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FROM THE *Publisher*



SPRING is finally here!!! Ol' man winter is behind us and tours are rolling out at last. This is a time of high activity in our industry and everyone is anticipating a resurgence of business.

So, what better show to feature on our cover at this time than the Star Wars Tour? This show was, admittedly, a surprise to us. We were so impressed with the quality of the production that we decided to make this a cover feature and we hope you agree with our selection.

Here at the home office, we have added a few new items for our readers. In an attempt to keep pace with the ever-increasing demands for internet content, we have added a new website for the Tour Link Conference, toulinkconference.com. Please take a minute and look! We have added videos, a slide show, an attendance list and in the future, we plan to dig through our archives and add photos and videos of previous conferences.

Speaking of websites, you may also want to keep pace with mobileproductionpro.com and see how our main site is progressing. We seem to be growing faster than anticipated and it is honestly a real challenge to keep up with the increasing activity, but our talented and imaginative crew seems to have new features and content to present on a regular basis, so keep watching.

Finally, we are offering some real deals on a Spring clearance of our annual Road Book and Venue Book. Watch your email and check our website to take advantage of these offers while supplies last. I know this sounds like a trite television commercial, but for those who know and depend on the Road Book every year, this is really the time to order one or two copies for your desk. Supplies really are running low, so get one while they are still in stock.

Larry Smith



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Meyer Sound M'elodie Translates

MAMMA MIA! into Dutch, Flawlessly

A new touring production of *MAMMA MIA!* is filling theatres across the Netherlands, with dialog and lyrics in Dutch but with a sound that is universally ABBA. To make sure that audiences are swept away by such hits as “Dancing Queen” and “Voulez-Vous,” the production carries a powerful reinforcement system based around 32 Meyer Sound M'elodie® line array loudspeakers.

The particulars of loudspeaker system configuration are the work of the production's associate sound designer, Richard Brooker, who was charged with fulfilling overall requirements set by Bobby Aitken, principal sound designer.

“I'd first used M'elodies on my design for a Spanish production of *Jesus Christ Superstar*,” recalls Brooker. “I needed to handle a dynamic and often quite loud show, but the production had to change venues quickly. Also, in most places I could not fly the system. After much head-scratching, I went the Meyer route with M'elodies and 600-HP subs. The results were fantastic, and still are with the similar system we have for *MAMMA MIA!*”

The flexibility of the M'elodies is also a big plus for Netherlands-based assistant sound designer Wibo Vermeulen, who uses the Meyer Sound's MAPP Online Pro™ acoustical prediction program to fine-tune the system for each venue. The halls range from 875 to 2,161 seats, in various shapes and sizes, from typical “horseshoe”

theatres to post-modern asymmetrical auditoriums.


“The M'elodie is adapting very well to all venues,” says Vermeulen. “Because of its small size and light weight, it can be hung or stacked nearly everywhere, without compromising either sight lines or sound quality.”

In larger venues, the M'elodie complement is normally configured as four arrays of eight each, covering two levels from left and right. The center vocal cluster comprises (venue dependent) as many as 14 M1D line array loudspeakers. The complete Meyer Sound complement includes six 600-HP subwoofers, 11 UPJ-1P VariO™ loudspeakers for foldback and fills, and three easy-to-conceal MM-4XP miniature loudspeakers for downstage lip foldback. System supply came from Autograph Sound of London.

According to Brooker, the main M'elodie arrays deserve the lion's share of credit for making the production easy to set up



and a sure-fire audience energizer. “Yes, they are easy to rig, lightweight, and have a small footprint,” attests Brooker, “but the main thing is the way they sound—which is like much bigger boxes. They are clean and clear, with a smooth dynamic range that works with everything from intimate dialogue right up to full-on ABBA disco pop.”

The Dutch tour of *MAMMA MIA!* opened in September 2009 and will close in July 2010, playing 16 venues with seven weekly shows. Other *MAMMA MIA!* productions worldwide are using Meyer Sound systems for reinforcement, including the Spanish tour supplied by Fluge Madrid and the Australian tour by System Sound. 



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Hermes Music

is Clay Paky's new partner in Mexico



Hermes Music has signed an agreement with Clay Paky to distribute Clay Paky products in Mexico that includes a long-term strategic plan drawn up by the highest levels of both companies.

Hermes Music is a very well known company and has been on the Mexican market for a long time. It was founded in 1991 and initially aimed its business at musicians and audio professionals involved in shows. It engaged in distributing the most prestigious names in professional audio equipment, musical instruments and digital audio. The company quickly made a name for itself in Mexico thanks to its widespread well-established sales network throughout the country, and gained the respect and loyalty of sector workers owing to its seriousness and professionalism.

This allowed Hermes to broaden its business slowly to include the professional lighting sector, until it reached today's position of the most important company in Mexico on the show equipment market. Hermes Music today covers several sectors: fixed installations, such as those in hotels, restaurants and cinemas, at theme parks and on entertainment premises; and on the rigs of the most famous local and international artists, both for live concerts and TV studios

Francesco Romagnoli, Clay Paky Sales Manager for North and Latin America, says he is very satisfied with this new partnership, which: *"is the result of an immediate feeling which arose both between the two companies and between the people involved. Cooperation with Hermes Music will make Clay Paky highly visible on the Mexican market, and in all Latin American countries in general, where shows are an important part of their strong musical-cultural background. Hermes has paved Clay Paky's way to a very interesting clientele. Our agreement will turn into a big sales opportunity for both companies."*

Alberto Kreimerman, CEO of Hermes Music, says: *"I have known Clay Paky for many years and have always appreciated the excellence of its products and services: from construction quality, reliability and performance to the assistance provided by the parent company. There is no doubt that Clay Paky lights have the right features to come out top on our market. At Hermes, we are all enthusiastic about this new opportunity."*

Greg Morrison, vice-president of the company confirms: *"We met the Clay Paky top management at the LDI last year, where we laid the*

foundations for the current pact and agreed upon a common corporate strategy. There was immediate perfect understanding and we are very confident that our partnership will lead to great benefits both for Clay Paky and Hermes Music." The General Manager **Juan Cordoba Perches** underlines how Hermes Music will undertake to provide all the technical and logistic support needed to drive the sales strategy Clay Paky has embarked upon in Mexico: *"Clay Paky is the only company in the world to have such a wide range of products for the professional market. With its Alpha line, Clay Paky products have become accessible to any type of user and any show, from the smallest to the largest and grandest, thanks to the brand new Alpha 1500 W line."*

The joint action of the two companies will be further reinforced by the precious cooperation of **Jorge Aguirre**. He has been a trusted Clay Paky commercial partner for several years and was appointed Clay Paky Regional Representative for continental Central America as part of this agreement. ☺

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STAGE HANDS MASSAGE Provides Therapeutic “Heeling” Backstage

“I can’t tell what feels better, your feet or your hands!” “Kudos to you and your Ashiatsu technique! I feel great!” “That was BEYOND the BEST massage I have EVER had!” These are some of the comments that Darcy Lynch, owner of Stage Hands Massage Therapy, hears as she takes a therapeutic stroll down the backs of some of the biggest names in Rock N’ Roll.

