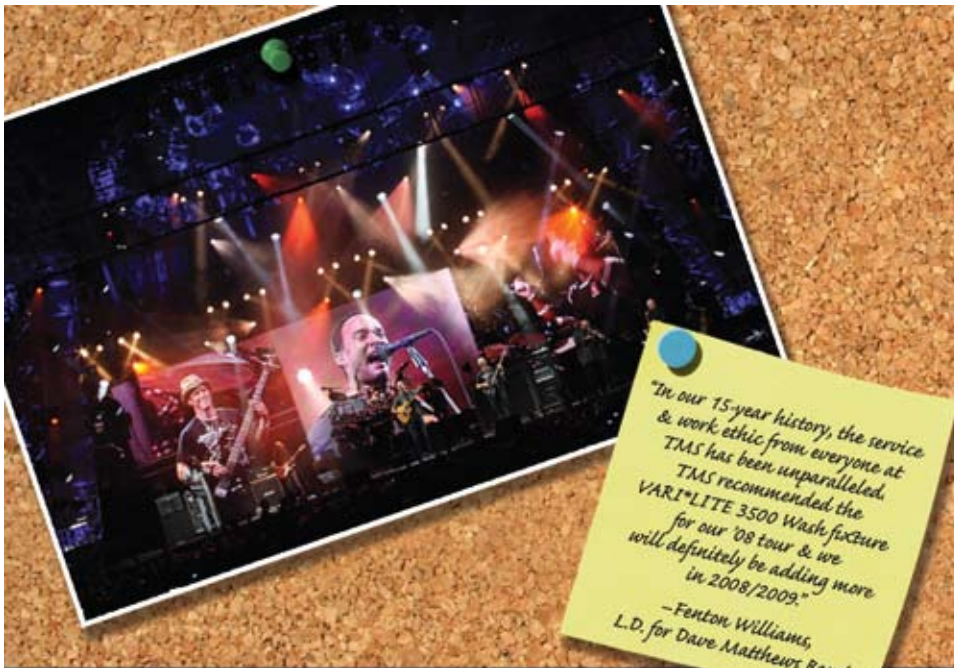
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MILWAUKEE THEATRE Welcomes the Jerusalem Symphony Orchestra



Wisconsin Center District Board Chairman Franklyn M. Gimbel(left),and Wisconsin Center District President & CEO Richard A. Geyer (right) welcomed Maestro Leon Botstein (center), who conducted the Jerusalem Symphony Orchestra at the Milwaukee Theatre on Wednesday, Nov. 12. Since its inauguration, the orchestra's repertoire has been comprised of an exciting combination of the masterpieces of the past and exciting, contemporary musical compositions. In addition to serving as the conductor and music director for the Jerusalem Symphony Orchestra, Mr. Botstein is the editor of Musical Quarterly, president of Bard College in New York, and is founder and co-artistic director of Bard Music Festival.

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Clear sound and dropout-free performance adds new dimension to productions

For the students, faculty, administrators, and others who routinely found themselves onstage before the student body and members of the local community at the Bedford North Lawrence Performing Arts Center, the quality of the facility's sound reinforcement system was a sore subject. Speakers and performers alike routinely experienced RF (radio frequency) interference, excessive dropouts, and poor sound quality as they struggled with the antiquated wireless microphone system. After determining this unfortunate state of affairs had existed for far too long, officials for the North Lawrence Community Schools decided an upgrade was in order—and they found their solution with wireless technology from MIPRO, distributed in North America by Kansas City, MO-based Avlex Corporation.

According to Nathan Lowery, manager of the Bedford North Lawrence Performing Arts Center, whose responsibilities include overseeing all aspects of audio and lighting in addition to supervising students who assist with productions, the acquisition of the MIPRO equipment was most timely. "Our old wireless system had really seen its better days," said Lowery. "With so many wireless products on the market now, our previous system lacked the ability to function well in a congested RF environment. We routinely had interference from other signals in the area and this caused a myriad of difficulties. Additionally, dropouts were very common. We actually had to keep the receivers on stage in order for the transmitters to be heard. Between the subpar audio quality and the frequent dropouts, the system compromised everything we tried to do."

