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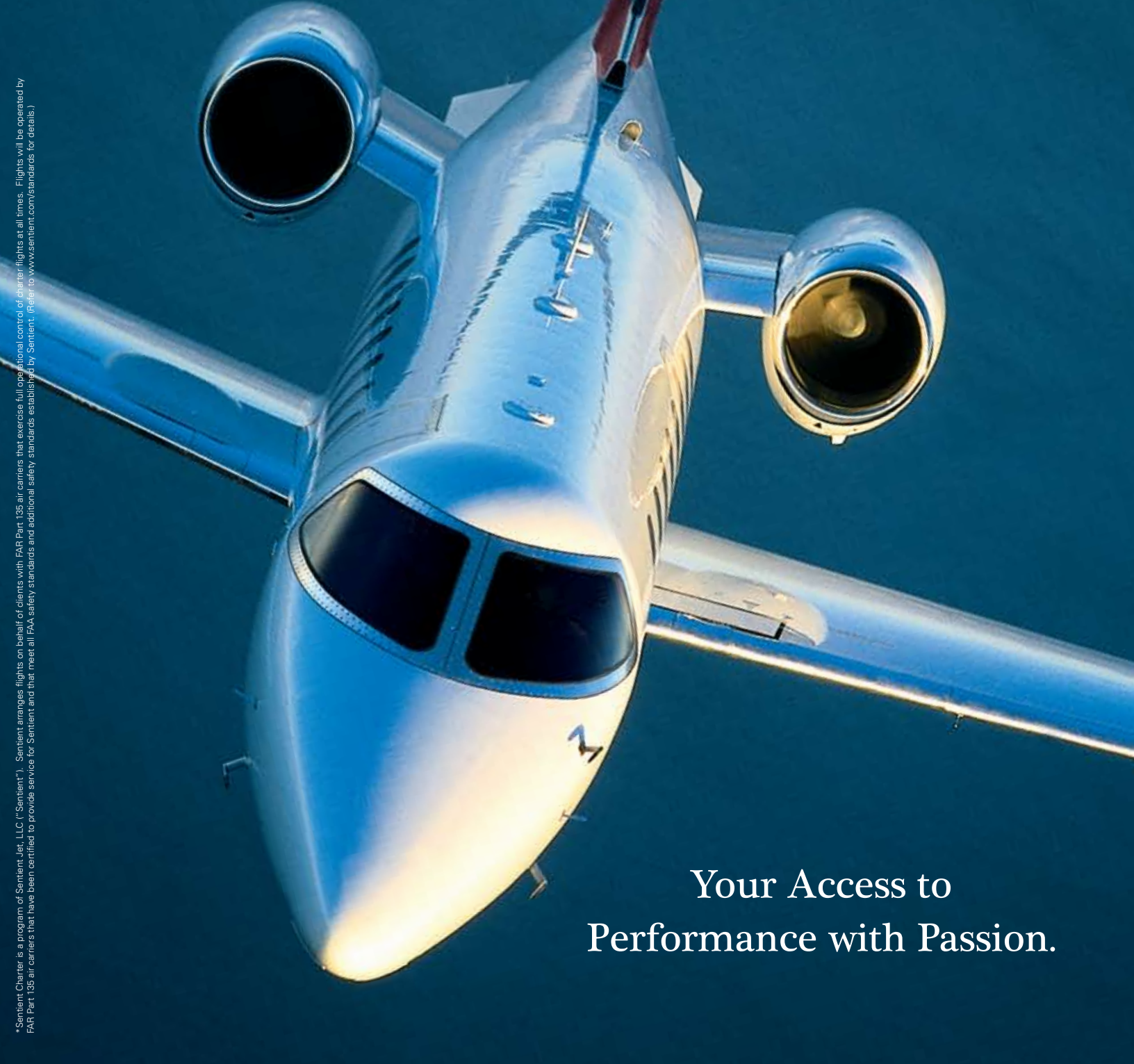
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## FROM THE *Publisher*



Now that the season is upon us, it seems that the worst of the recession may be behind us, certainly all of us hope that is the case. Fortunately, bands have to tour to stay alive financially is one consistent fact that supports the event industry. As long as that is the case, most of us will be able to continue to survive as the manufacturers catch up to the recovery.

One enduring part of our industry that is showing resilience is the festival business. These one-off financial booster-shots have been the mainstay of many service and production companies. Oddly, we seldom give credit to the support companies at these outdoor events that provide the logistics necessary to have the event in the first place. For that reason, we decided to take a look at the Coachella Festival in a different way, paying attention to the companies that provided portable toilets, showers and tents in addition to the traditional production elements.

Also, we wanted to look at a tour that has choreography as a central part of the show, another little-covered aspect of our industry, and Alicia Keys certainly provides that opportunity. We think you will enjoy these aspects of our coverage this month.

Finally, as we are all trying to catch up from a bad year, we sense a spirit of revitalization. Many people found themselves out of work with little warning, and the axe fell at all levels of our business. No one seemed to be immune to the necessities of downsizing and negative cash-flow. It has been very strange to see so many top veterans scrambling to secure new work for themselves. This has also caused a real problem for new people trying to enter our industry. Entry level positions are being occupied by people with very strong resumes and prior experience.

It is our hope that in the midst of all the reorganization that is occurring, we find a way to protect the people who have earned their wings in a difficult and demanding profession while leaving the door open for the deserving young talent necessary to keep our business health and vibrant. Even though the old must eventually make way for the new, experience has taught us that it is the blood of these two forces that delivers long-term success.

*Larry Smith*



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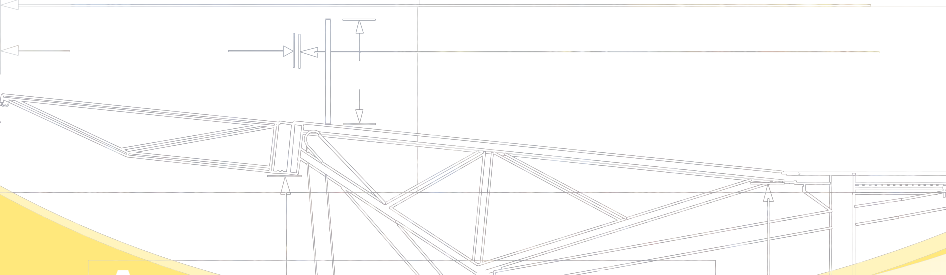
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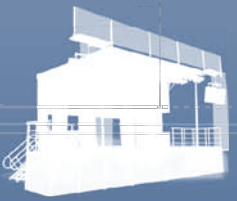
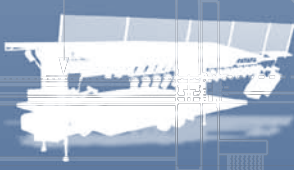
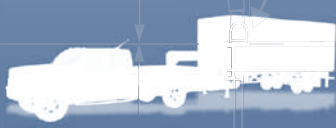


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## X-Streamers.com: The Confetti & Streamers Company to Call When the Impossible is Needed

*A Story of Its Beginnings & Commitment to Its Clients*

**J**ohn Jaworski, President of [X-Streamers.com](http://X-Streamers.com), says “If you had told me 25 years ago that I would one day be a leader in the Confetti industry – I would have asked you what you were tripping on and ‘hey...do ya have some for me?!’”