Founded in 2005, Stage Hands Massage Therapy provides body working services to touring bands worldwide. The services provided include massage, chiropractic care, acupuncture, yoga, pilates, esthetics and personal training. But it’s Darcy’s fancy footwork that has set Stage Hands Massage apart from the competition, and has the music industry coming back for more.



Darcy Lynch, Stage Hands Massage Therapy backstage at Rascal Flatts



Darcy’s unique approach to deep tissue massage is called Ashiatsu Oriental Bar Therapy. She performs the massage using her feet while holding onto overhead bars for balance and support. By using her heel, instep and toes, this massage delivers constant, deep pressure to the whole body. “I find this treatment is more effective than traditional deep tissue and covers more area of the body than the hands. Pressure is not only incredibly deep, but is given at a much slower pace and is so smooth that even the body has no choice but to relax. Clients have told me it’s a life-changing massage treatment.”

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The Ashiatsu portable bars fold up into a ski bag and can be assembled in about 20 minutes, taking up the same amount of space backstage as a massage table. The only critical space requirement is that the height of the

ceilings at the venue needs to be at least eight feet, but this treatment is well worth the wait and the space!

No stranger to the performance industry, Darcy feels at home among touring musicians. She is the daughter of Ron Lynch, a member of the 1960s pop group The Cascades, who had the hit song, “Rhythm of the Rain”.

“I grew up with Rock N’ Roll. I know that musicians lead tough lives on the road and many of them work as hard as professional athletes. I can see past a performer’s aura, and once they are face down on the table all I feel are their issues, and I get right to work.”

Formerly a producer for the Discovery Channel, Darcy also understands the pressure, needs, and concerns of managing national and international productions. As a result, the Stage Hand’s team is comprised of licensed and

Stage Hands Massage Therapy

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insured professionals who put “their best foot forward” to deliver the best quality treatments in the industry, and strive to do all they can to make the lives of performers and crews more comfortable on the road.

“Many of our therapists are cross-trained in a variety of modalities...for example, chiropractic and massage, acupuncture and massage, or yoga and massage. We can provide the right combination of skills based on the artist’s wants and needs. A tour can book Stage Hands’ services in every city on their tour, in select cities, or even take a health care professional on the road.” ☺

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Meeet masseuse Dorothy Stein, aka Dr. Dot. She's worked her magic on the necks, arms and lower backs of Mick Jagger, Sting, Eminem, Justin Timberlake and a legion of other tensed-up artists.

Stein's digital prowess first got her into a Def Leppard concert in Hampton, Virginia, in 1983. Now it has blossomed into a full-time job paying up to \$400 an hour -- cash only, please.

Whenever The Rolling Stones start it up on tour, they fly in Dr. Dot for weeks at a time. She spent two weeks on the road with Eminem, and counts members of Kiss, Aerosmith, Van Halen and many others as repeat customers.

Her scrapbook boasts a stream of testimonials from satisfied customers like Aerosmith lead singer Steven Tyler, who wrote: "Ew-La-La! You rub me the rite way!"

"When you're out on tour for months at a time, there's always a muscle that needs to be pushed back into place or rubbed, so you get a massage to help you relax," said Kiss bassist Gene Simmons, who got his first massage from Stein in Germany in 1999.

"I remember it was very quiet, music playing on a boom box, the lights down low," he told The Associated Press. "She was very professional. She also didn't talk a lot, which I particularly liked." She prefers to let the stars do the talking -- and boy, do they talk.

Courtney Love gave Stein a detailed appraisal of the physical endowments of various rock and movie stars. Simmons prattled on about how women should be glad their men cheat on them. And many male rock stars are only too glad to dish about which female rock stars they've (allegedly) had sex with.

"I wanted to hang out"

Born in Manchester, Connecticut, and raised by "hippie parents" on a steady diet of Beatles, Rolling Stones, Grateful Dead and Frank Zappa, Stein had seen the Dead in concert more than 20 times before she was 10 years old.

Her first brush with a rock star was outside a concert hall in Williamsburg, Virginia, in 1981, where several members of The Cars quickly scrawled autographs on the back of her jacket -- and immediately disappeared. "I was like, 'Hey!'" she recalled. "I wanted to hang out."

So Stein and two pals hatched a plan to meet Def Leppard: Get there early; look older than her true age of 15 by using makeup, heels and a short skirt; and dangle something other than sex.

Around midday, they spotted guitarist Phil Collen in the arena parking lot, and walked up to him. "He said, 'Elo, girls!'" she recalled, deftly mimicking his British accent. "Say, do you know where there's an Army-Navy store around here? Someone nicked our clothes."

Stein and her two friends piled into a car with Collen, and as Stein directed him to a store, she made her pitch. She and her friends were soon on the tour bus as Stein massaged the band.

Her one rule: No sex, please. "If I gave in to what they wanted, they'd have no respect for me, and never want to see me again," says Stein. "Men need to yearn, to want something they know they can't have. That way, they'll pay for it, over and over again."

A GOOD BUSINESS

Though she was winging it at first, Stein eventually took professional classes and worked at a massage clinic in Germany. It was her idol, Frank Zappa, who first called her "Dr. Dot" during a massage in 1988. She liked it, and started using it herself.



Sonora Byrd, Dr. Dot, Aida Horvath drdot.com

Stein estimates she got into more than 3,500 concerts for free. Stones drummer Charlie Watts was her first paying customer during a 1994 session in Toronto.

"He said, 'So how much do I owe you?'" I said, "You're joking. It was an honor to massage you." He's like, "No, really. That's bloody silly, Dot. Nobody's going to take you seriously until you take their money." Massaging had always been a hobby, a way to get something for free. It became a business that day."

Sting remains her favorite customer. "He tells jokes the whole time," she said. "He's just so charming. He's himself, and he can be hilarious. He does yoga and shows me his yoga moves. He also definitely has the nicest butt."

Blondie singer Deborah Harry is another favorite. "She tells dirty jokes, and she'd jump off the massage table, naked, and start to act out the jokes," Stein said.

Stein is peddling an English-language version of a book she had published in Germany, titled "Butt-Naked and Backstage." She also hopes to someday land a gig as a love/relationship adviser with a TV talk show, a kind of Dr. Phil meets Dr. Feelgood.

Also in the works: a how-to DVD, including the "bite method," in which she kneads large lumps of back flesh in her mouth.

