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### Robert Roth

"Oh Yeah? Watch Me!"

>> Q&A Part TWO

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## mobilePRODUCTIONmonthly



12

16



20



24

### 6 In the News

**6 Cases** 5 Star Expands Facilities with New Sanding Booth Area

**6 Insurance** Global Insurance Brokerage Announces New Office in Austin, TX

**6 Lighting** Jands Vista Controls Lights for British Rock 'n' Roll Legends

**7 Rigging** Reed Rigging Provides Production Rigging for Late Night with Jimmy Fallon Super Bowl Broadcast

**7 Sound** Pro Audio Stash launches new Slide-and-Rotate Racking system

**8 HARMAN's** Soundcraft Si Compact Takes Giant Leap With V2

**8 Sound Image** joins Adamson's Project Energia

**8 Video** Pixled & Radiant join forces

**9 TNDV** Gives New 'Inspiration' to Road-Tested Mobile Production Truck

**10 DJ Touring** The Bassnectar Experience Breaking Down the Stage Barrier for the New Year

**12 Q&A** Robert Roth "Oh Yeah? Watch Me!" PART TWO

**16 Sound** How Loud Is Too Loud? At What Point Does "If It's Too Loud, You're Too Old" Become A Crutch?

**18 Staging** Event Safety Alliance Puts Spotlight on Staging Safety at Live Events

**20 Trade Shows** Winter NAMM 2012 Music to the Ears, Eyes and Sensory Overload

**24 Transportation** Celebrity Coaches A Long & Open Road

**28 ODYSSEO** Presents the Perfect Example of Subtle Enormity

**34 Crew Members**

**36 SOLOTECH** Reaches Bigger

**40 Advertiser's Index**



## FROM THE *Publisher*



Well, here we go into another year. Time seems to slip away and the older we get, the faster it slips. After the past year, we all hope for a better run this season. This year, however, we are facing some new challenges as an industry that will have to be addressed if we are to continue doing business in a sane and profitable manner.

First and foremost is the issue of stage safety. The appalling loss of lives and injuries in stage collapses last year calls for a determined effort by industry professionals to set standards that will establish clear guidelines for outdoor performances. Clearly, if the industry does not act, government will do so and that opens up a real can of worms that none of us care to see.

Second, climbing fuel costs and new government regulations regarding drivers is further impacting the transportation side of our business. If this issue is not addressed and soon, we may find ourselves in a shrinking supply situation. Shows simply must understand that coach companies can no longer operate today at prices that are a decade old.

Finally, the credit crunch and tight economy is putting a squeeze on both manufacturers and production companies that are struggling to find ways to upgrade equipment.

The good news is that we are part of a very resilient and innovative business. The industry must, and I am confident that it will, find solutions to these pressing issues. It may take a lot of compromise and new thinking, but "The shows must go on....."

With that in mind, I hope you enjoy our feature on *Odysseo*, a logistical nightmare that the team at *Cavalia* have made into an art form. Also included is part two of our conversation with lighting innovator Robert Roth and a great story on SPL's from veteran writer Bill Evans.

*Larry Smith*

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# apollojets

A white Apollojet aircraft is shown from a front-three-quarter perspective, parked on a runway. The scene is set during sunset, with a warm orange and yellow glow in the sky and on the aircraft's surface. The aircraft's two engines are prominent on the wings, and the tail fin is visible in the background. The overall mood is professional and serene.

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# IN THE NEWS



## Cases

### 5 STAR EXPANDS FACILITIES WITH NEW SANDING BOOTH AREA

Leading European flightcase manufacturer 5 Star Cases kicks off 2012 with a new, much larger, custom designed sanding booth area at its Wisbech, UK, headquarters.

This is to help increase capacity, turnaround and the service for which 5 Star is renowned, and with a very healthy order book following one of the company's busiest years of its 30 year history in 2011. It is also in line with continued on-going expansion plans.

5 Star themselves undertook the main build of the new booth area, in the process removing the existing sanding and spray booths to make way for the much extended facility containing three dust extraction systems.

The new booth enclosure occupies a total area of 35 square meters and has been designed to ensure that there is plenty of room to manoeuvre .... as well as for future expansion.

Air Bench Ltd. from Colchester, Essex was commissioned by 5 Star to specify the three new draught tables that form the basis of the sanding booths. They supplied two of their FN126784s and one of their FN189784 prod-

Pictured – Ingus Lasinskis (seated) with Rokas, Vytaas and Valerijs from 5 Star's woodwork department



ucts, which extract the dust and fumes away from the workspace by drawing them down through the work surface into the internal filters, simultaneously returning clean air into the room.

