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FROM THE *Publisher*



This issue of our monthly magazine is focused on the recently concluded Tour Link Conference and the Top Dog Awards. After doing this event as well as the predecessor for twenty-eight years, I have seen most of the ups and downs that can occur. In all those years, there were a few of these gatherings that seemed to stick out in my mind for one reason or another. This time, I can honestly say that I was surprised and very gratified by not only the attendance, but the overall vibe of the event. It felt to me as though we finally hit that magical place where the right people were together at the right time for the right purposes.

Tour Link is a collaborative effort between our staff and the Board of Directors. Because of the diversity of interests and personalities of the people involved, there are always heated discussions, and challenges. The glue that holds us all together, however, is a driving motivation to produce a significant event that will continue to service this industry that we all love and cherish. Egos are put into check, disputes are moderated, finances are dealt with and in the end, all of us on the planning and execution end of the event are able to take a deep breath when the final award is presented on Saturday night and realize that we did a good job.

For all of you who did not attend the event this year, all I can say is that you should make a serious effort to attend the next one. Planning has already started in earnest and because of the quality and number of attendees that gathered this time, we all believe that the event has taken a serious upturn and the next one should be very, very special.

There are a few groups in particular that should find a way to attend next year. First, Personal Managers should realize that an opportunity to meet with the top production people and companies in the world for three days is an opportunity to get a real grip on the major expenses their bands face on tour. Transportation, Accommodations and Production are the cost elements that every act on tour must deal with if there is to be any profitability. Second, Regional Production Companies should flock to this event to try and form relationships with the touring production companies and Production Managers. There is serious business at the conference and I have never understood why more of the mid-range production companies do not attend. Those that do attend always return and seem to do well with their business. Third, the Event Coordinators at the arenas, sheds and theaters should be here if they never attend any other event during the year. There is absolutely no other place to meet and discuss mutual concerns that currently exists in our business. Fourth and maybe most important are the up and coming touring personnel, students and any young people entering our industry or taking the next step in their careers.

The relationships that are forged at his event may sustain anyone for the rest of their careers and could make all the difference; It did for me twenty-eight years ago and I am still riding the wave I caught then.....a word to the wise!

Larry Smith



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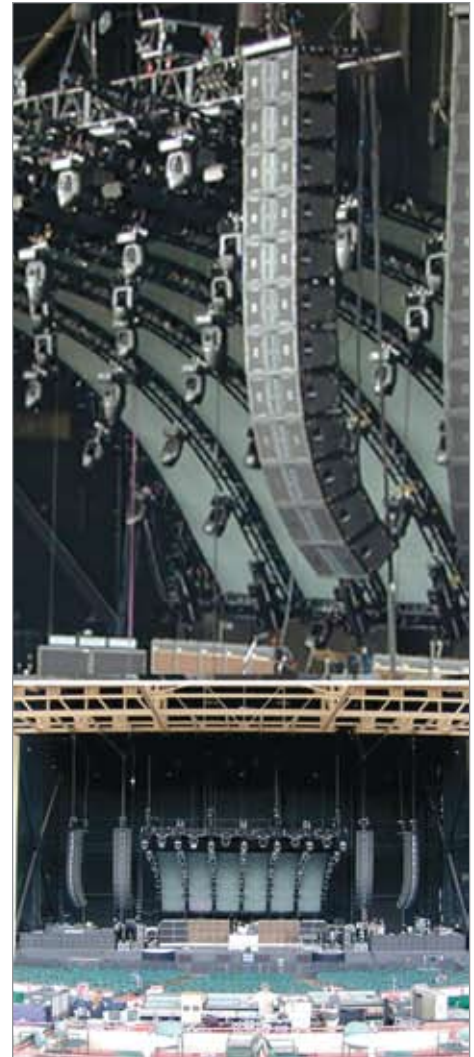
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SUPER BOWL HALFTIME

The
Wildest
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in the
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By MICHAEL A. BECK
Photos by Brad Duns

It is widely stated that the Super Bowl is the world's largest single day sporting event. While it doesn't necessarily follow that the halftime production is the world's largest single day entertainment event, it could be argued that it is the most interesting. A thumbnail description of the production makes the most experienced production veteran sway back and forth from shivering with amazement to green with envy of those who are on the gig.

Once all of the preproduction is done and it's time to make it happen on television, they have the field for 27 minutes from the end of the last play of the first half of the game to get the stage (known as "the shield") onto the field, do the show and get off. If you don't think there is an NFL person carefully watching the clock you're sadly mistaken. "The NFL is not real happy with me if we run late," said halftime Executive Producer Ricky Kirshner. "They send the players back out at 27 minutes whether we're off the field or not and it would be pretty embarrassing if we were still there."

Kirshner, Director Hamish Hamilton and Production Designer Bruce Rodgers first got together on the project in September. Rodgers described the meeting, "Because this was Hamish's first halftime production we all sat down and discussed pros and cons on what we've done in the past and didn't want to do again. We also talked about the things that worked and what didn't work. Several ideas were floated."

At the end of the meeting a lot of ground had been covered but there wasn't a clear idea of exactly what the production would look like. However, the parameters of the production were clearly laid out. There would be no audience on the field. The event would be the biggest ever. The band should play to the stadium audience and it should be shot so that it came across as if it were all being done for the TV audience. We wanted it to be epic and Olympic in scale and feel. Then in October, Rodgers had an epiphany about a stage in the shape of Captain America's shield. He distilled and compiled his thoughts and when he had enough to put in front of the team he sent out the word that he had a good idea.

The shield was 140' in diameter. The actual stage where the band played was 48' across with a two-tiered center riser. The first level of the riser was 18 feet across with an 8 foot wide clear plexi drum riser in its hub. The shield was made up of two types of set "carts." The center area where the band played was made by 14 puzzle pieces called 'band carts' and the 26 carts that radiated around the band area were called 'radial carts.'

Four of the radial carts positioned at 2:00 o'clock and 10:00 o'clock had special edge cutout configurations to accommodate access stairs up to the band area with the step unit riding in cart four. This was the upstage-left stairway. The stage left stairway was devised in the same manner between carts 13 and 14. While there were slight differences between the rest of the carts, they were, for all practical purposes, identical.

The most prominent feature of the stage was the application of 3500 Barco MiSTRIPs. The first level of the center riser had 40 lines of MiSTRIP radiating out from the center. The main stage had another 76 lines extending out from the riser. The outer most portion of the shield was made of 26 carts called, aptly enough, "radials."

While the primary esthetic function of the radials was to house more lines of MiSTRIP, there was a lot more going on inside. These pieces were all identical. When



fully deployed they were 44' 9 1/2" long. We'll get to the matter of deployment in a moment. At their leading edge they were 4' 11 1/2" wide and at their trailing edge they measured 13' 10". However, there was an issue with the overall size. At the dimensions just described, the unit could make the winding journey from the staging area outside the stadium through the tunnel to the field. The maximum length it could be was 35'.

The answer was nothing short of beautifully elegant. The last 9' 9 1/2" of the trailing edge (the wide edge) was built to disconnect and slid over the end of the cart, thus achieving the prerequisite 35'. That part of the radial became known as the "whale tail." As anyone who saw the show knows, the MiSTRIP carried out to end of the radial. The main part of the cart contained 10 lines and the whale tail held 19. In all, the system employed 4,000 five foot units of MiSTRIP.

As mentioned earlier, there was a good bit going on in the radials, besides what the audience saw. Each cart housed three Atomic Strobes, three pyro positions, two video control units, one dimmer pack and one video processor. Additionally, selected radials also contained laser positions, as well as fog and fan units.

When asked what kind of nerve it must take to run with something like this, Executive Producer Ricky Kirshner said, "You've got to be pretty stupid, but we all had a lot of confidence in our team. We went through a number of ideas that were overly ambitious and then we get to a point where we say, 'Okay, we can present this to the team,' meaning the people who have to make it happen out on the field."

