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FROM THE *Publisher*



It is hard to believe that the new touring season is already upon us. The older I get, the faster time seems to slip away. It seems that we were just leaving Scottsdale and Tour Link. Now we are in the startup of the season. Bids are flying around for production and transportation, crews are being organized, rehearsals are transitioning into load outs and rooms are being booked. Whew! I think I am getting too old for this. I honestly do not remember where we get the energy for this life, but thank God, most of you still have that spring time spark going. I hope it sustains you down the road.

As in all things, our focus is on the present and this issue we focus on Kid Rock. This tour features some great people, super vendors and many of my friends and acquaintances, so forgive me if I am a little prejudiced. I think this is one of those "sleeper" shows that will be talked about this year. There is a lot of great energy and good spirits on this show and we have been impressed with the professionalism at all levels. We think you will find this issue a good read to start the season.

Larry Smith



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ON STAGE POWER

Crown Audio products form a vital and integral part of many live stage arenas - Paul Watson finds out why.

Since its founding in 1947, **Crown Audio** has become one of the largest and most respected manufacturers of Pro Audio amplifiers. Lennart Dahlgren of Harman's Swedish distributor Septon Electronic talks to Paul Watson about the pro sound and installation market and Jim Risgin, VP of On Stage Audio International, reveals why Crown Audio has been an integral part of the Illinois-headquartered rental company's inventory for the last 10 years.

Paul Watson: What do you feel sets Crown Audio apart over other manufacturers?

Lennart Dahlgren: To be honest, I believe that the sound quality is its biggest strength; when I first listened to Crown Audio products, the difference in the audio was bigger than even I expected myself. Also, the built-in DSP and System Architect are big plus points; it helps to have that same platform for the entire Harman brand.

PW: You take care of Crown Audio's distribution for Sweden— what's an average working day for you?

LD: Yes – that's where my focus is. I find myself dealing with clients on a daily basis, concentrating a lot on the system solution. And also, with the System Architect and the networking between units it definitely helps make my job a lot easier.

PW: What units are the most popular and why?

LD: Well, there is demand for I-Tech, and XTi is also very popular, which is a cheaper amp with DSP built in.

PW: A kind of entry level in Pro Audio?

LD: Yes. And the new XLS Drivecore Series has a built in digital crossover; it's very lightweight and it sounds good as well

– it's certainly a more affordable way into Pro Audio equipment.

Paul Watson: So you're a big user of Crown Audio amplification? What stands out in your opinion?

Jim Risgin: Yes, for about 10 years. We switched over after using different manufacturers and found the reliability and sound quality to be enough of a difference to invest in an entirely new amplifier line. Since then it's been the workforce of our inventory; we recently invested in a large number of their VRACK packages.

PW: Why the VRACK particularly?

JR: Because it's a pre-packaged system that enables us to buy the amplifiers one day and have them out generating revenue for us within a week instead of having to go through it all ourselves. We found that to be a tremendous advantage. It's also cost competitive, and it's integrated into the System Architect control software which makes it even easier to use; that's the networking and DSP that's built into the amp. It's unique because it's a rack package, it's got control panels, and it's generally



crownaudio.com

easier than dealing with individual units.

PW: You've been using Crown Audio for 10 years. Have you seen the brand develop much over that time or have you always regarded it as a market leader?

JR: I have always thought of Crown Audio as a well established top brand, but in the last 10 years I believe it has established itself as the pinnacle of networks: Harman's proprietary network control system - HiQnet; and a distributed DSP amplifier platform. It has networked more amplifiers than probably all other manufacturers put together; and in this day and age that is a huge strength which, along with its outstanding audio quality and reliability, is the reason we consider it an industry leader.



KUDO

Thunder Valley Casino Resort Feels the Peel of KUDO



thundervalleyresort.com
avdb-group.com

Thunder Valley Casino Resort, located 30 miles east of Sacramento, has now wrapped up an ambitious schedule of renovations with the addition of a spa, outdoor pool and 17-story luxury hotel, which houses the resort's new 10,000-square-foot Pano Hall.

Designed to host concert and comedy productions, corporate meetings, poker tournaments, banquets and many other events, the multipurpose, 1,000-capacity space is equipped with a mobile L-ACOUSTICS amplifier and loudspeaker package supplied by Las Vegas-based Audio Video Design-Build (AVDB) Group.

A total of 12 L-ACOUSTICS KUDO cabinets and eight SB28 subs, collectively powered by eight LA8 amplified controllers, comprise the main PA for Pano Hall. Eight self-powered 108P cabinets are also available for front-fill, with six 112P for use as side-fills. Onstage, four ARCS and four SB118 subs serve as the side-fill monitoring system, with a dV-SUB enclosure on hand as a drum monitor sub.

Scott Oosthuizen, AVDB Group's CEO and AV system designer, notes that KUDO's "exceptional versatility and universal acceptance in the production and touring world were primary reasons we recommended the system to our client. Plus, the enclosure's adjustable K-Louvers allow the system to steer audio away from the parallel surface walls in the ballroom, which is always a very desirable outcome in any design. Less primary reflections from the side continued on 38

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SHOW-WAY 2011 STARTS UP AGAIN “the recovery fair”

The long-awaited second edition of the show will take place in Bergamo, Italy, from 15 to 17 May 2011

It is now time for recovery after a year on standby, which has allowed companies in our trade to concentrate their essential efforts on optimizing their businesses during the peak of the world recession, now behind us.

Since the successful first edition of Show-Way in 2008 (165 exhibiting companies, 60 percent of which was from outside Italy, 33 new products, 11 workshops and 6,783 visitors from 35 nations), companies in our industry have been eagerly working to research and develop innovative products in far from favourable market conditions. At last the results of their efforts may be exhibited in the most distinguished showcase to a market now ready to appreciate them.

The Show-Way Professional Entertainment Technology Exhibition will return to the Bergamo trade fair from May 15 to 17, 2011 with the same format as before: a trade exhibition for the professional lighting, audio and sound industry. These are sectors where renowned top-ranking companies work in Italy.

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A strong need was felt for this trade fair in order to support the industry and promote its growth. For this reason, Show-Way has simple application procedures without last minute surprise costs and with all the services needed to make taking part as an exhibitor or visitor straightforward and easy. In this way the “trade fair investment” is truly profitable for all those who come. ☺

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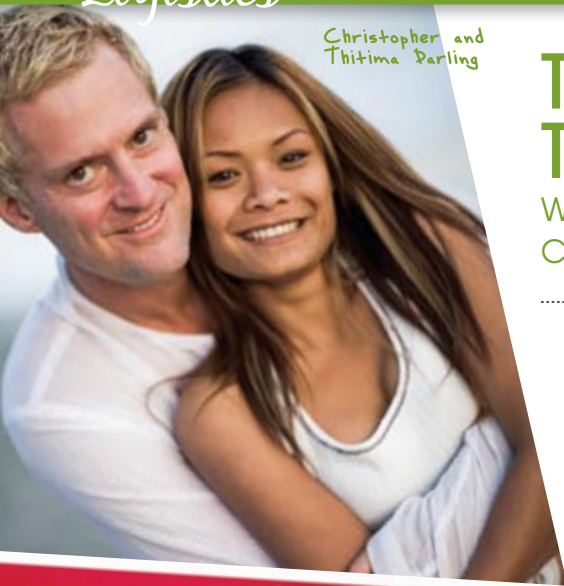


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Christopher and Thitima Darling



The 'Captain' of Logistics Tackles another Continent

Working for Janco Ltd. and now the UK's Redburn Transfer, Christopher Darling's larger-than-life persona just got bigger.

BY TYLER BLUE

The morning sun is just starting to peak over the foothills of Santa Barbara, and Christopher Darling is working the phones and firing off emails from a tree house in his backyard. When the weather permits, an eccentric fellow like him can't subscribe to the confinement of an ordinary office. His size 14 feet, supporting his 6'6 frame, are bare, as they often are. Blond highlights streak through his mussed, graying hair, which looks like he came straight from the VIP room of an Ibiza dance club the previous night.

In spite of the Bohemian, California portrait, Darling is ingrained with the nose-to-the-grindstone mentality of a guy raised by a hard-working automotive executive and an Alzheimer's day care clinic founder in a Detroit suburb. One moment he's on the phone with a tour manager for Iron Maiden, hammering out adjustments to their bussing arrangements. The next he is corresponding with a production manager for The Van's Warped Tour, analyzing the trucking specifications for an upcoming tour. Often it

goes smoothly but there are always fires to put out. After successfully sorting things out with Customs when one of his truck drivers is waylaid at the Canadian border, he gets up to go inside to make a tall glass of freshly juiced vegetables – some of which have been grown in his garden.

Many who know Darling think he lives a charmed existence and it would be foolish to argue. He's the kind of guy who always gets past the red velvet rope with a subtle wink. Everyone from truck drivers to rock stars gravitate towards him and his Ginsu-sharp wit. Serving as the logistics coordinator for Janco's trucking division since 1995, he has fine-tuned his job to a state of well-calculated gymnastics; performing the



Christopher Darling and Rick Rosenthal



Christopher Darling and Chris Redburn

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Serving as the logistics coordinator for Janco's trucking division since 1995, he has fine-tuned his job to a state of well-calculated gymnastics

equivalent of a one-armed pommel horse routine on a regular basis; nary breaking a sweat (naturally, his Blackberry is in the other hand). According to Janco's General Manager, Rick Rosenthal, "His easy going nature has made his interactions with clients, potential clients and drivers seem effortless."