The sanding booth plays a central role in 5 Star's case production process, as all the specialist woodwork passes through it to be prepped prior to final spraying and finishing.

The majority of specialist woodwork is produced on one of 5 Star's three Thermwood CNC machining centres, and usually requires various stages before it is completed.

Audio console side cheeks, stage manager desks, 19" rack-mount inner sleeves and top end DJ consoles are just a few regular 5 Star items that rely on specialist woodwork fitted inside the flight cases.

Once the woodworked elements are glued and pinned together to make the required sub-structure, they head for the sanding booth where they are filled, sanded and sealed ...ready for the spray booth.

Phil Bailey, 5 Star's resident engineer project managed the installation, with assistance from other 5 Star production staff. A primary consideration was keeping workflow disruption to an absolute minimum, so the majority of the work was completed during the Festive period.

Ingus Lasinskis, 5 Star's cutting shop supervisor, was a key advisor in the design and layout of the new booth area. "Over the last two years or so, we have seen a huge increase in the amount of specialist woodwork required for our projects. We started to outgrow the old booth and needed a new facility," he explained, "With the new system we can work faster and smarter, which will benefit all our clients and the diverse selection of projects with which we deal day-to-day".

[5star-cases.com](http://5star-cases.com)

## Insurance

### GLOBAL INSURANCE BROKERAGE ANNOUNCES NEW OFFICE IN AUSTIN, TX

Doodson Insurance Brokerage – one of the world's largest insurance advisors to live music and production, special events and wider entertainment – has announced that it has invested in a new office in Austin, TX.

Situated on Music Lane in the thriving city - known as the live music capital of the world - the company's Texan base represents a sizeable investment for the broker, which now has seven offices throughout the UK and USA.

The Austin office will be headed-up by **James Chippendale**, Doodson Executive Vice President



– a key figure in the live music industry for the past two decades, and co-founder of CSI Entertainment which became

part of Doodson Insurance Brokerage over 12 months ago. James will be working alongside a highly professional team including former concert promoter Cameron Smith.

The new Austin base is perfectly placed for the team to provide a round-the-clock service to its clients including Austin's most credible live music festival, Austin City Limits, as well as supporting worldwide artists such as the Black Eyed Peas and Kenny Chesney when they are touring in America's Southwest.

James Chippendale commented: "Our core business is expanding to service more of the live entertainment industry than ever

before, and in the US, there is no better location than Austin. Austin is home to many of our clients as well as some of the biggest live music events in the world and our new base will make sure we are at the epicentre of this elite music scene."

The Austin base is also key to Doodson's support of international conferences. Last December, James Chippendale was a noted speaker at the International Music Festival Conference (IMFCON), and later this month he will take his place alongside Doodson US CEO, Roger Sandau and other industry specialists in a 'think-tank' forum, themed safety in live music at the highly acclaimed Tour Link conference.

## Lighting

### JANDS VISTA CONTROLS LIGHTS FOR BRITISH ROCK 'N' ROLL LEGENDS

Busy UK-based lighting designer Derek Jones recently bought a Jands Vista S1 to help service his busy autumn season, including legendary British artist Cliff Richard's "Soulicious" tour and another with equally maverick performers, The Hollies.

With both tours overlapping Derek took his new Vista S1 out on The Hollies, while he called on Lars Kristiansen to operate Cliff Richard and the Shadows on his Vista S3.

Derek bought the Vista S3 some two years ago, and it has been on the road ever since. He has been running the next generation Vista v2 software since its launch and comments, "It's brilliant."

Vista v2 was designed from the ground up to allow all levels of user get the most from whatever mix of technology they have avail-

# IN THE NEWS



able, whether dimmers, moving lights, LED, or media. Available in a wide range of hardware options Vista v2 offers both the simplicity to work fast, with the power to control the finest details, so everyone can focus on creating a great looking show rather than on programming a desk.

Derek has worked with The Hollies for the last six years. The band, known for their fabulous, rich vocal harmonies were among the UK's leading groups throughout the 1960s and 1970s, are still hugely popular. They tour twice a year for five weeks each, playing to completely sold out audiences in theatres and concert halls nationwide.

Being in constant demand, Derek brought in Gareth Pritchard to cover the shows when he was unavailable. With each song programmed into a "Snapshot", Derek was able to pass the show

over, and with the single press of a button - each song was set up, labelled and ready to go.

The lighting rig, supplied by Blackburn based Lite Alternative, consisted of a front and back truss featuring Martin Professional MAC 700s and MAC 250 moving lights, Mole Richardson MoleBeams, Sunstrips, plus a selection of PARs and ACLs.