"People don't pay me to pet them," she said. "I'm very aggressive." ☺

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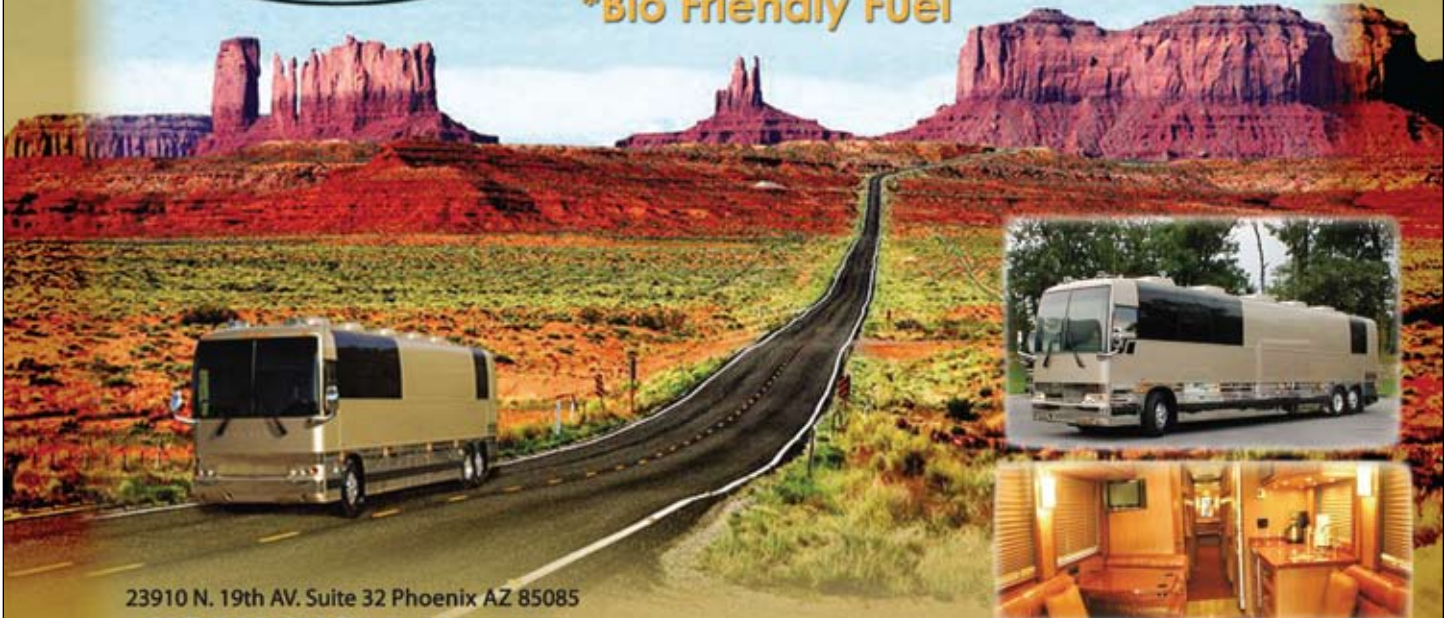
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by MICHAEL A. BECK

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The road to actually getting this project into the trucks began in Prague when Steve Cohen bumped into Patrick Stansfield. Stansfield had purchased the rights to a series of 16 video clips that were contained in a companion disk that was packaged with the last of the Star Wars movies, *Revenge of the Sith*. Each clip was made up of scenes from all of the movies as well as artist renderings of set and costume design all put to the music of legendary composer John Williams, who scored the sound tracks to the movies.

Stansfield knew that he wanted to do something with the material in a live environment, but couldn't put his finger on exactly what that might be. The question was, would Cohen be willing to put skin on the bones of the idea. Cohen signed on as the Creative Director and the project was on in earnest.

Cohen explained, "They came to me with the rights to the project and nothing else. All they had was a DVD with video cut to music from the orchestra. I said, "There's your show right there.'" In theory all that was left was to wrap gear, crew, and 80 piece orchestra and a 30 piece local choir around the video and Bob's your uncle. After all, where's the challenge? Any production design inspiration needed could be found in the body of the six movies.

However, as Cohen pointed out, the fact that the design would *have* to come out of the movies only added to the pressure. "I like starting out from a clean page. It all starts from the first thing I do, but in this case everything I did had to be

completely loyal to the movies. It would have been real easy to take just one wrong turn and mess the whole thing up."

Once the decision on how to present the show got cemented, it got panned in a lot of the better circles. John Williams seemed to think there was no way you could ever tour with a video wall the size it would need to be in order to do the content justice. He was equally doubtful about the notion of touring with an 80 piece orchestra. Williams wasn't the only one to voice these concerns.

To a lot of people this level of skepticism such lofty heights might have been daunting, but it had the opposite effect on the production team. Instead of questioning the wisdom of going forward, they took the attitude of, "Oh yeah, watch this!"

In the end it all paid off. During rehearsals Cohen set up a static video camera and shot the whole show and sent it to Williams (as per contractual agreement). This was a bit nerve-racking because this show isn't lit for television and therefore, the video footage can't be an accurate account of what the show really looks like. Not to worry. Shortly after he received the video, Williams called raving high marks over what he'd seen.

But that wasn't the height of the accolades. Cohen recalled, "We opened at O2 Arena in London and George Lucas came to the second show. He sat right down in front of me. During the intermission he turned around to me and

STAR IN CO

photos by Michael A Beck

R WARS NCERT







photos by Michael A Beck

told me it was fantastic. When the show was over he came back and was incredibly effusive about the show. He told me that what we'd done was to take his mythology and create another chapter in the *Star Wars* legacy. Coming from the guy who invented all of this you can't get a better review."

SUCCESS!

The production looked like a trillion bucks before it was ever turned on. However, it took some doing. As was stated earlier, every element of the show came from within the movies. Walking into the room bore witness to that fact. Looking at the stage the most prominent element is the video wall. It's 60 feet wide by 30 feet tall with a ten mil LED pitch. For those readers who aren't conversant, that means that the LED nodes in the display are ten millimeters apart. "We are pixel for pixel true high def, 1920 x 1080 in the screen," explained Video Director Mark Haney. "It was a straight transfer from the 35mm prints of the movies to 1080i. We could have gone with a higher resolution than that but the average person on the street wouldn't know the difference. That would be more for archival purposes. This show is really the first time that the first three movies have been seen in true HD."

The wall is wrapped in a frame that looked like a window of a space ship or a visual monitor on said ship. The frame is lit to contrast whatever was happening on the screen at any given time in the show. Roughly 20 percent of the content on the main screen is I-MAG of the orchestra and the show's host Anthony Daniels, who played protocol droid C-3PO in the movies. The rest of the content is basically a hot rodded version of the material from the DVD.

In addition to the main wall, there is a vast array of Main Light Soft-LED in the look. There are two panels into the wings off of the video wall. Additionally there are trapezoidal truss structures extending from the stage out over the audience. These were designed and hung to look like the Star Destroyers that passed close by one another in the opening scene of the first movie. "That's one of the most iconic scenes of the 70's. I

remember the first time I saw those things fly into the shot I thought that was the coolest thing ever," Cohen recalled. "It had to figure prominently in the show."

The structure was made of Upstaging's HUD Truss. With the exception of the custom corners designed to accommodate the desired shape, the pieces were pretty straight forward. What made it challenging was the Soft-LED that had to be stretched across the top of the both structures facing down toward the floor. The problem with the design is that the product is not meant to play stretched taught horizontally.

The solution was to build bridges across the top of each structure at the seams of the soft goods that would. This prevented the fabric from sagging in the middle. Regardless of the hassle of creating the look, the result was nothing short of sensational. Where 20 percent of the content of the HD wall is I-MAG, the percentage jumped to 40 in Soft-LED. This adds both contrast and an extra layer of texture to the overall look.