Sold by John Schaeffer of Indianapolis, IN-based Indy Pro Audio, the MIPRO system purchased by the North Lawrence Community Schools for their 1,900-seat proscenium style theater consists of four ACT-707D Dual-Channel Receivers, six ACT-707TM PLL (Phase-locked loop) Synthesized bodypack transmitters used in conjunction with the MU-55LX lavalier microphones, and two ACT-707HM PLL Synthesized handheld mic transmitters. Lowery was quick to point out that in addition to the equipment being very intuitive to operate, the documentation was equally informative.

As he re-focused his attention back toward school business, Lowery offered this final thought about the new MIPRO wireless microphone system. "Everyone has been very impressed," said Lowery. "The system's sound quality is excellent." ☺

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photos by Michael A Beck

BROOKS & DUNN

COWBOY TOWN TOUR

by MICHAEL A. BECK

THERE ARE FEW THINGS in life that are you can really bet on with any certainty. Let's see, there's the sunrise and sunset, the fact that the beleaguered Chicago Cubs will have a great season and not make it to the World Series and the fact that Brooks & Dunn will tour sheds and play to sell out crowds.

In all four cases this year was no exception. However, for now we'll focus on the Brooks & Dunn show out of respect for our friends in Chicago.

This year's production was a bit of a departure from years past in a number of ways. Many of them centered around the presence of Robert Deaton (of Deaton Flanigen Productions) as the creative director of the show.

"Clarence Spalding (B&D's Manger) called and asked if I'd handle creative direction for the tour and I said 'sure, I'll give it a go.'" Deaton recalled. "So I got a team of people that I use on my television shows and we put the thing together."

Among the people on this team was Mike Swinford. One look at the set and it was obvious that it was designed by Mike Swinford. The portion of this show that could be classified as "set" was limited to the upstage wall. It consisted of the same elements Swinford tends to go back to with remarkable frequency.

There were three tall LED panels across the back line. The LED panels were separated and

flanked by scenic columns that were made of corrugated steel (AKA "tin cans") with six cutouts of the B&D trademark steer's skull. Those cutouts were a part of the creative theory of the show. Deaton placed a high premium on hammering home the band's brand.



One of the other twists this year was that Lighting Designer Larry Boster, the only one involved in the visuals of the show who *wasn't* on Deaton's team, chose to light the show without the aid smoke or haze in the air. "I got tired of all of my atmosphere going away every night because we only do sheds," Boster told us. "So in rehearsals I set the rig up and lit the show flat with nothing in the air. Then I laid in smoke and focused



ARTISTS
Kix Brooks
Ronnie Dunn



through it. It worked so well and the final product was so clean that that's the way I'll do it from here on out."

"I've always lit the stage with the idea of beams slicing through the air. But this way I can light the scenic elements and the people on the stage with a lot more precision."

The original set design was to have Syncrolites shooting through the cutouts in the tin cans at the crowd. Boster liked the idea, but had concerns about hitting the first 10 rows right in the retinas with Synchros all night long and the idea got nixed.

Boster suggested using a cyc or a screen behind the cutouts and neither idea worked. Then Swinford came up with the idea of using a mesh material called Contra and it worked like a charm. The Contra was flown on truss sections behind the Tin Cans in panels that were 10' x 25'. Each one was hit from top and bottom with Mac 600's and the result was perfect high-

light of the cutout images.

The effect added great texture and allowed the audience members who paid the most for their seats to see something more than the business end of the most powerful light in the industry all night long.

The original set design also called for the Tin Cans to be flanked with vertical truss towers that Swinford would like to have seen contain as many as 8 intelligent fixtures (another Swinford stand by). The original concept also called for 16 of these towers which would have required a footprint of roughly 130' across. But the show's actual footprint was considerably less than that at 60' wide. So Boster revised the design to cut the number of towers back to eight.

Space on each tower and budget also dictated that Boster pull back the number of instruments from the desired eight to four per tower.



TOUR OFFICES

*Management - Spalding Entrainment
Clarence Spalding / Camy Swafford
Tour Manager - Scott Edwards
Production Manager - Randy "Baja"
Fletcher
Stage Manager - Lonnie Taylor*



Apart from the back light provided by the vertical towers, the bulk of the stage was lit by three circular trusses loaded with 12 Mac 600's each. The center of each truss held a large relief of the Steer's skull that dominated the space and was lit by a Mac 2k on the floor.