The band performed an intensive two hour set, encompassing 28 songs, with each number having an individual look. Next on Derek's schedule are flamboyant US disco divas "Scissor Sisters" in Australia, the Pacific Rim and Asia, where a Vista S1 will be in control and simply toured with the backline.

Jands Europe's Neil Vann commented "Vista v2 offers designers like Derek the perfect balance of power and simplicity. It is fast to

use, yet allows for detailed control of even the most demanding shows. With a wide range of hardware options, there is a console to fit almost every style, scale and budget of show. Make sure that you take a look at Vista v2 for yourself and see what this exciting next generation of control can offer you." [jandsvista.com](http://jandsvista.com)

## Rigging

### REED RIGGING PROVIDES PRODUCTION RIGGING FOR LATE NIGHT WITH JIMMY FALLON SUPER BOWL BROADCAST

Reed Rigging provided production rigging support for a uniquely designed and constructed set for the "Late Night with Jimmy Fallon" television show broadcast from Indianapolis's Hilbert Circle Theatre.

The Indianapolis-based broadcasts coincided with Super Bowl week for the NFL. Last year's Super Bowl set a U.S. audience record of 111 million viewers, and this year's contest is expected to exceed that number.

The Hilbert Circle Theatre, home to the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra, was transformed from its 1916 historical splendor to a fully-functioning 21<sup>st</sup> Century television broadcast studio incorporating miles of cable, cameras, video walls, lighting and state of the art audio systems into its ornate and elegant interior.

"We are very pleased to provide our support to this outstanding production," said Michael Reed, founder and president of Reed Rigging. "The on-site production team is comprised of some of the best in our business." [reedrigging.com](http://reedrigging.com)



## Sound

### PRO AUDIO STASH LAUNCHES NEW SLIDE-AND-ROTATE RACKING SYSTEM

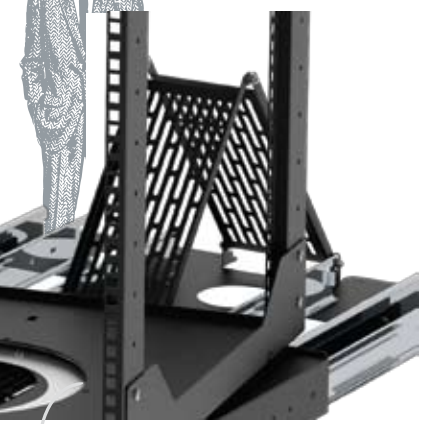
Leading UK professional audio and AV suppliers and 19 inch racking specialists Pro Audio Stash (PAS) launches its unique new R8010 19-inch Slide-and-Rotate racking system to provide ultimate flexibility for 19 inch racking set ups that are installed in tight and / or difficult to access spaces.

This innovative system has been developed in response to extensive feedback, and has a wide range of applications as a versatile solution for the installed rack units that can be easily rotated 90 degrees in either direction once pulled forward from the home position for full accessibility, maintenance, etc.. It's ideal for any location where space is at a premium e.g. AV installations on cruise ships where the rack needs to be locked into position with the base plate being screwed to a solid surface, or for clubs / theatres / studios where space is often limited.

For high-end commercial and residential installations, the Slide-and-Rotate rack can easily be fitted into enclosed spaces and







hidden discreetly from view, whilst being fully on hand for servicing, upgrading or changing, etc.

The rack system can be built up to any height – for specific and custom purposes - and will house any standard 19 inch rack mounting device. Versions currently available include 6, 8, 12, 16 and 20 U, with load capacities of up to 40 Kg (88 lbs) –accommodated by all sizes.

A stylish, ergonomic, retractable cable management bar at the back has been designed to track and keep all the cables neatly organised within the structure, which expands and contracts as the rack is slid forward and moved back into place.

The Slide-and-Rotate system is quality engineered to the same exacting specifications for which all Pro Audio Stash products are renowned, ruggedly constructed and with reliability to the fore.

Available initially as the rack superstructure, in the future, wood and steel cladding will be offered, so clients can match and finish the rack product according to their exact needs.

[proaudiostash.co.uk](http://proaudiostash.co.uk)

## HARMAN'S SOUNDRAFT Si Compact TAKES GIANT LEAP WITH V2

HARMAN Soundcraft's popular small-format (but big-hearted) digital console Si Compact has received a major upgrade with the V2 software release.

The new free upgrade provides more than 23 major new features, updates and enhancements; the first addition being eight additional DSP channels expanding the Si Compact 16 and Si Compact 24 to 32 and 40 inputs to mix, respectively.