That isn't where video involvement in the show ends. It also has a utilitarian application as well. The biggest part of this live performance is the presence the 80 piece London Philharmonic Orchestra. And while there is a whole list of challenges involved in having a live orchestra of this size on the road, there is also a substantial technical challenge. Haney elaborated, "Another part of making this happen every day is the fact that you have to start the orchestra. The orchestra has to know that video is starting and be ready to start in time with video, keep time all the way though and finish in time as well. That's no small task. The real star of the show in a lot of ways is the conductor."

The solution to keeping the conductor in time with the video was an SD device known in the cinematic scoring world as a 'streamer'. The conductor has a video monitor at his position that shows an SD reference version of what's happening on the video wall. When the music is about to start a yellow bar running from the top of the picture to the bottom runs across the



photos by Michael A Beck

monitor. That means the music will begin in four counts. Then a green bar comes through signifying the start of the music. The green bars continue throughout the piece noting either eight or four bar counts. A white circle appears at every down beat. From time to time another yellow bar flies through indicating a change of tempo.

Because this is an SD playback and the main content of the show is HD, two playback devices are needed. And because timing is everything, the streamer playback is the primary roll and the HD feed follows it.

The audio system tops out at 115 inputs including playback. This falls sort of what we thought it might be. FOH Engineer Steve Colby explained, "Most instruments don't sound so great up close. The sound needs a chance to get a little air around it, so you have to rely a little on mics being placed a distance away from the instruments. That allows you to get a more homogenous sound and it also allows you to cut down on the number of microphones."

Sound designer Fred Vogler, who has works with the Hollywood Bowl and the L.A. Philharmonic Orchestra, conceived a design that employed a combination of area microphones and clip on mics. Because of the powerful nature of this music and the fact that it would be playing arenas, it had to be able to reach at least the lower ranges of rock 'n roll volume levels. However, reaching that level with so many mics on stage was a bit of juggling act that is made even more challenging by the fact that the shows take place in arenas.

Colby told *mPm*, "It doesn't help that we're always fighting with the acoustics in arenas. Some are bad, some are awful and some are okay, but none of them are great. That's acceptable for a rock show, you can sometimes push through. It's hard to make an orchestra sound like an orchestra in places like this."

All that being said, at the top of the show when the orchestra opens with the 20th Century Fox Fanfare, you have to remind yourself that this isn't a movie, it's being played live. Truly incredible.

There was yet another challenge presented by the size of the orchestra. How do you get them all on stage where they are supposed to be on a stage footprint that fits inside the dashers of an arena? "That conversation took weeks," recalled Lighting Director Seth Jackson, who also handled the scenic elements. "John Williams dictated that every instrument be specifically placed on the stage. And 'yes it will be a nine foot piano and not a six footer.' All that had to be figured out."

Once seating accommodations were arranged, the next issue was the scenic elements themselves. The screen surround was utterly huge and it had to be designed to come apart. The stage was adorned with stand up lighting units dubbed "sconces." These units consisted of an Elation Impression mounted in the middle of a narrow vertically arched plastic hood. It was fashioned after

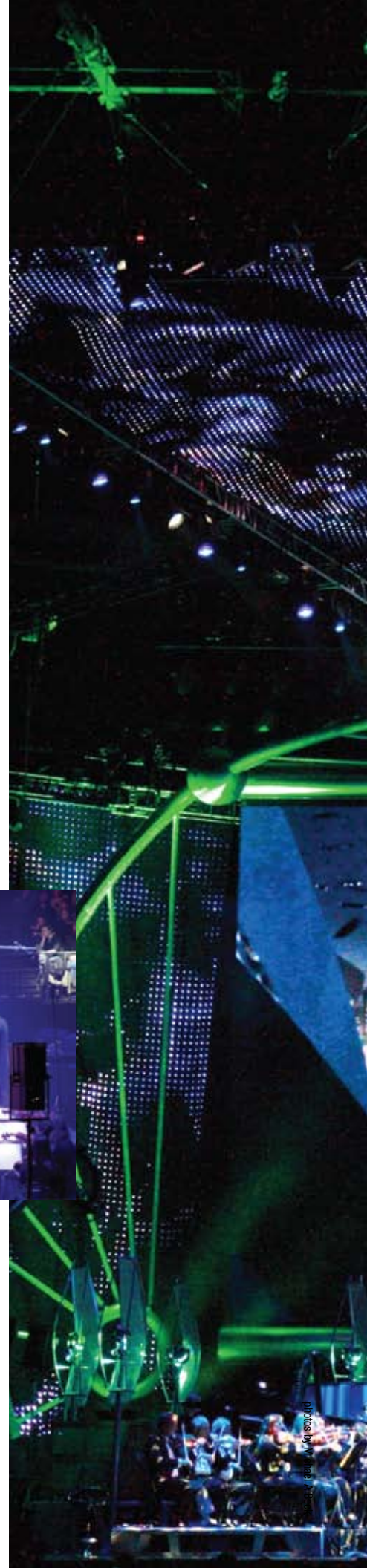


photo by David Iskra

something Cohen saw in the office of "Senator Palpatine" on one of the later *Star Wars* movies. None of these pieces had what you would call standard geometric shapes. Therefore, a great deal of thought had to go into getting them safely and efficiently in and out of a truck.

Lighting for the show had the very necessary if not practical charge of covering a massive orchestra and choir. It had to be done with a maximum of dramatic flair. Being that Cohen,

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PRINCIPAL PARTY

Producers Gregg Perloff, Spencer Churchill, Steve Welkom

Creative Director Steve Cohen

Principal Conductor: Dirk Brosse

Conductor Mark Watters

Narrator Anthony Daniels

Assistant to Mr. Daniels
Christine Savage

Tour Manager Ron Doroba



ORCHESTRA PARTY

RPCO Stage Manager: Chris Ouzman
RPCO Asst. Stage Mgr: David Mayne
RPCO Tour Mgr: Graham Midgley
RPCO Special Projects Mgr: Elli Clements
RPCO Orchestra Mgrs: Malcolm Wilson, Charles Strickland, Jane Aebi

Violin: John Bradbury, Cindy Foster, Kirra Thomas, Helen Allport, Miranda Allen, Merith Goodwin-Greer, Anya Birchall, Sali Wyn Ryan, Roz Lishak, Yvonne McGuinness, Kevin Duffy, Aaron Tighe, Norman Clarke, Clive Dobbins, Roger Foxwell, Jennifer Dear, Susan Watson, Vernon Dean, Jo Mcweeney, Clare Raybould, Sue Evans, Sue Croot, Richard Smith, Robert Higgs, Sue Kinnersley, Emma Martin

Viola: Graeme McKean, Jonathan Hallett, Christina Gestido, Rebecca Bre en, Louise Hawker, Nozomi Cohen, Henrietta Ridgdon, Geraint Parfitt, Louisa Parker, Claudine Guidoin,

Cello: Anna Mowat, William Routledge, Toby Turton, Pippa Rans, Jo Keithley, Roz Gladstone, Leonie Adams, Gemma Kost