Jaworski started out in this journey as a lighting designer. He went to James Madison University in Harrisonburg Virginia, mostly because it was close to home, and secondly because they had a few classes in lighting and stagecraft that he thought might come in handy later in life (when he turned 23).

Jaworski did about a dozen shows, some small, some large, won some awards and took all the classes they offered. Right about the same time, he got a call from a band that he worked with briefly at a hotel in Washington DC. A couple of years before, they needed someone to stand in for their lighting guy as he had a family engagement. Back then, there were a lot of bands like these, they were called “Show Bands” and played the hotel circuits, entertaining businessmen that were trying to pretend they were not married. They asked him to tour year round with them as a road manager/lighting designer/sound engineer – so he did. He spent a lot of years touring the country and Caribbean with them. The band was a full time touring act, 365 days a year, for about six years. Jaworski took the occasional break to try what always looked like bigger and better things, worked in

Hollywood with West Coast World Wide Theatrical where he did the “starving in hollywood” thing for a while, but the siren song of the road would call again and off he would go.

Jaworski says, “For those that think traveling with “Show Bands” kinda sucks, well sometime it did, but I was lucky enough to get myself hooked up with a band that played the Caribbean Show Band circuit. We spent 10 or 12 weeks at a time in places like Aruba and St Thomas. We played at the big Casino Resorts there, stayed in top notch rooms, ate the finest food, broke down and set up once each in the 12 weeks... Actually it didn't suck! It was a great education and except for the amount of gear and size of venues, it was a lot like a typical truck tour.”

Jaworski learned a lot those days about taking care of people. He says, “I remember the people that bailed me out by executing a Hail Mary play for me... like fixing an amp on a Sunday morning that we blew out Saturday night, replacing an engine in a truck in 48 hours so we could make our next gig, that kinda stuff. It's one thing to have someone sell you something, it's quite another to have someone

stand behind the gear and support ya! It was a great way to grow up and a great way to learn about life and people.”

Fast forward to about 14 years ago. Jaworski left the road and held various positions, some very much in the entertainment industry and some not so much. On one particular gig, he was the general manager of a large music store that specialized in nightclub and DJ equipment. He went to LDI one year in Miami where KC and The Sunshine band were playing on the beach. Now, X-Streamers.com is proud to call KC and the Sunshine Band a client.

While looking for new cool lighting and audio gear, Jaworski ran into some guys selling confetti cannons. He said, “The DJs and musicians would really dig this stuff.” He soon struck up a deal with a company out of Canada called Kabuki. He became a dealer for them and started to move some of their product pretty reliably. The one problem was that shipping was a fortune. In order to supply people as quickly as possible, they shipped from a Mail Boxes Etc. He contacted Kabuki and started into discussions with them about becoming a distributor. Anything Mail Boxes Etc. did he could do better and cheaper. They came to an arrangement and have had a great relationship ever since.

Jaworski decided he had it with the retail scene, so he approached the folks at Kabuki about becoming their US Distributor. They again struck an arrangement and Jaworski started X-Streamers.com. One of the things he brings to his clients is a first person understanding of their needs. He understands how important it is to have the gear work the first time and every time. He scours the industry looking for only the best, most efficient, lightest and sturdiest gear. One of the advantages of being a distributor is that he can sell a number of manufacturers gear and confetti. He picks and

chooses only the best for his clients as no manufacturer would ever steer you to its competitors gear. X-Streamers.com has a number of shops that do custom work – custom shapes, custom printed confetti, etc. Some shops that cut for him really have nothing to do with the entertainment industry.

X-Streamers.com has become known as the company to call when the impossible is needed. When the Boston Red Sox won the World Series and needed 800 pounds of red, white and blue confetti, X-Streamers.com had it to them within 11 hours. It knows that having the confetti arrive the day after the event really diminishes the WOW!

It has a very unique program that works really well for large touring shows. It's the Free Rental Program. The nuts and bolts are; buy the confetti and streamers for the tour, X-Streamers.com then supplies the equipment and doesn't charge a rental fee. It can't do this for everyone, but many tours qualify. This saves their clients thousands of dollars. X-Streamers.com is proud to support all of The Blue Man Groups tours and many of the theatrical shows as well as Taylor Swift's *Fearless* Tour with this program.

Bottom line, in this economy everyone is trying to save money, and X-Streamers.com understands the importance of having a supplier that considers its clients as an important part of its team. It considers every client a very valuable player on its team.

X-Streamers.com works hard to get its clients what they need when they need it, not 3 hours or 3 days later. It works hard with only the best manufacturers to ensure the best equipment, confetti and streamers at affordable prices. It also works hard to train its staff so that it always has great, easy going people to deal with. Jaworski says, "I understand, you don't need any more drama! Believe me, as someone that has walked in your moccasins, I know how important it is to have a vendor that considers me important and makes me feel like I am their only client. That's what we strive to do. So far it's worked well for us. We look forward to working with you on your tour!" ☺

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Washington DC

by MICHAEL A. BECK

# Making Noise in America's Front Yard

**R**egardless of what side of the political isle you are on, there is no denying that these are turbulent times we are in. As has been the case since America was born when the political waters get choppy people gather together and voice their grievances in protest. Public protest is so much a part of the American fabric that it is addressed in the first and arguably the most often quoted amendment to the US Constitution which says, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances."

Over the years the technology and logistics of organized public protest has gotten amazingly refined. It is that technological sophistication that is going to be addressed in this piece. Please note that *mPm* is not taking a side in the discussion of any issues facing America as that is a discussion for another forum.

One piece of information that everyone wants to know whenever there is a gathering of any size is how many people showed up. In the case of concerts, festivals and just about any other public gathering that is an easy question to answer. Simply count the tickets sold or on the occasions when it's a free event count the number of cars parked and estimate from there. But what happens when there is no parking anywhere near the event and it's not ticketed?

Last year on September 12, it was electronically confirmed that over 900,000 people gathered on the west lawn of the US Capitol for a protest rally. While this number was and still is hotly debated, one has to wonder how it is that the size of a crowd that large can be determined. At one point during the rally a person stepped to the microphone and asked the crowd to send a text message to a specific

address. The word they were asked to send was "liberty" and the address was a company that does electronic head counts.

The rule was that the company could only accept one call from any given phone. The event was on a Saturday, and by the following Wednesday the electronic tally had peaked out at slightly north of the fore mentioned 900k. The obvious problem with not knowing how many people showed up until after it happened is that it's difficult to know how to prepare for the event.

The detail has to be taken care of well before anything else is permitted. Because of the security concerns indigenous to Washington DC, getting permitted to put on an event in this area is no small task. The rally in September of last year was organized by FreedomWorks, which is a PAC (political action committee) and not a production company. Therefore, it was wisely decided to employ the services of CSI (Capitol Services Inc.), which is a corporate production firm that specializes in planning events in the DC area.

