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volume 1 issue 11 2008

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# O Canada } issue

**mobile** *monthly*  
**PRODUCTION**  
by TOUR GUIDE

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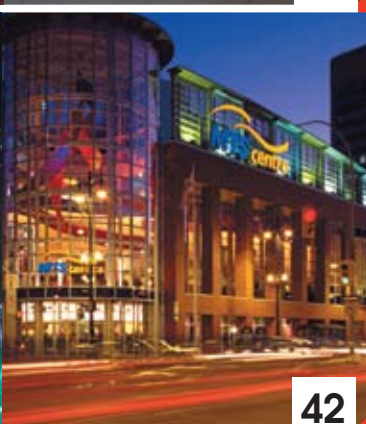
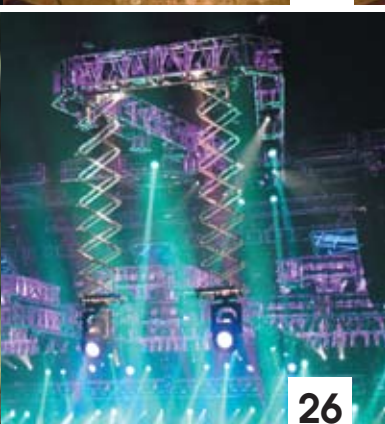
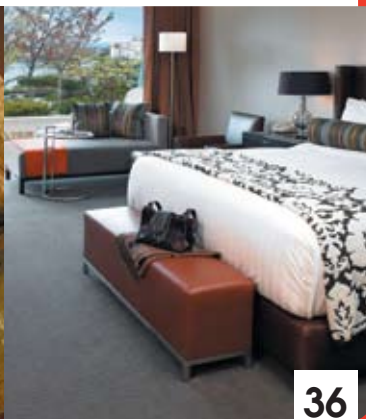
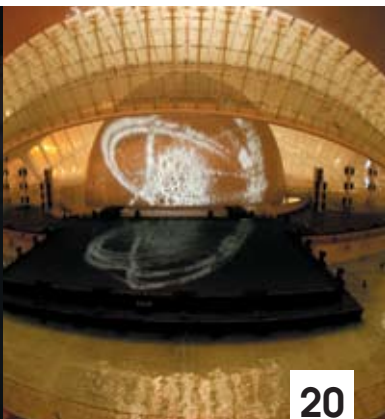
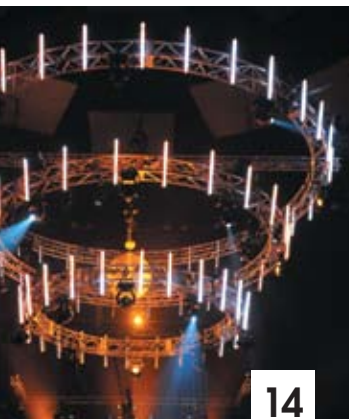
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Old Man Winter is closing in on us, the elections are *finally* past, the stock market is dropping faster than Maggie's drawers and we could all use some good news ... so we proudly present this month's issue with a major focus feature on Canada. When the cold air blows on us from the North, we can blame our Canadian Cousins for the chill in the air, and they can blame us for the chill in their wallets.

We have wanted to initiate this type of geographic focus for some time, and it has exceeded our expectations. We hope you agree and if so, we will be doing more of these pieces in the future. If you have any suggestions on other areas that may be of interest to our readers, please let us know.

In the midst of putting this issue together, we have also been frantically bringing together the annual Tour Link Conference, scheduled for Mesa, Arizona, January 22-25, 2009. To our great pleasure, our advance registrations are already ahead of any previous year and regardless of the doom and gloom of the economy, this is shaping up to be the best event we have yet produced. Whether you are a production individual, a regional company, a touring heavy-weight or drive a coach, this is the place for you. We seldom hear anyone who has attended this event in the past not plan to attend another as soon as they can. So, take heed and get your rooms booked and your tickets purchased.

Finally, do not be too discouraged by the dark economic news. If we have learned one thing from the past it is that all bad things eventually go away, and we work and play in one of the most resilient businesses on the planet. Most of our money is generated by direct sales, and we must simply sell our way out of the darkness and renew our places in the sun. It's all in your head, don't you know?

*Larry Smith*

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## HOME OFFICE STAFF

ph: 615.256.7006 • f: 615.256.7004

email: [info@tourguidemag.com](mailto:info@tourguidemag.com)

[tourguidemag.com](http://tourguidemag.com)

750 Cowan St • Nashville, TN • USA 37207

Publisher: Larry Smith

[lsmith@mobileproductionpro.com](mailto:lsmith@mobileproductionpro.com)

Editor: Chris Cogswell

[ccogswell@mobileproductionpro.com](mailto:ccogswell@mobileproductionpro.com)

Chief Writer/ Photographer: Michael A. Beck

[grockit@comcast.net](mailto:grockit@comcast.net)

Contributing Writer: Mike Wharton

[wharton8317@bellsouth.net](mailto:wharton8317@bellsouth.net)

Contributing Writer: Bill Abner

[bigolbill@comcast.net](mailto:bigolbill@comcast.net)

Contributing Writer: Jessi Wallace

[jwallace@mobileproductionpro.com](mailto:jwallace@mobileproductionpro.com)

Art Director / Graphic Designer: Kristin Searcy

[kristin.tourguide@gmail.com](mailto:kristin.tourguide@gmail.com)

[ksearcy@mobileproductionpro.com](mailto:ksearcy@mobileproductionpro.com)

Webmaster: Michael Stalcup

[mstalcup@mobileproductionpro.com](mailto:mstalcup@mobileproductionpro.com)

## ADVERTISING SALES OFFICE

Jessi Wallace • Nashville

[jwallace@mobileproductionpro.com](mailto:jwallace@mobileproductionpro.com)

ph: 615.256.7006 • f: 615.256.7004

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Benny Collins, Nick Gold, Jim Digby, Jon Nevins, Stuart Ross,

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ph: 615.256.7006 • f: 615.256.7004

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# 0 Canada }

## issue introduction

**O**oooooh CANADA! We have wanted to do a special feature on the far North for a long time and finally, here it is. We tried to select a group of companies that would make interesting reading, and I believe we surpassed our goal. This is just the first of this type of feature, and certainly there will be more Canadian coverage to follow, since it was not possible to cover as many of the companies as we would like with one issue.

**b**ecause there has been so much coverage of the presidential Election here in the USA, we thought it would be appropriate to remind our readers that there really is life outside of our borders. Manufacturing and new emerging technologies is alive and well in Canada. The service companies have expanded their reach well beyond the confines of its country.

**i**ncluded in this feature is a glimpse of Victoria island in British Columbia which is an emerging favored destination for conferences, tourists and special events. Victoria is one of the most beautiful places in North America, and the market has been growing in capabilities every year. Anyone searching for a unique conference setting should give serious consideration to this location .

**f**inally, there is no way to accurately describe the personality and competence of our Canadian Cousins. However, anyone who has had the good fortune to work in that country is immediately struck by the grace and maturity of the Canadians themselves. We were fortunate to have an opportunity to explore a few of the key companies and we hope our readers reach out to the industry in that country as often as possible. For our part, we can't wait to work on a follow-up issue and have an excuse to return as soon as possible.





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## STAGELINE: Making Choices for the Future

by MICHAEL A. BECK



**O**n September 30, 2008, several hundred people gathered in a new building in L'Assomption, just outside of Montreal, for a very special day. It was the grand opening of Stageline's new facility. Okay, it's a new building, big deal, right? Not so much. This actually was a big deal for many reasons.

This facility, which is the new home for the company's stage manufacturing division, is the second most efficient in Canada, but that is a loaded statement. The most efficient structure in the country can only make that claim because the activity within creates so much heat that it is able to keep the place warm throughout the winter.

On the other hand, the Stageline building was built with the purpose of mounting a full-on assault on inefficiency. The goal was to make being "green" something more than just a politically or fashionably correct move.

Stageline President Yvan Miron explained, "Everybody rattles about the importance of changing a personal lifestyle, but when it comes down to making those changes at the work place, the sense of urgency ceases to exist."

One of the first challenges of the project was heating and cooling the facility, which would have enormous amounts of open space, as well as a fair amount of office and meeting space.

The first step was to spend three weeks dropping geothermal wells into the property. These wells would heat the building in the winter and cool it in the summer. The efficiency innovations run from top to bottom. The roof is covered with a material similar to the lining of a swimming pool. The surface of the roof dips in at several locations into drains.

This collecting system gathers rainwater from all over the 38,000 sq. ft. of both levels of the facility, which is then used for washing vehicles in the yard. But that's not all that happens on the roof. There is a huge solar panel that gathers

heat. The heat gathered in the panel creates a vacuum inside itself and sends the heated and filtered air into the building. The system creates a thermal difference of roughly 20 degrees.

With these and many more efficiency related features, this building is 70 percent more efficient than it would be if its environmental systems were managed through conventional systems.



According to Yvan Miron, it all figures into a more "in your face" issue. "With energy prices rising the way they are, there is no way that a medium sized company like ours could afford to own a building like this in five years without the efficiency feature that we built into it."

Miron went on to say, "We're technical people. We don't just look at the numbers. We also look at the disability of the technology, but it's more than just that. It's the air that your people breathe."

In addition to the efficiency related features, this building, as well as the other Stageline properties, have full C-TPAT accreditation. According to the CBT.gov website, C-TPAT (Customs-Trade Partnership Against Terrorism) is a

voluntary government-business initiative to build cooperative relationships that strengthen and improve the overall international supply chain and U.S. border security. In other words, it is an American security program through which foreign companies can have clearance into America even if the American borders are closed down.