Double Bass: Gareth Wood, Kylie Davis, Ian Hall, Rebecca Welsh, Frances Casey, Oliver Benson

Flute: Ian Mullin - D Picc, David Cuthbert - D Picc/Af, Susie Hodder-Williams - D Picc

Oboe: Steven Hudson, Jennie Lee Keetley, Olivia Duque D Cor

Clarinet: Massimo Di Trollo, Nigel Ellis D Ss, Shaun Thompson D Eb/As, Chris Caldwell D Bass/As

Bassoon: Stuart Russell, Elizabeth Trigg, Jacqueline Hayter D Contra

French Horn: Samuel Jacobs, Tim Anderson, Nick Benz, Ellie Reed, Mark Wood

Trumpet: Chris Cotter, Miles Maguire, William Smith, David Archer

Trombone: Graham Lee, Robert Price, Simon Baker

Bass Trombone: Paul Lambert

Tuba: David Powell

Timpani: Chris Thomas

Percussion: Martin Owens, Paul Parker, David Stirling, Robbie Gibson - D Kit, Karen Hutt

Harp: Deian Rowlands

Keyboard: Claire Isdell

PRODUCTION PARTY

Production Manager: Michael Weiss

Stage Managers: Jeff Wendt, Brandon Sossaman

Tour Accountant: Karen Ritchie

Production Assistant: Kari Stephens

Backline: David Rapp, Mark Konrad

Riggers: Mike Farese (Head Rigger), Danny Machado, Rick Wilmot

Carpenter: Jay Fortune (Head Carpenter), Greg Gish, Steve "Shaker" Genovese

Lighting Director: Seth Jackson

Programmer: Bryan Barancik

Lighting Techs: Kevin Royan, Adam Morrison, Ben Bain, Brent Sandrock, Joe Gonzalez, Todd Erickson

Sound Designer/Consultant: Fred Vogler

FOH Sound Engineer: Steve Colby

Sound Engineers - Stage: Richard Morris, Greg Lopez

Sound Techs: Sylvian Lemay, Jeremy Walls, Matthew Fox, Hilario Gonzalez

Video Director: Mark Haney

Video Tech: Bradley Reiman, Phillip Evans, Christopher West, James Malone, Bob Larkin, Dan Savage

Video Maxedia Programmer: Curtis Cox

Lasers: Alexander Wilson, A. J. Seaback

Pyro: James Beardmore

Exhibit Director: Betsy Scott

Exhibit Curator: Dave Iskra

Exhibit Electrician: Robert Vitas

Exhibit Production Coordinator: Wendy Faber

Exhibit Production Assistant: Keirstin Fernandes

Orchestra Librarian: Victor Pesavento

Wardrobe Supervisor: Thomas Wells

Ticketing / Box Office Manager: Zeke Garza

VIP Ticketing: Jerry Fox

Merchandising Rep: Aaron Hoch

Hair/Makeup Stylist: Megan Ambroch

Head Chef: Bruce Gilbert

Catering Crew: Rachael Hall, Melanie Freder Michael Buss, Jessica Isaac, Neal Carson, Fiona B

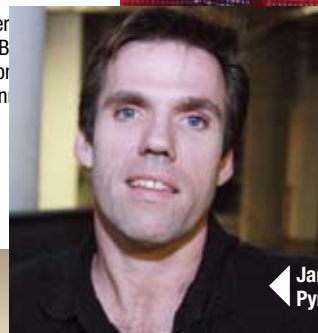
Principal Bus Drivers: Tony Cazabat, Deor

Bus Drivers: David Lopriore, Reno Rojas, Don Danny Pratt, Mike Brown, Mandrill McLaughlin

Caterers: Neal Carson, Michael Buss, Bruce Gilbert - Head Chef, Jessica Isaac, Melanie Frederick, Fiona Bohane, Rachael Hall



Michael Weiss -
Production Manager



James Beardmore -
Pyro Shooter



Jeff Wendt, Brandon Sossaman - Stage Managers

Chris Ouzman - RPCO Stage Mgr, Graham Midgley - RPCO Tour Mgr, David Mayne - RPCO Asst. Stage Mgr, Malcolm Wilson - RPCO Orchestra Mgr.

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Protravel Int'l

Travel Agency – Orchestra

Linden FROSCHE

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Buses – Principal/Orchestra

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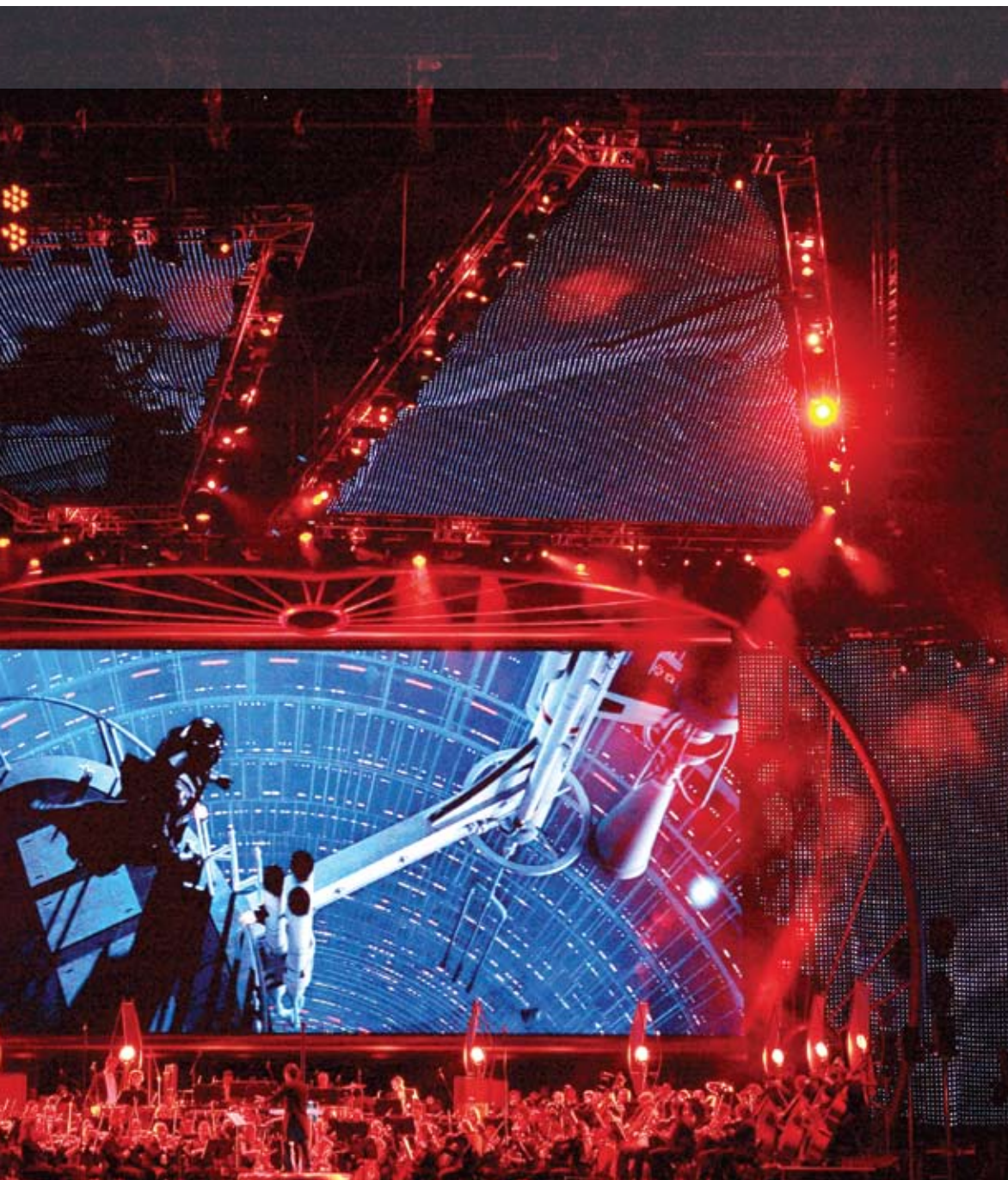
Princeton Entertainment