CSI Senior Operations Manager Kelley Gillespie explained the permitting pro-



photo by Michael A. Beck

cess, "On the 9/12 event we had 11 different jurisdictions in play including the Secret Service. And while they all do very well at coordinating their own security measures, sometimes we came up against conflicting ordinances. We had to be very diligent about making sure that all of that was in place."

Gillespie went on to discuss how much of said diligence is about securing the event. "We have to make sure that the protesters are safe as well as people who might be in close proximity to the event as well."

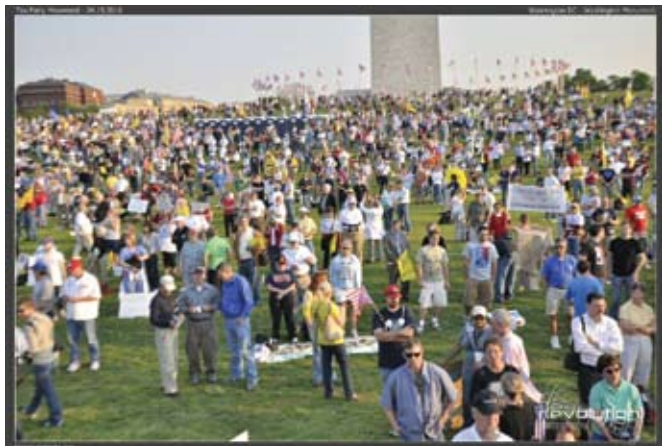
The area that extends from the west lawn of the US Capitol, down the National Mall all the way to the Lincoln Memorial is known as "America's Front Yard" and has been favored rally points of protesters for as long as they have existed. But these are hallowed pieces of real estate that are strictly regulated. The rally at the Capitol last year had big problems from a production perspective. The first was that FreedomWorks had no earthly idea how many people would show up. This posed the immediate challenge of not knowing how much PA to bring to the party.

The long grassy area extending from the Capitol to the monument is the National Mall. Because the mall had been permitted to another group whose event was being loaded out that day, the FreedomWorks group could not occupy the mall and, therefore, had to expand out and around the Capitol building.

This is where the sound issue got big. The law states that no tower on the west lawn can stand any higher than the 14 feet and the stage can be no higher than two feet



photo by Michael A. Beck



pictured above: courtesy of Pierre Demester

and nothing could be covered. So getting sound out over the crowd was going to be difficult at best.

The other problem was that audio can't be directed out to the side of the Capitol building because it is surrounded by congressional office buildings where people are working there on any given day of the week. This meant that even if FreedomWorks had known how many people were going to be there, there is no way sound reinforcement could have been provided to hit everyone given the way the crowd had to be channeled. Additionally, because of the lack of a permit for the Mall the event had to limit its PA in order to insure that sound couldn't throw onto the Mall or any other unpermitted area.

There was also a sight problem. The organizers had contracted video walls for the event that wound up serving little or no purpose at all given the 14' height restriction. Even if more video could have been provided it would have to be placed out in the crowd which would have been impossible.

Had the event been permitted for the Mall both audio and video would have been more easily managed by deploying audio delay towers and video displays along the mall. In the case of something like the presidential inauguration or any other time when the size of the crowd can be better quantified in advance, audio and video arrays can be placed and delayed in order to get to the crowd more efficiently. This simply wasn't the case last September.

Fast forward to this past April 15 when FreedomWorks organized another protest rally this time at the base of the Washington Monument. Having learned from the event at the Capitol, many things were different. FreedomWorks VP of Federal & State Campaigns Rob Jordon explained, "The monument grounds accommodated a larger crowd, and we did not have the same restrictions. For example, we were allowed to distribute materials, we were able to have a bigger stage and sound system, bigger I-MAG, and we could cover the stage."

While the restrictions at the Washington Monument were different from those at the Capitol lawn, they were no less stringent. The entire area of "America's Front Yard" is the

ward of the National Parks Service and the sanctity of the grounds is something that is taken very seriously. First and foremost is the mandate that the grass must be protected at all cost. This means that protective flooring such as what's been used in stadium events for years had to be laid down upon which sat the stage, mix position and backstage area.

There are also very exacting sound restrictions at the monument as well. Because the Washington Monument is a tourist attraction visited by millions of people of all political stripes, caution must be taken to limit the extent that any given message might intrude on the proper grounds of the monument itself. This area is delineated by a retaining wall that surrounds the monument. Any event that takes place must be outside of that perimeter.

In the case of the 4/15 event, the stage backed up against Constitution Avenue, which placed the stage between the Washington Monument and the White House. The area between the stage and the monument held 40,000 people on the day of the rally. The crowd went all the way back to the monument's retaining wall beyond which [theoretically] no sound could legally extend.

While there was a delay tower at the mix position, the law was carefully adhered to. There is only one residential dwelling in this area of town. However, given that this particular domicile happens to house the First Family there are also time restraints as well. No music can be played after 9:00 p.m., and everything must be shut down no later than 9:30 p.m.

The technical aspects of the event were handled by Maryland based MultiMedia Solutions. Account Rep. Ken Derr, who has been working on this kind of production since the late 70s, spoke to the production philosophy of getting something like this done, "You come loaded for a bear and hope for a squirrel." Derr went on to add, "We've done this for a long time, and by now we know what it takes to get it done. Every time anyone came to us [on the 4/15 event] with a request we already

continued on 34



## HSL in the Passion Pit!

**B**lackburn UK based lighting rental company HSL were delighted to get involved in supplying equipment for the latest UK tour by cult US electronic band, Passion Pit.

HSL's Mike Oates was approached by Passion Pit's lighting designer, New York based Mike Janowitz, with whom they are working on various other projects. Janowitz asked if HSL could put together a good visual package for the band's UK tour. Says HSL's Mike Oates, "It's very exciting working with cutting edge new artists, so we looked at Mike's design and approached XL Video to supply the video elements required. We also co-ordinated a trucking deal with Fly By Nite for the tour."

The two week UK tour encompassed a variety of venues including students unions, small to medium theaters and town halls including Rock City, Nottingham, Manchester Academy and The Forum in London. Passion Pit's lighting was looked after on this leg of the tour by lighting director Ryoji Suguro, who was joined by HSL technician Andy "Paris" Hilton.

HSL supplied a dynamic and flexible floor-based system which was integrated with the overhead house lighting rigs available at each venue.

The floor package was based around 7 vertical towers that formed an upstage

semi-circle behind the band, built from A-Type trussing and mounted on X-bases. The outer 2 towers were 8 ft high, the next two 10 ft, then 12 ft with a 14 ft high section in the center.

All towers featured a 120 x 120 cm square of PIXLED F40 LED screen attached the front and a Robe ColorWash 700E AT moving light on top. The two 12 ft towers had 2 PIXLED F40 screens rigged top and bottom, with a Robe ColorWash 700E AT mounted in the gap between the two LED panels. The overall visual effect was that of a pyramid of screens.