Once the design was agreed upon at the highest level, one of the pieces was built at Camarillo, CA based B&R Scenery. Then people from every department were flown out to have a look at it with the goal of laying out where gear, cabling and personnel access would have to be placed.

Kirshner explained what happened next, "We sat everyone down and asked them if they could get it out on the field and plugged in eight minutes... and nobody said yes. We still decided to go forward and no one said no."

B&R Scenery's Brian Sullivan added to Kirshner's take on the get together, "We got a lot of questions solved during that time together in our shop. Representatives from every production vender involved showed up with samples of the gear they'd be using."

All of these issues had to be dealt with in the construction of the carts in a way that if surgery had to take place on site it could happen on an outpatient basis. This means

that the shop work had to be done with the highest level of engineering cleanliness and elegance as the MiSTRIP wouldn't show up until two days before rehearsal began in Florida. Sullivan explained, "We had to design the 'whale tails' in a way that if a problem should occur on the field, two guys can fix it with a hammer."

B&R began work on the project on November 19th with a ship date of December 10th. There is a serious distinction that must be made about this show. When we talk about shipping the production elements we're not talking about pushing 40 fully loaded carts into 30 trucks and shoving off to Florida. Everything was shipped in pieces and assembled on site by representatives of the vendors and local union hands all under the watchful eye of Sullivan and his team, as well as Staging Supervisor Cap Spence and his crew.

The band was floor lit by 72 Color Blast units that were placed around the perimeter of the stage. As was stated before, there were three Atomic Strobes mounted in each radial making for a total of 78. Additionally, there was one Vari*Lite VL3500 per radial. When the carts were brought out onto the field, the VL3500's rode on top of the retracted whale tail. Once it was in position and the whale tail was fully deployed, the VL3500 was hung underneath the end of the cart shooting out from the shield.

Because there were no vertical set elements, there was nothing to light that could serve as background. Lighting Designer Al Gurdon chose to use what he had available to him, which was the stadium audience and the smoke that was being created by pyro and foggers for laser. "I didn't have to worry about lighting the set because it was self lighting. So I chose to use the stadium as an extension of the set on the horizontal and vertical plains," Gurdon shared.

That would have been a bit of a stretch except for the fact that the stage covered the field from sideline to sideline. Had it been smaller, lighting would have been more of a challenge than it was, as any light that might spill out onto the field would have made the stage look lost and isolated. However, in this case the size of the stage seemed to invite one to see the field. While Gurdon didn't spend a lot of time spilling off of the stage, when he did hit the pitch it made for the perfect frame.

The goal of lighting of this production was to accent the color of what was going on with the video in the shield. "My main goal was to use color in a broad way," Gurdon told mPm, "I didn't mix color. When there was a color in the shield we integrated everything within the rig to make that statement. So when it goes from

Pinball Wizard, which was all white, into Baba O'Riley it was a big hit into a completely green environment."

Speaking of Baba O'Riley, that was the first time in the show when laser showed up in force. Designed by Doug Adams of Toronto-based Laser Design Productions, this was a massive look. Adams did all the programming in Toronto with Programmer Jason McEachern. However, this time out they tried a new tool using a pre-visualization package called Light Converse. This made it possible for Adams & McEachern to do the heavy design lifting at home and do onsite tweaking as needed via virtual visual reference.

The equipment list included: Four 50-watt Green YAG Lasers, four 25-watt full color air cooled OPS Lasers, two 20-watt full color air cooled OPS Lasers, two 20-watt Full Color DPSS/Diode Lasers, four 13-watt Full Color DPSS/Diode Lasers, sixteen LDP 10 Projectors, sixteen Le Maitre G-Force 2 Foggers. All in, this put up 400 watts of laser. Although that may seem like something less than the average hair dryer might pull, we're not talking about the power needed to turn the laser on; we're talking about the measured concentrated light output. It might be helpful to understand that in the 80's NASA used a 20 watt laser to hit the space shuttle.

So when we're saying that this show employed 400 watts of laser, we're talking about something truly incredible. Laser Design Productions' Production Coordinator Jim Schorer described what that meant for the company, "In terms of the quantity of equipment and the level of technology, this is definitely the biggest show we've done in the 20 odd years we've been in the business."

Because of the precise nature of laser use in the entertainment world and the fact that a fair number of the laser units were to be mounted in the shield itself, the project posed substantial challenges for the laser team. The NFL had set up a full scale practice field outside the stadium where all technical aspects of the production could be rehearsed. This made it possible to program and practice the gear in the shield. The problem was that it couldn't be focused as there were no reference points to gage off of. Conversely, the gear that was hard mounted in the stadium could be focused and programmed with the relative comfort of knowing that it would be where it was focused when show-time came around.

The whole production was only allowed to rehearse on the field the Thursday before the game. That was the first and last time that both systems could be interlinked as one for lighting, laser and pyro. It was also the only opportunity to aim and set the lasers in the shield. But once that happened they now had to contend with the journey, back out to the

staging area and then back onto the field on game day.

Adams addressed how that worked, “When we got out on the field and powered up on game day we were able to do a low power reference check. The termination line of our scan rate was on the LED video ribbon that went around the stadium so that the people in the stands could have the experience of either looking down on the effect or up at it, depending where they were.”

That accounted for the focus of units in the stage. One other issue to be dealt with was the fact that the rest of the system was shooting up into the sky. This meant that the precise times of rehearsals, programming and show had to be carefully logged with the FAA so that air traffic could be diverted for safety purposes.

It can't be said that any one person or team is more important than another. However, there is no doubt that one team was larger than any other and that was the volunteers, without whom this show could not have happened, no matter how sleek the design was or how well seasoned the technicians were. The NFL actually acquired the volunteers for the production as part of the 11,000ish volunteers needed for the overall event. But the number need for the halftime production was decided by the incredibly straight forward Staging Supervisor Cap Spence.

It must be made very clear that these volunteers are not in any way connected with the entertainment industry. They are everyday people from all walks of life. Spence asked the NFL for 600 people. This presents a whole host of logistical concerns. These people have to be fed. When they are not working they have to have someplace to go. They need restroom facilities. The list goes on. But most of all they have to be trained.

The show was 12 minutes long and that left a total of 15 minutes to get the production on and off the field. Although the amount of time available for halftime has never changed, the size of the production changed in a big way this year. That meant that the ballet had to be cleaner and more precise than ever before.

Each cart called for anywhere from five to 15 volunteers. Once these people were assigned to a cart they were then under the supervision of a union stagehand who was in turn under the control of Spence's team. The fore mentioned full scale layout of the field had the tunnel mapped out as well so the entire experience could be rehearsed from start to finish. While the show could only be rehearsed on the actual field on Thursday, they were able to test drive it on the practice field several times within the parameters set by the availability of the volunteers, who could only show up in the evening after work, school and anything else



they had going on.

Spence let the volunteers know in no uncertain terms exactly what to expect, “I told them, ‘look if you're here to see the game, you're in the wrong place. If you're here because you think you're going to hang out with Pete and Roger, you're in the wrong place. If you think you're going to watch the game on TV, you're in the wrong place.’ I let them know that they're going to get lousy box lunches, soggy pizza, a baseball hat and maybe a T-shirt. I also told them that Payton Manning doesn't get to watch the game either, he's IN the game. I told them that they are in the game as well.”

He went on to warn them that there would be long hours of standing around, especially when the TV guys showed up because “they are the kings of standing around.” He advised them to go to their jobs and when the boss catches them standing around the water cooler and asks what they're doing, they should say that they're going to be in the Super Bowl production and they're practicing.

But he also made them a promise that would most certainly be kept: “I said, ‘You'll never forget this experience. You may not want to ever repeat it, but you'll never forget it.’”

There is no question when having this many nonpaid staff, there is a certain X factor to be considered and in some cases feared. “I have to be honest with you,” said Ricky Kirshner, “two weeks out we were putting it together in about 11 or 12 minutes wondering if we were going to make it.”