Passes

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Front: Sylvian Lemay - Sound Tech Middle: Sound Techs Jeremy Walls, Matthew Fox, Hilario Gonzalez, Steve Colby - FOH Sound Engineer, Richard Morris - Sound Engineer Back: Greg "Chico" Lopez - Sound Engineer

Jerry Fox - VIP Ticketing

Traveling with Star Wars

by MIKE WHARTON

When Ed Kasses of PEO Touring was hired to put together the orchestra for the US leg of the Star Wars in Concert tour, he called Marla Wax-Ferguson to arrange travel for the musicians. Handpicked by Kasses, culled from a variety of cities throughout the US, the list was comprised of 95

Wax-Ferguson, a veteran of 30 years in the travel industry, had worked with Kasses on various projects in the past...

Currently with Frosch Travel, a privately owned travel management company headquartered in Houston, and co headquartered in New York City, Wax-Ferguson has held a variety of positions which enables her to be uniquely qualified for entertainment travel.

College included an accounting degree coupled with a dance major at Brooklyn College School for Performing Arts. Upon graduating, she found work in the offices of legendary promoter Ron Delsner in New York, and worked with Fred Heller, an artist management company.

Travels with her husband William Ferguson, who at that time was a monitor engineer, exposed her to all the aspects and logistics of touring. This also brought her into contacts that would become both mentors and future business associates.

One of the people she met was Judy Gordon, from Mystical Tours, who asked her if she wanted to become a travel agent. Wax-Ferguson recalls thinking, "Travel agent? I felt like I was totally selling out at the time."

Nevertheless, Wax-Ferguson signed on. "Judy instilled a real passion for travel in me". Their client roster, at the time, included REO Speedwagon, Devo and the first U2 tour.

When Gordon decided to move the company to California, Wax-Ferguson declined, staying in NY to work for the management company of Ben Vereen. It was here where Wax-Ferguson met her main mentor Cesia Ritter.

"The management company for the Talking Heads worked out of our office as well. They did travel with Cesia and just loved her as an agent...but she had no clue about entertainment touring!" Wax-Ferguson was promised if she went to work for Cesia, they would hire her. Her passion for travel outweighed her desire to continue with management so she took them up on their offer.

"Cesia was an amazing woman. She hired me at \$250 a week and then forced me to go out on my own. She literally pushed me out her door. She is the one that made it all happen for me," recalls Wax-Ferguson.

As an independent contractor with her own staff, Wax-Ferguson was affiliated for 22 years with Linden travel which was acquired by Frosch in 2009. Frosch, primarily a corporate and leisure travel agency, was looking to expand into the entertainment business. Wax-Ferguson brought the Star Wars Concert to them.

Pre-planning began two months before rehearsals. Names and date of birth all had to match the records provided to the airlines. Not a big deal for the individual traveler. Multiply that by 95 and throw in the mix of influx and change of names, that are the norm for tour startups and 2 months doesn't seem nearly enough time. Post 9/11, you can't just reserve a seat.

"It was a lot of work on one project for two people," recalls Wax-Ferguson. She considers her office assistant on the project, Claudia Alvarez, invaluable.

Hotels, while welcoming the revenue of 95 bookings in the current economy, still aren't going to just give away their



Marla Wax-Ferguson, Joseph Mauceri, and Randi Gelman

accommodations.

"PEO Tours, Star Wars Production and the producers were very clear regarding their concern that the orchestra's comfort was very important," states Wax-Ferguson.

To insure this required Wax-Ferguson's direct contact hammering and begging the individual hotel sales reps to negotiate the best possible deal to stay within a prescribed budget. As a result there were very few complaints.

On the tour ushering the orchestra to and from airports and hotels as well as the venues were Peter Kepes and Craig "Kujo" Yun. They settled the bills, as well as helping to insure that comfort level was maintained.

Negotiating current airport terrain and procedure for an individual these days is not an entirely welcome experience, to put it mildly. The patience of these two men must be infinite.

Occasionally when a short trip warranted it, regular seated buses moved the orchestra city to city. Kepes and Yun were instrumental wrangling these procedures too.

When asked if she would do it again, Wax-Ferguson replies, "In a heartbeat. I love working with new people on unique and exciting projects like this." She is quick to point out also that, "this was a great joint effort with PEO Tours and the Star Wars Production office.

Wax-Frosch is opening an LA office in April. They can be found on the web at: www.froschtravel.com.



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Solotech

Rocks *Star Wars In Concert*

by BILL ABNER



Seldom is a tour really all about the music. A tour could be all about the talent, and how famous they are, or a tour could be all about 'The Show' and how big it is, or how many trucks they have out. Additionally, a tour could be all about who was where on last week's charts, but rarely is it really all about the music. *Star Wars In Concert* may not be all about the music either, but as the show 'stormtroops' its way across America and Europe to sold out crowds, the music is arguably as much the star of the show as the headliner from any conventional tour on the road today.

When the material is this special, and relates to such a wide audience, the treatment of the material had better be just as special. Enter Solotech, the Canadian production company entrusted with the care and handling in a touring atmosphere of some of the most recognizable music ever produced.

Montreal-based Solotech, audio system vendor for the *Star Wars In Concert* tour - yes, tour - is fast becoming one of the most recognizable names in the touring world, and boasts a client list just about as impressive as they come: Britney Spears, Diana Krall, Celine Dion, Alicia Keys, and Cirque du Soleil, to drop just a few names. With offices spread across Canada and in Las Vegas, somebody must be doing something right.

David Shapiro, Solotech's Account Executive for *Star Wars In Concert* has a thing or two to say about that. "You can get gear from anybody. Our motto is that we put the right people in place to get the job done."

That's not to say that the gear isn't just as stellar. One of Meyer Sound's biggest customers, Solotech has packed the show with enough punch to support venues much larger than the hockey rinks the

show is filling every night. A total of 18 MILO® speakers per side, with another 14 in the center, are augmented by nine 700HP subwoofers mounted rearward. Two bananas of 16 MICA line array speakers cover the sides, with six M'elodie units along the downstage apron for front fills. A triad each of UPQ-2P's and UPQ-1P's make up the delay and surround packages. That's a pretty substantial package no matter what the music is, and that's not even the complete list.