While the sight of the aluminum truss running up the side of the tin cans was a bit of an eye soar (black truss would have disappeared a bit better), Boster, who wanted them to be black in the beginning, wanted to have a minimal visual for a transitional look. He used the aluminum towers filled that bill. All that being said, the overall look really was fantastic. The icing on the cake was the spectacular video content, which was produced by Lee Lodge (another member of Deaton's team) and posted at Mantra Productions in New York.

The video content was as successful as any show this writer has ever seen at truly showing the audience what the music *looks* like. In some cases it was incredibly edgy video that paced the music note for note. In other cases it was beautifully complex animated graphics that brought to mind the artwork of the 60's.

However, the video that had the most impact was also the simplest. During the very soft and gentle "Neon Moon," sung by Ronnie Dunn, the video content was nothing more than periodically appearing stars on a dark background. It gave movement and depth to the stage, yet it allowed Ronnie to lean into the song and be the sole focus of the stage.

"That was the song that required the most work on our part," Deaton told us. "Every time we came with a concept they would tell us that they'd already done it because they've been

BAND

Keyboards, Vocals, Band - Leaderdwain Rowe

Bass, Vocals - Terry McBride

Lead Guitar - Lou Toomey

Rhythm & Lead Guitar, Vocals - Tony King

Drums - Trey Gray

Fiddle, Rhythm Guitar, Banjo - Jimmy Stewart

Steel Guitar. & Lap Steel - Gary Morse

Back Ground Vocals - Julie Downs, Kim Parent, Trez Gregory



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doing that song since the mid 80's. So finally we decided to back all the way off of it and it really worked well."

Apart from the remarkably low risers that the band and backup vocalists worked on, the stage was completely clean. This gave everyone lots of real estate to move around. There was also a thrust that extended out to a B-stage upon which there was activity for much of the show.

Toward the end of the show there was a fairly stirring (non-political) tribute to the American Armed forces during the song "Only In America." In the show *mpm* cov-

ered, two Marines in full dress uniform and two Army soldiers in combat BDU's marched, one at a time, out to the B-stage. There, they assembled four abreast, gave a very slow salute and were instantly covered, along with most of the seated audience, with a massive streamer shot. That was pretty much the only real gag of the show. But it was enough to make the crowd come completely off the spool.

The execution of this show was silky smooth in large part because this team has been together for so long. As most people reading this story can attest, if a production team stays together as long as this crew has been



We must add that several shows on this tour were performed as a twin bill with ZZ Top. Because of last minute time constraints, we were not able to gather enough information to properly include the description of that format of this tour. However, we can say that despite the somewhat unexpected pairing of these two bands on the same stage, it not only worked great from a logistical and design perspective, but it was also a great show. If the rumors of these two acts teaming up for selected dates next year come to fruition, we assure you that we will be there to cover it.

on the road, it acquires a symbiosis that trumps just about any problem that comes along.

The Cowboy Town tour was the model of that theory. The production was spearheaded by Randy “Baja” Fletcher who has been working with B&D for close on 15 years. Baja explained why it works as well as it does. “First of all, I believe it all comes from the boss. We work for a couple of great guys in Kix and Ronnie.”

“Then there is communication. We have 61 people out here and communication is key. We pay a lot of attention to that. As far as my part of it goes, I believe that the best way for me to do my job is to surround myself with the best people I can get. They do the work and I support them in their efforts.