Based in Wayne, New Jersey, Janco was founded by Tom Mallow; a theatrical producer. He started an agency, followed shortly after by the establishment of a transportation division in 1975. Janco Transportation is now considered by its peers as one of the top three trucking companies in the entertainment industry. A commitment to diversity has been critical to its success as the company handles everything from sporting events to trade shows. When Darling came on board, Janco's identity was as a Broadway carrier with its core business being in the fall through spring seasons. He brought with him a roster of music clients who were on the road at the opposite time of the year. "I gave Christopher a blank canvas so he could use his creativity to make Janco's music division as successful as our Broadway division had been for years," Rosenthal explains. "He designed the playbook."

Darling was integral in establishing two separate divisions of drivers in order to assign each to the specialized niche best suited to their



In the fall of 2010, Darling was hired by Redburn Transfer a fourth generation trucking company based in Enfield, just outside London.

"My operations team and our drivers make me look good," declares a humble Darling. "Our drivers are truly middle management and take great pride in their work. While I can develop a tour's needs, it takes a great day-to-day office staff to execute properly. We have a fantastic team that operates very efficiently." Janco's lead driver, Bill "Chilly" Taylor (who worked on the Jay Z / Eminem 2010 stadium tour), expresses, "It is always an adventure working with Christopher. He allows me to meet new people that keep challenging my abilities. We both agree that Janco's extensive training program

skills.

He makes a point to know everything about them including outside interests, musical tastes and family details. He then dispatches them according to the size and nature of each tour. His value for each employee is a mentality he attributes to his high school basketball coach. "He is the reason I'm so successful in this business," Darling extols. "Every member of our team was an asset from the star player to the twelfth man." Janco driver Steve "TC" Holmes sees the analogy in football terms: "The office coordinates, Christopher sets up the plays and we run the routes. He is a vital part of what makes this a winning team."

is key. We go to great lengths to educate every driver to make sure they can transition from one tour to another, no matter what the size."

Upward mobility is a realistic opportunity as a result of the way they are privy to touring components outside of their typical expertise. After ten years of service, one ex-Janco driver, Chris Knorr, went on to become the production manager for Jack Johnson and Ben Harper. Offering its drivers' premium 401k and health benefit packages is standard practice. In addition to the quality of its staff, Janco is proud to be an industry leader in its efforts to reduce carbon footprints. Operations staff member, "Little John" Limatola, has worked



Duh...

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closely with Darling to implement eco-practices for Janco. "When Christopher first explained the concepts behind becoming a green fleet, I was a little skeptical," he recalls. "Turning a trucking company 'green' is no small task. It wasn't soon after, with his help, I spearhead the current platform and procedures now in place at Janco." Specifically, this implies using bio diesel fuel and incorporating alternate power units for the tractors.

Darling got started in the transportation field in the 1988 after graduating from University of Arizona. He was intrigued by the traveling secretary position while he worked for the Detroit Pistons during their infamous "Bad Boy" years before moving to California to a similar position for the Oakland Athletics. He enrolled in a sports marketing class at University of California Berkeley taught by then marketing director of the Athletics, Andy Dolich. Darling recalls, "While my dream job had been as the marketing director of an expansion pro hockey team, I took the concept of the traveling secretaries logistical duties and put it to practical use with what I learned from Andy that year." Before the semester was over, he had launched his career in trucking.

Ten years ago, Darling made a pivotal career move when he joined forces with Mike Slarve and Four Seasons Coach Leasing. Forming a partnership with tour manager Jerome Crooks (Beastie Boys, Usher), the pair began to purchase and convert their own buses. Working in conjunction with Four Seasons and Janco made it possible for a one-stop shop for USA touring transportation. "I have the audience to lease buses and Jerome has the experience for coordinating successful tours. Together we make sure the artists and crew travel safely, in comfort."

Between Janco and Four Seasons, Darling's 2010 clients include Iron Maiden, Yo Gabba Gabba, Gorillaz, Diana Krall, Jack Johnson, Conan O'Brien and LCD Soundsystem. "I have always said that listing clients is just window dressing," he proclaims. "It is their tour staff, the success of the work you accomplish together and the relationships that grow from

there which are what is really important." However, unlike many industry lifers, Darling still maintains a youthful passion for the live music experience. He makes a point to attend as many of his clients' concerts as possible. Darling's reputation is synonymous with his zest for international travel. His passport is filled with enough ink to write an abridged version of *Robinson Crusoe*. He heard the siren's call years ago, beckoning him to Southeast Asia where he has spent extensive time over the last decade. No matter how remote the region is, he always manages to find WiFi and cellular reception to keep tabs on operations back home. A perennial bachelor, he finally found his soul mate on a trip to Thailand; marrying Thitima Suriyon in 2007. They are in the beginning stages of building homes on Golden Buddha Island – a sustainable beach resort in Thailand, as well as a new project in Malpais, Costa Rica with The Crystal Method's manager Richard Bishop.

"People in the UK and Down Under will know me as The Captain before we are ever introduced."

The globetrotter has practically earned the status of an honorary British citizen based on the professional and personal relationships he has fostered there over the years. In England, he is affectionately known as Captain Darling – a reference from the British mock historical sitcom, *Blackadder*. "The nickname really stuck without any effort on my part," he says. "People in the UK and Down Under will know me as The Captain before we are ever introduced." Proving a splash of context, production manager Jason Danter (Lady Gaga, Britney Spears) praises, "The Captain brings a fine balance of professionalism and humor to the job, making him a complete pleasure to do business with... on point at all times, never an issue."

The stock for that moniker is on the rise as

his presence – whether physical or not – has already become more ubiquitous across the pond. In the fall of 2010, Darling was hired by Redburn Transfer – a fourth generation trucking company based in Enfield, just outside London. Chairman and Managing Director, Chris Redburn, is a longtime friend. It figures they would get along since Redburn was a guitar player in a 1970s pop band called Kenny. "He's a likeable, larger than life giant," Redburn exclaims. "Unfortunately he supports the wrong soccer team (Chelsea) but hey, you can't have everything I guess."

Darling will continue his relationship with Janco and Four Seasons while expanding his scope of expertise to include the nuances of European touring. "I have been given a large playing field. There are several challenges ahead of me and I will have to adapt," he realizes. "Each country has its own set of rules and regulations. There are ferry schedules to learn. There are many similarities; however, there are also vast differences."

Redburn Transfer UK was established way back in 1870. Redburn established its modern incarnation, Redburn Transfer Ltd, in 1982. Some of the biggest names in the industry have entrusted their tours to Redburn, including Pink Floyd, Bruce Springsteen, Rod Stewart, Aerosmith, The Eagles, Fleetwood Max, John Mayer and Kings of Leon. Recently they have added the NFL to their illustrious roster. Redburn has been voted "Best Trucking Company" by the music industry in the UK five times and nominated every year since the inception of the award. Chris says of his new star, "We both share a common business ethic of providing excellent value service to our clients and, at the same time, have a passion for the music our clients produce."

In early 2009, Redburn Transfer merged with a large UK-based freight company, Deben Transport Ltd. The merger now gives Redburn Transfer a substantial increase in available fleet size, management expertise and systems, maintenance programs, and vastly improved buying power to ensure all equipment is state

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Cavalia





So You Say You Know What Touring Is Like Eh?

BY MICHAEL A. BECK

A large part of any show *mobile Production monthly* features is logistics. When we were approached by Cavalia Publicist Bradley Grill to come out and have a look at the production, it was obvious from the first conversation that logistics would be the center piece of this story. That is not to suggest that the substance of the show is anything but stellar and well worth the Herculean effort required to put it together. However, the logistical effort of this production is truly astonishing by any standards.

Starting with the basics, the show was conceived by Cavalia President and Artistic Director Normand Latourelle who admits to having a sub-neophyte level of understanding of the animal kingdom before discovering the beauty of horses. “I’m only half joking when I say I barely knew the difference between a horse and a cow. I was not a country guy; I was more of a city guy,” he recalls.

Several years ago he created a show that depicted a 19th century town whose only means of transportation were horses. “At one point I had 120 people on the stage and only a few animals and one them was a horse,” Latourelle explained. “I noticed that every time the horse came onto the stage the audience was focused on the horse and not the people. I found this to be very interesting.”

What he found was that any study of the timeline of horses is a study of humanity as there has not been a time in our presence on the earth when horses weren't here beside us.

His interest in the way a horse could steal the focus of the show grew. As it did, so did the number of horses in the production. As time went on he began to acquire a stable of his own horses. Somewhere along the way he realized that horses could actually carry the entire show with humans as the “supporting players,” not only because of the way the horses could mesmerize an audience, but because of their sheer beauty.

All of this gave birth to a voracious desire in Latourelle to know all that he could about equine history. What he found was that any study of the timeline of horses is a study of humanity as there has not been a time in our presence on the earth when horses weren't here beside us. “When I studied all of this and saw what a rich and profound history horses have, it was easy to get inspired,” Latourelle added.

Latourelle considers himself to be both the artistic director and the producer of the show. As anyone knows the most common clash in the entertainment world is between the creative vision of the artistic director and the fiscal restraint of the producer. In this case that discussion was taking place in Latourelle's own head. While he would never say that money is no object, the creative director won the debate with the motto, "When you have a dream you just have to do it, and you should go as far as you can."

In the beginning he figured the show to travel in roughly 30 trucks. That number soon wound up in the rear view mirror of the more than 90 trucks that currently carry the show. The production is a completely self-sufficient unit that can function anywhere there is a fire hydrant. Tour Manager Duncan Fisher explained the independent nature of the tour, "Beyond the need for fire hydrants we don't need anyone. We've got everything we need."