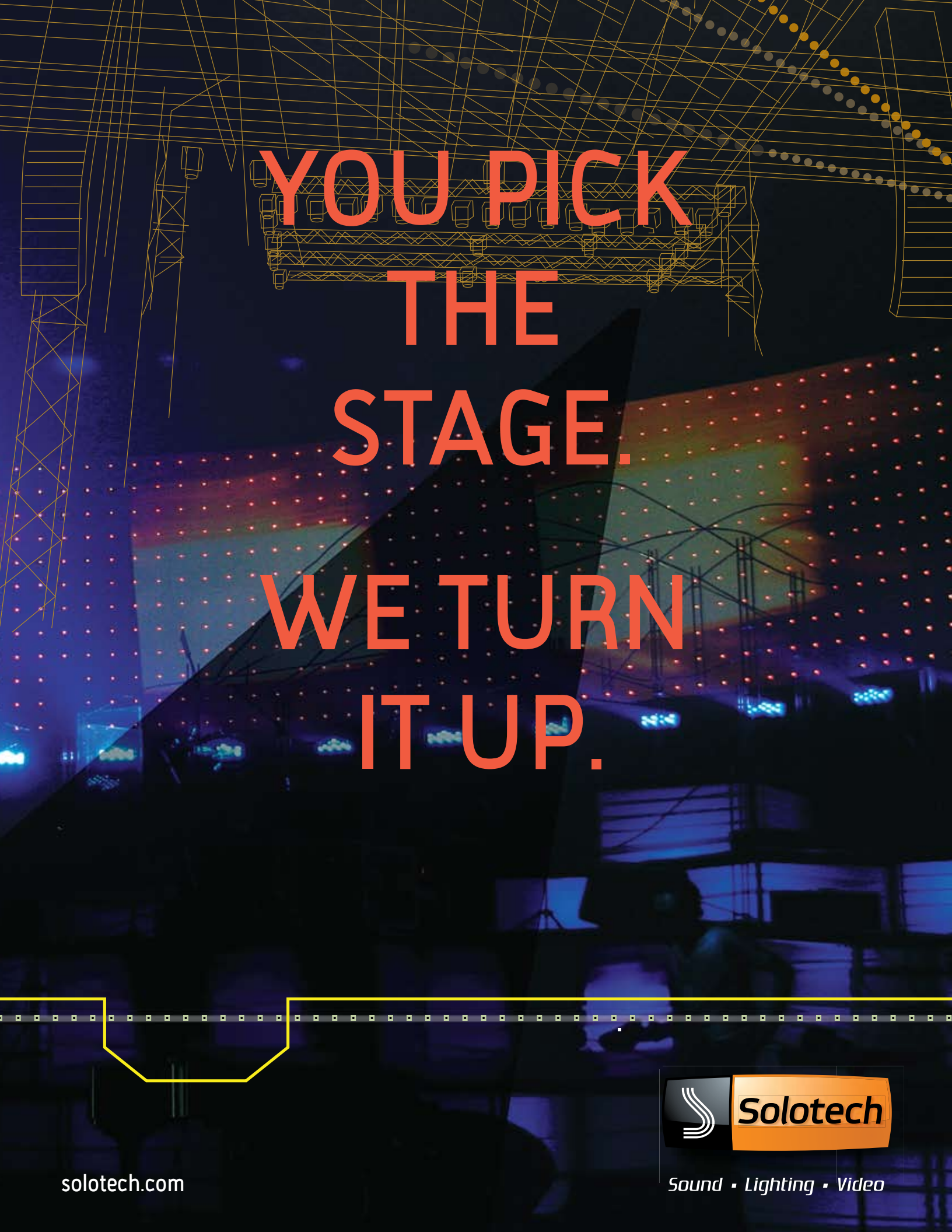
Just so we're clear, the music - the music - is not canned. Every night the same 86 musicians from the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, and a local 60-voice choir perform selections of John Williams' iconic and memorable soundtracks live. Live in time with Lucasfilm reedited film footage playing on the 60x30 Daktronics Mag10-HD LED screen, and while being lit by an army of MAC 2Ks, Vari-Lite VL3500's, and Elation Impressions, all without a click track...but that's a different story.

Solotech is also a pioneer in the mobile deployment of Meyer Sound's Constellation® electroacoustic architecture beyond the install world. The system takes a combination of as many as 30 sub-mixes and disperses it into UPJ-1P and UPA-

1P loudspeakers and USW-1P subs, both arrayed throughout the lighting trusses, creating an electronic shell of sorts onstage. Consequently, there are no wedges on stage. The system had previously only been used in permanent installations situations, and Solotech is the first production company to incorporate the system into a tour. More evidence of Solotech's clout with the good ol' boys over at Meyer Sound. Says Shapiro, "Meyer has been very supportive. We were really fortunate to have some of the design team come out to rehearsals, and so it was really just one less thing for us to worry about. After the first stop, it's pretty much been locked in." Apparently so, as some have called it the "best sounding show anyone's ever heard."

The show has been out since October of 2009, was on hiatus for the month of December, and is now speeding through Europe like the Millennium Falcon, one sold out show at a time, and will then return to the US for dates through July. *Star Wars In Concert* is more than a movie and a show. It is an experience. For example, in addition to the production elements of the show, there is an artifacts exhibit (thanks to Artifact Design) which travels along with

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Atomic Design is Exploding

by MICHAEL A. BECK

In the 80s and early 90s Tom McPhillips was living in England and designing shows for many of the “big hair” bands of the day as well as Janet and Michael Jackson. After much prodding by Michael Tait, Phillips became convinced that a move to America was in order, so he uprooted his family and off they all went to Lititz, PA. This is when Atomic Design came into existence. In the beginning Atomic was working out of an office in the Tait Towers building.

A big portion of the business was the MTV Unplugged shows. However, as the client list grew, so did the need to get out of nest of the Tait building and stand alone. But the journey wasn't a long one. Indeed Atomic now lives right across the street from Tait where the company has grown by leaps and bounds. There must be something in the water.

While at one time live concert entertainment made up the whole of the company's business, that and television sets are only a part of what goes on today. The company has swelled to a staff of over 40 people with something very few companies can display in this economy, a help wanted sign. The work load now includes corporate production, pop-up retail and even cruise ship environments just to name some of the limitless areas that the company can apply itself to.

All of this happens out of any one of the four distinct business units. There is a scene shop out of which comes custom environments that incorporate plastics, metals, wood, foam carving and anything else one can use in set construction. There is also a soft goods group that creates



traditional theatrical drapery as well as dimensional soft goods. Both of these parts of the groups partially feed into the third group, which is a rental house. Atomic also has a theatrical lighting company.

The thing that fuels all of this is what Atomic President Soren West calls an eclectic cast of loony's, “We're all a bit wacky here,” West tells us, “We all love the creative process and we enjoy getting involved in the ‘What if?’ or ‘Maybe we could...’ or ‘Would that be cool if...’ part of it. I think that our clients dig that was well.”