Let's say Stageline is delivering two stages to a customer in the U. S. and the delivery time is critical. Ten miles out from the border crossing, the word comes down that an incident occurred that has caused security measures to be implemented which include the closing of our borders. This doesn't mean that no one gets in. However, it does mean that getting through is going to be a real bureaucratic nightmare, especially if you are bringing commercial goods into the country.

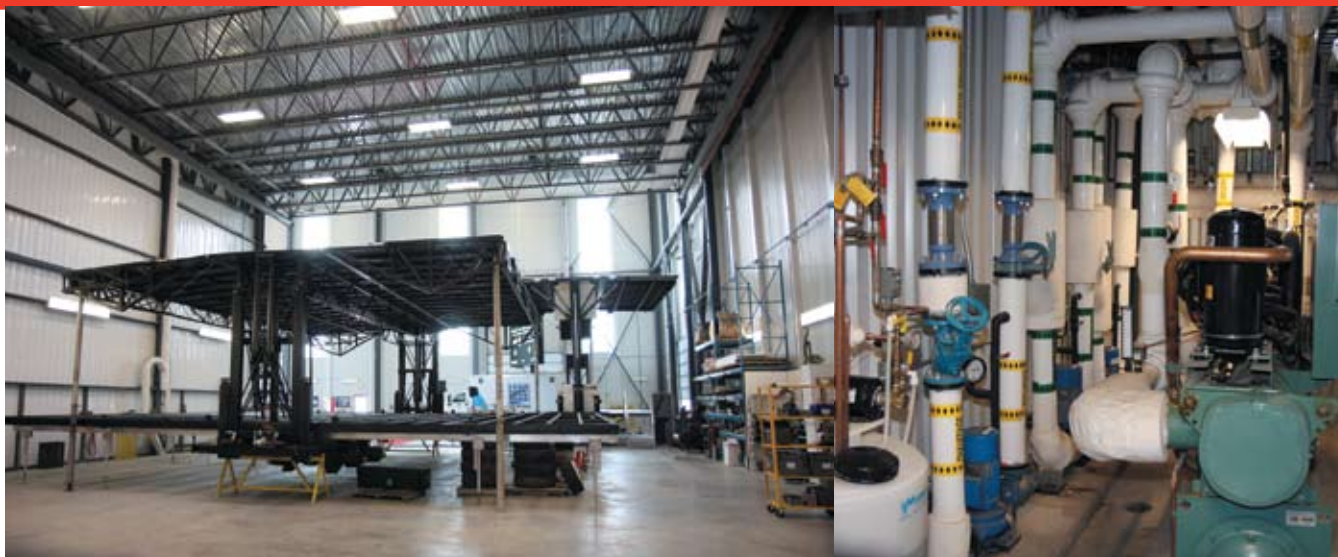
The U. S. understands that such border closings could badly disrupt the national supply line in many ways. The way around such hassles is to have been pre-inspected at your home facility all the way through to the delivery process.

This accreditation was very important to Stageline given the volume that it moves into the U.S. as well as into some 30 other countries. So what does this mean to the employees in L'Assomption?

The new building had to be fitted with serious surveillance imaging gear in and around it that can be accessed directly by the U.S. government. Everyone going in and out of this space has to have magnetic security badges that are scanned upon entry and exit, as do all visitors.

All of the vehicles that enter the secure





yard have to be cleared through security and all outgoing deliveries have to have a specific seal signifying C-TPAT certification, which means that the truck cleared customs the moment it left the yard in Canada.

As all of this was being built into the new structure, the old building was being retrofitted with the same capability as well.

Now that the facility is built to be hyper-efficient and secure, what does it do? It is where the chassis for the larger units such as the SL-320 and the mammoth SAM-550 will be built from the raw material. While that is happening, the roof and floor panels are being built in the other facility and are brought over to where they are craned into position.

When the stage is built, it is moved into an area wherein the stage can be fully deployed. This area of the building has a height of just over 60 ft., which will accommodate the stages Stageline builds. This area can serve another purpose as well. It was built with a load-bearing roof with the possibility of doing production rehearsals. While there is no such work coming Stageline's way at this date, there is no reason to believe that it won't happen down the road.

With all this talk of the new building, it's easy to forget about the Stageline products. The old building holds one of the new releases. It's the SL 100 Mix Position.

Built on the chassis of an SL 100 stage, it measures 24' x 20' and has a setup time of an hour-and-a-half with one technician and one stagehand. The leading floor panel has the ability to work at heights from 12 inches off the ground up to 51 inches allowing the audio console to be below the main level. The unit can

be positioned with a pickup truck.

It has full floor-to-ceiling rain protection that can be deployed in seconds. Additionally, it has a spot position on the roof with a capability of accommodating four spots. While this unit has many great features, one that you may not find on the company tear sheet is that when this thing is deployed, it creates next to nothing in the way of sight line obstruction. It was unveiled to the public for the first time at this year's LDI and got huge



reviews by all who saw it.

Another new company development is the offering of covered sound wings for all of its larger model stages, the SL 250, 260, 360 and the SAM 500. The one thing that is constant with any model stage that Stageline builds is that it will be for use outside. This creates another constant; you never can tell what the weather is going to be like on any given day. These covered wings offer a great deal of space for dead cases, backline operations, monitor position, quick change and many more options.

At the end of the day, the Stageline Group is about making money, as is every other business in the world. These days

where words like conservation, efficiency and the horribly overused "G" word seem to be more of a fashion accessory or a political talking point than anything else, Stageline is a company that knows that a healthy work place is a productive work place. It understands that the more heat you can get out of the ground or from the sun, the less you have to pay for it to be delivered. Stageline understands that the more rain water it can gather off of its roof, the less it has to pay a utility to pipe water in. It understands that with the world being as unstable as it is, it can't allow that instability to stand in the way of getting its product to its customers.

Most of all, it understands that the money saved by taking all of these steps can be put into creating greater quality products and taking better care of its employees. This is a demonstration of just how committed Yvan Mioron and Vice President Lise Morissat are to this concept. There has never been a building like this built in Canada.

It's the first of its kind, and while that is impressive, the banks weren't all that impressed. There was no model to gage from which led the bank to deny the \$1.8 million loan needed to build the efficiency upgrades into the building. So the bosses took the money out of their pockets and put it into the building to make it happen.

Stageline understands that despite the fact that its products will go out and last 35 to 40 years, the important issue is not how many customers come through the door, it's how many of them come back through the door. Yet it doesn't see the need to build obsolescence into its products to keep the customer coming back for more. These guys have a much stronger ingredient to draw repeat business... **QUALITY!** ☺





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## MEGA-STAGE: Taking Canada by Storm

by MICHAEL A. BECK

**I**n 1973, Guy Berger started a local production company in Quebec called Berger Son et Lumière (or, literally translated: Berger Sound and Light). As time went on and business continued to grow, new markets began to present themselves and in 1992 Berger built his first stage.

It was a hybrid blend between a mobile stage and a ground-supported structure. The new venture into stage design was entered into with a company called Fafard that had several divisions, one of which



PHOTO - Guy Berger

was mobile stage design. In 2002, Berger bought the stage design division of Fafard and it became Mega-Stage, which became one of two divisions of what was by this time called Group Berger.

The other division was devoted to lighting, sound and video. However, the act of purchasing its new division didn't mean that it would be instantly up and running. Mega Stage President Stephen Berger (son of Guy Berger) explained, "Fafard's technology was solid but it lacked finesse. So we kept the rental fleet and intellectual

property. We also kept the Fafard staff to work on developing a new series of products."

was achieved by following the overarching philosophy of paying attention to details.

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ABOVE - A page from Mega Stage's Tour Guide Spotlight featured in this year's Road Book

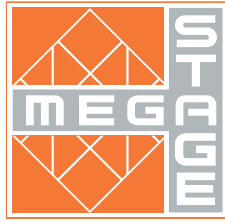


PHOTO - Mega-Stage President Stephen Berger (son of Guy Berger)

Today the audio inventory of Group Berger tops \$10 million. The Mega-Stage arm of the company has made great strides in the three years since the new line hit the road. There are two basic classifications of stages in the company. The Dynastage group breaks down into the Lightweight Series and Pro Series, both of which are trailer based mobile stages.

The Lightweight Series is made up of five stages. They range in size from a 20'-0" x 16'-0" stage with 10 ft. trim and a load capacity of 4,158 lbs on the roof structure and lift up fully loaded to a 32'-0" x 32'-0" structure with a 17' trim and a 10,000 lb load capacity. All of the stages in this product line can be transported with a standard two-ton pickup truck. The stages in this class have a minimum





setup time of 20 minutes and a maximum of one hour with a two man crew. The

Dynastage product line uses hydraulic deployment technology.

The Pro Series stages are a lot more beefy in every way. The smallest stage in the Pro Series has a deck measuring 32'-0" x 30'-0". However with what's called a "Super Duty" option, the deck size can be expanded out to 32'-0" x 38'-0". This same option can also be applied to the trim height and load capacity.

The standard max height on this unit is 21 ft., but with the Super Duty option that can be raised to 27 ft. Similarly, the option can be applied to the load bearing capacity increasing it from 30 to 40 thousand pounds. The smallest stage in the Pro Series can be deployed by two people in two hours. The largest unit boasts a setup time of two and a half hours, again, with two people.

As was said, there are two main categories of stages presented by Mega Stage. The Lightweight and Pro Series' make up the Dynastage category. The other category is Logicstage. These are the company's big dogs. The smallest stage in this category is 52' x 50' x 33 with a max load capacity of 35,000 pounds. It's a hybrid cross between a mobile stage and a ground support unit. The truck that it shows on remains as part of the deck. But rather than flying the roof on two center masts the way a mobile stage would, this one flies the roof on four corner supports. The largest of the Logicstage Series is 70' x 50' x 45'. With the sound wings in place, it's got a total of 140'. The

max load capacity is 75,000 pounds. the Logicstage stages use electrical deployment.