According to Fisher, the production site covers roughly 450,000 square feet depending on the city. The dynamic factor in how much space is actually needed in any given location is parking, which is determined by the nature of the city where the show is performing. In a city like San Francisco that has outstanding mass transit capabilities, the site may only need 350 parking spaces for the 2,000 people who will undoubtedly show up for every production. On the other hand, in cities like Atlanta wherein mass transit is less extensive, the parking requirements may exceed 500 spaces. On opening night in Burbank they had 900 cars.

As with almost every other aspect of the production, Cavalia controls the parking although that lesson was learned through experience. When *mPm* caught up with the show, it was performing in San Francisco for the second time. Fisher discussed the parking issue. "When we were here before, we were in the Giants' parking lot, which was great. It saved a lot of time, but they controlled our parking. This time we are in an area that has been under construction for quite some time, and although we have to level out the site, parking is ours. That gives us one more revenue stream."

The only aspect of the production that Cavalia does not control is the official intervention of local and state governments. Because of the completely unique nature of the show, negotiating the bureaucracy can be a bit dodgy. The person who has to deal with that is tour Pre-Production and Permits Coordinator Anne-Laurence Dubois. Due to the size of the show site and the need to keep the down time to an absolute minimum, the company leapfrogs tent systems. For this reason the permitting process begins well before the move from one city to the next.

"We have to get a building permit for the raising of the second big top



two months before the actual opening of the show in that city," Dubois explained. "Sometimes cities have a rule that says we have to give them anywhere from 60 to even 90 days advance notice, but we don't know that until we get into the process in each city. When they see the size of our production, they wave the rule and work with us."

That being said, the building permit is only the beginning of the bureaucratic labyrinth. Within the building permit there are also sub-permits covering sewage, water, electricity, and in some cases cities have special event permits that must be acquired. Once that is done there are layers of fire inspections. Then Animal Control comes out to inspect the

Cavalia



stables to make sure they are safe and the animals are well looked after.

Depending on the location of the show site in any given city, there is also the matter of police involvement in traffic control, and of course there is getting a license to do business. As if that's not enough, soon the show moves into Canada where truck weight limits are greatly reduced, which bloats the number of trucks needed to transport the show to as many as 130.

There are some cities wherein the permit process moves pretty smoothly, such as Atlanta. It seems Atlanta's City officials went to school on how to handle special events when the 1996 Olympics came through town, and they learned their lessons well. However, not all cities have that experience to access. Indeed, there are some cities that draw a complete blank when Cavalia rolls in, and that's when it gets difficult. Picture a by-the-book bureaucrat frantically going through "the book" to figure out how to permit a show that has never been imagined in his or her town. Thankfully, that is the exception and not the rule. Dubois said that there is another event that helps in the permitting process. "If we go to a city where Cirque du Soleil has preceded us, the city officials are able to go into their archives and follow what they did with Cirque as the template for us."

What he found was that any study of the timeline of horses is a study of humanity as there has not been a time in our presence on the earth when horses weren't here beside us.

It is critical that the permitting process take place on time because the advance team can't be held up. Once the bureaucratic compliance is underway construction can begin. The first thing that takes place is getting the site leveled. There is some leveling that takes place no matter where the show site is located, and the procedure takes roughly four days depending upon the condition of the site. Whereas in other gigs, tent structures may not be as great an issue. This production has an enormous truss grid, 2,000 seat theatre system and a wrap around scrim all of which has to be exactly plum and true. That's where 2,500 tons of material comes in.

Leveling of the site is done with a road mix of recycled asphalt and crushed concrete, which is typically used as a sub-layer for highway surfaces. Once that is laid out it is covered with rock dust, an extremely fine crushed rock that is similar to the brick dust that is used to cover the infield of major league baseball stadiums. Inside the big top the surfacing needs are more intense. The next layers are dark sand then white sand, which is much finer than the dark and finally silica. This is for water drainage. A mulch fabric is laid in next. The mulch has a density and weight that is needed to keep the sand from going air born.

In the center of the stage there is a pond that is only used for the first number of the show. This is created by sinking a three foot deep bowl into the ground that acts as a basin. The pond is filled at the top of the show by pumping water in from a holding tank outside the tent. As soon as the first performance of the show is over, the pond is drained off with such subtlety as to not be noticed by the audience.

There is another water feature in the show. It's a water screen that extends most of the way between the two tent masts that stand in the stage area. When the screen comes into play, it is used as a rear projection screen upon which the ghostly image of a horse is presented. The effect is very impressive. However, because the horse and rider that are on stage have to actually ride through the water screen, the water has to be heated.

Along with the water needs for the show, the production site has massive water requirements outside of the big top. The show travels with a contingent 74 crew members, 37 performers and 52 horses. Although

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the personnel on the tour stay in hotels or apartments, there is an ongoing catering operation that offers three meals a day to all tour employees who care to partake. In addition to catering for the tour, there are also VIP tents that offer food and drinks to those who buy tickets to that experience. Because all the horses need grooming, the stable has six showers. The site has three 53' bathroom trailers that are in constant use before and after the show as well as during the intermission. There are also numerous hand-washing stations around the site. Then there is the all important need for water for fire trucks in the unlikely event that such a need should arise.

The water needs for each show is 900 gallons for the pond and another 250 for the water screen. All factors considered, the site uses 5,000 gallons of water a day. Operations Director Richie Waite explained how much water pressure is needed. "If we're running off one line then the amount of water that's used all the time can knock the pressure down sometimes to around 30 or 40 psi and that's not enough during intermission because of the heavy water needs in the bathrooms. So we have to keep it up between 90 and 100 pounds."

In the case of the Burbank site, the two city hydrants were feeding somewhere in the area of 140 psi. Waite explained, "We blew one of our lines, so on the day of the premier I was out trying to find 2" pressure reducing valves. That wasn't the easiest thing to do because we had to step down from hydrant thread to pipe thread. We were able to reduce it down from 140 to 95 psi. We got it done around 4 p.m. that afternoon. The good news was that the line we blew was the feed line to the concession area and the VIP bathrooms. Had it been the other one we would have lost the kitchen, the horse showers and water for the show, and we couldn't have gotten that back up in time." Waite added that there can also be a problem of not enough pressure. "We had a problem in Chicago where the pressure was so low that we couldn't do anything at all, and we had to go out and purchase a pressure increaser."

There is an enormous amount of flooring that is laid out. From the time patrons present their tickets at the front gate to the time they leave their feet never touch the ground. 😊

Be sure to check out mPm Issue 4 for the second part of this fascinating production, including photos of the crew that make this event happen.

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B

It's difficult to find a more musically eclectic performer in the world than Kid Rock. Combine that with the fact that everything he plays addresses a decidedly straightforward and hard-hitting blue collar audience, and you have a low budget show with a high dollar look that unashamedly charges with a vengeance right out of the gate and never lets up until the end of the show. "It's always been a combination of Rock's showmanship and a desire to give the most bang for the dollar," said Production Manager Eric "Shakes" Grzybowski. "He obviously doesn't need all the smoke and mirrors, he's proved that in the past with the more scaled down shows he's done. He just wanted to come back this time around with a new record he's real proud of and give everybody the full ride."