Baja finally summed up the method of getting this show down the road with what was probably the most telling comment of anyone who we spoke to in putting this story together; “I don’t know if the way we are doing this is the right way, but do know that it’s the Brooks & Dunn way and that works for us.” ☺

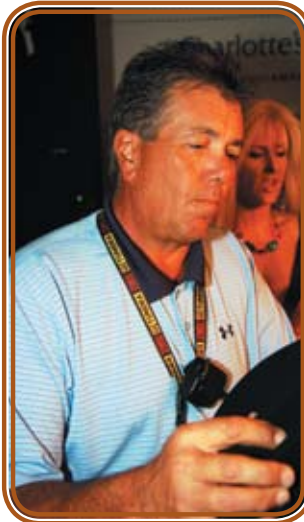
BROOKS & DUNN

2008 COWBOY TOWN TOUR STAFF

CREW

FOH Engineer - *Tommy Welch*
 Monitors - *Kurt Springer*
 Systems Tech/On Stage - *Matt Bock*
 FOH Systems Tech - *Jim Brentlinger*
 Lighting Designer - *Larry Boster*
 Crew Chief - *Shawn Lear*
 System Techs - *Cory Reynolds, Cody Cheatham*
 Director - *Dan Hanson*
 Engineers - *Mike Bishoff, Mike Forbes*
 Led Wall Tech - *Bryon Fuller*
 FOH Camera - *Mike Buswell, Darren Spann*
 Hand Held Camera - *Brandon Lewis, Dave Alexander*
 Set Carpenters - *John "Frenchie" Ristoff, Edwin Skinner*
 Drum Tech/Set Carpenter - *Johnny Seay*
 Head Tour Rigger - *Mike "MF" Rigger*

Rigger - *Mark Mckinney*
 Grid Techs - *Rich Connell, Ryder Deas*
 Merchandise - *Bill Huntsman*
 B&D / Videographer - *Thein Phan*
 Hot Air Balloon Pilot - *Joe Shevnell*
 Text Messenger - *Candice Watkins*
 Kix Brooks Bus Driver Lead Driver - *Mike Leatherwood*
 Ronnie Dunn Bus Driver - *Wayne Sullivan*
 Band Bus Driver - *Bee "Cuzman" Haley*
 Crew Bus Driver - *Curley Jones, Earl Singleton, Candice Lee*
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ABOVE (L TO R) Scott Edwards - Tour Mgr.
 Lonnie Taylor - Stage Mgr.
 Thein Phan - Tour Videographer
 RIGHT TOP John "Frenchie" Ristoff - Set Carpenter, Edwin Skinner - Set Carpenter,
 Johnny Seay - Drum Tech/Set Carpenter
 RIGHT MIDDLE Rich Connell - Grid Tech, Ryder Deas - Grid Tech
 RIGHT BOTTOM Mike "MF" McDonald - Head Tour Rigger, Mark Mckinney - Rigger
 OPPOSITE PAGE (LARGE MIDDLE) front row - Dan Hanson - Video Director, Bryon Fuller - Led Wall Tech,
 Dave Alexander - Hand Held Camera
 Middle - Mike - Forbes Engineer, Darren Spann - FOH Camera
 Back - Mike Bishoff - Engineer, Brandon Lewis - Hand Held Camera,
 Mike Buswell - FOH Camera

photos by Michael A Beck



TOP ROW LEFT Cory Reynolds - System Tech, Shawn Lear - Crew Chief,
 Larry Boster - Lighting Designer, Cody Cheatham - System Tech
TOP ROW RIGHT Jim Brentlinger - FOH Systems Tech, Tommy Welch - FOH,
 Matt Bock - Systems Tech/On Stage, Kurt Springer - Monitors
MIDDLE Candice Watkins - Text Messenger
BOTTOM Jeff Kersey - Guitar Tech
BOTTOM RIGHT Randy "Baja" Fletcher - Production Manager



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 JT Williams, Security
 Brett Bachemin, Trent's Assistant
 Leo Herrera, Band Assistant
 Pete Keppler, FOH Sound
 Mike Prowda, MON Engineer
 Todd "Fox Hole" Tiedemann, Stage Audio Systems Tech
 Chris "Radar" Russo, FOH Audio Systems Tech
 Owen "Doc" Thomas, MON Audio Systems Tech
 Ryan Neuberger, Audio Systems Tech/Ghost Backline Tech
 Terry "Cowboy" Parker, Head Rigger
 Russell Glen, Rigger/Carpenter
 Andrew "Hans" Buscher, Trent's Guitar Tech
 Mat Mitchell, Keyboard/Midi tech
 Chris Harrison, Robin's Guitar Tech
 Mike Schuppan, Justin's Bass Tech
 Jeremy Berman, Drum Tech
 Michael "Blumpy" Tuller, ProTools Tech
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Going into the assignment, the comparison had been made between Nine Inch Nails and Pink Floyd. This seemed a bit odd given the massive disparity in musical styles between the two bands.