On the floor were 6 Martin Atomic strobes with color-changers, and tucked in the gaps between the towers, 6 Robe ColorSpot 1200E ATs were used for powerful back-beam effects. These were augmented with 4 x PixelPAR 90s also positioned upstage to give additional blasts of deep colored back light.

SGM Ribaltas along the front of the stage on the floor provided some off-beat foot-lights and key lighting.


Suguro controlled all the lighting from a Road Hog console, including the house



lighting rigs, and also drove the Catalyst media server supplied by XL Video to feed the LED panels, loaded with content supplied by Mike Janowitz and the band. Andy Hilton tech'd the LED screens as well as the lighting each day.

It was a bit of a squeeze fitting the rig into some of the smaller spaces, but it was designed to be versatile enough to offer plenty of options and still look good.

The essentially expediently sized rig yielded plenty of imaginative scope, much of it was run 'live' on the beat, going with the rhythmic flow, with each song having its own strong color theme. There was plenty of 'theater' and a bit of edginess in the overall design, a tribute to the band's name which derives from a traditional slang reference to drive-in theaters.

It was the first time that Minneapolis-based Suguro, has worked with HSL, an experience that he has really enjoyed, "The service was great and everyone there is knowledgeable and helpful," he comments. 



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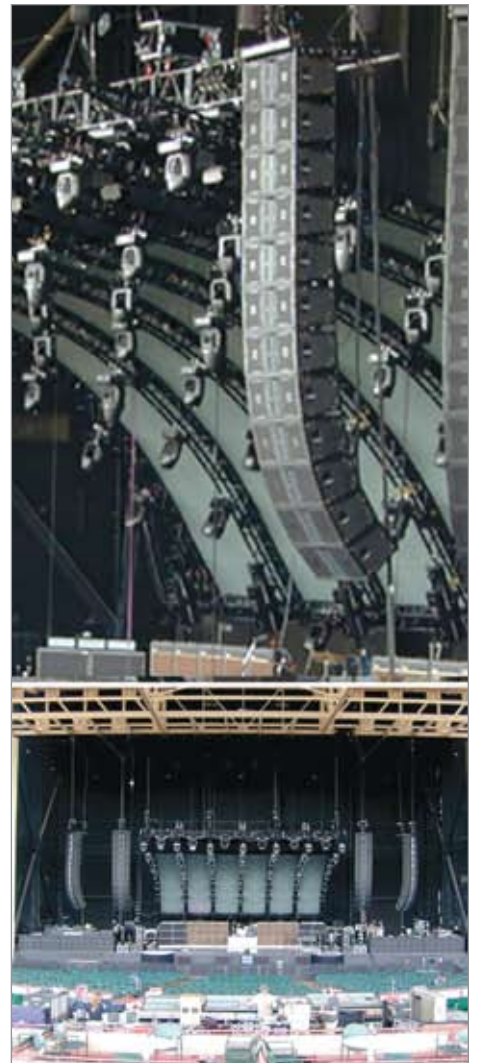
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# SOUND IMAGE

## George Strait And **ONSTAGE SYSTEMS** Get Plugged Into **L-ACOUSTICS LA-RAK**



**D**allas-based Onstage Systems is one of the latest touring production companies to embrace L-ACOUSTICS' K Standard platform by purchasing 16 new LA-RAK touring racks, each loaded with three LA8 amplified controllers.



All 16 racks recently went out on the first leg of country music superstar George Strait's 2010 Tour, which was performed in-the-round at 20 arenas and domes across North America. The LA-RAKs delivered power, processing and control for 72 V-DOSC and 48 dV-DOSC enclosures—split into eight arrays flown around the center stage—in addition to 16 SB Series subs and eight more dV-DOSC for front-fill.


The first leg of the tour wrapped up with sold-out concert on May 1 at San Antonio's Alamodome, which packed in more than 55,000 fans to see Strait, Reba, Lee Ann Womack and Randy Rogers Band. To accommodate the size of the enormous venue, Onstage cross-rented

some supplementary gear from fellow L-ACOUSTICS Rental Network companies US Audio and Sound Image.

"Between Onstage Systems and US Audio, we had nearly 80 L-ACOUSTICS LA8 amplified controllers in use on our show at the Alamodome, and, like the rest of our tour, we had zero problems with them whatsoever," says George Olson, Strait's FOH engineer and lead system tech. "I love the packaging of LA-RAK. We can stack them any way we want, and they patch up perfectly every time with no ground issues, buzzes or hums. They're very solid and sonically pleasing."

"I'm also really enjoying LA Network Manager and the LA8's onboard process-

ing tools, especially Array Morphing," he continues. "I generally have quite a few 15s in the air, and, with this tour being in-the-round, the network software has provided a very quick means of tailoring out some of those low-mid frequencies. Plus, seeing that the LA8s are perfectly matched for our L-ACOUSTICS loudspeakers, I've found that they provide a bit more brilliance in the mids and highs than our previous amplifiers, which is a nice improvement."

Onstage Systems' Charles Belcher agrees with Olson that the LA8-loaded LA-RAK is a winner. "The true beauty of this system really is the lightweight, four-channel LA8 amps with built-in processing," Belcher adds. "They sound and work great!" 

# SOUND IMAGE

## Joins K1/KUDO Pilot Program and Prepares for Tom Petty's MOJO Tour

**S**outhern California-based Sound Image, Inc., a full-service sound reinforcement provider for four decades, has now joined the short list of North American L-ACOUSTICS K1/KUDO Pilot Program companies.



At the request of Robert Scovill, Tom Petty's long-time FOH engineer, Sound Image took delivery of L-ACOUSTICS' K Standard package comprised of 48 K1 and 36 KUDO enclosures, 24 K1-SB and 24 SB28 subs, plus accompanying LA-RAK amplified controller racks. The system is currently in pre-production rehearsals for Petty's upcoming MOJO Tour, which kicks off on June 1 at Red Rocks Amphitheatre in Denver and treks across the US and Canada through early October.

According to Sound Image Director of Touring Mike Sprague, the typical loudspeaker setup for sheds on the tour will be an LCR arrangement featuring left and right hangs of 14 K1, eight K1-SB and three dV-DOSC for downfill, plus eight KUDO flown in the center. In arenas, the production crew will add an additional 8-10 KUDO per side for far left and right audience coverage.

"We've had V-DOSC, dV-DOSC and ARCS in our inventory for some time now, but the premium K1 system really takes L-ACOUSTICS to the next level," says Sprague. "Its sound is extremely honest and open—very sonically true to the source. In addition to sounding great, K1 features a rigging system that is extremely well thought out and implemented."

Sprague further describes L-ACOUSTICS' related SOUNDVISION acoustical simulation program as "fabulous" and LA Network Manager monitoring/control software as "brilliant." ○

**CONTACT: Mike Sprague**  
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## ALLEN & HEATH

### Launches Larger Format iLive Mix Rack

**A**llen & Heath will be introducing the iDR-64 larger format fixed I/O MixRack to the iLive digital mixer family, offering high I/O capacity and a lower cost alternative to the flagship modular iDR10 MixRack.