While everything in the company's catalog is for sale, the Logicstages have remained in the rental inventory for the time being. With a name like Mega-Stage, one would think that this company is all about selling stages. But there is a bit more to it than just that.

The company has a wide variety of LED products for video presentation with resolutions of 30mm down to a 6mm pitch, which is based on Barco Technology. In addition to being a Barco Dealer, Mega-Stage is also an authorized dealer for CM and ArcoFab (manufacturers of ground support truss systems). Additionally, Mega Stage also offers LED lighting gear, crowd control fences and barricades, flooring systems and power distribution.

After 35 years in the production business, Guy Berger's presence is big and strong. Not just in Montreal where the company is now headquartered or Toronto and Vancouver, it's other two Canadian offices, but internationally with representative offices as far away as Chile and Senegal.

With Berger's son Stephen along side him as the President of Mega-Stage, the two make a formidable team with seemingly endless energy. Mega-Stage Director of Sales Claude Dubois described both men as "bulldozers" who get up in the morning and plow through anything that come at them. Two guys who work endlessly sun-up to sun-down to make sure that there is a stage upon which the show can go on. ☺



**access all data**  
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# solotech

One of the most interesting stops in Montreal is the facilities of Solotech. With the exception of film work, there really seems to be nothing that this company doesn't do. Solotech is a full service production company offering video production including gathering (cameras) and presentation (projection & LED), rigging, audio and lighting.

But to call that a fair description of this giant business is to "fairly" describe the Canadian Rockies as those "rolling hills out west." Solotech is a massive enterprise with over 500 employees that is heavily into television production, special event production, corporate theater and, of course, touring production.

Among its touring accounts are names like Celine Dion, Michael Bublé, Il Divo, the upcoming Britney Spears tour and the Leviathan Cirque du Soleil account, just to name a small number.

Cirque du Soleil is one of Canada's most lucrative enterprises, knocking down in excess of \$7 million weekly in its Las Vegas operations alone. Solotech is closely related to all phases of Cirque's success. But as big as that sounds, Cirque only represents about 10 percent of Solotech's touring income.

Touring operations for Canada and Europe are handled out of the Montreal office of the company and American Touring is dealt with in the smaller Las Vegas center. However, touring only

represents about 30 percent of the total production of the company and has, at times in the past, been as much as 40 percent of the company's business. A 30 to 40 percent "slice of a pie" this size is a really big slice. One indication of the size of Solotech is the fact that it has the largest touring inventory of Meyer Sound gear in North America.

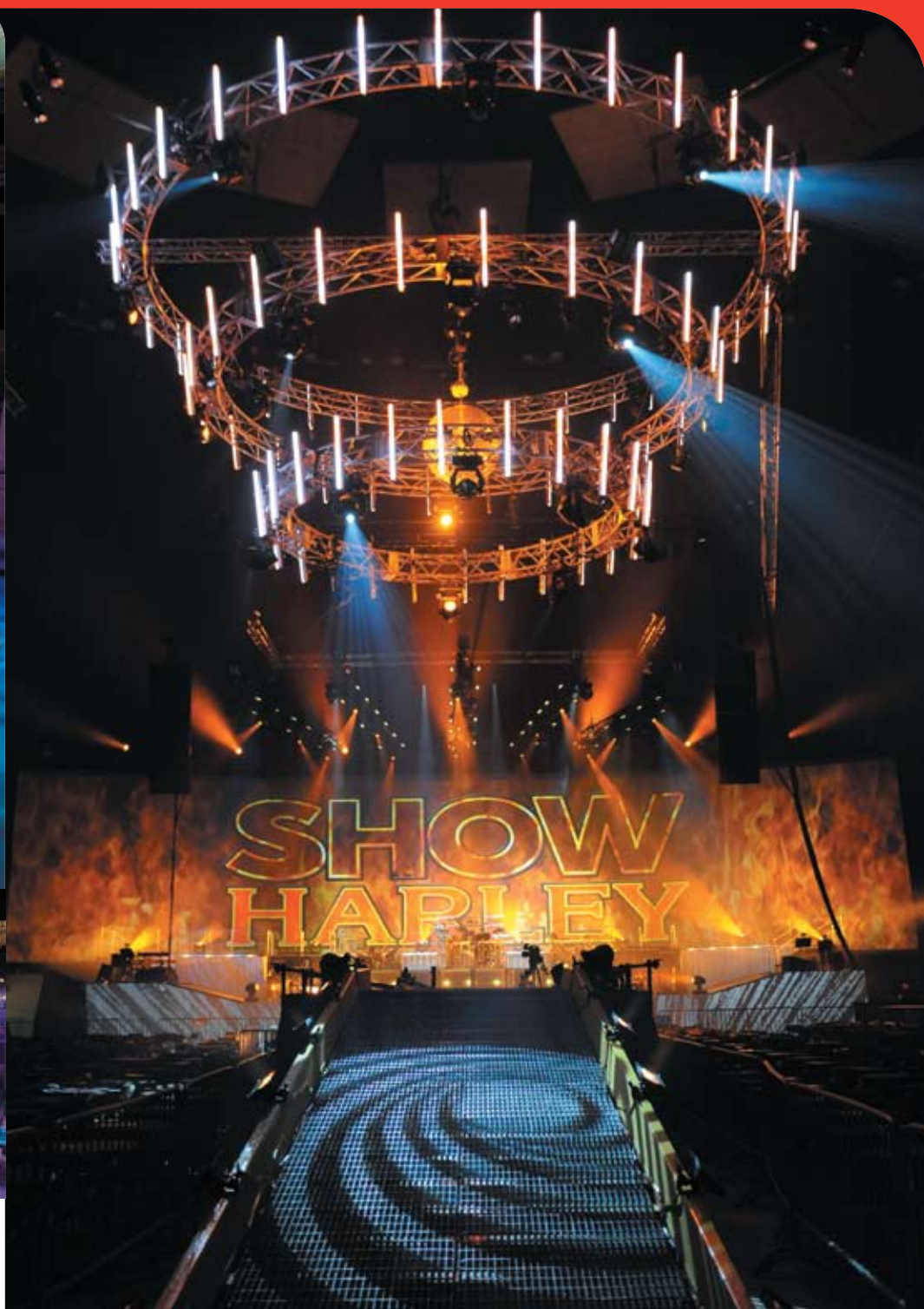
Solotech has a massive installation business with projects as far away as Dubai and throughout Europe. For a long time, it was a huge supplier to Cuba for permanent installation work filling a gap left open by the American trade embargo with Cuba.

With locations in Las Vegas, Quebec City, Holland and its headquarters in Montreal, Solotech is the largest buyer/dealer in production gear and supplies in North America, according to Richard Lachance, Vice President of the International Division.

The Montreal operation is housed in a sprawling complex of five buildings in an historic part of town that once housed the industrial yards and factories that provided military equipment for WWII prior to America's involvement. Now those factories have been either torn down to make room for residential development or turned into sound stages.

Solotech has grown out of its current home and is currently preparing to move into a new 250,000-square-foot facility that will take the already efficient operation and make it even more so. Included in the new digs will be a full production



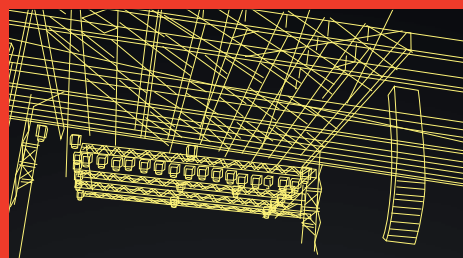


rehearsal hall with a 60 ft. rigging trim.

It can often be the case that a company the size of Solotech might have a global approach to its business and leave the local business to the smaller local companies. Such is not the case with Solotech. It does a huge amount of local business in the production rich area of Montreal. Another part of the Solotech universe is corporate production, which represents roughly 30 percent of the company's overall income.

One can argue (as many do) about the wisdom of being a one-stop shop such as Solotech as opposed to a company that focuses on lighting, sound or video. However, there can be no argument to the fact that the Alpha and Omega approach is not just maintaining momentum for this company; it is laying on the coals and picking up steam. ☺

[solotech.ca](http://solotech.ca)



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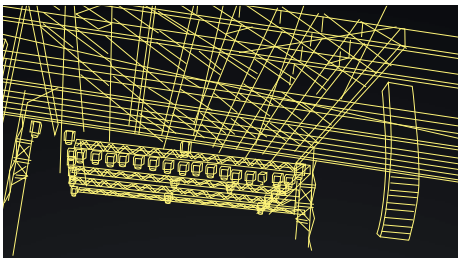
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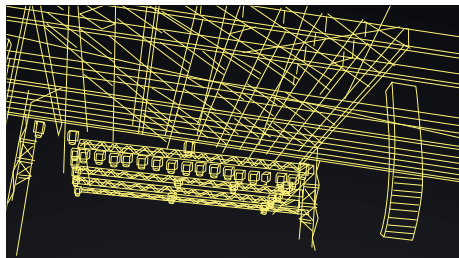
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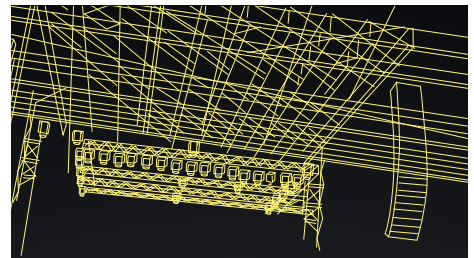
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# LSI/saco

by MICHAEL A. BECK

**I**n any field of technology, if you dig deeply enough, you will find that there is a seldom named force in the universe that is at the heart of any given technology. Such is the case with LED technology. This particular force is clearly evident in Japan and Germany. While there is some truly cool stuff coming out of those places, this force is also present in Canada and is known as the “northern lights” of LSI/Saco.