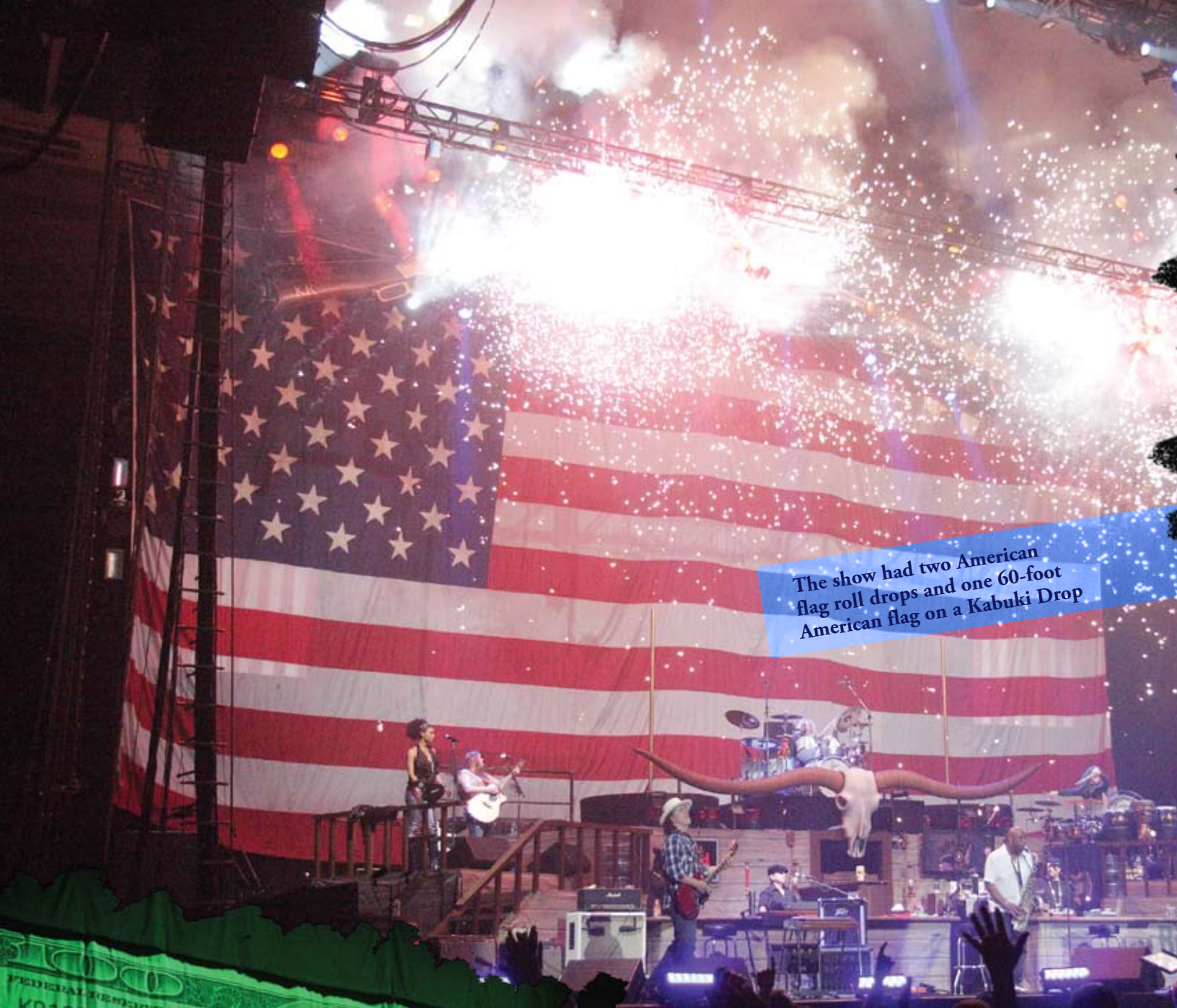
KID ROCK *Summertime*

AND ALL OVER THE MUSICAL MAP

BY MICHAEL A. BECK



photo by Michael A Beck



The show had two American flag roll drops and one 60-foot American flag on a Kabuki Drop



...he did a song from early in his career called "EMSP" (Early Morning Stone Pimp) wherein he played in front of a huge hundred dollar bill that was hung as an Austrian drape while dressed in a fur coat festooned with LED nodes.

The set was modeled after a honky-tonk bar complete with bar stools and stripper poles. However, the first idea for the show's look was Kid Rock's "Nudie," which is the Pontiac Bonneville that is seen on the cover of the latest CD called *Born Free*. The car has interesting music industry significance in that it was Hank Williams Jr.'s first car, which was bought for him when he was 14 years old.

Lighting Director Richard "Nook" Schoenfeld has been lighting Kid Rock for 12 years. He explained how the design came together. "It's a saloon. I walked into his office one day, and he took me out to this car and said, 'I want a comfortable living room that is as comfortable as this car with Naugahyde on the furniture, and I want some cattle horns and some big guns.' I told him that with a 10-piece band it would be hard to get comfortable in a living room, but you could get comfortable in a little bar."

Because Kid Rock owns a brewery in Michigan (Badass Beer), and he also has a Jim Beam sponsorship it was easy enough to acquire kegs, stools and chandeliers sporting the logos of the two companies. The upstage truss border was two 30-foot-long rifles that faced one another. They had to be modeled in 3D and carved out of foam. The downstage truss wasn't necessarily bordered in that same manner. However, it did

Born Free

The show climaxed with Kid Rock playing a piano that rose out of a riser on an American flag draped lift in the thrust.



“We start the show with 180 pounds of propane. When I was out on TSO (Trans-Siberian Orchestra), we would get more fuel for every show than on this show, but we’d never burn through it all. On this one we’re pretty much empty by the end of the show.”

photos by Michael A Beck

have a gold eagle that served as a center piece, which was lit from the mix position with two beam projectors.

The center piece of the set was a Nocturne Productions 24' x 15' V-Lite 28 mm LED wall that was driven by Maxedia media servers and a (3) camera SDI Panasonic system. While the rig looked typically great, it is going to be upgraded on the next leg of the tour when Nocturne will debut its latest 18 mm LED creation called V18, which will fill the gap in its catalog between V9-9 mm and VLite 28 mm LED products.

The show began with Kid Rock entering upstage center through an opening just below the nose of a huge longhorn steer's skull. The skull had horns extending out to either end of the drum riser that sat above the entrance. The drum kit was flanked by the afore mentioned stripper poles that were put to use by local “talent” picked up in every city.

Because it was of paramount importance to keep the ticket price as low as possible, the decision was made to use a promoter stage and only travel with a thrust and grill deck, all of which was provided with Accuate staging. Of course this made load-in a bit harder as everything had to be forked up to the stage and built at the same time in position. It added an extra hour to the day.

One wildly prevalent aspect of the show was pyro which was provided by Toronto based Pyrotek with an effects arsenal that included a silver gerb waterfall, silver gerb fountains, flash reports, flash with bang, air-bursts, gerb spinners, double headed dragons, Fire-Screen modules and cryo jet heads. The thrust grill was needed for under mounting some of the flame units.

Australian pyro shooter Clint Ranse illustrated the quantity of fire brought to bear on the show. “We start the show with 180 pounds of propane. When I was out on TSO (Trans-Siberian Orchestra), we would get more fuel for every show than on this show, but we’d never burn through it all. On this one we’re pretty much empty by the end of the show.”

When we caught up to the tour, it was playing the Arena at Gwinnett Center in Duluth, Georgia. Upon completion of his inspection of the show, the local fire marshal informed Ranse that the radiant temperature of the flames was 106 degrees, which was four degrees above the previous record for the venue. Needless to say this was a proud moment for Ranse. It even got a rise out of the ultra soft spoken (pyro technician) Adam Cryderman who, according to Ranse, only talks when something is dangerous.

Pyro wasn't the only effects in the room as Production Design International did solid work layering of lasers over the show.

This show is gag intensive and the nature and complexity of the gags vary as widely as does the music. Schoenfeld explained, "I have stuff that comes in and out all night. It's a different gag for every song. If you don't like the music, hang around until the next song and it'll be a whole different genre."

The show had two American flag roll drops and one 60-foot American flag on a Kabuki Drop. Because of the widely disparate range of musical ethos of this production, the lighting and sound reinforcement of this show faced the same challenge. With all the gear provided by Upstaging and Sound Image, it's easy to get caught up in the inertia of the night and stay turned up to 11, but it all had to be pulled back when the show would dip down to nothing and the lighting had to be nonexistent. Likewise, the sound had to go from a balls out cannon shots to levels that are not expected at this show.

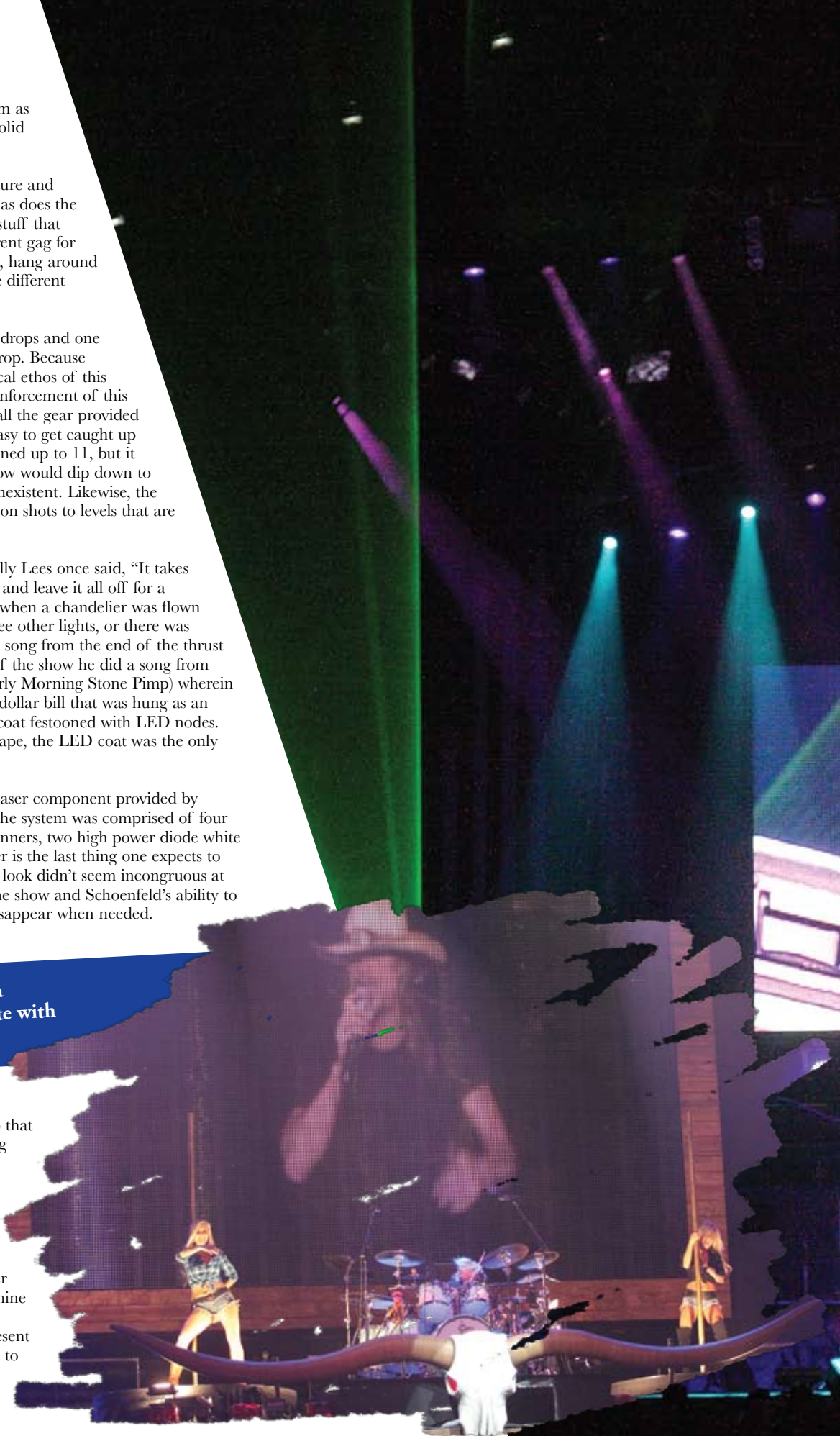
As lighting director extraordinaire Wally Lees once said, "It takes courage to have all that stuff up there and leave it all off for a song." Such was the case in this show when a chandelier was flown in over a piano onstage using only three other lights, or there was the time when Kid Rock did an entire song from the end of the thrust in a folding lawn chair. At one point of the show he did a song from early in his career called "EMSP" (Early Morning Stone Pimp) wherein he played in front of a huge hundred dollar bill that was hung as an Austrian drape while dressed in a fur coat festooned with LED nodes. Apart from the lighting that hit the drape, the LED coat was the only light in the room for the entire song.