As the day wore on, however, one began to understand the similarities. There was the manner in which the crew members talked about the production not as being something they'd never seen before but as something they didn't know was technically possible.

But when you put the minds of Trent Reznor and Roy Bennett in the same room with Montreal based Moment Factory (a company that we will talk about at length in next month's "O Canada" issue) the outcome will undoubtedly cause a suspension of disbelief across the board.

While there were a number of interesting kinks in this production, it was really all about the visuals. When asked what he brags to his friends about concerning this show, FOH Engineer Pete Kepler said, "It looks great! It's hard to make something sound as good as this show looks."

The show plays in three parts. The first and third parts were, for the most part, a "straight ahead rock show." The middle section was wrapped around Reznor's "Ghost" album, a 36 song work of which four songs were played in this part of the production.

Very little of the lighting was provided by oblique angles. It all hit straight on from side lighting through the use of offstage atomic

strobes and movers, or down light from several pods flown above the stage. There were seven pods that hung on an upstage line that hit the crowd with 16 of the MAC 300's (each) that Bennett commissioned LSI/Saco in Montreal to refit with LED panels for the last Paul McCartney tour.

The effect these units had was very impressive. They didn't just hit the crowd. They moved en masse to create wave effects that seem to animate the whole array and gave it a truly fluid look. Centered at the top and bottom of each pod was a Vari*Lite 2500 that provided great back light and spent a good deal of time shooting out through the stage to the house.

In today's world, we have come to expect video as the center piece of just about any production. This show lived up to that expectation due to the massive video presence. But it's what was done with the video content of the show that changed the way everyone who saw the show will ever look at a stage again - in the same way the first automated lighting and the wireless microphone did in their time of epiphany.

It was more than just a video presentation that accented the performance of a band on stage. It was an interactive environment the likes of which has never before been seen on a concert stage.

While many people were involved in the design of the show, the glue that held the amazing look together was Moment Factory. The stage had three primary video delivery points. There was a down stage Stealth wall

that was the length of the stage, about 20 feet high and was convex toward the house.

There was another Stealth wall that was the same size but was concave as the crowd looked at it that played mid stage. Finally, there was an upstage high-res wall made of Barco D7 (which will be replaced with the incredibly crisp Saco V9 on the next leg of the tour) that was the width of the stage, flat and the same height as the Stealth walls.

All of these elements including the wall of LED loaded Mac 300's flew in and out with the same regularity as one might see in a theatrical fly system. When they were flown, they were hidden by a deep teaser that masked the entire rig. This added to the dramatic effect of the five Syncrolite units as they seemed to come slamming out of nowhere from the perspective of all but the first 20 or 30 feet of audience.

All of the elements of the show were interconnected through a hard coded system provided by Moment Factory. Moment Factory provides interactive production environments as opposed to set and scenery in the classic sense. That is a very important distinction in the context of the NIN show.

The visual aspect of this show, especially the "Ghost" segment, was constructed like a video game is written rather than the video content as we have known it to be. That being said, there was traditional video content in the show but it was integrated into the bigger picture.

Sakchin Bessette, one of the founding partners of Moment Factory described the system as a video game that uses the stage as the joy stick. The stage was painted with infrared and scanned with high speed lasers from several different positions and angles. This provided the system with three dimensional data of what was on the stage, where it was and where