The new iDR-64 comprises 64 mic/line inputs and 32 XLR outputs in a 9U frame, and features the iLive 64x32 RackExtra DSP mix engine, providing full processing (dynamics, EQ and delay) for all 64 channels and 32 mixes. The RackFX DSP framework provides 8 stereo processors capable of high quality FX emulation of industry classics. Each Rack has flexible I/O routing with EQ and Dynamik FXShaper on every dedicated return.

With the addition of the iDR-64, the iLive Series now includes a total of 6 MixRack and 7 Control Surface variants, which can be mixed and matched in any combination, and share the same firmware, so that show files are transferable between systems via a USB key.

Using standard Ethernet, the iDR-64 can be controlled with one of the iLive Control Surfaces, ranging from the rackmount iLive-R72 to the iLive-176. Allen & Heath's proprietary ACE (Audio Control Ethernet) link is provided to link the rack to a control surface, allowing cost effective long distance point to point

control and audio communication over a single CAT5 cable up to 120m in length. iDR-64 also has a built-in network switch and MIDI ports allowing remote control using laptops, touch tablets, MIDI devices, and connection for Allen & Heath's PL Series of controllers. The iLive Editor software is a user-friendly, JAVA-based program that enables both offline set up and online real time operation of the system with or without a Surface connected.

There is a Port B option slot for further audio networking possibilities - such as system expansion, digital mic splitting and multi-track recording - via plug-in cards for various interfaces, including EtherSound, MADI, ADAT and Aviom™.

To coincide with the availability of the iDR-64, iLive Firmware and Editor software version 1.7 will also be released, supporting the iDR-64 MixRack, as well as the new Dante and Rocknet audio networking cards, which join the ACE, EtherSound, MADI and MMO options currently available. The software will also provide support for an iPhone app.

v1.7 brings several other key enhancements, including pre-amp safes; side chain source selection; PL remote control of engineer's monitor channels; and improvements to PEQ control, including a 20-20kHz frequency range option, and HPF response curve overlay on the PEQ graph.

"The iDR-64 fills the gap between the iDR-48 fixed I/O MixRack and the flagship modular iDR10 MixRack, offering a high I/O capacity at an attractive price point due to the fixed I/O arrangement," comments Allen & Heath MD, Glenn Rogers. "Not only does the iDR-64 provide a great solution for larger, more demanding events, it would also be an ideal partner to a second iLive MixRack using the Dual-Rack function to expand to up to 128 channels."

The iDR-64 will be unveiled at the Infocomm exhibition on June 9-11, 2010 in Las Vegas, USA, followed by the ABTT show in London on June 16-17, 2010. [🔗](#)

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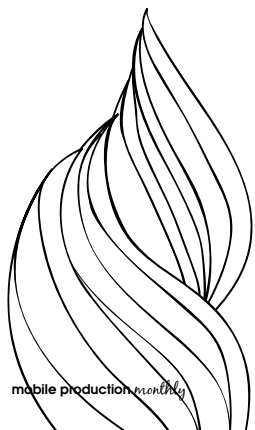


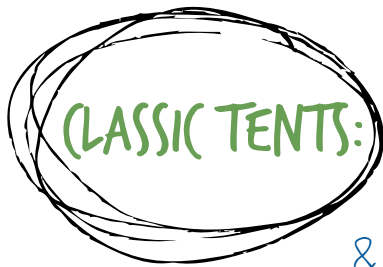
# [COACHELLA] ←←

## Unsung Heros:

The **COACHELLA VALLEY MUSIC & ARTS FESTIVAL** (commonly known as Coachella) began in 1999 as a one-day music festival and later to a two-day festival. It currently has evolved into a three-day music & arts festival organized by Goldenvoice/AEG. It takes place at the Empire Polo Fields in Indio, California. The main stages include the Coachella Stage, the Outdoor Theatre, the Oasis Dome, Gobi Tent, Mojave Tent and the Sahara Tent. Along with the artwork on display, the stages are occupied constantly with bands of various genres playing 24 hours a day.

Much can be said about the production of the various Coachella's shows over the years. Let's however, take a look at some of the unsung heros of Coachella and how they make the event comfortable to all who attend each year. As the festival's needs evolved, so have the vendors.





Covering Large & Small

The Coachella Music Festival takes place in the desert, the daytime temperatures frequently rise to over 100 degrees. With so little cloud coverage, the temp drops as the sun goes down each day. Tents are vital to all including the artwork, stages, artists, crew... the list goes on and on.

Classic Tents has been doing the Coachella/ Stagecoach, Rothbury, All Points West and Mile High events for many years. At the annual Coachella, Classic Tents has over 300,000 square feet of tenting, both in frame tents and clear span structures. Its tents cover the stages, restrooms, concessions, merchandise and vendor/sponsor areas. In addition, it provides police with arrest/booking tents, grocery store structures on the adjacent campgrounds and many other ancillary tents.

These guys have a crew of 20 who begin setup approximately 12 days before the start the event. Cranes, extended reach lifts and booms are used to raise the structures which range in size from 50m to 30m in width. There are over 12 trailer-loads of equipment delivered to the site. Following Coachella, the site is adjusted to fit the requirements for Stagecoach. In previous years, it has removed structure tops to allow the grass to get sunlight between Coachella and Stagecoach event dates. At the end of Stagecoach, Classic Tents had just five days to strike the event.

With such a huge undertaking, one can appreciate

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

the work involved with its endeavors. No event is too large or small for them to help make it a success. With so many locations nationwide, check out their website and see how Classic Tents can help with your production or festival needs.

In the end, tents are tents... but these guys really know their craft. It aint easy "covering" all these events, but as long as they got it covered... ☺

## UNITED SITE SERVICES:

### Keeping it Clean & Green

by MIKE WHARTON

The downturn of the economy in 2004 actually produced some very positive results for individual citizens as well as major companies. The Coachella Arts Festival and United Site Services were two of the recipients which benefitted from the problems that came about at that time.