The show also boasted an extensive laser component provided by Production Design International. The system was comprised of four 60 watt yags, four laser tables with scanners, two high power diode white lasers and 100 mirrors. And while laser is the last thing one expects to see in cowboy bar, the super high-end look didn't seem incongruous at all because of the eclectic nature of the show and Schoenfeld's ability to make the incredibly high profile set disappear when needed.

The set was modeled after a honky-tonk bar complete with bar stools and stripper

The show climaxed with Kid Rock playing a piano that rose out of a riser on an American flag draped lift in the thrust.

As the show charged through Hip Hop, Blues, Rock and Country, the production design kept up in perfect time. It never stopped reaching for more and as a result the crew never stopped hopping. This tour travels in nine trucks, and while the huge 20 and 30 truck show of the world invariably present production valuable one would expect to see come out of the number of trucks needed to carry it, this does not. It shows so much more.



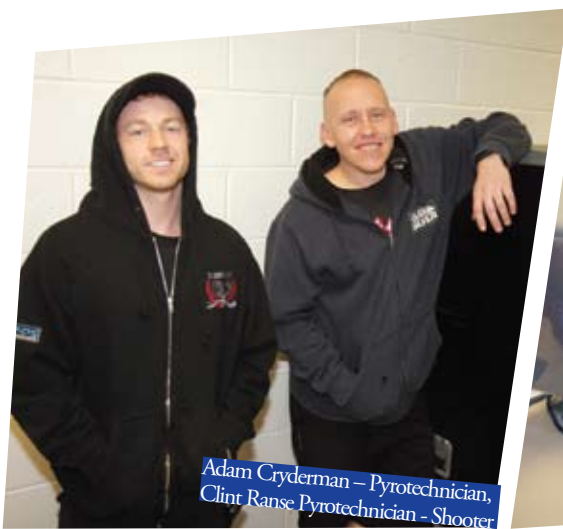
Born Free

"We start the show with 180 pounds of propane. When I was out on TSO (Trans-Siberian Orchestra), we would get more fuel for every show than on this show, but we'd never burn through it all. On this one we're pretty much empty by the end of the show."



Band

Artist - Kid Rock
Drums / Vocals - Stefanie Eulinberg
Guitars - Jason Krause
Keyboards / Vocals - Jimmie Bones
Guitars - Marlon Young
DJ / Vocals - Freddie Beauregard
Percussion - Larry Fratangelo
Bass - Aaron Julison
Saxophone - Dave McMurray
Background Vocals - Shannon Turfman, Jessica Wagner-Cowan



Adam Cryderman - Pyrotechnician, Clint Ranse Pyrotechnician - Shooter



David Licursi - Tour Manager / Accountant



Aaron Siegler - Production Assistant



Pyro Shooter - Clint Ranse showing his colors



Chuck Greene - local stage hand, Shawn Hawkins - local stage hand, Donnie Dloyd - Stage Mgr, Eric "Shakes" Grzybowski - Production Manager, Brent Maxon - local stage hand, Chili - local stage hand, Moses Williams - local stage hand



Al "Rogo" Rogozinski - Guitar Technician



Kid Rock crew 26: Jim Fredrickson - Lighting Tech, JT McDonald - Lighting Crew Chief, Richard "Nook" Schoenfeld - Lighting Director, Jason Blaylock - Lighting Tech, Michael Coryell - Lighting Tech



Laser Tech - Alexander Jonathan Scott Wilson



Vince Luchetta - System Engineer, Mike Bangs - System Engineer, John "Haircut" Tompkins - Sound Crew Chief, Steve Cross - House Sound Engineer



Truck Drivers: Bob Rienev, Sandy Sanderson, Pete Henke, Tim Moffess, David Tidwell



Crew



Joshua Marrano - Video Engineer, Steven Ossler - Video Director, John McLeish - Video Crew Chief, Michael Hossack - Camera Operator



Head Set Carpenter - Shawn Shebetka showing why he's a set carpenter and not a stripper by testing the stripper poles



Tim Bolin - Assistant Set Carpenter, Matt Silva - Assistant Set Carpenter, Shawn Shebetka - Head Set Carpenter, Josh Smith - Assistant Set Carpenter



- Tour Manager / Accountant** - David Licursi
- Production Mgr** - Eric "Shakes" Grzybowski
- Production Assistant** - Aaron Siegler
- Stage Manager** - Donnie Floyd
- Venue Security** - Mike "Gio" Giammarco
- Personal Assistants** - Tony Hazard, James "Bossy" Murphy
- Lighting Director** - Richard "Nook" Schoenfeld
- Head Rigger** - Bobby Carrell
- Keyboard / Drum Tech** - Mark Messina
- DJ / Percussion Tech** - Casey Long
- Guitar Tech** - Enrique Trejo
- Head Set Carpenter** - Shawn Shebetka
- Assistant Set Carpenters** - Tim Bolin, Matt Silva, Josh Smith
- House Sound Engineer** - Steve Cross
- Monitor Engineer** - Beau Alexander
- Sound Crew Chief** - John "Haircut" Tompkins
- System Engineers** - Mike Bangs, Vince Luchetta
- Lighting Crew Chief** - JT McDonald
- Lighting Techs** - Jason Blaylock, Jim Fredrickson
- Pyrotechnicians** - Shooter - Clint Ranse, Adam Cryderman
- Laser Techs** - AJ Seabeck, Alexander Jonathan Scott Wilson
- Video Director** - Steven Ossler
- Video Crew Chief** - John McLeish
- Video Engineer** - Joshua Marrano
- Camera Operator** - Michael Hossack
- Jim Beam Representative** - Dez Hughes
- Head Merchandise** - Ty Ziegler
- Artist Bus Driver** - Don "Tank" DiGiovanni
- Band Bus Drivers** - Arnie Knave, Joe Reed
- Production Bus Driver** - Rich Flood
- Crew Bus Drivers** - David Mickle, Dewayne Mickle
- Lead Truck Driver** - Tim Moffses
- Truck Drivers** - Leon Chee, Dave Donkey, Rick Halbbrook, Pete Hence, Gary Stenbridge, Nate Thompson, David Tidwell

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PYROTEK
Enflames
Kid Rock's
Born Free Tour
BY ROBERT BRYSON



Flames shoot high into the sky off the stage of the Kid Rock *Born Free* tour as the audience erupts. Even though they can feel the heat on their faces, everything is safe and professionally controlled. Over a half dozen songs feature the coordinated propane bursts which add to the music and energy of the night's performance.

At the heart of the night's pyro and propane experience is 25-year-old veteran company out of Toronto, Pyrotek Special Effects – the recent winner of the Top Dog Award for Special Effects Company of the Year at Tour Link 2011. Behind the on-stage effects is Pyrotek's CEO and designer Doug Adams, who took the time to tell us about the 12 year relationship Pyrotek has had with the Kid Rock tours.

"We started with ideas first, not a budget," begins Adams. "'Nook' (Richard Shoenfield – Lighting Director) sent me the drawings of the new set. I then talked to Production Manager Eric 'Shakes' Grizdowski, and I told him we've got these new Fire-Screens. These Fire-Screens are a modular programmable pixel-based unit, which presents the ability to control various propane flame effects from high to moderate speeds which also has the capacity of shooting a lazy flame bar or fire jets, which can create a wall of fire up to eight feet tall. Adams continued, "We sent them out with the Trans-Siberian Orchestra, and they were

pretty incredible. So we sent them off some video tape, and they asked us to bring it down and see if Bob (Kid Rock) liked them. Sure enough, he freaked when he saw them. Even though it is one effect, it can have 10 different looks to it."

"We don't have a time code, we do everything live but we set up a series of sequences," explains Adams. "So we hit the button and it would fire to the beat. You can change it up for each song, different looks, different heights, different variations. You can even have it look like a marquee sign where it's like a blinking light. There's several different ways to use this thing."

Because the effects are manually executed, Adams starts every tour with them. "I get out their with Nook, Kid Rock and Shakes to make sure everything works properly. Shakes and I have been friends for a long time, as he was actually one of my early technicians. One of the first gigs Shakes ever got was when he was one of my assistants out on KISS' *Reunion Tour* in 1996. We go back that far. Now he's moved up the ladder to production manager and has done very well."