PHOTO - President LSI/Saco Technologies Inc. Fred Jalbout & LSI/Saco Vice President of Business Development and Special Projects Jonathan Labbee

Back in the 80s, the company was replacing mechanical control panel systems for electrical power control plants. The issue was that these huge display panels had graphics printed onto them and they were highlighted with incandescent lights through holes punched out in the panel. The problem was that every time the system was changed, the panel had to be replaced with a new rewired panel, lights, meters, gages, the whole works. The other problem was that these systems ran around the clock, and the incandescent lighting that was used only had a lamp life of about 3,000 hours.

An example of how tedious this could get is the fact that the control panel for Ontario Hydro is 50' high x 100' wide and contains some 6,000 lights. It needed two technicians on staff at all times whose sole responsibility was to change incandescent lamps.

The project found its way to Saco (well before the company was purchased by Cincinnati based LSI). The revolutionary solution that Saco came up with was to create a mosaic of polycarbonate tiles measuring 24mm x 24mm that could be switched out whenever there was a need for change. This system was called, cleverly enough, Mosaic.

So, once this system was in place, anytime changes needed to be made, rather than changing out the whole wall, the panels got popped out and replaced with new instrumentation and/or graphic or whatever needed to be added. The lighting of choice was red LED, which was all that was available at the time.

Then the green LED showed up, and there was more than one color. This cut the number of incandescent light units down to 1/3 the number in the beginning. Finally when the blue LED came along, it became possible to have any combination of color out of each LED node. Added to that was the fact that the only thing on earth that lives longer than LED is nuclear waste and Twinkies.

This is where the Saco's experience with LED began. But around the early 90's, competition showed up in the form of projector systems. The argument that companies like Barco and Electrohome were putting forth was, “Why build a physical wall when you can project everything onto a screen?” The added benefit of these projector systems was, according to the companies selling them, that when clients needed to make changes to the system, they wouldn't have to make physical changes to the wall. All they would have to do is go in and make changes in the computer system that was being projected onto the wall.

Sounds simple enough, right? So what happens when the projector breaks down? The whole room is left in the dark and everyone waits in panic for the images to come back on. Seems this happened once too often. Saco came to the rescue. There were other issues such as view angle and the fact that the room had to be dimmed for the projectors to read, and of course, try to imagine sitting in a dimmed room for 12 hours watching a projection that would only read well if the room had no light whatsoever.

Thus was born the full color video wall. Saco Technologies Co-Founder Fred Jalbout

explained, “We decided that we needed to invent something that would work better than a projection. We were the first company to do research and development on this idea and we were the first company to introduce an LED video board like a CRT. We mapped the system out on a one to one pixel ratio at high two, three millimeter resolution.”

As time went on the Saco video product gained recognition and popularity in the nuclear and hydro-electric world, which was the company's bread and butter at the time. Saco had installed a massive high resolution LED wall for a Belgian power company. At the time, U2 was looking for a large scale video system that it could take out on the 1997-98 Pop Mart tour. It had explored Sony Jumbotron, but it would have taken 12 trucks to get the thing down the road. The other problem with the Sony solution was that load in and load out time would have been prohibitive.

LSI/Saco Vice President of Business Development and Special Projects Jonathan Labbee, laid out what happened next. “I'm not sure how they got in to see the panel in Belgium, but somehow they did. And one day this guy walks into our office and starts telling us about this crazy idea he had about building a 50-foot see-through, high-res wall to replace the Jumbotron. And because he flew all the way from Belgium, we indulged him. We said ‘Sure we can do it,’ not knowing who this was for because he wasn't telling us. The following week he showed up with U2's management and the rest is history.”

While this was Saco's first sortie into the entertainment world, it had been looking





into the market as its next move. But once the U2 tour happened there was no need to explore anything. The world came knocking.

The creative process happens with blinding speed in this company. Video director, Marcia Capiston, who met Saco while working on the U2 tour, introduced Saco to Nocturne Productions. Nocturne went to Montreal to meet with Saco and by the end of two days of meetings the super crisp V9 was designed and slated for touring on Paul McCartney.

Since then, Saco has done great work with the entertainment industry. But that arena is, for the most part, an R&D lab for the real bread and butter of the company, which is permanent install work. Projects like massive video displays at sports stadiums and video display facades on structures, like the NASDAQ building in New York are examples. "We invented the term 'Media Building'," Labbee says, with a victorious grin. That doesn't mean that the company would ever walk away from the entertainment world. However, there is never a shortage of new markets between the worlds of entertainment and permanent architectural installation.

Jonathan Labbee described how one part of the business feeds another. "The entertainment world is the perfect R&D ground for us. It utilizes our core competency, which is custom equipment design. The touring business always wants something that's new. The permanent installation business always wants something that has been tested."



ABOVE - V-Lite wall used on Stone Temple Pilots 2008 Tour. photo courtesy of Steve Jennings

BELOW - V-Brite modules

In 2006, Saco Technologies entered into a merger agreement with Cincinnati based industrial and architectural lighting giant, LSI Industries. Founded in 1976, LSI began with five employees determined to provide good lighting for service stations. With that focus, the company quickly gained a strong recognition as a solid lighting manufacturer within the petroleum industry.

Using the niche marketing philosophy that made it successful in the petroleum market, LSI began to expand its business as it developed a deeper knowledge of products, distribution channels and requirements in these niche markets. Through a course of strategic growth and acquisition, LSI has put together a very strong brand that combines lighting and graphics, as well as other technologies and services.

When the two companies worked on a project together, there was an undeniable synergy that led to the companies joining forces.

Once the deal took place, Saco Co-Founders Fred and Bassam Jalbout stayed on with the company.

Little has changed in the Canadian offices of LSI/Saco, in that the company still enjoys going after the projects that makes its staff work hard to come up with the most elegant solutions possible. "With the way things are now, we are able to do more of the R&D work that we've always done with this arrangement," says Labbee.

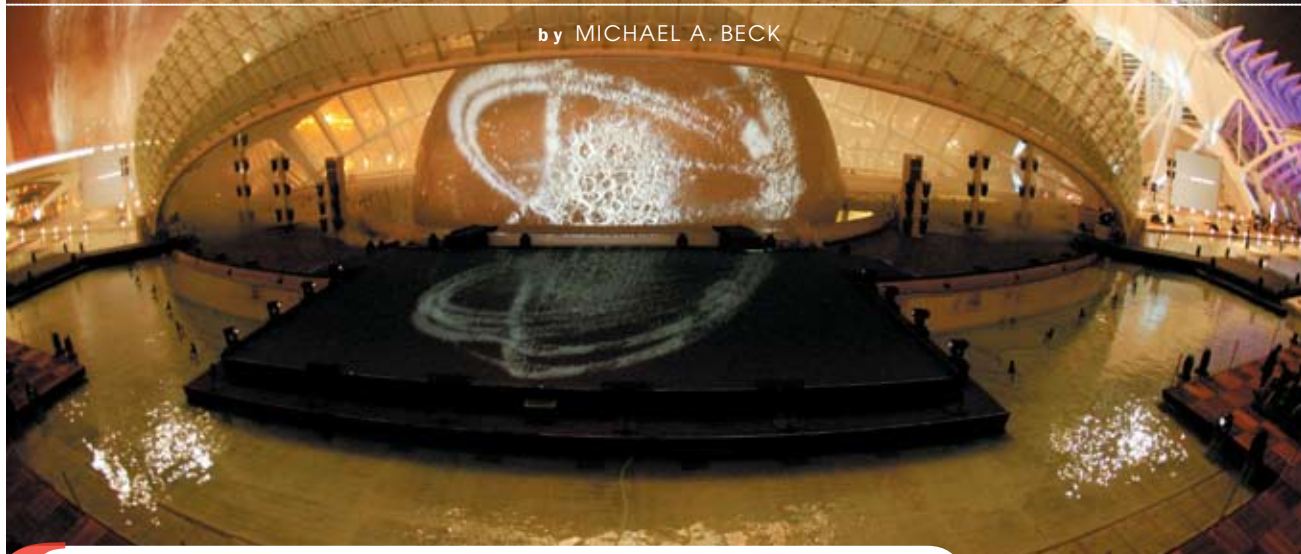
Working with companies like Nocturne, Moment Factory and Edmonton based Illumivision, as well as designers like Roy Bennett and Mark Fisher, the company never wants for challenges. Atlanta based and sensational architectural designers like Beau McClellan and PHA Lighting Design add to the diverse and interesting projects the company tackles on a regular basis.

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# MOMENT FACTORY: a bold new world

by MICHAEL A. BECK



**W**hen thinking in terms of production design, we think of sets and scenery in the classic sense, but the minds at Montreal's Moment Factory have a completely different spin on the issue – the atmosphere. Instead of designing set or stage looks for shows or scenic elements for special events, this company designs interactive environments that ensconce those who enter into them like nothing ever seen.

The products of this "Factory" are, indeed, "Moments" that reach from the world of technology into the intangible world of visceral experience and twist the heads of those who experience Moment Factory events into entirely new shapes.

Company co-founders Dominic Audet and Sakchin Bessette began working together doing freelance production work. In the early 90s, Bessette was working as a VJ doing raves. Around 2000, he met Audet who had been working in corporate production after having studied electronics and video production in school.

Somewhere along the line Audet had worked in a planetarium where the idea of designing entertainment environments that would engulf the client or audience was first planted. This new entertainment experience would be called "ambient entertainment."