That being said, the thing that makes the people who work in this type of design work unique is the necessary marriage of both sides of the brain and nowhere is this more apparent than at Atomic. West elaborated, “What I get a kick out of is the notion that every day here is an exercise in ensuring that a vision, budget, a time line and a whole list of criteria such as who is playing on the stage, how much time is allotted for set change and who the audience is, all gets reconciled. I look at some of the designs that we get and I love the idea that somewhere a group of people sat a room and said, ‘Here's a good idea.’”

A good example of that is the *Star Wars In Concert* tour that is currently on the road. As you will read in this issue's feature story



on the tour Atomic was tasked by Creative Director Steve Cohen to create a front of house display of memorabilia from the movies. These displays included the actual costumes that were worn by such characters in the movies as Darth Vader, Chewbacca, C-3PO and bounty hunter Boba Fett. In addition to the costumes, the exhibit also displayed props and accessories used by the cast, and the original score from the soundtrack penned by John Williams.

When the call came in on the project it was greeted with an almost childlike excitement. West explained, “We're all in our 30's and 40's here, so to get a call from Steve Cohen concerning *Star Wars* was a real blast. This is part of our fiber. We all grew up with *Star Wars*. This was a pretty exciting project for us.”

While the decision on what was to go out with the tour rested between Lucas and Another Planet Touring, how the artifacts would travel on tour was up to Atomic under the final direction of Cohen. This involved the field trip of a lifetime. West and members of his team went to Skywalker Ranch where the entire collection is kept in order to take

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Robert Allen O'Bleness, Age 48

On March 20, 2010 Robert O'Bleness, a truck driver for Stage Call, was killed in a single-vehicle accident while traveling on Interstate 95 near Stonington, CT. At the time of the incident, Robert was transporting goods for Carrie Underwood's North American Tour. The equipment in Robert's trailer was a complete loss, but the show went on. Carrie performed a heartfelt rendition of Temporary Home which she dedicated to Robert at that evening's show at Foxwoods Casino.

Robert, affectionately known as "Bob O", had been driving for Stage Call since March of 2002 and had been the main driver for Vince Gill since 2006. He'd previously toured with Rascal Flatts, Toby Keith on the Ford Drive One Tour and handled many other corporate, country and rock events. He was a valued employee and was highly requested among Stage Call's customers.

Robert lived in Muskogee, OK. He is survived by his parents, Ann and Robert J. O'Bleness, sisters Kathy Jenkins, Kim Morey and Mary Beth Burger. Vince Gill personally attended the family's service near their home of Wichita, KS and sang *Go Rest High On That Mountain* in tribute to Robert's memory. He will be missed.

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Jackson and Programmer Bryan Barancik were the ones who were mounting that task, it was no surprise to see explosive rock 'n roll looks built into the show. Indeed, it's been a long time since this writer has seen a show whose lighting execution was this loyal to the dynamic needs of the show.

In addition to the visual impact added to the show from the lighting desk, there was also laser and pyro. You can expect to see a lot of things in an orchestral experience but big dragon flames across the downstage line of the stage are not one of them. The show has six flame heads that were used in two different parts of the show, once when in the fiery scene called "A Hero's Fall" when Anakin Skywalker becomes Darth Vader and later in "Sanctuary Moon" when the Death Star is blown up. Because the units don't have a pilot light and rather fire off of a spark, the audience is caught completely off guard when the whole thing goes off 15 feet away from them.

As pyro is used sparingly, laser is more liberally

Solotech continued from 26

the show so that the fans can get up close and personal with items, images, and memorabilia from the 30 year span of the series.

A very real part of that experience, even for someone with the credentials of Shapiro, is the sound. He shares his impressions from a recent trip to Europe to check in with the crew: "I was just blown away by how good it sounded. The show is really hitting its stride out there. Some of that of course is the players, and some of that is the engineers. Steve Colby (FOH) is such an amazing engineer, we're just lucky to have him on the tour." For those unfamiliar with the name, Colby is also the resident sound designer and FOH mixer for the Boston Pops, so he's mixed a few orchestras in his days.

"There's two things I'm really proud of," says Shapiro. "One is the show. It's just so unlike anything that's out there, and it's great to be a part of it. The second thing is that it reintroduces orchestral music into the mainstream. We're seeing a lot of kids at the shows and kids aren't really exposed to it anymore, so to me that's really great."

Solotech is happy to be recognized as more than just a Canadian gear rental house. The company has made serious inroads to the US touring scene. This show, Britney Spears, Cirque Du Soleil, all attest to the company's wide versatility and range. "We're here," says Shapiro. "Give us a shot. We think that the work ethic and quality of work you get out of Solotech will be completely different from what you experience with a lot of companies out there." 🎧

solotechonline.com

applied throughout the show to a fantastic result. Shooting from positions upstage right and left and the mix position the laser looks in the show are nothing new except for the fact that this is *Star Wars*. The show stands very well on its own but when the laser fills the room it adds a 3D feel that somehow brings the audience into the sense of being in outer space. Very seldom has laser been this pertinent to the context of a production.

The final touch on the event was seen by the fans as they made their way to their seats. Lititz, PA based Atomic Design developed a portable museum of *Star Wars* memorabilia that was on display in a reception area outside of the bowl of the arena (which is discussed in more detail in an accompanying story in this issue discussing Atomic Design).

Nothing was left to chance with this production. *Star Wars* is arguably the most successful movie franchises in history. It began before many of the people in the touring industry were born. It has not only stood the

Atomic Design continued from 28

measurements.

"It was great. When we went out there we got to look at all of this groovy stuff and come back and work with these things that were part of our childhood fantasies."

Once the measurements were taken at Lucas, the exhibit items were carefully shipped to Lititz with the very serious task of creating display casing that could hold up to the rigors of touring the world.

This process was assisted by Leayla French who then handed the project over to tour Exhibit Director Betsy Scott and her team to care for on the road. This is no small task. We're talking about priceless artifacts from the world's most successful movie franchise. You

test of time, but it set a bar that has never even been reached much less surpassed by anything in its genre. According to Forbes Magazine the amount of money generated by the *Star Wars* franchise over the course of its lifetime is about equivalent to the 2004 gross domestic product of Panama--over \$20 billion.

This was an incredibly bold idea that could have gone off the rails at any time starting with the act of walking into someone's office and saying, "I have an idea..." Instead, it is picking up steam and all of those who said it could never happen are happy and making money. As Steve Coehn said, "It could have been a disaster and it turned out to be an incredible success."

The tour is currently blowing minds in the UK. *Star Wars In Concert* comes back to North America for an additional leg in May at the Germain Arena in Orlando, FL. 🇺🇸

"Do or do not... there is no try." - Yoda

don't get a second chance to screw this up.

In a time when scenic elements are more about LED walls and less about painted backdrops, the scene shop at Atomic painted fewer drops because they now run the goods through a large format printer. However the paint floor hasn't shrunk, and they are in the market for a new artist to ease the load on the art staff.

In fact, all of Atomic's business groups are doing as well as they've done even in tough times. When asked to explain that phenomenon West quoted Buffalo Bill who said, "Hard times is good times for entertainment."

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