Doug is especially proud of their newly created Fire-Screen gas effects and the Dragon, a propane fed device that emits a controllable flame column or fire ball effect up to 40 feet high. "You can't get enough of it," he enthuses. "There's so much fire on it. We have these little mini Gatling Guns that emit a powerful multi-burst flame effect which can be fired vertically, horizontally or custom designed for various stage props that we created to which we also put on that. But the Fire-Screens are the big-

gest hit. Those things are so incredible for controlling the wave of a fire. You can make the fire look like it is just sweeping, waving, moving, chasing – doing anything you want with it. It's a new toy for Kid Rock, and he's loving it."

The current Kid Rock tour utilizes 180 pounds of propane per night, which is shipped in locally to each city they perform. The effects crew can go through the entire amount in one show. Fire Marshals are always on hand to check the safety of each show insuring that both the audience and the performers are free from harm and can enjoy the spectacle. A *full shot* of propane on the newly created Fire-Screens ("complete screen – one big shot") can generate over 100 degrees of heat on stage and is not unusual according to Adams. "They can be controlled and gauged down accordingly," he continues. "We also have cryo jet heads that come out of the snout of the on-stage steer head when Kid Rock first walks out from under the drum kit. It looks like it's breathing this cryo," Adams says.

Some of the artists that Pyrotek have been and continue to be honored to work with are: Metallica, Lady Gaga, Paul McCartney, Green Day, Beyonce, Trans-Siberian Orchestra, The Jonas Brothers, Rascal Flatts, Britney Spears, RUSH, Tina Turner, Taylor Swift, Justin Timberlake, Hannah Montana, New Kids On The Block and The Killers to name a select few. Over the years, the company has also worked with KISS, Chris Brown, Van Halen, Meatloaf, Spice Girls, Christina Aguilera, Motley Crue, My Chemical Romance and Fall Out Boy. Pyrotek also works with many award shows from the American Music Awards,

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Born Free

ACCURATE STAGING Sets the Stage for the First Touring Saloon

BY HANK BORDOWITZ



Kid Rock had been kicking around for a bit, but in 1998 after four albums, he became a phenomenon. The minute Accurate Staging's current owner Joe Gallagher first heard him, he knew he had to work with him. "It was with the fourth record *Devil Without a Cause* that he blew up," Gallagher recalls. "I first heard him on The Howard Stern Show. I went through Gary Dell'Abate and all the people on Howard's Show to get to his management at the time. They got me the phone number."

With that Joe Gallagher built his first stage for Kid Rock in 1998, the first time Kid Rock hit the road with an actual stage set. "For many years it was just the catwalk up the back, 8 x 32, and he would come up on a lift with a girl on each arm. He had a catwalk, a couple of risers and would come down the stairs. There were polls for the strippers. He also always had a thrust. That was the first step, the beginning." Since that beginning, every time Kid Rock has hit the road, Joe Gallagher built the stage. "The best thing about working with Kid Rock is he is just a great down to earth guy," Gallagher says. "He gets involved in the entire design from beginning to end. Eric 'Shakes' Grzybowski has been his production manager since 1999, and we have a great relationship."

Gallagher and Accurate Staging's relationship with Kid Rock is indicative of the way Accurate does business. Their stated goal is "to build a long lasting relationship with our clients and bring our knowledge and experience to the table to add to the production value." This came into play in a large way on Kid Rock's current *Born Free* tour. The staging on this show is very busy, with elements like lasers, large amounts of pyro, video that's actually part of the show, and many lighting effects, some of which could be triggered by the people on stage. All of this took about a month for Accurate to build initially. While elements like the cages for the strippers from the last tour are gone (the poll dancers do their thing more discretely on a riser behind the drummer), this is easily the most elaborate set Kid Rock has ever taken on tour.

All of this was arranged by Gallagher with lighting director Richard "Nook" Schoenfeld and of course Kid Rock. The stage itself is composed of elements from Accurate's huge warehouse. The set is staged to look like a western saloon, with swinging doors, a bar (the DJ and keyboard player double as bartenders) and other miscellaneous set pieces (more on these in a moment).

"He really went to bat this time and went all out on the design," Gallagher says. "Going into this tour, I knew it was going to be 18 months worth of rental. He spared no costs on the custom elements. We used rental decking and clad wood on top and printed digital soft goods to create the western bar. We have whiskey kegs of Red Stag from Jim Beam; they are sponsors of the tour and they supplied the kegs. We had beer taps given to us by some beer company."

Besides the bar and these promotional pieces, Kid Rock envisioned a massive Texas longhorn skull under the drum riser, two 30-foot-long rifles framing the top of the video screen, two American flags framing each side, and an 6-foot tall bald eagle with a 15-foot wingspan above it all, proclaiming "American Bad Ass" across the land. These are not the kind of things that Accurate has on hand, so they too, had to be fabricated. All of them are made from foam. "We start out with a large block of foam add structure into it for support and start carving away then add a hard coat it for strength. In addition to being hard coated, we protect them in a set cart," Gallagher says of the foam artifacts. "The crew is very aware of handling them with kid gloves as not to damage them."

Even the ever-present thrust has gotten far more complex. There's a turntable with a lift which Kid Rock uses for the piano introduction to "Born Free," in addition to many other elements. "He always had a thrust, not as elaborate or long as this one," Gallagher agrees. "This one has pyro on it as well as rope lights." Kid Rock also uses the thrust for one of the lower tech moments of the tour. For "Flyin' High," he goes out to the edge of the thrust with a bottle of Red Stag and a lawn chair. This is not one of the props supplied by Accurate. "He always adds something to the set after rehearsals," Gallagher laughs. "He puts on a great show live." And Accurate Staging is there to help. 🍷



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Born Free



NOCTURNE Rocks for Kid Rock

BY HANK BORDOWITZ



For the fifth year running, Nocturne productions took home the Top Dog award for Video Company of the Year. Their work on Kid Rock's *Born Free* tour illustrates why.

The tour is an extravaganza of music, staging, effects, lights and video. From the eight musicians, to the working bar, the swinging saloon doors to the lawn chair he sits in when he sings "Flyin' High," from the persistent use of pyro, to the 24' x 15' wall of video, from the giant steer horns to the neon-lit catwalk that juts into the first rows, there's an awful lot going on onstage. And while it might look like chaos, that is by design. It takes a lot of planning, collaboration and careful attention to what Rock and the band do every night to make everything work together.

Take the sheer amount of lighting, pyro and video. There are flash pots, lasers and specific cues for much of the video, all of which play nearly as important a role in the spectacle as the music. Coordinating much of that falls to Nocturne System Engineer and Media Control expert John McLeish, and Lighting Designer Richard "Nook" Schoenfeld.

"Timing is everything in this show," McLeish says. "The show can change nightly, and we have to stay alert to keep the integrity of it together."

For example, you might think that the sheer volume of visual effects have the potential to clash with each other, and with the video screens in the back of the stage, the lights and

pyro might interfere with the images. It turns out Nocturne's proprietary V-Lite panels, manufactured exclusively by the company in conjunction with LSI Saco, actually are so bright they interfere with the other effects. "We actually turn the wall off for some parts of the show to aid the visibility of the lasers and lighting effects," says McLeish. "Nook Schoenfeld and I have definitely collaborated on the placement of specific blackouts and various other effects for the show. There's also a lot of pyrotechnics. I feel it definitely enhances the overall visual effect."

The Nocturne video wall plays an integral part in the show. In the opening moments, before Rock even hits the stage, there is a video montage called "The History of Rock." It shows young Robert James Ritchie (Kid Rock's given name) as a kid and adolescent, capturing moments from grade school and high school. After these, the audience gets treated to images of the early days of his career. Then there are the pictures of Rock with such pop culture icons as Hank Williams, Jr., Sheryl Crow, the late, great Waylon Jennings, Willie Nelson and President Obama. During the show Rock takes license to lace into LeBron James (and make a costume change), by saying it in a video clip. At one important moment where the video helps propel the concert, TI performs his part in the song "Care" via the wall. That same wall enables critical juncture in the show, with an appearance by MTV megastars Beavis and Butthead, who through snark and derision literally get Rock to change his tune midway through a song. "Kid Rock?" they say just as he finishes the first verse of the ballad "Picture" (just about when fans who know the song wonder who's going to do Sheryl Crow's part on the next verse). "More like Kid Soft Rock." This launches the band into the raucous "Bawit'ba," and finesses the Sheryl Crow problem.

McLeish operates a Panasonic switcher, allowing him to toggle between images from the hand-held Ikegami cameras operated by Josh Marrano and Mike Hossack, the four mounted cameras – three of them lipstick cameras actually attached to members of the band – and one Ikegami 55 mm long lens operated by Bobby Carrell, and the prerecorded video images created by John Featherstone at Lightswitch. The video plays through Maxedia media servers.

"One of the special things about the way we hooked the video up for the show is how we set up the control for the Maxedias," McLeish says. "We have the ability to control them from the front of the house position and the DJ position on the stage using a touch screen and a Raritan control system."

While some of the excesses of previous Kid Rock shows, like strippers in cages and bawdy dialog were missing – the tour celebrates the Kid's 40th birthday, and even he admits to settling down a bit (c.f. "Slow My Roll" from his latest album) – he has adopted higher tech befitting the larger houses he now plays. One of the necessities of such growth is a high class video component. And video components, and the people who operate them don't come higher class than the equipment and technicians provided by Nocturne. 🎸

See *mPm* Issue 6 for an update on Nocturne's plans for the rest of 2011...

Born Free



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20 YRS OF CROSSOVER

A Conversation with BILLY JOHNSON Part II

BY MICHAEL A. BECK

WITHOUT DIVULGING CONFIDENCE, ARE THE SITUATIONS THAT YOU CAN DESCRIBE WHEREIN YOU'VE HAD TO DRAW THE LINE WITH CLIENTS?