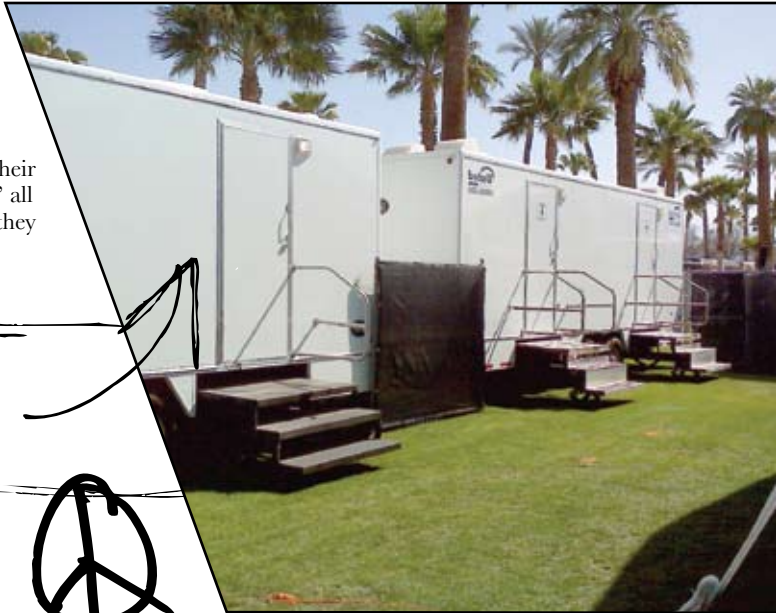
Coachella, which has run annually since 1999, takes place on 90 pristine green acres known as the Empire Polo Fields. It is surrounded by the Colorado Desert. The owner of

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

this acreage had plans at the height of the real estate boom to chop this up and turn it into residential lots, ending what has become one of California's most recognized, profitable and community friendly festivals. Those plans were set aside in 2004.

About this time United Site Services, the nation's largest portable toilet rental company, was seeking other markets for revenue. From its corporate headquarters in Massachusetts it had been acquiring companies on the west coast.

Working at one of these companies was Jeff Dixon, a veteran of 10 years in the industry and a man who self admittedly "really loves what he does." He came on board as operations manager for its San Bernardino facility. The facility had been providing 9,500 services a week when construction was trying to keep up with real estate demands. Within a





couple of years, Dixon was promoted to Area Manager covering everything from Las Vegas to San Bernardino to San Diego.

Then the collapse of the real estate market occurred. United began developing other service offerings, such as temporary power, storage bins and fencing. It also became aware that its "Special Events" market had not slowed down at all. "We had been doing the fences about seven years at Coachella and seemed to have established a peer relationship with the promoter Goldenvoice/AEG," says Dixon.

United Site Services began expanding its bid to Goldenvoice to do the entire event, which includes public and backstage artist facilities as well as hot and cold sinks for the caterers and festival vendors.

"The bid process and preproduction planning begins about three months before the festival," Dixon says. Between requests from the client and recommendations from United, "a number gets hammered out so everyone is happy," he states.

United provided 14 miles of fencing, 825 portable units, 15 restroom trailers, 7 New Concepts VIP, and a double VIP Executive trailers for this year's event. The United advantage is it can provide full service to the event, not only equipment wise but with an experienced staff as well.

Setup takes about 10 days with 15 drivers bringing in portable toilets as well as positioning and planting the comfort station trailers. Ten crews of two deploy the fencing.

Dixon oversees this whole process and schedules the crew for the event from start to finish. He does this with great assistance from Scott Malone, "my right hand man on site." Sal Reyes, United's fence manager, and Manuel Baruman the fence 'onsite' supervisor round out the team.

AEG's operations representative onsite, whom Dixon works closely with, is Kevan Wilkins. Pre and post production planning is done with Wilkins as well. Wilkins of United Site services for the Coachella Festival says, "It is difficult for me to even describe the immense amount of work that goes into putting up the 71,420 feet of fence at this event. The amount of changes that are made onsite is challenging, the long hours in the heat are grueling and the skill it takes to manage the fence crews to get the job done is incredible. This was all done professionally and efficiently







photos courtesy of Coachella/Goldenvoice

without a single complaint. We will not hesitate to call on United in the future for other projects that we take on.”

During the run of the festival, 50 people are employed by United. Attendants continuously monitor, restock and re-freshen the facilities during the day, and a night crew does a full cleaning in preparation for the next day. Biodegradable materials are utilized in all paper products, deodorizing tablets and cleaning detergents.

Two United crew members handle the shower water discharge or “grey water” from the 13 showers which Goldenvoice contracts through another vender. United provides 28

holding tanks which are utilized to collect grey water from these and the sinks the venders and caterers use.

Grey water goes into a 1,500 gallon bladder, and then United trucks pump the water out of the bladder and take it away to the disposal site. Waste is held in four 5,000 gallon tanks and two 3,000 gallon tanks, and then transported to a transfer station in Palm Desert.

After the last haul to the transfer station, the strike commences. United’s crews efficiently and meticulously remove all their equipment, restoring the Empire Polo Fields to their original pristine condition.

In fact, the event has had such a low environmental impact on the land that the property owner has contracted for more special events, which is a great tribute to our industry and a good thing for the community. No doubt you’ll see United’s bright blue solar powered commodities there as well. ◊





## The Next Best Thing To Home

Porta Kleen offers single unit restrooms to elaborate VIP restroom trailers and has a wide selection of products to meet a wide range of portable sanitation needs. With that in mind, it was a huge hit this year at Coachella. It is no secret that a good shower is an essential on a multi-day festival. This year the guys at Coachella acquired the services of Porta Kleen for the first time.

Since their beginnings in 1995, Porta Kleen has evolved into the go-to guys for the music festival industry. They currently have one of the biggest mobile shower and restroom trailer fleets working today. These amenities can be used not only for music festivals but other applications for gatherings of any size as well. Clients include the PGA, NASCAR, and the AVON breast cancer walks. They are currently the only GSA schedule holder for mobile trailers of this sort. Coachella was a much more comfortable event due to Porta Kleen being there. ☺

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

These are vendors that don't usually get press, but deserve to be acknowledged. We should all thank them for their efforts. mobile Production monthly would like to thank all those that go way under the radar to make successful events happen. ☺





photos courtesy of Coachella/Goldenvoice



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# [RAT SOUND]

## Figuring It Out At Coachella

by BILL ABNER

If you were to poll any of the thousands of sound companies across the country and around the world and asked them what kind of a gig or a customer they would like to have in their pocket, undoubtedly each of them would have somewhere on their list, a gig like the Coachella Festival. A gig that is bigger than big, that is challenging, that allows a company to stretch its boundaries and experiment with ideas and concepts and a gig that as long as you don't screw it up can be perpetual or at least close to it. Rat Sound Systems, based in Oxnard, California, may just have found that gig right in its own back yard in the form of the **COACHELLA VALLEY MUSIC AND ARTS FESTIVAL** or simply Coachella.

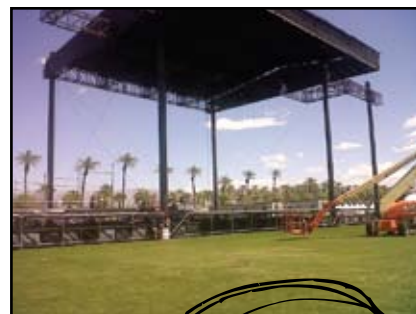
In its 11th year, the festival drew over 225,000 people. A record 75,000 people came through the gates on each of the three days to see performances by acts as diverse as Jay-Z, Muse and even 70s legend Sly Stone. With over 140 acts in three days split between seven stages, therein lies the first and not even the biggest challenge for Rat Sound. It is an issue that most sound companies encounter at some point: How do you go about staffing an event this big, with this many top acts, with high quality audio engineers and techs? Rat Sound will deploy an army of up to 35 "sound humans" to accomplish the mission, and we're not just talking about sticking a warm body on a stage.