Soon the two were adding lighting and delivering a more full spectrum product to their clients as they began to move more heavily into the corporate production fields. Through friends they had in Cirque du Soleil, they had the opportunity to apply their talent to a party that was held on the property of Cirque du Soleil founder Guy Laliberté in 2002.

"It was in one of those huge inflatable domes," recalls Bessette, "and it happened to be on Halloween. So we made it look like it was a big pumpkin. To start the party, we shot Guy making his welcoming remarks to the guests through an actual pumpkin and projected it on the inside of the dome. When he put the top back down onto the pumpkin, the whole environment exploded into a violent cosmic scene resembling creation and resolved into a gentle forest wherein a woman took the party on her journey into the future, and so the night went."

The problem with all of this was that the



ABOVE - Sakchin Bessette  
BELOW - Dominic Audet

guys only had a couple weeks to get it all together. "We didn't have a lot of time to reinvent the wheel," said Dominic, "so we had to use the systems that we knew. It was a lot like what I did in the planetarium, only we took it to a new level."





The Cirque gig was the first job as “Moment Factory.” From there it went into the world of fixed presentations. “Entertainment projects have their attraction. They’re great to do,” said Bessette. “But after three, four or even six months on an event, it’s all gone and there’s nothing left but pictures and video of it. It doesn’t exist anymore. It’s good that it has instant gratification. Touring and event production are

also great proving grounds for new techniques, but the experience of working over a two-year period with architects and developers, there are varying levels of intensity that fit into an overall marathon rhythm. When it’s finished, there’s something that will last and will have a huge audience.”

Despite the company’s affinity for permanent projects, the love for live entertainment

work hasn’t gone away. This past year Jonathan Labbee, Vice President of Business Development for LSI/Saco introduced Moment Factory to Roy Bennett with an eye toward getting it involved in the design of this year’s ground breaking Nine Inch Nails tour.

The work it did on the show will open the door to new areas of creativity on mobile productions for years to come. Labbee, who is a master of recognizing who the “right people” are and putting as many of them into the same room as possible explained how Moment Factory and NIN got together.

“I knew that Roy [Bennett] was going to be designing the show, and that he would be using Nocturne on the project. We (LSI/Saco) have done so much in the past, and I had wanted to get Moment Factory plugged into the rock scene. This seemed like the perfect time to try to bring them in.”

While the project wasn’t without its snags and difficulties, such is often the case when one creates innovations which have *never* been seen before, it all did finally come together. Given the far-reaching creativity of that tour, it is impossible to imagine what could possibly be next.

However, it will always be fresh. These guys never do the same thing twice and the scope of projects that they are involved in has no limits. In addition to the work Moment Factory is involved in with Nine Inch Nails and Cirque du Soleil, it is also working in New Orleans where it is turning an entire neighborhood into one massive entertainment outlet as well as many other projects.

With all of the diversity that exists in the many different kinds of projects that Moment Factory is involved, there is one thing that they all have in common—they are all interactive. Whether it’s an atmospheric environment for a corporate party, a concert or theatrical tour or the application of its creativeness to architecture (which is fast becoming known as “architainment,”) it is impossible to be close to the creative genius of this amazing company without getting some of it on you. ☺





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# the **NEWEST** effects from a **pyro** company is all about **WATER**

by MICHAEL A. BECK

In a recent conversation with Doug Adams, president of Pyrotek, we asked the question, "What are you most excited about these days?" His answer was a bit surprising. It wasn't some really hip new pyro effect or a new kind of laser (all of which the company is known for). It was, of all things, a water effect. That's one of the hippest new gags on the horizon for a company called Pyrotek.

It's called Aqua Visual FX, and it's the product of a new wing of the company that goes by the same name. Odder still is how difficult it is to find out exactly where the idea actually came from but it's here and truly impressive.

In the simplest possible terms, Aqua Visual FX is a hyper-intelligent waterfall with graphic capabilities. The system consists of a reservoir on the ground, a pumping system that gets the water out of the reservoir and a computer driven nozzle system that fires the water through the nozzles at precisely programmed times in order to create desired effects in the waterfall.

What was involved in the "growing pains" of the system was massive amounts of software modifications. In

the beginning, the system tied six 60 nozzle panels to one computer with a separate processor feeding data to each two-foot section. One big issue was latency. As the demand for larger systems came in, several computers had to be tied together. The whole idea was to be able to present one large image across the entire spread of nozzles. However, when they started networking several computers together in order to accommodate say, a 35-foot-spread, it became difficult to get it all timed properly. "Initially, we used to be able to do long strings of bit maps to create the imagery," Adams told us, "but when we started networking the computers together, we found that we couldn't do that anymore. So, we had to figure how we could still get multiple images out."

A system, which might be comprised of as many as 720 nozzles, is controlled by six computers, designed to distribute one cohesive image. However, as the signal ran through the system, one or two milliseconds was all that was needed to create a jagged edge on a logo or whatever other kind of image that might have been presented. The answer was to control the whole thing through a server and keep the processing on the ground as opposed to at the panels. The system that was on display at the LDI conference used a server on the ground that controlled the processors on location via a 68-pin control cable that took the signal



to each processor, which fired the cues. It worked like a charm and looked great.

The new system that is currently being beta tested will use what is essentially a media server at every panel. So, the signal can be sent from a laptop through the proprietary software designed for the system and all of the artwork is handled at each panel. High speed clocks have been found that will be able to sync up the system with no latency.

Aqua Visual FX was used at the BET awards for a performance with Chris Brown. The show was done in a theatre and there was little time to set it up. When you look at the image taken of the performance, there's the feeling that the water is all over the place. There seems to be something this writer read about a long time ago about water and electricity. That's right, *they don't mix!*

On the other hand, we're talking about a company that manages to load stages up with massive amounts of flames, explosives and high-end lasers and never gets it wrong. It stands to reason that this would be no different. This is a company that can't afford complacency. The answer to the notion that

water and electricity don't mix is, quite simply, to not mix them.

"We had a pumping station in the basement, and we had the space of a commercial break to get the trough in place," said company Vice President / Director of Operations Lorenzo Dornacchia. "We

had two hoses that

we quick connected to the trough, which gravity fed to the pumping station in the basement. Once the song was done and we disconnected the hoses and got the trough out, there was roughly the equivalent of an eight-ounce glass of water on the stage. It was nothing."

The new system is still in the works and should be released soon. In the meantime, what Pyrotek is able to do with the current system is truly impressive. If you get a chance to see this thing in action, we highly recommend it. ☺



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## Epic Production Technologies Enters the Race at Full Throttle

Let the names Ed & Ted's Excellent Lighting and Q1 Production Technologies never be spoken again. For as of September 2008, the two companies merged to create Epic Production Technologies. The merger brings together two companies that are so different as to be perfectly complementary. Where both companies are similar, is their historical beginnings as local production houses that grew into North American prominence.

Q1 began primarily as a theatrical house, never forsaking those roots with accounts like Disney's *The Lion King*, Tony Award winning musicals *Showboat* and *Ragtime* and the XV Winter Olympic Games Closing Ceremonies. The company's founders, Marc Raymond and Phil Bernard, gained recognition throughout the entertainment industry for building Westsun International from a local lighting rental facility into one of North America's leading technical suppliers, with operations in seven cities throughout Canada and the US and over \$70 million in annual revenues by the year 2000.

In 2002, a year after Q1 was born, the company merged with Showtime Lighting, a well-known Vancouver boutique lighting shop with an impeccable reputation. Showtime founder Brian Konechny joined the Q1 partnership and later that year the company repurchased a portion of Westsun, including the Winnipeg Head Office operation.

However, loyalty to its theatrical beginnings notwithstanding, it did gather a number of impressive touring rock 'n' roll accounts. Not the least of which being Kelly Clarkson, Journey and Motley Crue.



In addition, it hosts the monster dual set annual productions of Trans-Siberian Orchestra, where the music and the visual aspects (which include a gigantic lighting rig) take equal billing as the true stars of the show.

With locations in Winnipeg and Vancouver, Q1 brings a massive inventory of Vari\*Lite gear and conventional instruments to the Epic deal, among many other assets.

Then there is Ed & Ted's Excellent Lighting. Event producer Ted Fowler, concert promoter Jim McNeill and audio company owner Ed Pratt founded Ed & Ted's Excellent Lighting in 1994 in Salt Lake City, Utah. Over time Fowler bought out his partners, and Ed & Ted's moved to Oxnard, California and after the merge, remains as the Epic US operation. It was pretty much a straight forward rock 'n' roll house from day one with a strong list of accounts that included Bon Jovi, Beyonce, Matchbox 20, Tom Petty & The Heartbreakers and The Eagles. Where Q1's automated taste leaned toward Vari\*Lite, Ed & Ted's had a strong leaning toward Martin Lighting gear.





The deal went down only about a week-and-a-half before the bottom fell out of the banking industry in late 2008. Had there been the slightest delay at any juncture of the deal, there is strong speculation that it wouldn't have happened. That being said, it did happen and the result was a company with immense and immediate strength.

One of the major reasons to make this move is that the production industry is a capital intensive business. Despite whatever else might be going on in the world, production values seem to always be on the rise. Designers are ever more demanding of a variety of equipment as well as sheer quantity of gear. Overnight Epic Production Technologies more than doubled the equipment capacity of both Ed & Ted's and Q1.

"The industry has widely and wildly accepted the merger. We've had great response from our clients and colleagues because of our new menu of equipment," explained co-owner Ted Fowler.

Epic Vice President Craig Redden explained, "There were times that we missed jobs because we were a VL house and the same was true for ED & Ted's because they were a MAC house. This is going to give us a much larger equipment pool and make us a lot more competitive."