Spence also admitted that he had concerns but at the eleventh hour it all came home, “The Wednesday night before the game I began to realize they could do it.”

Okay, so let's run through it.

The second half of the game is winding down. The show has been rehearsed and programmed. All of the carts, camera dollies and everything else needed on the field to make this show happen have been prepped and staged. By now, the volunteers have taken



complete ownership of their respective gear to the point of guarding it. Spence is well beyond firing people up and the volunteers are well past needing to be excited. This is game day and they're moments away from taking the field. Spence and his team are now reminding the volunteers to breathe through their nose.

Kirshner, Hamilton and Rodgers are in the NEP Denali video truck waiting for the half to end. No matter how many times anyone has worked this production; it's still a nerve-racking experience.

The video guys are playing stage trivia, going through every conceivable scenario, no matter how farfetched it may seem.

The Saints have received a punt and returned it four yards to their own 48 yard line.

One minute before halftime the spine stiffening call comes across the radio that a golf cart has hit one of the [show] carts and has damaged the cart.

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The Saints have now worked their way into field goal position. As they line up for the attempt, the first four carts are allowed to sneak out onto the field.

Thankfully the damage to the cart has been fixed to the point where it can make the trip to the field and fire up. A bullet dodged.

The clock is now winding down the last seconds of the half. Spence is still telling the team to breath.

The kick is up.

It doesn't matter whether it's good or not. One clock has expired and another has started ticking.

The ballet begins with the carts for the drum riser and the stage coming out first. As they are hitting the 50 yard line power is being pulled from the Saints' sideline and data is being pulled from the opposite side of the field.

The stage is in place and while the first of some 380 connections are being made under it, The Who's Production Manager Roy Lamb is top side with B&R owner Brian Sullivan checking every seam as someone below is leveling as per their direction.

Now the radials are showing up and the shield is taking shape. As they are coming into position the five foot wide, six foot high hamster run inside the shield is getting more and more populated with band backline crew, stage hands, video, pyro and laser crew. There are sixty people in all who will be there for the duration.

The last of the radials are in place; the volunteers have left the field and now it's all on the crew. All that is left to do is light the fuse.

While the guys in the truck want all of the elements in the stage to work, they know that the one thing that has to work is video. In the back of everyone's mind is the fact that it has only worked in rehearsal once out of 12 tries. They know that Al Gurdon can light the band with the scores of VL3500's as well as follow spots posted around the stadium. They know that Doug Adams can still put up an impressive laser display if the gear in the shield doesn't make it and the same goes for pyro. Right now they know better than to ask the crew how it's going.

When it receives data, the shield comes up in sections in a uniformed manner. When they start coming up, Bruce Rodgers, seated behind Director Hamish Hamilton in the truck, is watching the monitor with one eye as the other eye is closed in prayer. He starts to breathe... a little... with one lung... holding the other in reserve.



Then it occurs. The radials have stopped lighting up, with the bulk of them still dark. Nothing is happening. Finally, the very calm voice of Video Content Producer Lee Lodge, who worked with NYC based Loyalkaspar to create all the content, comes over the production line advising that he's going to need another 40 seconds. He may as well be asking for two weeks.

Three seconds into trying to find the NFL person with whom to negotiate for extra time, the whole shield comes up.

Rodgers is now watching with both eyes and breathing with both lungs as the word comes down that they are show ready. Expert analysis of the game has now finished and they are away for a commercial, during which time the broadcast has been handed off from the CBS truck to the Denali truck, where the halftime show will be switched.

House lights go down, Denali has the con, back from commercial and the show is on.

Exactly twelve minutes later, the show is over and production personnel everywhere are calling each other up asking, "Man, did you just see that?!"

The show might be over but the production isn't. Now everything has to get off the field and the clock is still ticking. With 7½ minutes used up on the in and 12 minutes for the show, the remaining 7½ minutes are slipping away fast. Six hundred volunteers have to get back out onto the field, get the thing apart and make it disappear. And while the particular order of getting everything out of the building doesn't matter, what does matter is that people don't get just outside the building and start high fiving each other over the success, thus causing a log jam on the field. Once out of the building they have to keep going until there's room for everyone.

The ballet finally comes to its close with the last cart exiting the field as the players are retaking it. There are no cables left on the field, there are no wholes or tire tracks or divots in the field. It has been left as it was



found with one second left on the clock.

There are much larger and more complicated productions that take place on a regular basis. Events that come to mind are the Oscars, the Olympic opening and closing ceremonies and the national political conventions, to name a few. But there is simply nothing that even remotely resembles the mind seizing, white knuckled ride that is the Super Bowl halftime experience.

Everyone whom we interviewed in the process of putting this story together spoke with one voice that conveyed the pride and even swagger of having done something that shouldn't be possible. It's easy to say that it takes serious stones to even suggest something this aggressive and to agree to attempt it. But in fact, all it really takes is supreme confidence in the team you're working with and the desire to say:

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When the legendary rock band The Who took the stage at the Sun Life Stadium in Miami, FL for the *Bridgestone Super Bowl XLIV Halftime Show*, it was the culmination of months of hard work and collaboration. “The Who is an iconic rock band known partly for a very distinctive and recognizable visual style,” commented Lighting Designer Al Gurdon. “There is a pre-existing visual ‘vocabulary’, which can inform and support the design approach.” Production Resource Group (PRG) provided the lighting package and crew for the Halftime show, one of the most intense twelve minutes in live entertainment.

Gurdon, Production Designer Bruce Rodgers and Screens/Graphics Producer Lee Lodge collaborated on the NFL Network Production with executive producer Ricky Kirshner and director Hamish Hamilton, translating that vocabulary into an integrated, cutting-edge design. “I wanted to develop the visual impact of the stage floor itself, and extend that out into the audience in a three-dimensional way,” Gurdon explained. “I wanted to create a background for camera close-ups and have the audience and the stadium itself be part of the spectacle and the set.”

Gurdon’s lighting programmer for the event was industry veteran Michael “Oz” Owen. Due to the severely limited rehearsal time on-site, Gurdon and Owen spent five days at PRG Essential Lighting’s pre-visualization studio in London, programming the show. Owen also worked with Video Content Programmer Jason Rudolph to insure that the lighting and

the LEDs in the stage floor were completely synchronized. Owen and Rudolph both used PRG’s Virtuoso® control consoles. “I always prefer using a Virtuoso,” Owen said. “In Miami, I had three; one in the band/stage rehearsal tent, one in the ‘design’ cabin and one front of house. With PRG, I feel really comfortable because there is always plenty of support.”

Rudolph added, “I used the Virtuoso because it made it so easy for Oz and I to sync our cue lists. He could export his cue timings, and I could import them directly into my show and edit them as needed.” PRG also engineered a HTP (Highest Takes Precedence) data merge for the lighting and the video systems. “The merge,” explained Rudolph, “was there so that we could control the color blocks either via the media server doing pixel-mapping, or from Oz’s Virtuoso console. It gave us more programming options.”

In addition to Gurdon and Owen, the lighting team included Lighting Directors Rich Gorrod, Bob Barnhart and David Grill. Peter Radice provided additional lighting programming. Full Flood Inc. coordinated with PRG on the lighting equipment and crew. The PRG technicians supervised the volunteers who were responsible for setting up the lighting on the field. Several members of the PRG crew have participated in as many as ten Halftime shows.

Gurdon was very pleased with the results. “We had a very good rig, with no reliability problems at all. You need to know you can rely on things working. PRG was great; I work with them all the time and I find they provide great service and great crews. I always know PRG will deliver; I couldn’t ask for more from them.”

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Lasers Light Up the Skies

of Miami for the
Super Bowl XLIV
Halftime Show

The Super Bowl halftime performance has become one of the music industry's highest profile events, with recent acts such as Prince, U2, Green Day, Bruce Springsteen, Tom Petty, the Rolling Stones and Paul McCartney taking part. For this year's **Super Bowl XLIV** halftime show, The Who lit up the skies of Miami Sunday, February 7 at Sun Life Stadium performing a wide array of their classic hits. The legendary London band performed a medley including Baba O'Riley, Pinball Wizard, Who Are You and Won't Get Fooled Again.