**\* Dave Rat** owner of and inspiration for Rat Sound Systems explains, "Rat Sound doesn't have enough personnel in our regular circle of engineers to staff a festival of this size. One of our business strategies is kind of like a ping-pong game at a barbecue. We play the game to win, but we'll have a beer together after the game. Because of the friendly relationships we keep with other sound companies throughout the year, we're able to bring in top staff people from our competitors to man these stages." Some of the biggest companies from around the country and around the world contribute personnel: ATK AudioTek, Delicate Productions and even New Zealand sound company Oceania just to drop a few names. "Because these guys are at the very top of their game there is no animosity, their loy-

alty is to the gig at hand. These are people that know what they are doing, love what they're doing and do it well."

With the challenge of staffing the event virtually overcome, Rat is able to focus on the more technical issues that are inherent in this type event. For a sound company, the 400 pound gorilla in this room has got to be coverage. Dave Rat says, "With this event, there are five main stages and two smaller ones, and at some points during the weekend they are all running concurrently, therefore, there are seven primary sound sources of audio that can all be competing at once. So to create an impressive audience experience and have it be fairly loud yet not have them interfere with the other stages nearby is probably one of the biggest challenges of Coachella. Not only are we tasked with providing sound for all of these stages, we're also involved in controlling the interaction of sound between the various stages."

How do you effectively and efficiently cover 75,000 people gathered on a polo field in the middle of the desert when not only do those paying customers want to hear the performance on any one of the seven stages that are going concurrently, they also don't want to hear what's going on behind or beside them on any of the other six stages that they aren't watching? This presents a prime opportunity for Rat Sound to stretch its boundaries and to experiment with ideas and concepts.





DAVE RAT

➤ Dave Rat w/ founders of Goldenvoice (Coachella promotor)

had six delay clusters, and when the second stage fired up it had six delay clusters. In real time each one could be adjusted up or down in volume to accommodate larger or smaller areas and crowds. “It was a demand-based system,” says Rat. “If a bunch of people gathered at one stage, all of the delay clusters would follow that stage and vice versa. When the crowd would leave or thin at a particular stage, the delay clusters could be collapsed down to mirror the movement. It worked really well.”

Psychoacoustics played a large part in the equation also. While the team was never able to completely eradicate the bleed over from other stages, they found that when someone is presented with direct sound close to them then secondary sound that

is further away becomes less relevant. By having delay clusters closer to the listener, it made the other sound further away seem less intrusive. What the team found was that when a sound source is much closer to a person, they were psychologically inspired to listen to the source that was closer to them, and the far away source was disregarded.

The trend in large-scale sound reinforcement is to have these new high powered line arrays and to steer away from delay clusters. There are a few flaws with that approach. One obviously is bleed over from stage to stage. While the clarity coverage might be okay, the low-end and mid-range that can't really be steered that well, bleeds everywhere.

“Another significant advantage that we gained, and that we knew we would gain,” says Rat, “is the significant control over environmental factors. As the day heats up the space and the ground, you get thermal waves rising off of the ground, dispersing and diffusing the sound waves. By having multiple sources in a closer proximity to the listening audience, we were able to overcome those issues. It significantly reduced the environmental factors relating to the quality of the sound.”

A further advantage of the “distributed” system is that it allowed Rat Sound to reduce the amount of sound bleed that escaped the site. Obviously, a lot of little speakers are easier to control and contain than one big one. By reducing the size

of the main sound system and going to the multiple delay clusters, Rat reduced the amount of unwanted sound propagation. The team also reduced the area that was covered by focusing both the main stacks and the delay clusters down into the crowd more thereby increasing the angle of incidence and effectively decreasing the amount of sound escaping into the surrounding area.

This year marked Rat Sound's 10th Coachella festival. That's a pretty good run and as close to perpetual as many in the business will ever see. It doesn't appear that Rat will be releasing the reins anytime soon. When asked what lessons the team has learned that they will take into next year's festival to help improve upon what it have done thus far, Rat sighs, “We're still processing the information and figuring that out. Obviously we want to do a better job each time, and we feel like it has been a steady growing experience for us each year. The really big challenge that remains unresolved for us is communication between stages at a rock festival. I don't know an effective solution on the market for it as of yet.”

Think about it: you get 80,000 fans on cell phones sending video, making calls and cluttering up the airwaves, and even if the festival brings in cell towers that much traffic can shut down the cell networks. Consequently, text messaging, cell phone calls and even email all become unreliable. Even if a cell call can be made in the environment in which they work, the sound guys often can't hear well enough to carry on an effective conversation. “Walkie-talkies are a popular solution for some, but for this festival the way we are operating the delay clusters dynamically, we need to be able to have quick accurate exchanges of information, and walkies, while they are mostly reliable, require focus and immediate attention. We're looking for something that's text based where you can send accurate information back and forth that can be acted on without necessarily having to have a conversation.” Rat says he would like to find a system whereby “Coachella Central” for example could send messages to one stage or to all the stages. Whether it is an emergency alert or simply a direction for a particular stage to follow. “That's the Holy Grail of the production for us next year.”

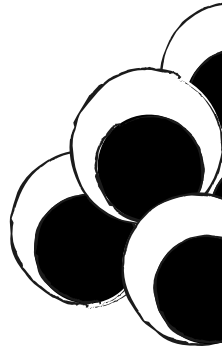
Something tells me the folks at Rat Sound will figure it out. After all, it has been figuring it out at Coachella for 10 years. ○

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One answer, while somewhat complicated in execution, was really just a matter of basic sound principles and physics. Any good sound guy knows that blasting audio from a single source point results in the people up front being blown away while the people at the back can barely hear. It used to happen all the time on big corporate events and concerts before the advent and improvement of line array systems. Even line arrays while they are able to more evenly distribute the sound waves across longer distances still have their limitations. Blowing sound out into the distant reaches of a festival of this size still isn't the most effective use of energy. The answer came for Rat Sound at this year's festival in the form of a basic audio principle: distributed sound – but on a much larger scale.

In the past, the concept had been to just blow the sound across the desert and augment it with delay towers, but that created several issues. First the other stages had to compete with those sound waves intermingling at the very least and even interrupting its own show in some cases. Something as simple as a good strong wind blowing across the festival space could affect the quality of the sound, because again, as every good sound guy knows, as the wave spreads ever further across distance, it becomes more susceptible to being distorted by the wind, the rain or even heat.

“This year we approached those issues from the angle of having multiple delay clusters and having expanding and contracting coverage from the two main stages,” says Rat. The main stage would fire up and



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Drums - PAUL JOHN  
Guitar - WILLIE BROWN JR.  
Bass - STEVE MOSTYN  
BGV - WHITNEY KEATON, CORTNEY BROWN JR., MONTE GILL  
Percussionist - PABLO BATISA  
Keyboards - ANTHONY MILLER  
Dancers - SHAUNA MITCHELL, ADETOKUNBO  
"ADAE" OBAYOMI, NATALLI REZENIK



*Freedom Tour*  
**alicia KEYS**

by MICHAEL A. BECK  
*photos by Michael A Beck*





the days when the average big arena show is upwards of 15 or 20 trucks, it was a bit of a surprise to walk into Alicia Key's show and only see eight trucks. All the more reason to get in and see what was going on. The first thing noticed was that the tour wasn't carrying a stage.