"Immediately after the deal happened we had a system come in from *Lord of the*

*Rings* in London and go directly to Oxnard," said Marc Raymond, co-founder of Epic. "Around the same time, we had a lot of gear that was formerly Ed & Ted's equipment that got incorporated into the Trans-Siberian Orchestra system. So from an internal perspective, we started to see that it is working in terms of increasing resources that are available to our customers almost from day one."

The constant theme of the creation of Epic Production Technologies was more gear and greater variety available to the market, but availability and variety isn't the only benefit of the deal. There are whole new markets to be explored.

Fowler went on to say, "Ed & Ted's had been focused on touring and large scale one-offs. And now with the strength of the merger, I'm gathering the strength of installations and theatre, and my Rolodex has quite a few inquiries into those areas."

While not wanting to take anything away from the other major lighting companies on the top of the hill, to say that it's time to make a little room for the new guy would seem to state the blatantly obvious with far too much clarity. The fact is that the ground has been taken and all that is left to see now is what Epic Production Technologies will do with the claim it has staked.

In the immortal words of Craig Redden, "This looks to be a merger of *Epic Proportions*." ☺

*Editors not: On November 20, 2008 Craig Redden had left the Oxnard office of Epic Productions and was going to meet his beloved family when he succumbed to a massive heart attack in the parking garage of his hotel and passed away. We chose to leave his remarks in this piece in the present tense because they were and are currently relevant as is our memory of his bigger than life presence.*



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## Craig Redden 1956 - 2008

**E**pic Production Technologies, along with the entertainment lighting world, lost a consummate professional and great friend with the sudden passing of industry veteran Craig Redden, who died of an apparent massive heart attack November 20, 2008 while in Los Angeles.

Craig was born on February 6, 1956 in Sudbury, Ontario and moved to Winnipeg in 1976 to study psychology and pursue a career in psychiatric patient care. Among the new friends he met in his adopted home were members of a local band who enlisted him to help out with sound and lights for an upcoming gig. In the summer of 1978, he stopped into a newly opened equipment rental shop called Westsun Media and formed an immediate friendship with the company's founder Marc Raymond, who later invited him to join the company full-time. After years of learning, touring and teching every kind of event in North America, including the Calgary Winter Olympics Closing Ceremonies, Craig took on a well-earned management role at what had now become Westsun International. This ultimately led to a move to Toronto and the position of Senior Account Manager.

In 2002, Craig rejoined Marc in Winnipeg at newly formed Q1 Production Technologies as Vice President of Rentals where he focused on US and International business growth as well as overseeing major tour and event projects. He took a special interest in the growth of the annual dual-coast Trans-Siberian Orchestra tours, working closely with the management and artists behind TSO to help create the extravagant lighting and production that became an entertainment phenomenon. A genuine "people person," Craig turned many of his clients into long-time friends and nowhere was this more evident than in his relationships with the entire TSO team. In a recent newspaper interview, TSO founder Paul O'Neill said, "I consider Craig as much a member of the band as any lead singer or myself." Craig in turn, considered his involvement with TSO to be one of his greatest personal and career achievements.

Craig was excited about the recent formation of Epic Production Technologies through the merger of Q1 and Ed & Ted's Excellent

Lighting and had taken the new title of Vice President of Concert Touring. He was in the midst of working with the Epic management team in strategic planning for the company's future and was contemplating a move to Southern California with his wife Judith Williams-Redden and their two children, fourteen-year-old son Terrell and four-year-old daughter Chelsea, who were all with him in Los Angeles at the time of his passing. Craig is also survived by his sisters Linda, Sandra and Beverly and his brother Rick and their families.

Epic Chairman & CEO Marc Raymond issued the following statement about his long-time friend and collaborator:

"For all of us who knew and worked with Craig, we have lost a **tireless colleague and a great friend** with a dry wit and boisterous personality. For me personally, I have lost someone who has not only been a close friend for over thirty years, but a man who has been **my source of inspiration in more ways than he ever knew**. With his eternal optimism and unwavering loyalty, he has been **a cornerstone of the personal and professional successes of so many of the people whose lives he touched**. We have been uplifted by the incredible outpouring of sympathy and support from Craig's friends and colleagues around the world and can **only hope that in his lifetime he knew how very much loved and admired he was.**"



A special tribute page is posted on the Epic Production Technologies website at [epicpt.com](http://epicpt.com). ☺

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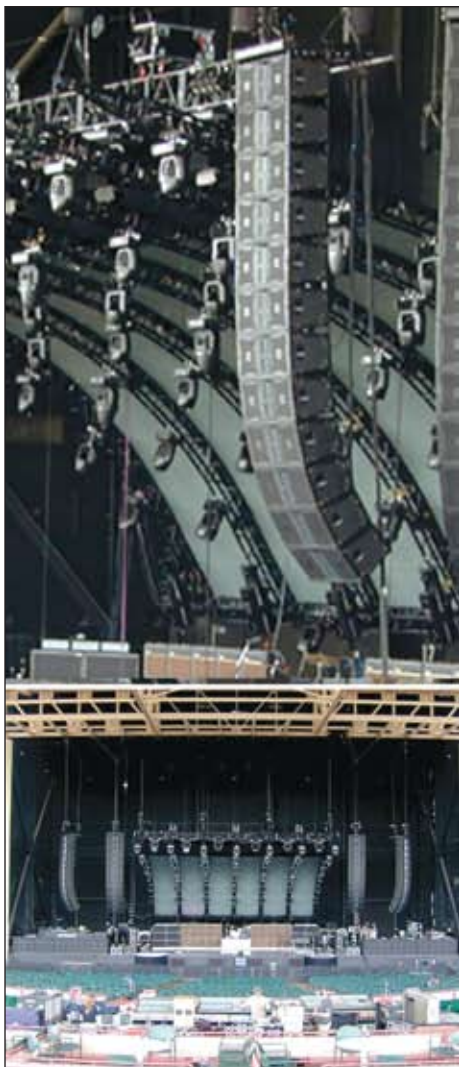
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# Victoria

British Columbia Canada

Most of us from the U.S. (except from those living in the upper Northwest) have not been exposed to Victoria, located in the British Columbia section of Canada. However, one trip to this idyllic place is enough to leave anyone longing to return. Without any doubt, Victoria is one of the most beautiful, peaceful and inviting places in North America.

The island has several facilities appropriate for about any size or type of event. Located on the site of the former Victoria Memorial Arena, the 7,000-seat Save On Foods Memorial Centre facility is the home to the Victoria Salmon Kings, world-class concerts and sporting events. It has more than 1,000 Club and King Club Seats, a fine dining restaurant, a Club lounge, retail space, meeting space and world-class acoustics. It is available for special events, business and trade shows. The Victoria Conference Centre is located in downtown Victoria by the inner harbor. It is a modern facility, technically advanced and bright, that is a perfect facility for conferences and expositions.

Finally, the University of Victoria's 1,233-seat Farquhar Auditorium features a unique theater. The Auditorium is the first "surround" hall built in Canada. The prime objectives of the facility's design were to provide good acoustics and sightlines from all seats. These objectives were successfully met, evidenced by the Auditorium's national reputation as an acoustic venue. The architectural design is enhanced by the interior's stunning wood lined stage, creative lighting and the beautiful Clearihue organ that adds majesty to the environment and has become a tourist attraction in its own right.

The Royal Theatre and McPherson Playhouse are home to the Victoria Symphony and Pacific Opera. The theatre has 1434 seats and the playhouse has 772 seats. Either facility is a great place for conference award shows, special entertainment or a pleasant evening diversion. The Esquimalt Archie Browning Sports Centre is downtown and is an interesting facility for event planners interested in providing an entertaining break for business for their event attendees. It is a fine ice rink that is geared to hosting and catering

parties and gatherings of all types. Local production companies, such as DL Sound and Lighting (Doug Lyngard) and Pacific Audio Works (PAW, Clay Russell) are well equipped and staffed to deal with any event coming into the island.

The island is large...very large and is both a vacation destination and event destination. Typical West Coast activities abound ranging from surfing to hiking. Whale watching, fishing, camping, boating, swimming, diving or shopping - this place is a cultural paradise for most people, especially for those who do not have the opportunity to visit Canada very often.

As for hotels, the city has a host of excellent properties, all very capable of supporting most mid-sized conferences. The hotels include Coast Victoria Harbour Side, Brentwood Bay Lodge And Spa, Best Western Inner Harbor, Fairmont Empress Victoria, Harbour Towers Victoria, Hotel Grand Pacific, Laurel Point Inn, Marriott Inner Harbour Victoria, Queen Victoria Hotel & Suites, Red Lion Inn & Suites Victoria and Royal Scot Suite Hotel, to name a few.

More than anything, the real draw of Victoria is the people who live there. People are usually the best asset of any business. The drop dead beauty of the city and island combined with the wonderful, gentle and embracing population make this city a major destination point for event planners and producers seeking something unusual and special for their event. ☺

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Inn at Laurel Point



# The Inn at Laurel Point Victoria Canada



by LARRY SMITH

**T**he Inn at Laurel Point in Victoria, Canada has been voted by Conde' Nast Traveler as being one of Canada's top 20 hotels. Located on Victoria's famous inner harbor and within walking distance of most downtown venues and attractions, the hotel houses 135 harbor-view rooms and 65 suites all with private balconies. This is one of the premier destinations in North America for leisure, corporate and special event planners.

The guestrooms feature complimentary high speed internet and local calling, toll free calls, secure underground parking, half size refrigerator, in-room Italian roast coffee, organic tea and hairdryers. The property features a world class relaxed and hip waterfront restaurant, "Aura", an ocean-side terrace, hand tended Japanese garden, indoor pool and gift shop. 11 meeting rooms with up to 10,000 square feet of space and high-tech A/V support make meetings easy and pleasant to organize.