Engaged in the massive production, Executive Producer Ricky Kirshner alongside with Director Hamish Hamilton pulled together a production crew of some of the industry's best in staging, lighting, sound and special effects. Kishner & Hamilton introduced one of the most technical stage structures ever seen for a Super Bowl half-time show. Bruce Rodgers (Production Designer) of Tribe Inc worked along with his design team to draft the unique circular LED video stage that consisted of 14 set carts and an additional 26 radials around the main stage. The creation of the stage at its conceptual design was a reflection of the Captain America Shield symbolizing a strong powerful patriotic influence that meshed with a Mercedes-Benz McLaren SLR Sterling Moss with all the built-in options of pyro, lasers and lights. From concept to reality, all departments worked out all the potential obstacles they would face in creating such a monstrous design that would need to be assembled within 8 minutes during a commercial and commentary break. Introducing the lasers to the Super Bowl was a new facet.

Rob Paine (Executive in Charge of Production), contacted Laser Design Productions to conjure some of the possibilities of utilizing numerous lasers to create a huge effect for the half-time performance.

Incorporating the latest technology in lasers, Designer and President of Laser Design Productions, Doug Adams, coordinated along with Victor Tomei (Laser Technical Director) to project over 400 watts of power through 16 laser sources that were located on the field and within the stage to achieve the looks Hamilton desired. After numerous meetings and site inspections, a number of obstacles and concerns were overcome in order to incorporate the lasers into the show. Preparing for every possible and worst-case scenario, Tomei along with his team designed custom apparatuses including rain protection housings for each laser, anti vibrating platforms mounted to the white light lasers housed within the radial carts. Power requirements and additional generators to keep the lasers and foggers warm before rolling onto the field to go live were also taken into consideration.

Staging Supervisors, Cap Spence and Tony Hauser, assessed all divisions to strategically implement the load-in, setup and load-out with the full production crew plus approximately 600 volunteers. The logistics to coordinate this stage in such a short amount of time was an impressive feat, to say the least. With a determination to advance the concept, the entire production team moved forward to choreograph the show moments into 12

minutes of music that was led by Hamish whose talent was clearly visible. The stage itself was a phenomenal structure with over 3000 five-foot radiating LED MiSTRIPs to project video content of graphic vibes, text and waves of light that crescendoed with blasts of pyro and laser beams to specific beats and cues.

Adams and his crew pre-programmed all 16 lasers at their head office studio. Working with Laser Programmer Jason McEachern, they took a new approach to test pilot a pre-visualization software program, *Light Converse*. It was a great new approach that allowed Adams and McEachern to program the lasers and make changes on and off-site with a visual reference. Laser Design Productions including a total of 16 lasers with an output of over 400 watts of laser light. The equipment list included:

- Four 50-watt Green YAG Lasers
- Four 25-watt full color air cooled OPS Lasers
- Two 20-watt full color air cooled OPS Lasers
- Two 20-watt Full Color DPSS/Diode Lasers
- Four 13-watt Full Color DPSS/Diode Lasers
- Sixteen LDP 10 Projectors
- Sixteen Le Maitre G-Force 2 Foggers "range 110v"

The entire Laser Crew consisted of:
 Douglas Adams - Designer, Jason McEachern - Programmer, Vittorio Tomei - Laser Technical Director, Laser Technicians: Jason Bridges, Chris Stuart, Robert Pratl, Noam Sigal, Keith Hellebrand, Kenneth Schmitt

Fourteen pangolin laser control cards were all networked at a central control under the main stage. Eight full color lasers were positioned in eight of the radial carts. Eight additional lasers including four 50-watt yags and four of the full-color air cooled lasers were located upstage of the New Orleans Saints (NFC) bench. Segueing into "Baba O'Riley," Adams designed a classic green laser look that was renowned from past Who performances. Diffraction, machidda and beam chases filled the arena with lasers. Leading into the closing of Baba O'Riley, full color lasers were showcased as they transitioned into colors of purple, red, white, blue and even an amber/brown look choreographed in sequence with the lighting.

After all was said and done, the Super Bowl, and the NFL proved to once again show the world it is more than just a game. The Indianapolis Colts were upset by the New Orleans Saints. A city that was devastated on August 25th 2005 by Hurricane Katrina proudly showed the world that it was making a powerful comeback. According to preliminary results from the Nielsen Company, CBS's broadcast of Super Bowl XLIV attracted an average audience of 106.5 million U.S. viewers, making it the most watched Super Bowl of all times. ○

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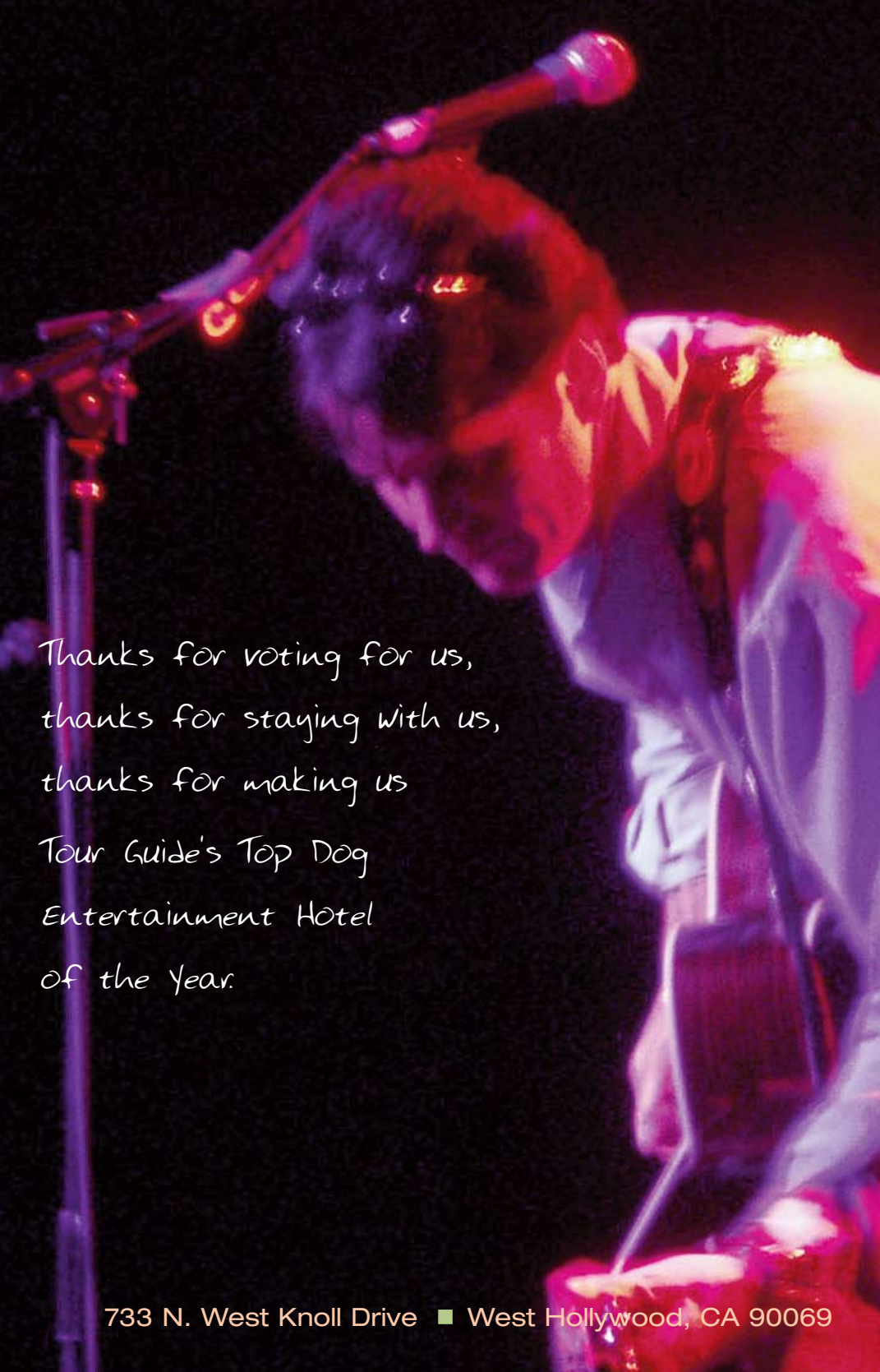
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TOUR LINK 2010 Rocks Mesa

Tour Link Photos courtesy of: Alan Poulin Photography



For the fifth year in a row, the annual Tour Link Conference came together at the Phoenix Marriott Mesa in Mesa, AZ, February 4-7, for an extended weekend of networking, catching up with old friends, making new friends, and drinking at Diamonds. The official title sponsor for the event was Prevost, title co-sponsors included AAA Communications, Brown United and Shockwave Cargo.