BJ: From the beginning we didn't want to create an environment that you couldn't feel comfortable working in. That meant that everyone who comes into this building attached to a band or artist must have a job. No hangers on. No groupies. No germs just wanting to hang out at the cool place. No family members just hanging around. At first it was a little difficult for a person like me who was trying to get every penny of business through the door dictating to the customers what they can and can't do. It was a scary thing, but at the end of the day it paid off because they appreciated it. They valued the fact that they could know that when they came to Crossover they were going to get it done. They weren't going to have to contend with a constant flow of extraneous personnel through the place distracting their process. They also knew that if they didn't want a spouse hanging around they could say, "Look honey, the studio doesn't allow it," and they were off that particular hook. Of course there are the generals of no smoking in the building and absolutely no drugs or other

BILLY JOHNSON IS THE GENERAL MANAGER OF ATLANTA'S CROSSOVER ENTERTAINMENT, THE MOTHER SHIP FOR A THRIVING PREPRODUCTION REHEARSAL FACILITY AS WELL AS VERY SERIOUS BACKLINE RENTAL OPERATION. THIS YEAR MARKS THE 20TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FORMING OF THE COMPANY AND BY ALL ACCOUNTS THE SKY SEEMS TO BE THE LIMIT. WHEN WE LEFT OFF WITH BILLY, HE WAS DISCUSSING THE RELATIONSHIP ORIENTED ENVIRONMENT THAT EXISTS IN ALL ASPECTS THE COMPANY.

things that create an environment that is not productive for anyone. The last thing we want is to wind up becoming a night club.

THAT OF COURSE SPEAKS TO THE FACT THAT EVERY ACT HAS THE INALIENABLE RIGHT OF LIFE LIBERTY AND PROPERTY SO LONG AS THE EXERCISE OF THOSE RIGHTS DON'T INFRINGE ON THE SAME RIGHTS OF THE ARTIST REHEARSING IN THE ROOM NEXT TO YOU.

BJ: Exactly. Because we are Crossover and want everyone to feel comfortable during their time here, if we have a set of consistent operating standards that everyone has to comply with the acts of differing genres that might be working in the facility won't impede the productivity of one another regardless of how peculiar their process may be.

HAVE YOU HAD CLASHES?

BJ: Absolutely. I've got a saying, and I hope that it will be taken in the spirit it's meant. I really don't have to do business with people that I don't want to, but you have to do business with everyone to find out who you don't want to continue to work with.

A WELL PLACED "NO THANKS" CAN RAISE YOUR STOCK IN SOME CASES, BUT IT'S GOT TO BE BLOODY WELL PLACED.

BJ: That's an interesting point. The environment of this place is not only created by the employees who work here but by the clientele that comes here to work. The criteria for behavior that we have in place applies to all of the above. When we have customers pulling for the business and the business pulling for the customers, we have harmony. So if there's anyone on my staff that you have to walk on egg shells around they will no longer be welcome. Same with a customer.

THAT POINTS UP THE FACT THAT SEPARATES THE SERIOUS PLAYERS FROM THE DILETTANTES IN THIS BUSINESS, WHICH IS A SERIOUS POLITICAL NUANCE THAT CAN BE A PRETTY THIN NEEDLE TO THREAD IF YOU'RE NOT PAYING ATTENTION, AND IF YOU CAN'T GROK IT HERE IN REHEARSAL YOU WON'T GET IT OUT THERE WHERE THE METAL HITS THE MEAT. I'VE SEEN SOME TOURS LIMP AND FLOP DOWN THE ROAD AND FINALLY FALL FLAT OVER THE FACT THAT THEY DON'T GET IT.

PICTURED L TO R:

Jack Prince - Sales Backline, Steven Senn - Quality Control, Billy Johnson - GM, John Rogers - Director of Operations - Audrey Batungbacal - Administration, Geno Stachurski - Backline Tech

NOT PICTURED:

Liz Berry - CFO, Tony Taylor - Manager, Jennifer Kreps - Studio Manager, Vyck Goel - Backline Tech, Danny Akin - Backline Tech, Tim Duyck - Backline Tech, Chad Singer - Audio Engineer, Rush Anderson - Backline Tech, Clay Johnson - Backline Tech, Tee Hayes - Studio Manager, Terrence Cash - Recording Engineer

BJ: To that point, we're on one mission here and that's to gain mutual respect. Not demand it, earn it. When you put it like that, it's pretty easy to walk up to anyone, pull them aside and say, "Hey man, what are you doing?" It's all in how you put it. I've never gone busting into a rehearsal room where things were going on that shouldn't under the "policies" and began screaming at people or raising my voice. It's more like we come sit in my office and I say, "Hey, I just wanted to give you a heads up that this is what you can and can't do in this building and here's why." It's all in how you put it.

DID IT TAKE LONG FOR EVERYONE TO GET ON BOARD THE TRAIN?

BJ: Not really. After a while the clients started taking stock in the company. They would come to me and say, "Hey, there's stuff going on back here you're not going to like." They would call me and ask me if they could give someone my name and number because they didn't just want to give directions to the place and have them just show up out of the blue. We built a clientele to the point where they got protective of our reputation. When you have a customer base that feels an investment in making sure the company stays in business, that's a good thing.

IS EVERYONE THAT VESTED IN THE ETHOS?

BJ: Well there are acts that we've asked not to come back. There are people we won't do business with. Look we're not making this stuff up. The behavior we're calling for here is no different than the behavior that is the mandatory norm out on the road. If they can't cut it here, they certainly won't cut it out there.

LET'S TALK FOR A MOMENT ABOUT YOUR TEAM.

BJ: I thought you'd never ask.

HOW BIG IS THE STAFF HERE?

BJ: I got three full time Q/C guys who maintain and test everything before it goes out the door. They are vital to the operation. We don't let anything go out that hasn't been fully cleaned and tested. It would be disastrous to get out there and have anything not work. John Rogers is our director of operations in the rental department, and he is absolutely *the man*. He keeps it going. If 11 calls come in to the company for rental gear, 10 of them are for him. When we hire sales people on, we model them after him. They have to have his ability to deal with customers, because he has built up a trust with our client base that we don't want to lose. We have two full time sales people who do nothing but take sales calls, handle tech riders, turn around orders and logistically get the job done. We have six freelance backline techs that I keep busy. They've been around for anywhere from 10 to 13 years.

SOUNDS LIKE THIS IS A GOOD GIG TO HAVE.

BJ: I'd have to let them speak to that.

WELL, THEY'RE STILL HERE.

BJ: One key to their longevity is that they take pride in what they do and having a customer walking away with a smile on their

face - that spreads throughout the company.

WHO HANDLES THE MONEY? WHAT'S THE FRONT OFFICE LIKE?

BJ: Elisabeth Berry is our CFO. She does everything from receptionist to office manager. We also have a night manager, Tony Taylor, who has been here from the very beginning. The people who work for Crossover are the reason the doors have stayed open. Yes, the client base is remarkably loyal, but that can go away in a hurry with just one or two really bad moves. No one is perfect, but this team is pretty close.

LET'S MOVE INTO BACKLINE RENTALS. IT SEEMS LIKE BACKLINE IS A NATURAL EXTENSION OF THE SERVICES A REHEARSAL FACILITY WOULD HAVE TO OFFER. WHEN YOU STARTED DOWN THE PATH TO EQUIPMENT RENTAL, DID YOU SEE YOURSELF DOING TOURS?

BJ: You're right. It is a natural extension, but it was a lesson that had to be learned along with everything else. Back when we were first getting started, I never said nor did I know that this would be the next step. As we progressed through every day it became clearer and clearer that man cannot live on rehearsal space alone. You have 20,000 square feet and not all of it is rehearsal space, and when it's full, it's full. At some point when you're trying to grow a business you realize that you have to find a new way of generating revenue. At one point it dawned on us that we were opening a lot of trucks full of rental gear from another company and it was now time to start exploring that end of the business. So I went on the hunt throughout the industry to find someone who could oversee that end of the business and eventually found that person. We went to the NAMM show that year in '96 and with capitol in our hands to purchase enough backline equipment to service the number of clients we had coming in the door. We bought three drums kits,



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three bass rigs, combo amps, some percussion gear, you know the standard stuff. Basic drum kits, Fender Twins, JC-120s, things that were staples in the industry. Now we've created this "all genres" mindset, which calls for a wide variety of backline needs. If we were just doing all rock we would be into Marshall slant stacks and Fender twins and Hammond B-3s and the basic Rock 'n' Roll fare, but when you get into R&B and Hip Hop it's a lot more electronic in nature. It was a trick to figure what we needed in our inventory to service everyone's need.

TO THE COMPLETELY UNINITIATED, IT SEEMS INCOMPREHENSIBLE THAT SERIOUS MUSICIANS AT THIS LEVEL WOULDN'T WANT TO TAKE HIS OR HER OWN GEAR ON THE ROAD. HOW DID YOU MOVE INTO THE TOURING ASPECT OF BACKLINE RENTAL AND WHY? WHAT'S THE ARGUMENT THAT WOULD MAKE ME WANT TO TAKE YOUR GEAR OUT ON TOUR RATHER THAN MY OWN?