The amenities also include a tanning deck, 24-hour concierge service, dry cleaning and laundry service, safety deposit boxes,

a business center, brand new fitness studio, handicap accessibility and special needs rooms. Free shuttle service is provided to some downtown locations. Meeting planners also receive several incentives including 500 Aeroplan miles for every \$ 1,000 over \$ 7,000 spent on guest rooms, food and beverages.

Production offices at the Inn include multiple phone and fax lines, direct dialing numbers, answering services, cordless telephones, call sheets, photocopying, high-speed internet, power point presentation capabilities, refrigerators, microwaves, coffee and tea, CD, DVD and VCR players, bulletin boards and even pet fish.

These amenities are certainly a plus, but the real secret of this property (other than a fantastic location) is the highly professional and friendly staff. This is one of the biggest reasons that the hotel has attracted several film crews as well as concert tours and crews. It is hard to imagine a more idyllic location with float planes coming and going in the harbor, commercial and pleasure craft of all types plying the water and some of the nicest people on the planet populating the city. Travel to Victoria means either arriving on a traditional airline or a more exotic option of helicopter or float plane or ferry from Seattle or Vancouver. Even bus service is available from the mainland. An event planner searching for that special place to host a mid-size event could not go wrong with this location. Room prices are reasonable as are all the food and beverage services. This is a gem of a hotel close to everything of interest in Victoria.

The exterior is unique in the architecture, designed by Arthur Erickson, and the room I had was spacious and well laid out and





decadently furnished. More than anything, however, was the perception of the staff. This is a group of professionals who really like their work. They seem to like each other as well, and that was an impression gained from watching the way they interacted with each other as well as solving problems. This is a good team working at a good property in a fantastic location.

There are several good options in Victoria for event planners or travel agents, and admittedly, we have not seen all of them yet. One has to believe, though, that this property would be very hard to beat for anyone in our industry. ☺

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## THE RADISSON WINNIPEG (canadian comfort

Directly across from the MTS Centre, the Radisson Winnipeg Downtown is the best hotel for both artist and crew traveling to Winnipeg, Manitoba. Of course, the convenient location isn't the only reason why this property is the obvious choice. Why does the Radisson host eight out of ten acts that come through Winnipeg? Convenient location, excellent bus parking, classy renovations with comfort kept in mind, award-winning customer service, and a Director of Sales and Marketing who *understands* the music industry.

Located in a music-savvy area, the Radisson Winnipeg Downtown is walking distance away from venues like the MTS Centre, and the future home of Winnipeg's premier upscale food and beverage emporium, which will pay special tribute to Canada's rock 'n roll heritage, The Metropolitan Theatre.

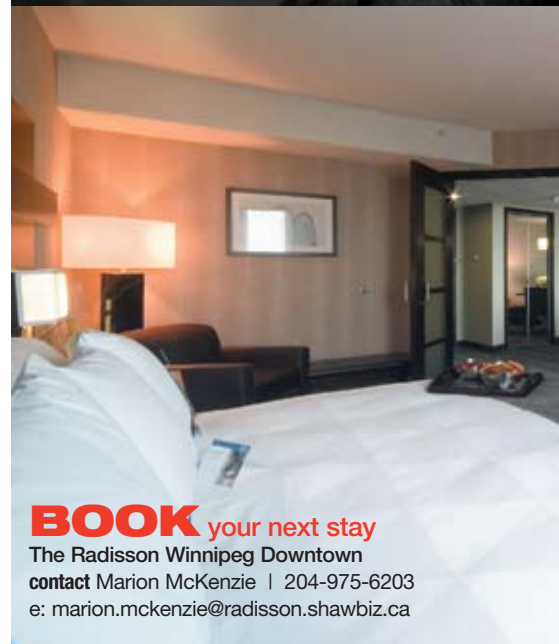
Finding a hotel that offers bus parking can be a headache at times. The Radisson Winnipeg Downtown has the situation covered. They offer two complimentary bus parking spots in front of the hotel, making it easy for a driver or crew member to run out to the bus and grab something they may have left behind when checking into the room. The hotel has a good relationship with the MTS Centre, so they're able to easily accommodate those tours with more than two buses. This way, everything is close by with easy access.

The hotel recently completed phase one of its renovations. In September, the top three floors, also known as The Club Floors, reopened with a more executive feel. The hotel has created a contemporary atmosphere without all the dark colors. The color pallet is soothing and comfortable, which makes it easier for road dogs to feel more at home. Guests on The Club Floors can enjoy a deluxe continental breakfast, wireless internet, and pre-dinner appetizers. There is also a bar with concierge, a mini business center and complimentary meeting space available for reservation. There is also a brand new workout room with an assortment of weights and equipment for every need. Upgrades to

guest rooms include stand-up showers, cordless phones, flat screen TVs, and Exclusive Radisson Sleep Number Beds, which give guests the ability to choose the firmness of the mattress so they can sleep as comfortably as possible.

The Radisson Winnipeg Downtown has received the Presidents Award for Outstanding Customer Service, which goes to show that it keeps the guests' needs first. In order to make every stay as comfortable as possible, the hotel has connections with local businesses so guests can be accommodated on several different levels. There is a gym down the street that has personal trainers ready to come into the hotel and work one-on-one with guests who need a good work-out before a show. There is also a spa nearby, who is available to come do private massages in guest rooms. These are only a couple of the services the hotel concierge offers its guests.


The Radisson Winnipeg Downtown was recently purchased by Canad Inns, a Manitoba owned and operated company, and one of Canada's 50 Best Managed Companies. The Director of Sales for the hotel is Marion McKenzie. McKenzie has been at the hotel for one year. Before handling entertainment for the hotel, she was a VIP event planner for eight years. Her pre-hotel experience lies in planning events for entertainers of all sorts, from music to television. Today, she is the primary contact for tour managers and travel agents looking to book rooms for artists and crew.



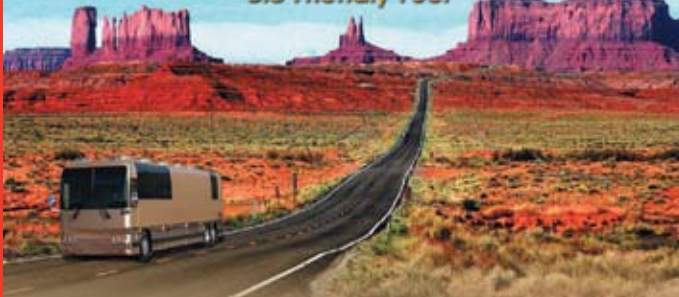
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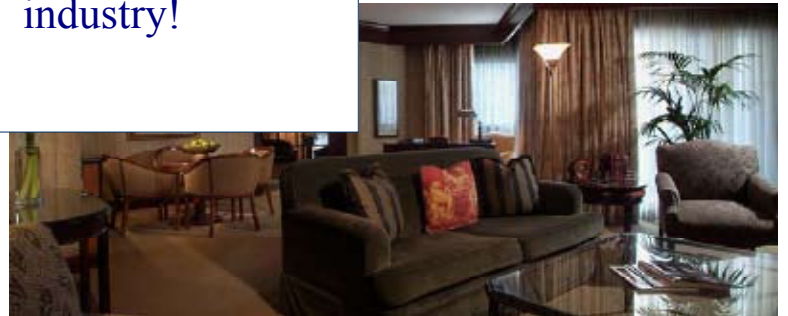


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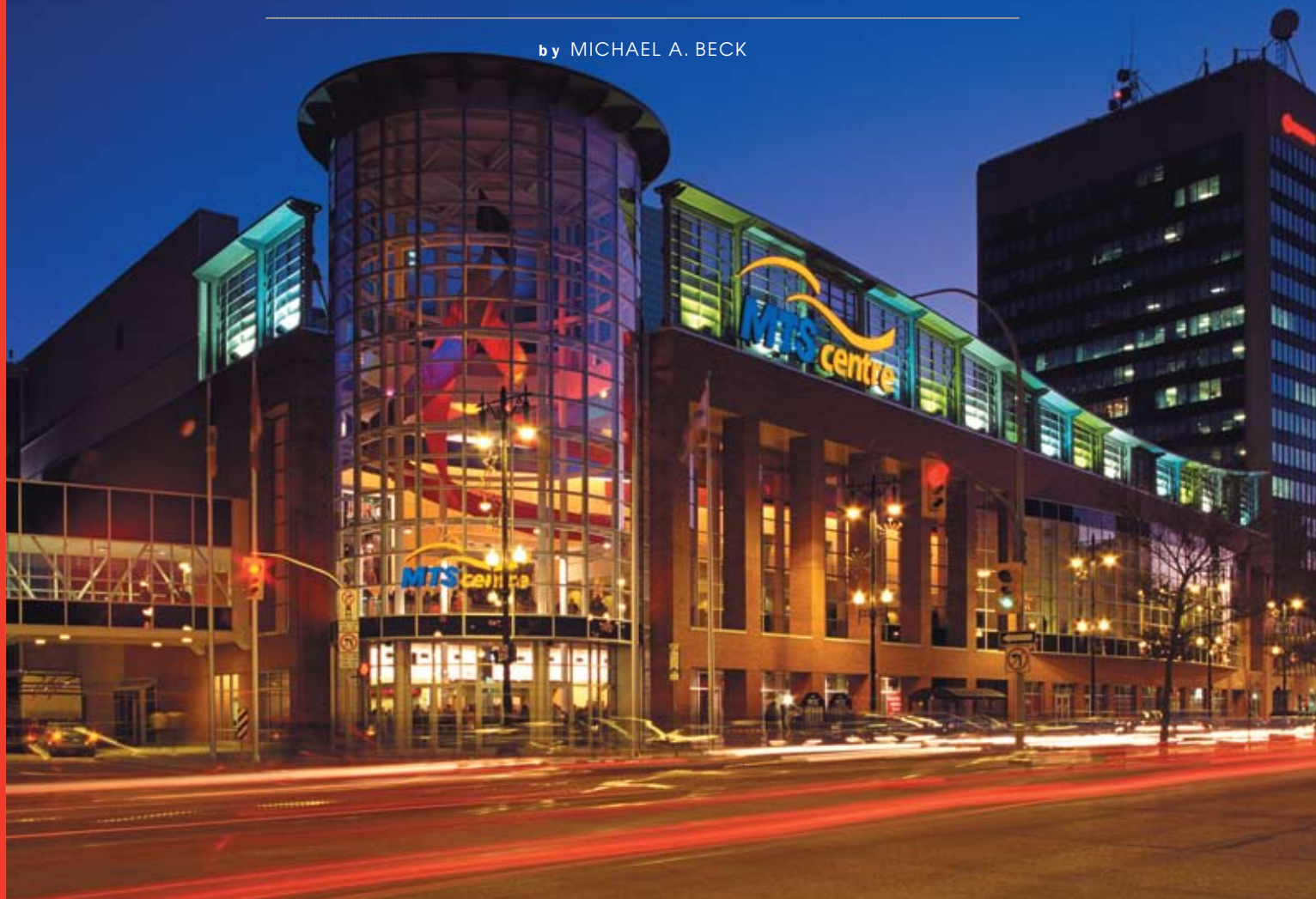