Of particular note is the new user configurable fader layers allowing input channels to be reassigned anywhere on either input layer and any bus master reassigned to either master layer. Now an engineer can put the inputs and returns where he or she most needs them, for example, having the main vocal or presenter always in position 1 on both input fader layers, or mixing aux and matrix masters on a single bus layer to reduce the number of layer changes.

Another particularly useful function introduced in V2 is D.O.G.S (Direct Output Gain Stabilisation). A common frustration for engineers is when two consoles (FOH and Monitors) share the same source such as a mic on stage; the mix balance on the second (slave) console can be overridden if the engineer at the master console changes the mic gain and in some environments this could also result in feedback in the slave system. Using a connection topology where the slave console is fed from a pre-fade direct output of the

master, DOGS can compensate for the gain adjustment maintaining original system gain between mic in and direct out. One of the unique advantages of DOGS is since stabilisation occurs 'locally' in the master console *only this component* requires the DOGS system and all other equipment connected to the master can benefit from the feature.

Selective Copy & Paste is now implemented allowing all or part of a selected channel or bus to be copied and pasted elsewhere. This basic functionality is augmented with the ability to copy and paste individual bus or matrix mixes and copy/paste FX presets between Lexicon processors. Enhanced MIDI control allows snapshots to be recalled from any external devices capable of sending simple program change messages.

A new security mode prevents unauthorised access to key functions; as well as 'total lockdown' security can be tailored for different 'operator access' levels for example locking out house EQ and processing for guest engineers whilst allowing access for in-house operators.

Other enhancements include additional information displayed in the Function Focus window on the touch screen, improved matrix mix facilities, show file & folder management, better navigation, improved default settings, HPF settings, added EQ curve graphics and much more.



developing. As soon as beta testing began, we confirmed that we would join in Phase One. The Sound Image philosophy is to deliver leading technology and to stay ahead of the curve. Energia was a simple choice. This system is progressive and a very powerful solution. We look forward to getting it on the road."

Sound Image has carried Adamson Y-Axis and T21's in their inventory since 2007 and the move to the Energia series was a natural step forward. Adamson Systems Engineering, President, Brock Adamson comments on the new Energia Beta Partner; "Dave and his team package and deliver a quality product and service to a wide range of artists. We have worked together with Sound Image for years and their engineers always come back wanting more. They offer a strong presence in international touring and we are happy to see them join the growing team of global Energia users."

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

## Video

### PIXLED & RADIANT JOIN FORCES

PIXLED has been appointed as the official distributor for LED display manufacturer Radiant's Linx range of products in key European countries as of January 1, 2012.

Recognizing the enormous success that Pixled has already enjoyed with these products, Radiant is the first top-level Asian manufacturer to make such an agreement for distribution with a high profile European based operation like Pixled, which has a worldwide distribution network for all its products.

### SOUND IMAGE JOINS ADAMSON'S PROJECT ENERGIA

Escondido, California based Sound Image, a leading provider of audio systems for touring and installation applications globally, is the second American company to join Adamson's Project Energia.

The significant investment in Adamson's E15 system was no surprise to Sound Image president, David Shadoan. Shadoan comments, "Adamson kept us closely informed as Energia was



For almost two years, Pixled and Radiant have been involved in an on-going 'co-development' agreement, with Pixled selling Radiant's 'L-Series' Linx products badged as Pixled F-37L / F-30L, etc.

For continuity, Pixled has now renamed its four current L-Series products to carry the same name. The Pixled Linx-18 / Pixled Linx-25 / Pixled Linx-30 and Pixled Linx-37 all have the suffix 'by Radiant'.

Pixled's general manager Bart Van der Beken says, "We're delighted with this official appointment which recognises that Pixled has the right contacts, resources, infrastructure and mind-set to take the Linx brand forward. In the past 12 months we have sold high volumes of this very lightweight, ultra-flexible and highly creative product line, and we expect to do the same again in 2012".

A new sales manager – Roel Peeters – has also been added to the team in anticipation of the increased business that the Radiant dealership will generate.

Jason Lu, General Manager of Radiant comments, "Pixled has always been a loyal partner, and the central European location in Belgium is perfect. The company also has a great reputation throughout Europe and is well equipped with available demo systems for customer tests and evaluations. The support and service department is first rate, with spares available from stock".

## TNDV GIVES NEW 'INSPIRATION' TO ROAD-TESTED MOBILE PRODUCTION TRUCK

TNDV Television, offering mobile production services for broadcast, entertainment, worship and other live events, has given its first truck a new lease on life — from an interior HD makeover to a shiny new exterior.