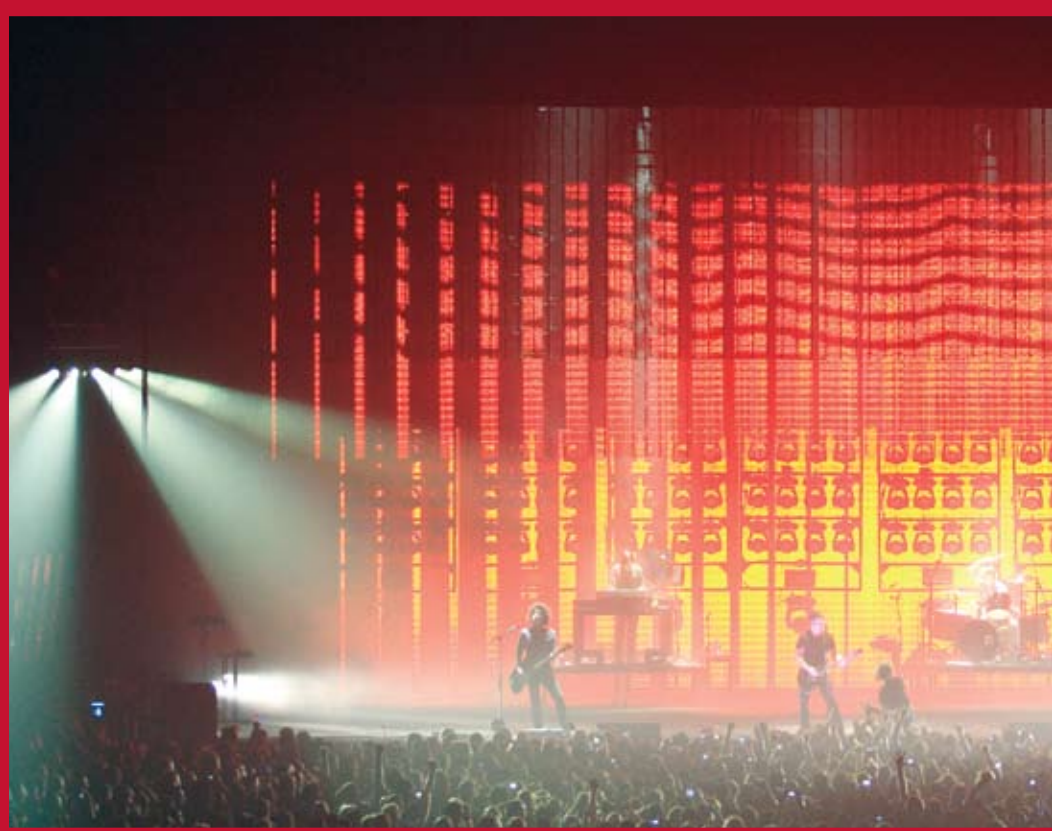
NIN BAND

Trent Reznor, Vocals/Guitar/Keys/Percussion
Alessandro Cortini, Keys/Guitar/Vocals
Josh Freese, Drums
Robin Finck, Guitars/Vocals
Justin Meldal Johnsen, Bass Guitar/Vocals

NIN VENDORS

Production & Lighting Design:
Dakana Design, Inc.
Lighting: Upstaging
Video: Nocturne Productions

Interactive Video: Moment Factory
Bus Company: Roberts Brothers Coach Leasing
Trucking Company: Upstaging
Air Freight: Rock-It-Cargo
Stage Construction: Accurate Staging
Merch: Bravo Intl. Group
Communications: AAA Communications
Security: NPB Companies
Catering: Culinary Underground
Passes: Cube Services
Itineraries: Smart Art



or how it moved about the stage in the case of performers.

That information was fed to the system so that at times it could, through the use of video feedback or raw electronic signal, present an image with similar characteristics of a CAT scan or an MRI. This could be used with such precision that at times it could focus on Trent Reznor's mouth as he held a microphone to it.

This system didn't just control the video presentation. It also controlled lighting as well. During one part of the show, the downstage Stealth wall was full of white noise. As this was happening, Reznor was walking along the upstage side of the wall as he performed a song. As he moved, the system tracked his progress and kept floor mounted lights trained on him at all times. As that was happening, the system also created a hole in the white noise wherever he was so that he could be seen through the screen.

The screens were also used to create incredible depth of field. At any given time, the band played anywhere between them as well as down stage of them. There was a point of the show where the look was a

swamp. Because various parts of the scene were presented on all three screens, and the performers were positioned in among the screens, it looked like they were playing all throughout the swamp.

During the section of the show where the "MRI" effect (for want of a better descriptor) was focusing on an image of Reznor's face, the audience was completely drawn into the effect. Then when the song was over Stage Manager Doug Eldridge came out onto the downstage apron and swiped hand held conventional light across the downstage Stealth screen. As he did it, the image was washed away as though the light was an eraser.