As usual the event began on Thursday with an exciting afternoon at Golfland where attendees battled in laser tag, mini golf, go-kart racing, and arcade games. The afternoon served as an ice breaker for first timers looking to meet the veterans of the event before everyone came together in the evening for the Opening Night Reception at the hotel.

Friday and Saturday mornings and afternoons were filled with sessions at the hotel offering a broad variety of topics. Friday evening attendees enjoyed the new Jet BBQ at the Scottsdale Air Center. Saturday evening was the much-anticipated Industry Dinner & Top Dog Award Show in the grand ballrooms of the hotel. Of course, every evening all came together at Diamonds for late-night hospitality suites hosted by Access Pass & Design and The Hyatt hotels.

Tour Link 2010 proved to be a success with a spike in attendance, even during a recession. The staff and board of advisors thank all who sponsored and attended to make the event bigger and better than ever. Special thanks to the Board of Advisors whose help with this event each year ensures a successful gathering.

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Opening Night Reception

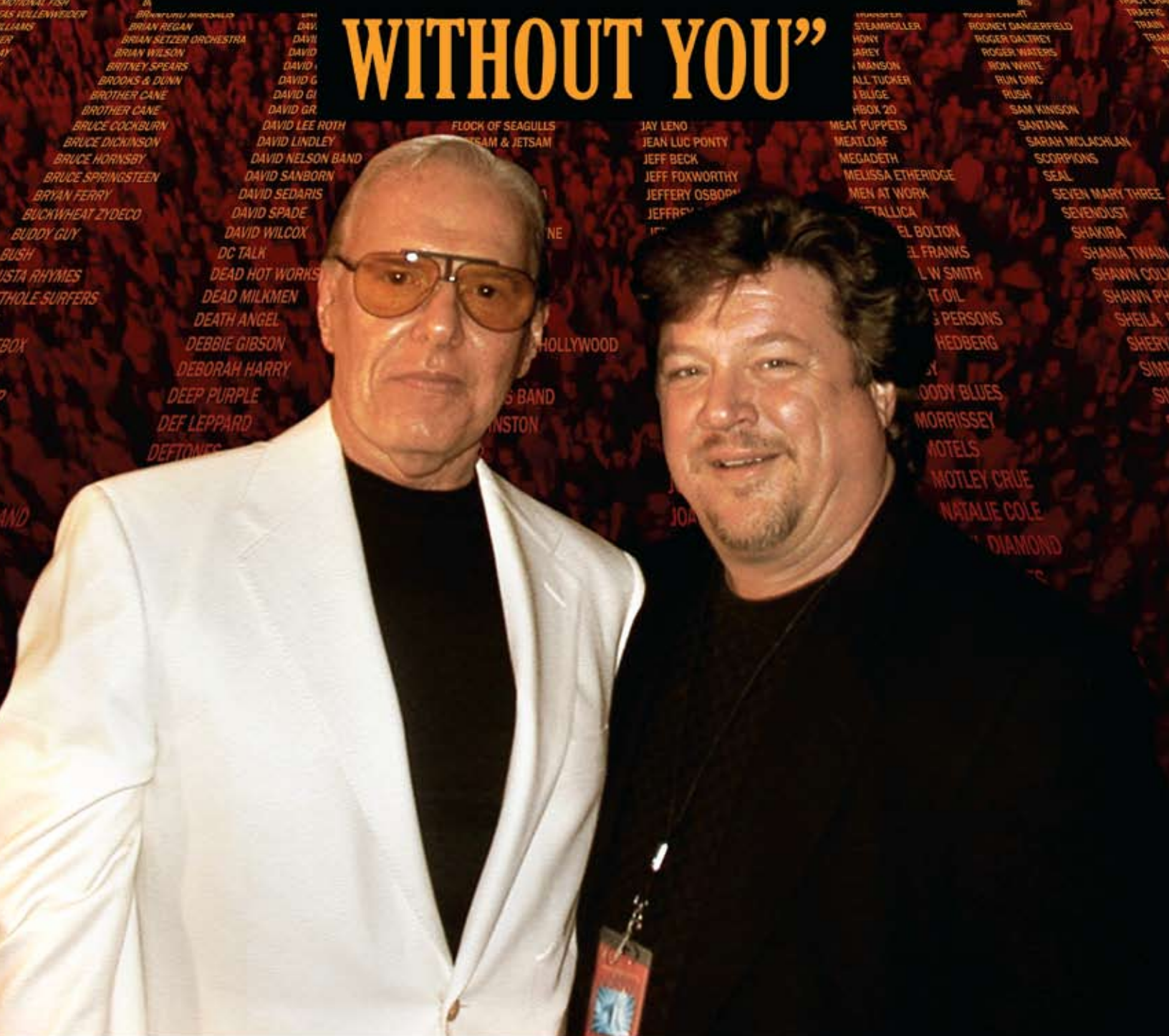
On Thursday, February 4, 2010, Tour Link attendees gathered in the Canyon Room of the Phoenix Marriott Mesa for the Opening Night Reception. Robert Rozich with Entertainment Production Services provided attendees with a unique and relaxing ambience. Stars lined the ceiling of the dimly lit room and jazzy guitar riffs from artist Stev Skye filled the air as old friends made new friends throughout the evening. The hors d'oeuvres were sponsored by MCI and drinks were sponsored by MacSpecialist.

The reception is designed each year to give attendees an opportunity to renew relationships and meet new people before the heart of the conference begins. The activities of the day are all designed to ease attendees into the spirit of the conference and to enjoy each other's company before discussions begin in earnest.



Tour Link Photos courtesy of: Alan Poulin Photography

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Danny Zelisko - Tour link promoter of the year 2010

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Sessions2010

An Oasis of Information & Experience in the Arizona Desert

by BILL ABNER

The 2010 Tour Link General Sessions proved once again just how much this conference has to offer both the touring professional and other entities supporting the industry. With subject matter ranging from ways to diversify your business, to insight on how to integrate new technology on the road, the sessions literally had something for everyone in attendance.

Drawing from the successful format that was initiated at 2009's Tour Link conference, this year, the sessions were held in a "round table" fashion. A format that again proved to be engaging and informative, encouraged each session's attendees to participate, and featured a highly interactive approach.

One or more members of the Board of Advisors, who opened up each session with a topic, and then let the attendees discuss the subjects amongst themselves, moderated each session. You can bet there were some lively and animated discussions, and at times it was all the moderators could do to rein in the discussions when the end of the allotted periods had arrived.

This year there were a total of six General Sessions that were open to all attendees, and as many as four closed sessions dedicated to the transportation and accommodations sectors.

The General Session topics:

1. Diversifying Your Business
2. Taxes and Payroll
3. Life After Life on the Road
4. Anatomy of A Tour
5. Technology on the Road
6. Through the looking Glass: How the Industry Views Us

Diversifying Your Business

This session was co-moderated by Board Members Jon Nevins of Shockwave Cargo and Seth Sheck of Access Pass and Design. Sheck broke the proverbial ice by relating how he and his business morphed from managing bands in his youth, to his current role in designing and printing passes for the music industry. He explained how his business is still looking for ways to diversify itself by branching out to the sports market and into other areas that may require his company's particular range of services.