# MTS CENTRE

## A Truly Well Thought Out Venue

by MICHAEL A. BECK



**O**n the run through Canada that yielded the material for this issue, mPm stopped in Winnipeg and visited the MTS Centre. The temptation is to remark on how pleasantly surprised we were after having toured the facility. But we'd been briefed before hand on the impressiveness of the arena by Senior Vice President/General Manager, Kevin Donnelly.



Donnelly had 20 years experience as a promoter before being called to run the MTS Centre, and he wasted no time putting his experience and knowledge to work. "When I got here the drawings were about 25 percent done and there was time to make the changes necessary to making the place concert/special event friendly without compromising the building's ability to be a world class sports arena," says Donnelly.

The building sits on the site of the old Deaton's department store, an icon of Winnipeg until it closed in 1999. The facility re-opened for business on the November 16, 2004 and hosted 11 events in 13 days starting on the opening day, but that's not the most impressive part of the story.

"We locked in a completion date with the construction contractors 12 months out and promptly started booking dates based on that projected date," Donnelly recalled. "While the building was still on the construction company's insurance policy, they gave us permission to have a dry run event. So we gave out 5,000 tickets to friends and family and put a local band on stage and did all kinds of fun stuff like a group flush and other such things. All of this happened on the Nov. 14. The next



day it was tweaked and cleaned, then it was off to the races.”

However, long before the grand opening there were a number of course corrections that needed to be made. Most notable among them was the issue of loading dock access. The original plan was for the building to have 12 loading docks. That’s good news right? Not so much. The problem was that the loading docks were to be a full city block away from the stage. The push would have been through a very smooth tunnel. But all the same, *a block away!*

Kevin explained to the powers that be that this would slow the loading down dramatically; it would generate enormous labor over runs. Most of all, it would generate sheer mind bending, unholy hatred for the venue among touring productions throughout the industry. The concept seemed workable in the beginning because the idea was that the venue is in a crowded part of town and an indoor push (even one of this distance) would be a welcome relief in the -40 degree winter.

However, when all of the facts were laid out, no one argued the point, and Kevin was able arrange for dock space directly at the bowl for seven trucks.

The load bearing capacity of the building is 150,000 pounds from the low steel, which trims out at 88 ft. However, while the 150k load can be hung all year long, during the winter months load points have to be more carefully selected. There is one attractive feature of the grid in the building. The catwalk is at the same level as the steel. So if there is an issue with the rig that requires Donnelly’s attention or that of the house engineer, they can get in the elevator, head up to steel, look

directly at the situation and talk with the riggers from a few feet away rather than having to scream from the floor.

Back on the ground, the building has a 10,000-square-foot storage area for dead cases or anything else that might need to be kept out of the way.

The building’s capacity for a concert is with seven rows of retractable seating all the way around the bowl and nine rows at the stage end. There is one area where efficiency was slightly sacrificed for the sake of aesthetics, however that has nothing to do with show day.

Donnelly explained, “We are not a basketball town so we don’t have to lower our Hockey presence in order to allow for a fast turnaround. So we opted for the best looking system and did so knowing that it would cost us time, money and manpower in the turnover. Rather than going with Plexiglas we decided on tempered glass so we wouldn’t need to have the vertical supports between the panels. It’s heavier and takes more time for change out, but it’s worth it.”

There was a weekend where the venue had a Monster Truck event that went Friday through Sunday. The Sunday show ended at 5:00 pm. The venue’s crew removed 1,200 yards of dirt, 2,500 sheets of plywood, replaced the seating that was retracted all the way around the bowl, put down the ice deck and the room was ready for John Mellencamp by 8:00 am. These guys don’t have a problem turning the place around on a dime.

If a show calls for a half house configuration, Donnelly came up with a beautifully elegant solution. The building is rigged with four tracks that can fly in to whatever height is needed. The tracks

hold the house drape. The outside drapes are cut to the rake of the seats and when the rig flies in, two people can simply pull the drape line to any position in the house within the 140 ft. of travel that the track allows. The scoreboard gondola can fly into the steel to a height that allows only four feet of it to fall below the bottom steel, and this lets the drape line to pass under it unimpeded.

Donnelly and a friend drew out the whole system on a napkin one night in a restaurant. The upper decks of the bowl can also be draped off by using the traveler that stays in place all the time. The drape consists of several 20 ft. panels and can be pulled into place as well.

Other features of the building include cell phone repeaters, which allow for a minimum of three bars anywhere in the building and wireless internet access is free throughout the building.

Because it does get bitterly cold in Winnipeg during the winter, there is a feature of the building that serves as a public service to the city. The building has a second story interior skywalk that connects to various malls, office buildings and hotels in the downtown area.

This is a part of a privately owned building, but it is opened to the public for refuge from the elements everyday of the year except Christmas day for 18 hours a day from 7:00 am until midnight.

Of all the features of this building (there are many more that weren’t mentioned) the greatest seems to be the exceptional mind of Kevin Donnelly and the foresight displayed by True North Sports & Entertainment Ltd. for hiring him. ☺

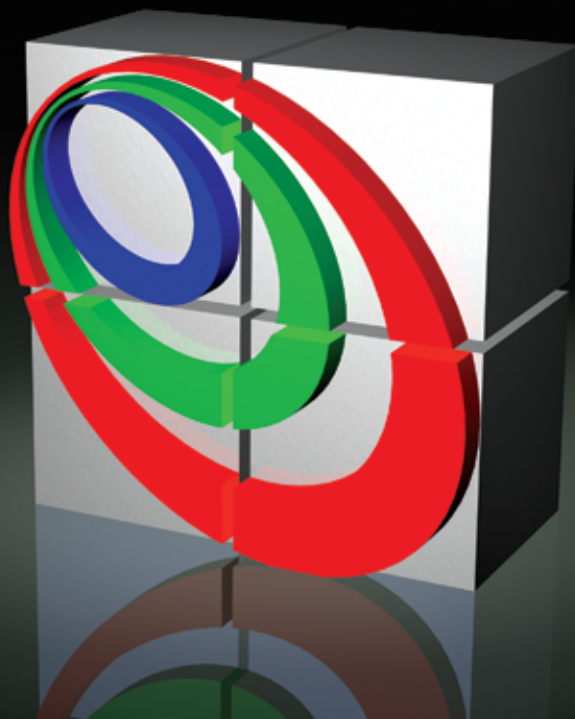
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The latest offerings put forth by the company are medium and low res video products called V-Lite and V-Brite. Both are an answer to all of the low res video systems

on the market. V-Lite is a 28mm med res semi-see thru system that is deployed in a framework configuration. V-Brite is a low res variable pitch net system that hangs on an aircraft cable system. One thing that was very important was to clean up the

look of low (or medium) res video systems. There is cabling that can be seen outside of the structure with either system.

"The other systems out there all look nasty with a mess of cables hanging out in plain sight. What's the point of calling something transparent if you're going to allow all that stuff to be seen?," Jonathan Labbee told us. "It was important for us to create a system where all of that garbage goes away and we did it."

The two systems have a look that is completely clean. There are no cables to be seen in the structure of V-Lite. In the V-Brite system, the only cables that can be seen are those that connect one pixel to the next. This creates the look of a mesh or fishing net. Moreover, because the power/control cables can be connected to the pixels on either side or the top and bottom, the system can be laid out to contour any shape (a statue or a building of any size). There is no limit. The system is supported by Aircraft cable strictly for strain relief. However, it is done so cleanly that nothing can be seen when the system fires up, even with close up photography.

There are many kinds of companies in the world with many different motivations for what they do. Some focus entirely on the pay check at the end of the job. They have little to be proud of at the end of the day, other than a pile of money that came from a limited revenue stream. Then, there are tech companies that sit around and dream up cute little gags that do this or that but have no real practical application in the real world and somehow get a small part of the market to buy into it. Again, that leaves little room for something we like to call *The Future*.

Finally, there is a company that beats back the real challenges of its industry with solutions that can actually be applied to everyday life with a truly dramatic outcome. That outcome has two parts; the revolutionary alteration of the industry and an endless stream of clients who want something more than a great solution for their needs...they just want to be around the process that can create this kind of world class outcome.

Labbee said it best, "Look, anything that's easy, we don't touch. We leave that for everyone else out there. We go after the stuff that's either very difficult or impossible." ☺

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