BJ: That part of the business evolved like everyone else. Given that every guitar player carries their instruments and pedal boards, it boils down to the fact that we rent amps and processors, and, in the case of a fly date, a drummer may not bring his drums, but he will bring his cymbals, kick pedal and snare. But something happened. It came to pass that musicians didn't want to take their gear out on the road and getting it beat up. They have their gear set up in their home studio, and they didn't want to rip it all out to go on the road. Back in the beginning, musicians weren't taking their gear nor were they taking rental gear out. Back then they had manufacturer endorsement deals and endorsement deals were a lot different from they are now. They would supply any major artist with free gear to take on tour. It was a constant juggling act. I would set up relationships with artist relations departments at the manufacturers so when my clients came here who were endorsees, they would get their gear from us, and I became the endorsement house of the Southeast for these companies because they wanted their product in front of established artists as well as new artists coming up. So there was a constant battle of all the big companies wanting to get their equipment out on the big tours. The big pay off was, depending on how big the artist, getting a spot on Leno or Lettermen or any of the other big talk shows. As time went along the artists began to pull back with good reason. They had a lot of gear out there and musicians were jumping around from one company to the next for whatever reason. It wasn't a slight on the manufacturers or the artists but they saw that this really wasn't working the way it was supposed to. It was too fluid. So they started marketing more with a rifle than a shotgun going after particular artists and getting them into long term relationships. Companies like us were a part of the new look. We were telling them that we aren't asking for free gear, but that we'd purchase the equipment and when their endorsees came through town, there would be a certain protocol. I did notice that the endorsement side of the business was a bit

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bothersome to some of the backline companies in the industry because, in general, you're giving the gear out for free.

HOW DOES THAT WORK?

BJ: It's different with each company, but in basic terms we supply the brand that the artist is endorsed by. If the artist is an A list player, the manufacturer will handle any expenses like cartage, restocking or labor that may be incurred in getting the gear to the artist. As they move down the list, a lot of times it's on the artist to take care of the costs.

YEAH, BUT YOU'RE STILL PUTTING FREE INVENTORY OUT IN THE FIELD THAT YOU DIDN'T GET FOR FREE.

BJ: You have to look at it a different way than that. It's an investment in the market. We want the manufacturers to say, "If you're going to be in Atlanta, our place is Crossover." I had a call from a drummer for Travis Tritt who was endorsed by Tama at the time. He was told to call here to see about getting his drum kit, and we came highly recommended from the artist relations department. I said, "While I've got you on the phone, if you're not bringing your kit I suspect that the rest of the band may need backline as well." He wasn't handling that part of the gig so he put me in touch with the production manager, Bobby Thrasher, and he had called another company that hadn't returned any of his calls. After a short introductory conversation, he sent over some riders, and it turned out to be the Harley Davidson festival at the raceway in Hampton, Georgia. They needed complete backline for a house band on both stages as well as the Neville Brothers, Ted Nugent and Travis Tritt. That led to us getting the same contract in Dallas and Washington, DC as the festival touring around the country. I know of some other folks who will get that phone call for that drum kit and will say, "It's rented out and pass on the gig." We look at it another way. The endorsement side of the business can be lucrative if it's handled correctly. It's not just about handing out free gear.

DO YOU KNOW WHERE YOU'D LIKE TO BE SEVERAL YEARS FROM NOW? FOR EXAMPLE, ARE YOU LOOKING DOWN THE ROAD AT A FULL PRODUCTION REHEARSAL FACILITY THAT COULD HOLD A DYNAMIC LOAD OF 170K TO 200K?

BJ: Even though this conversation has demonstrated an evolutionary pathway to where we are today there has always been a master plan. There's always been the Holy Grail, and that's exactly what it is. The first thing to remember is that one of the main reasons we are successful is the city of Atlanta. Atlanta is a service oriented market that is not solely reliant on one industry like the car industry or oil, so that when the one industry goes bust, so does the city. We have all different kinds of businesses here. We have Fortune 500 companies that are based here; we have communications companies and the busiest airport in the world.

We even have our own little Simi Valley up the road. We have low taxes, and we're a right to work state. We have five star dining and a vibrant night life. With all of that here, we have been able to attract very talented people who come down here and create these companies that are able to support a music industry and a feature film industry that's on the rise. So the prize that sits at the end our rainbow as a large facility with 90 foot high rigging steel that can be used as either a concert production room or a sound stage for film or television. This would be a place where communication companies could safely park their satellite trucks when they're in town for sports or news events. It would have a full commissary and all the other amenities that such a place would call for.

SOUNDS LIKE THAT WOULD TAKE YOU FULL CIRCLE.

BJ: What do you mean?

WELL IN THE BEGINNING YOU TALKED ABOUT CROSSOVER BEING A GATHERING PLACE FOR ALL GENRES. A PLACE LIKE THE FACILITY YOU JUST DESCRIBED WOULD BE A GATHERING PLACE NOT JUST FOR ALL GENRES BUT ALL, OR AT LEAST MOST, MAJOR MEDIUMS OF ENTERTAINMENT.

BJ: Absolutely, and the beautiful thing is that Atlanta is ripe for it.

IS THIS SERIOUSLY ON THE HORIZON?

BJ: Like everything else, one step at a time. That is what has gotten us this far.

It should not be assumed that because we spoke with Billy Johnson on the matter of Crossover that either he or we believe that the company enjoys its current success and continued growth because of Billy's work alone. To that end we offer the names of the people whom Billy works with:

Owner: Luther Randall III

Full Time Employees:

COO: Billy Johnson

Backline Director of Operations: John Rogers

CFO: Elizabeth Berry

Studio Manager: Tony Taylor

Audio Engineer: Chad Singer

Backline Assistant Manager: Jack Prince

Backline Shop Manager: Steven Senn

Rehearsal Studio Manager: Jennifer Kreps

Rehearsal Assistant Studio Manager: Telethia Hayes

Administrative Assistant: Audrey Batungbacal

Backline Techs: Danny Akin, Vik Goel, Geno Staehurski, Rush Anderson, Tim Duyck, Clay Johnson, Tony Ray

IT Tech: Andy White

PR/Social Networking: Isis Paden



walls lead to better overall audio intelligibility in the audience seating areas. As far as I'm concerned, KUDO is the best-sounding 12-inch-format line array system out there. It's definitely a very versatile system and easily meets most rider specifications."

Oosthuizen points out that Pano Hall's new setup is billed as fully mobile touring sound system, allowing Thunder Valley to not only set it up in a variety of configurations within the ballroom depending on production needs, but also deploy it outside or off-site as well.

"Our mission here at Thunder Valley Casino Resort is to provide a truly first-rate experience for our guests and the KUDO system is very much in line with that philosophy,"

Logistics continued from 12

of the art. In addition to catering for any number of trucks in the specialized touring market, Deben's resources enhance the ability to ship bands' equipment in and out of the UK via container. "Because of the merger," says Darling, "some think that Chris is out of the business. That is far from true. In fact, I think in an overall sense he is more involved than ever before. This has really given the company a shot in the arm."

While some might think Rosenthal would have

adds Doug Elmets, spokesman for the resort. "L-ACOUSTICS' reputation for uncompromising excellence is widely known throughout the live event production community and having this system is helping us attract high-profile artists that might not otherwise perform in a ballroom of this size. So, obviously, it's been a big 'win-win' for both us and our guests."

Owned and operated by the United Auburn Indian Community, Thunder Valley Casino Resort first opened in June of 2003. Pano Hall, which officially opened in October 2010 and is named after the Maidu word for "bear," can be split into five breakout rooms: one large ballroom and two smaller ones that can each be further divided into two. ☺

trepidation in sharing his ace with Redburn, it's quite the contrary. "We consider this a wonderful opportunity to work side by side with Redburn as we complement each other," he says. "This has been a seamless integration between the premier organizations in Europe and North America." With a new gamut of responsibilities on his plate and more resources to work with, Darling has been invigorated like a stallion released to the plains. Before embarking on another Southeast Asia excursion – which would include swimming with whale sharks in the Philippines – he was elated

the GRAMMYS, MTV, Teen's Choice, the People's Choice Awards, Latin Billboard Awards, the Scream Awards and the BET Awards. They also provided the laser effects for The Who's Super Bowl halftime show last year.

From the sky high plumes of fire to the minor burst of flames from the on-stage horned steer, Pyrotek is definitely on the forefront of live performance entertainment. The company is also capable of laser and aqua visual effects. "We like to be the innovators not the imitators," says Adams of his company's entertainment work. The pyrotechnics has added to the performance and has taken the music from a good night of entertainment to a longtime memorable event. Adams states in closing, "And remember – there's a fine line between art and arson." ☺

in reflecting on his new situation. "Redburn and Janco are like mirror companies; quality equipment, dependable staff, and drivers who work the trucks, taking charge of the local crews to cut down on the time at the loading dock. They make everyone's life easier. I am very excited about this new adventure."

Given his longevity in the industry, Darling has formed a rare rapport with many of his associates. Janco driver, Joey Fisher Jr. asserts, "If I had to choose one word to describe Christopher it would be 'comfortable' because

I always know what to expect. The result for me is a tour that runs smoothly. That's something invaluable which everyone involved appreciates."

Kevin Lyman, founder and producer of the Vans Warped Tour, realizes how fortunate he is to have someone like Darling who never hesitates to think out of the box. "Christopher has been able to understand that my projects don't ever quite fit the 'norm' when it comes to trucking," he explains. "He has been able to find the right drivers to work with us, who are always part of our extended touring family. He also goes the extra mile to help us figure out the most efficient and cost effective way to make things work; especially when I am starting a new project." Expressing a sentiment clearly shared by many, Lyman adds, "He is also one of the few people I really appreciate hanging out with in this business when I am not working." ☺

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