"It's the economy stupid," said Production Designer Baz Halpin quoting Bill Clinton. "That's the trick these days. We needed to put this show in as small a package as possible. So we decided that we would rather spend money on lights, video and content rather than saving money going with a promoter supplied stage."

Not having a custom stage didn't take anything away from the show, but it certainly added to the design challenges. The show had a very tall backline in which there was a toaster (elevator) that lifted Alicia to the top level for one look, a baby grand piano that moved around the stage on a motorized riser and a cage that she entered the show in that also sat upon a motorized riser. All of this had substantial weight that would be much of a concern if they knew what stage the show was going to play on every night. Since that wasn't always a given, the set had to be designed so that the weight wouldn't be an issue regardless of the stage it's on.



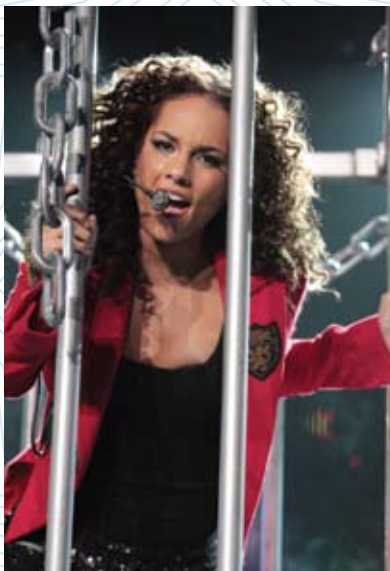
"That's the biggest day to day challenge of the tour," said Production Manager Omar Abderrahman. "We have to rig off of the stage and getting it correctly positioned is critical. The stage is in place before we arrive."

However, upstream of all of these concerns was the fact that from the time Abderrahman got the call to take the tour out, he and his team had only three

weeks to design the tour, put it out to bid, and rehearse it.

The production design and execution thereof was based on the name of the tour, *Freedom*. The idea was when the show opened it had a narrow almost claustrophobic feel, and it opened up from there. The production had a very clean look to the point of not having a downstage truss. There were three video lines of medium resolution video that hung like the successive lines of drapes in a proper theatre.

The show opened with the downstage video line flown into the stage, which flew out to reveal Alicia in a cage that moved to a position at downstage center. When she broke out of the cage the video proscenium stayed at a trim height of 24 feet. As the show progressed, the video got higher and higher as the show got bolder indicating the gradual access to freedom.



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## — MANAGEMENT & STAFF —

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 Director of Ops - **DJ WALTON**  
 Tour Director - **MARTY HOM**  
 Tour Manager - **ALLAN TATE**  
 Road Manager - **EDDIE POWELL JR.**  
 Assistant to Ms. Keys - **ALICIA RENEE GEIST**  
 Hair Stylist - **CYNTHIA ALVAREZ**  
 Personal Security - **ANTRANIK "ANTON" KALAYDJIAN**  
 Security Director - **JAMES "CHRIS" BRIDGES**  
 Tour Accountant - **SUNIL SINHA**

When the stage was revealed from behind the video, one of the more striking stage elements was six very unique lighting arrays. Each array was made up of four metal rods arching vertically into the air with an Elation Impression on the end of it. The positioning of the fixtures came from the idea that Halpin wanted to be able to low angle back and side light. The idea for the design of how it would look came from a different place all together.

"I wanted something in those positions that wouldn't be a heavy set piece and could back light the band," he recalled. "And at one point I was looking at my hands, and I was making these shapes with my fingers. I spread them out and bent them and said, 'What if we made these sort of things?' So I said to my friend and associate Chris Nyfield (set designer for the tour), 'Let's put these thing in there.'" The angle of attack from the units perfectly displayed the perfect marriage of form and function. It also lent credence to the long held belief that one can never stare at one's fingers too much.

One primary desire that Alicia Keys brought to the design table on this project was the desire for the show to have a deeply theatrical feel to it. While lighting was a major part of the success of that philosophy, the silky smooth deployment of the video line was a more evident player to that end. Flown off of a rigging system provided by SGPS, the walls performed seamless and almost imperceptible moves from one look to another until the production reached the same level of freedom as the performance did.

The smoothness of this production cannot possibly be overstated. It all flows from the gentle genius of Omar Abderrahman and Stage Manager Scott "Stryker" Christensen who move their crew with an outstanding ability to treat people as gently as possible and as firmly necessary.

It was as fun to watch this crew as it was to see the show. ☪

## — CREW —

Production Manager - **OMAR ABDERRAHMAN**  
 Stage Manager - **SCOTT "STRYKER" CHRISTENSEN**  
 Set Designer - **CHRIS NYFIELD**  
 Video Designer - **OLIVIER GOULET**  
 Tech Director - **ELI WARD**  
 Prod. Coordinator - **JON BUMGARNER**  
 Security - **ROBERT "BIG ROB" MCNULTY**  
 Production Assistant - **LAUREN ABDERRAHMAN**  
 Backline - **DAVID MEJIA, CHRIS HUETZ, KURT KASINOFF**  
 FOH - **DAVE KOB**  
 Monitors - **KEVIN GLENDINNING**  
 Wardrobe - **JILL FOCKE**  
 Head Rigger - **ART MCCONNELL**  
 Head Carpenter - **JOE ROGERS**  
 Carpenters: **SAGE CHRISTENSEN, CHRIS MALTA**  
 Sound Techs: **JAMES RAGUS, RACHEL ADKINS, PHILLIP KRIZ, ROBERT TAYLOR**  
 LD - **BRYAN BARANCIK**  
 Lighting Tech: **RONALD BEAL, JASON WINFREE, CHARLES EVANS**  
 Video Director - **GARY ODOM**  
 Video Techs: **NATE FOUNTAIN, L SIDNEY PTAH, WAYNE BOEHNING JR., TYLER MUNSON, SETH SHARPLESS**  
 Screens Director - **PHILIPP SCHAUER**  
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had it covered.”

The 32' x 24' stage was lit for television, which became necessary as the sun began to set. Offstage I-MAG displays were not what we're use to seeing in concert or corporate applications. They were self-powered units like what one might see on the infield of a car or horse race. The problem with them was that they were parked so close to the stage that the onboard generators were too loud to have running during the event. The exhaust would have created an issue as well. The answer was to run the onboard units on the test day then handed off to a more secluded genny for the event.

As was mentioned earlier, American citizens have been availing themselves of the right to speak out as long as America has had a name. As has happened with all other areas of addressing large gatherings of people, it only makes sense that the means by which the practice of peaceably assembling to petition the government for a redress of grievances eventually became carried through the technology developed in the world of concert production.

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