Nevins pointed out to the group that this was a period of time in the country and in the business where it is important to "protect your business and to find ways to keep it going through rough times," and how diversifying your business is one such way to accomplish that goal.

The discussion then moved on to others in the room giving examples of ways that they took their passions – a recurring theme throughout all of these sessions – and turned them into businesses, and are now diversifying those businesses further to create other markets, or even support mechanisms, for their main ventures.

One such story came from industry veteran Jim Evans of Mountain Productions: "We found that we were spending outrageous amounts of money on chain bags for our motors, so we started to make our own bags just to fill our own needs. Before long, we were making and shipping bags to other users, and now we are one of the largest chain bag suppliers in the world!" A great success story, and a fine example of how one business turned a need into a revenue stream for the business.

Over and over, networking was cited as a major way that lots of these businesses have created



We'll touch briefly on each one here in summary, but be sure to book your slot early for next year's conference so that you can be involved in these spirited and educational sessions first hand.

opportunities for diversification. Making contacts along the way and taking those contacts from business to business can help to create those opportunities, not just on a business level, but on a personal level as well. What better way to network than here at Tour Link!

Tour Link Photos courtesy of: Alan Poulin Photography





Tour Link Photos courtesy of: Alan Poulin Photography

Taxes and Payroll

Okay, go ahead and groan. Your head is hurting already, right? How in the world is this session going to be interesting? Believe it or not, this was one of the most interesting discussions of the week! Moderated by Board member Jay Sendyk of Sendyk and Company, and Certified Public Accountant Ron Shirley, of CAPS Universal Payroll services, this session covered everything from the quirks of keeping bus and truck drivers paid, to questions of how to file and account for Per Diem payments received while on the road.

Shirley pointed out for example how the music touring business was different — for tax purposes anyway — from regular businesses in that, as a tour moves around the country, each jurisdiction — states, counties, and cities -- wants to get their piece of the tax revenue due from that tour. Sendyk, himself a CPA, added that as a hiring entity, it is required that withholding be accounted for each individual in every state in which that individual worked or performed a service. That got the discussions going for sure!

The session was filled with tour accountants, tour managers, business managers, and even home office personnel all looking to increase their knowledge of tax strategies and finding ways to increase their effectiveness for their businesses and tours.

One of the standout discussions in this group focused on a new innovation by CAPS Universal of a “Cash Card” for petty cash on a tour. The idea is that instead of paying touring personnel with cash, or paying Per Diem in cash, they are given a re-loadable card, similar to a debit card, and never have to carry actual cash. As the discussion grew, tour managers themselves were coming up with other ways the cards could be used, such as giving them to runners for day-to-day expenses.

One of the features of the card is that it is password controlled and each entity, from the business manager, to the tour manager, and on down the line, can have as much or as little access as is desired. And the reconciliation is immediate. The issuing agent can check the usage immediately and will know exactly where every dime of the amount loaded onto the card has been spent. It would be a safe bet to expect to see these cash cards popping up on tours all over the country soon.

Life After Life on the Road

“What Life?” As this session began, that was the question posed by Tour Link Director, and Publisher of Tour Guide’s *Road Book*, *Venue Book*, and *mobile Production* monthly magazine, Larry Smith. “What are we gonna do about our lives when it’s time to slow it down? Everyone is going to come to the point where you’ve got to think about what’s your life gonna be when

you come off of the road. You’ve got to start thinking about it now.”

Whether it is a financial consideration, a psychological consideration, or a physical consideration, the time will come when we all have to make a change from this life we love, to a more mundane, or at the very least, a simply different, lifestyle. This session brought those concepts to the forefront and evoked some strong emotions from the audience. An audience made up of people from both sides of the equation. Those who have already made the transition such as Smith himself, and others who still have good productive years ahead, but are looking to face the prospect head on, and are looking for ways to meet those challenges now, and on their own terms.

Yeah, it was pretty heady stuff for certain. It was a much more emotional conversation than any of the other sessions, but a necessary one. Board member, and legendary Production Manager Bobby Schneider of Accurate Staging tied it into the day’s previous session on Diversification by indicating that, this too, was a type of diversifying, of reinventing oneself to continue to be productive, and to have a life beyond the road. “It really is a matter of realizing that this life is not the never-ending story. You’ve got to have something to fall back on. It’s a matter of preparing for the future,” opined Schneider.

Smith also brought up the possibility of creating some sort of “professional touring association;” some kind of entity that would give people in the industry strength, and bargaining power for their future. Smith was adamant about it NOT taking on the identity of a trade union, but simply an association of touring professionals to give us all some protection, both down the road, and for the near future. Smith and Schneider suggested that the idea be discussed through the coming year by the attendees, and that if enough support were garnered, it could be a topic for action at next year’s Tour Link Conference. Another example of how Tour Link is right at the forefront of what is happening in the industry.

Anatomy of a Tour

Okay, so who knows the difference between a war story and a fairy tale? A fairy tale starts out: “Once upon a time...” A war story starts out “This ain’t no crap...!” This session ended up being a bunch of THOSE conversations!

Board member and tour accountant Stuart Ross, affectionately known as the “Phil Donahue of the panel circuit” -- and moderator of this session -- called it “A combination of war stories and show and tell.” That was the understatement of the week! Indeed, the stories got so raucous at times that this writer was sworn to secrecy on some of the topics, and threatened with bodily harm should any of the more “interesting” tales be related in any

periodical that anyone would actually read. Consequently, there won't be any truly juicy revelations here, but therein lies one more reason, gentle reader, why you should go ahead and book your reservation for next year's Tour Link conference, so you can hear these stories for yourself.

However, before the discussion devolved into tales of weird contract riders (we actually got to the bottom of the 'no brown m&m's' issue!) and persnickety talent, there were some interesting revelations about some well-known tours and what it took to make them happen every day. Kevin Lyman of the Warped tour expounded upon one such example:

Before the Warped tour, Lyman's first touring gig was as Stage Manager for Lollapalooza. Trial by fire for sure, but a great learning ground for what was to come. "I started the Warped tour in 1995 and it was going to be my last tour, my last summer," he says. "We've now just finished our sixteenth year. We're now doing about six hundred thousand tickets per year."

Here's some more numbers from that tour that will blow your mind: Two years ago, the tour comprised eleven hundred people, moved in one hundred twenty six vehicles, fed six hundred meals *three times a day*, and did forty six shows in fifty-four days! That is amazing! Although we've all heard of the Vans Warped tour, who knew that it was that huge of a show, and was drawing those kinds of numbers? The oohs and ahhs were clearly audible in the audience as Lyman listed the tours accomplishments.

After Lyman finished wowing the audience, more Production Managers and Tour Managers got up and shared their stories, from the surreal to the sublime. Mike Amato, this year's Top Dog Award winner for Tour Manager of The Year, told how his gig with KISS was "like the movie Ground Hog Day: the same thing every day with no surprises." We heard again from Bobby Schneider and his experiences with Third Eye Blind, and New Kids On The Block, Steve Kidd of Guns N' Roses shared tales of life with Axl. Board member Benny Collins related some of his experiences while out with the Madonna tour, and Jerry Levin got the crowd going with the exploits of Spinal Tap's "Unwiggled" tour. Frankly, you just should have been there!

Technology on the Road

Board member Jon Nevins opened up this session by having some of the exhibitors in attendance talk about their products. Products and services like the new Office-In-A-Box, which includes all of the machines and technology needed for a mobile production office in one user-friendly road case, and Mac Specialists, whose name says it all and that support Mac users worldwide, were

highlighted. Each of the manufacturer reps were given an opportunity to explain the features and benefits of their products to an audience willing to learn of ways they could raise their productivity, and lower their bottom line.