All of this brings us back to the software that made all of this possible. The show was written, as was stated earlier, like a video game in that it could do nothing without the interaction of the people on stage. And like a video game, the hard coded data was immobile until the performers entered the equation.

In other words, if the system was the video game and the stage was the joystick, the performers were the thumb on the joystick's trigger. Various parts of the show could be

triggered by the Grand MA console, SMTP code, MIDI coming from any number of places from the stage to the FOH console. The system controlled every visual aspect of the show.

This amount of technical interaction made for amazing challenges that started even before rehearsals. "We have done a lot of interactive environmental systems. But they were mostly static applications," said Moment Factory Co-owner, Dominic Bessette. "You go in, calibrate everything and set to work every time in the same place. But in this show we had to design the system with the knowledge that it would be bounced down the road, set up and recalibrated in a different place with different characteristics every day."

That wasn't the end of it - next came rehearsals. Despite the emphasis on visuals in this production, all of the other aspects of the production had to be attended. The problem was that they were all tied into this system, which meant that the writing of this software had to involve everyone in one way or another.

And this wasn't like programming a console. When someone said, that they were

continued on 38



{ CREW PHOTOS AND MORE

L TO R TOP TO BOTTOM

Doug Efridge – Stage Manager

FOH Infrared Array

Terry "Cowboy" Parker – Lead Rigger, Russell Glenn – Rigger/Carpenter

Ryan Neuburger – Audio Systems Tech / Ghost Backline Tech

Tina Skjerseth – Video Tech, Adam Dragosin - Nocturne Crew Chief, Jordan Goodfellow – Video Tech, Jean-Philippe Tremblay – Interactive Video

Paul Fonnemann – Catering Utility, Jerome Criscitiello – Catering Crew Chief, Richard Harris – Catering Chef, Ali Vatter – Catering Dining/Dressing Rooms



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not quite comfortable with something, it meant that it all had to be rewritten.

Of course the part of the show that interacted most closely with the Moment Factory system was video delivery provided by Nocturne, as is the company that is deploying the bulk of the final product. Nocturne has worked with NIN since 2005 when it provided the first ever hi-def video screen (Saco V9) to hit a stage. Nocturne Co-Owner, Bob Brigham spoke to us about the experience of working on the project.

“You have to understand that this is the first time that anything like this has ever been done. Therefore, it came with the expectation that there were going to be a few bumps in the road. When you know that going in, it becomes easier to deal with the kinks. And they were there. But we got by them and the finished product was well worth it. This is an unbelievable show. I highly recommend that everyone see it.”

Rigging had its share of tests as well. Lead rigger, Terry “Cowboy” Parker explained,

“This isn’t an especially heavy rig by today’s standards, but it’s really precise because of all of the stuff up there that you don’t see on any other rig. It can’t be changed at all. It’s got to go up the very same way every day.”

The rig had 11 different kinds of hoists. Parker continues, “If one of them gets out of position, you can’t ‘deal with it,’ you have to get it right. There’s 10 inches of clearance between everything that is moving up there. There’s no such thing as fudging a point. We had one point that we tried moving four inches during rehearsals, and it spiked the load from 2,300 to 3,800 pounds.”

There was an interesting backline twist on this show as well. The “Ghost” portion of the show was performed with orchestral instruments such as a 5 ½ octave marimba, timpani, orchestral bells and an upright bass that you don’t see any time during the rest of the show. These instruments obviously took up a lot more real estate than your usual backline array. They all had to be staged on rolling risers up stage and maneuvered into position and struck in a remarkable amount of time.

We could go on talking about this show for a very long time and never really get the full point across. But it must be said that this show presented a level of creativity that we haven’t seen in a very long time. That’s not to say that we aren’t seeing spectacular events, but it’s not often we see shows that reach this far.

One characteristic spoke the loudest - the complete lack of ego it took for the band to step back from the temptation to have the show be all about them instead of being all about the show. Remember, there were no follow spots or IMAG in this show. And often times the image of the band was completely lost in the image of the show.

Roy Bennett probably said it best when he described this show as performance art, thought for a moment and then corrected himself...

“Actually, it’s better described as High Art.” ☺



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