Next, other users in the audience gave their suggestions of technologies that had worked for them, from basic text messaging, all the way to Skype and even tour management software such as Eventric. A major topic of concern was technology that is available for communicating while touring overseas. Domestically, the technology is fairly simple and relatively cost effective, but once you get outside the US, it becomes quite expensive to communicate, not only user to user in-country, but even more so in communicating back to the US.

For example, you're on a six-week tour in Japan, and your daughter is having her thirteenth birthday while you are doing a show in Osaka, or some other god-forsaken place. What is the best way to make that call back home so that you don't come back with a three thousand dollar cell phone bill? Yes, it does happen, and it was the goal of this session to inform the attendees of their options out there on the road.

Another aspect of the conversation was who should actually pay for the use of those technologies? Should it be the responsibility of the user? The band? The Promoter? And how do you account for those expenses at the end of the tour? At the end of the year? Again, Tour Link is out there on the leading edge of technology, and gives the attendees suggestions and insight for tools to do their jobs better, cheaper, and more efficiently.

Through the Looking Glass: How the Industry Views Us

"Do we burn bridges?" Stuart Ross posed the question to the audience to begin the final session of the week. "We often in this industry act disrespectfully. We bully our way out of situations. This is generally not the kind of thing we talk about in these sessions, but I want to pose these questions to the people here."

What a way to start up a conversation! Bruce Eisenberg of Audio Analysts continued the discussion by explaining that yes, in the early days especially, there was a lot of bridge burning going on. "It wasn't a business that was sophisticated in terms of doing budgets for tours, so you just beat people into the price that you had to get, so yeah, we were burning a lot of bridges back then."

The goal of this session was to point out and highlight how we as an industry, and as individuals in the industry, can and should, present ourselves to the supporting industries in the business. Not only to benefit the image of the industry, but really because it is just the

right way to do business. The old order, the days when we would ram our way through a show day, are really over. The business has grown, evolved into a more mainstream entity, and one that must embrace the conventions of good business. Here even more than in most, relationships are key. Interpersonal, and even intercrew (yes, this writer invented that word), relationships are vital to the well being of the entity, the living, breathing, thing, that we call a tour.

The tone of a tour is set from the top down. Often that hierarchy even includes the talent, but more often than not it really begins with the tour management, and continues to and through the production manager, and on down to the stage manager, the techs, and even the stagehands. How could a tour such as the Warped tour, eleven hundred strong, survive and yes, thrive, without the proper tone being set from the top by examples such as Kevin Lyman and his counterparts?

Sure, there are obstacles. Lack of standardization, accountability issues, there are no templates for "how to do a tour" (although there are several shows out there that could put on a clinic, and those that want to learn the right way should pay very close attention to them), but there's no book, no course one can take to ensure success. However, the example set by successful businesses and corporations should stand as beacons to those who really desire to be and to do their best.

One avenue that was mentioned to gain that success is to take the time to learn what the other guy does to make each show a success. Take the time to learn how and why that hotelier makes the calls and decisions they do. Spend a day with a venue manager and get to know what it takes – from their perspective – to make your show happen. Oh yeah, to be sure, it ain't going to be easy. It will cost you some valuable time. But, in the long run, if the career you've chosen, or has chosen you, is important to you, if you really want to rise above the rest, this is a valuable investment and one that could just be the process to set you apart from the many others in the field. Those dinosaurs who do burn bridges and who push and manipulate their way through a show day without ever giving thought to what it really takes to make a show happen from all sides.

Tour Link 2010: An oasis of information and experience in a desert of understanding. These sessions, like any other of their ilk are only as good as the people who attend them, contribute to them, and engage in them. This group of people made this year's conference one of the best ever. There was only one thing missing that could have made it any better... you. See you next year for Tour Link 2011!



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JET BBQ



On Friday, February 5, 2010, after a day of sessions, Tour Link attendees met in the lobby of the Phoenix Marriott Mesa for transportation to an event brand new to the schedule. Roberts Brothers Coach, Taylor Tours, Kewl Komfort, and All Aboard America provided transportation from the hotel to the Scottsdale Air Centre, where the Jet BBQ awaited them. Upon arrival, attendees were greeted by Platinum Sponsor Sentient Jet, Gold Sponsor Apollo Jets, and Bronze Sponsor Chapman Freeborn. Sentient Jet and Apollo Jets had immaculate aircraft on the ground for attendees to walk through.

The evening started with a special cocktail hour provided by Truck 'N Roll, Rock-It Air, and Roberts Brothers Coach. As attendees mingled, Sentient Jet had flight attendants circulating the hangar with tequila samples for tasting. After cocktail hour, the much-anticipated dinner began. All Access Hospitality provided the catering services for the evening. All the food was completely organic and provided by UNFI, Albert's Organics, Organic Valley, Organic Prairie, and Heartland. Attendees were wowed by the incredible menu options and preparations provided by the sponsors.

The event was an evolution of the prior year's Bus BBQ. The concept was to add a new dimension by including the Air Charter companies and aircraft. Next year should see an expansion of this concept to include even more transportation elements.



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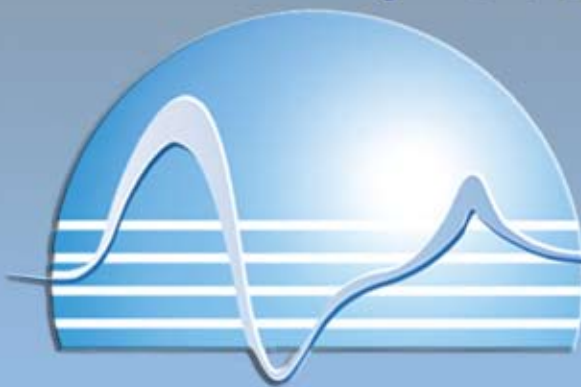


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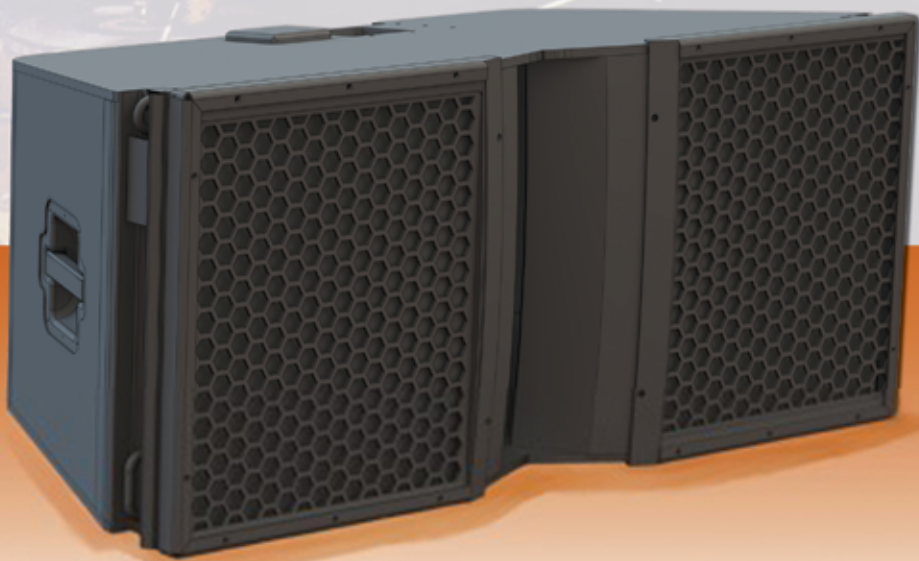
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& Industry Dinner AWARD SHOW



On the evening of Saturday, February 6, 2010, the Tour Link Conference came to an end with the most anticipated event of the weekend: The Industry Dinner & Top Dog Award Show. The event was bigger than ever thanks to Robert Rozich with Entertainment Production Services (EPS). Rozich went above and beyond to assist the Tour Link staff with making the event memorable. He provided a professional production team and worked one-on-one with students from the Music Industry School of Mesa Community College to keep the show's load-in and load-out going smoothly and on time. He worked with the other production sponsors to make sure everything for the show went smoothly and timely. Video West provided the video screen, drapes, and follow spots for the show, and Nocturne provided the projector. Together, the production sponsors provided attendees with a beautiful evening.

The Platinum Sponsors were Accurate Staging, Apollo Jets, CLAIR, Nocturne, Pyrotek, and Tour Supply. Gold Sponsors were Andaz West Hollywood, EFM, PRG, Sound Moves, TAIT Towers, and Soundcheck. Silver Sponsors were Rock-It Cargo, Stageco, and Upstaging. Bronze Sponsor was The Orlando Hotel.

The evening began with a cocktail hour in the grand foyer of the ballrooms at the Phoenix Marriott Mesa. Once it was time for dinner, guests entered into the ballroom for the Industry Dinner. The menu for the evening included grilled salmon, pan seared peppered filet mignon, and cheese tortellini. Once it was time for dessert, the Top Dog Award Show began. No one knew what to expect as the MC for the evening, Dave Paiva with Cube Services, danced his way into the room with a grand entrance to be remembered. He introduced his "douchettes" for the evening, the ladies of Stage Hands Massage, and his partner in crime, Michelle Pekrol with Star Gift Alliance. Together, Paiva and Pekrol lead the award show with comedy and entertainment.

As the award show went on, it was apparent that many were anticipating, with excitement, the upcoming honor for Jake Berry. Award winners took time to mention Berry and thank him for their success as they accepted their awards. At the end of the show, many of Berry's clients and friends took the stage to tell entertaining stories about him and his history working for some of the largest tours in the world. The love and respect for Berry radiated throughout the room as it came time for him to accept his Platinum Award for Lifetime Achievement. When he took the stage, attendees watched and listened intently as he reminisced of his years in the touring business, thanked everyone who made him love his job, and challenged his clients and roadies to take a stand to help Haiti. It was very apparent that Berry has a huge heart for those who are in need and everyone in the room felt the love.

Tour Link Photos courtesy of: Alan Poulin Photography







and the 2009 TOP DOG winners are...

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ACCOMMODATIONS

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LeParc Suites - Los Angeles

Crew Hotel
Sportsmen's Lodge - Los Angeles

PERSONNEL
Front of House Engineer
"Big Mick" Hughes

Lighting Designer
Willie Williams

Lighting Director
Ethan Webber

Monitor Engineer
Kevin "Tater" McCarthy

**Production Coordinator/
Assistant**
Helen Campbell

Production Manager
Jake Berry

Stage Manager
Rocko Reedy

Tour Accountant
Bob Davis

Tour Manager
Mike Amato

Video Director
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Artist Hotel of the Year LeParc Suites



It's a real honor for Le Parc to have been voted Top Dog Artist Hotel of the Year and congratulations to all the hotels that were nominated. Thanks to everyone who booked us, to everyone who stayed with us, to everyone who voted for us and especially to all of our good friends at Mobile Production Monthly and Tour Link, including Larry Smith, Jessie Wallace, Chris Cogswell and Kristin Salaway.
Barry Podob - LeParc Suites



Rigging Company of the Year Branam Enterprises

Thanks to all of their supporters out there, Branam Enterprises was recently voted 2009 Rigging Company of the Year at Tour Link. For over 30 years, Joe Branam

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Leslie Tolle, Project & Admin. Manager - Branam Enterprises



Promoter of the Year Danny Zelisko

I would like to thank everyone who voted for me, and especially all of my friends who come to the convention in the valley each year!

Danny Zelisko - Live Nation



Lighting Director of the Year Ethan Webber

I would like to thank Willie Williams, Jake Berry, Lighting Crew-Nick Barton, Craig Hancock, Alex Murphy, Bits, Andy Beller, Blaine Dracup, Mick Stowe, Jake Sullivan, Stuart Lee, Jessica LaPoint, Alison Triplett, Chris Keene, Gareth Morgan, Chris Davis, Rod Clay, PRG- Anne Johnston, Jere Harris, Tim Murch, Robin Wain, Chris Conti, Marion Hall; GrandMa for giving us a console that actually works-Ralph Wezorke, Oliver Rump, Philip Norfolk, Michael Althaus, Bob Gordon & Joe Cabrera. *Ethan Webber - Lighting Director U2*



Accountant of the Year Bob Davis

Many thanks to the Tour Managers (Dennis Brennan, Steve Kidd), Production Managers (Chris Gratton, Robert Long) and Business Managers (David Weise) who've provided me with gigs over the years. I'd also like to thank Stuart Ross and Blaine Brinton for always making themselves available to me when I had questions. Without their help and support, I surely would not be where I am today. *Bob Davis - Coldplay*



Production Coordinator of the Year Helen Campbell

There are so many people behind the scenes of the "largest tour to ever go out", it's difficult to know where to start, but here goes...

Thanks to Jake for everything he has taught me over the years, and for taking me out on my 4th U2 tour. Thanks to the U2 crew & drivers for maintaining a sense of humor, and to all our vendors worldwide. We are very lucky to work with the best.

Thanks to Wendy Stephenson, Lori Tierney & Charles Zimmer at Satellite Office Services LLC. Without all their help & support, I wouldn't have looked so good, or been able to take on such a mammoth task.

Thanks to Dave & Nicole at Rima Travel for all their hard work on Europe, and to all the crew hotel contacts worldwide who kept up with the ever expanding hotel rooming lists.

Thanks to the "Zagreb 4" and "Vegas dinner club" for keeping me sane. Thanks to my wonderful fiancé Phil Perry, for his love and support throughout. Finally, thanks to everyone who voted for me, & to Tour Guide for the Award.
Helen Campbell - U2 (photo by Phil Perry)



Stage Manager of the Year Rocko Reedy

I am very honored to receive Top Dog Award for Stage Manager of the Year. It is great to be recognized as part of Jake Berry's team - the best production crew on the road in any year! I also would never be able to do my job completely without George "Stewie" Reeves working as the other Stage Manager for the U2 360 Tour. Cheers to all!

Rocko Reedy - U2

Monitor Engineer of the Year Kevin "Tater" McCarthy

I would like to thank, Linkin Park and Judas Priest, Jim Digby, Pooch, Martin Walker, Paul White, Brian Thorene, Mario and all at Audio Analysts, Michael Gonzales at Schubert, Adamson, Shimo, Ryo, and Yoshi at Clair Japan, Joseph Lopez and Yamaha, Jerry Harvey, Jeanette Coffey, Gary Boss, Richard Sandrok, Peter and all at Radial, Paul Snyder and all the 4 Star, Apogee Electronics, Patron Tequila, Ben and all at Kalitta Racing, Tour Guide, YQA, and my family.

*Kevin "Tater" McCarthy
Monitor Engineer Judas Priest / Linkin Park / Dead by Sunrise*



Tour Manager of the Year Mike Amato

I really meant what I said when I accepted the award at Tour Link... without everyone's name who was on this year's nomination list and ALL the nomination lists before, we wouldn't have the high standards that we impose on ourselves. Without those people - all of us - the award is just a pat on the back. If everyone strives to set the bar as high as possible, we will all benefit by the challenge of keeping our standards high in the industry. Thanks again.

Mike Amato - KISS

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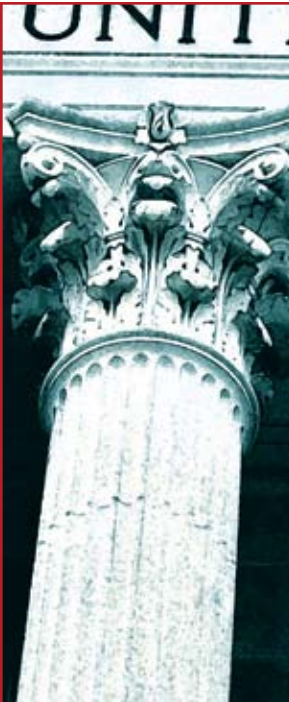
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