Nic Dugger, president of TNDV, purchased "Old Blue," the production truck he cut his teeth on from his alma mater, Middle Tennessee State University (MTSU). The four-time Emmy winner had the body refinished, updated the interior and added it to the truck cab that has been on the road since the company launched seven years ago.

"MTSU was the catalyst for my career," said Dugger, who worked on the truck as both a student and a faculty member. "It gave me tremendous opportunities, and rather than say goodbye to an old friend it presented a perfect opportunity to upgrade."

Dugger and his team rechristened the truck as "Inspiration" and installed a new complement of HDTV production gear, including a Blackmagic Design router, a Ross



Vision 2 production switcher, Aja KiPro video recorders, Hitachi Z-HD5000 cameras, a Yamaha DM2000 audio mixer, Tascam X-48 audio workstations, an RTS Cronus intercom system, and brand new Clark cabling and wiring. Gerling and Associates renovated the existing truck shell.

Inspiration joins "Aspiration," the company's recently-launched 12-camera SD/HD/3D truck, as TNDV's broadcast and produc-

tion presence grows. Both trucks now cross the United States, producing at least two live events a week for broadcast and cable networks, venues, worship organizations, corporations and other customers. The Red Carpet Show for "Soul Train Awards 2011" was the first Inspiration project, with a large number of recent and upcoming Nashville-based awards shows following.



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## THE BASSNECTAR EXPERIENCE

### Breaking Down the Stage Barrier for the New Year

**A**t the Bridgestone Arena in Nashville, Tennessee, over 11,000 people gathered together to ring in 2012 with the deep rhythmic sounds of electronic music and dubstep artist, Bassnectar. Fans of Bassnectar, or “Bassheads,” who have attended past shows bring high expectations for an energetic, club-like atmosphere that provides a sensory experience using the elements of light, sound and video.

As this event would be the largest audience to date for Bassnectar as the headliner, the production team was challenged with transforming a massive arena with the ability to provide the same level of experience for a much larger audience. Plus, as the gig was New Year’s Eve, of course they wanted to crank it up a notch – and then some.

#### Hitting the Ground Running

Planning for the show kicked off in October. Bob Strakele, Bassnectar’s production manager as well as FOH engineer, flew to Nashville for a site visit and planning meetings to start designing the show and working out the equipment needs. “Our main goal was to provide a real dance party vibe, and make it *not* feel like an arena,” notes Strakele. “We wanted to immerse the entire audience in the full room experience, so everyone would feel like they had the best seats in the house, regardless of where they were - which can get tricky in such a large venue.” With a unique show like Bassnectar, where it’s one artist on stage mixing music, the technology in the room plays a much larger role in the performance in comparison to a band. Therefore, the production team did not want to compromise on anything in regards to providing the total Bassnectar



vibe for everyone in attendance, while keeping in mind a realistic approach within an established budget.

To create that ‘larger than life’ experience and non-arena feel, the production team designed a concept that expanded the main stage and brought the technical elements out to the audience. Working with LMG Touring to provide the video, audio and lighting equipment for the event, the production team had specific requirements for gear that would provide the maximum visual and auditory exposure. Bob Strakele visited the LMG Design Studio in Nashville to discuss the concept and products they needed, and was able to review LMG’s LED product line. “Everything started to fall into place with LMG – they had the lights and LED that we needed, and a brand new K1 system, which we never would have been able to get,” states Strakele. “If you can do a show with one vendor, it makes everyone’s life easier.”

#### Beyond the Stage

For a musical artist with the name Bassnectar, the sound is obviously of critical importance. “When I found out that LMG had a L-ACOUSTICS K1 system,



For more info:  
[bassnectar.net](http://bassnectar.net)  
[imgtouring.com](http://imgtouring.com)

I knew I had to get that in the show,” says Strakele. LMG provided an audio rig composed of 24 K1 speakers, 12 K1 SB’s, 6 Kara downfills, 20 KUDOS, 8 ARCS, 16 VDOSC, and 30 SB-28s. “The K1 system is capable of throwing long distances while maintaining full frequency response and a sense of intimacy,” stated Kevin Bridges, director of audio services for LMG. As Bassnectar’s music is very strong on the low end as well as the top end, a carefully planned sub system was designed to deliver low frequencies to the audience in a controlled manner. Strakele noted, “With some products there are certain frequencies that will start to disappear, but it’s not an issue we the K1. We had a lot of comments from production people around Nashville that it was the best the arena ever sounded.”

For the main video display, 300 18.75MM LED tiles were used to create a backdrop surrounding Bassnectar onstage, as well as two overhanging LED chandelier displays, designed to add width and dimension to the stage. In addition, the arena’s center scoreboard acted as an additional video element, and graphically tied in with the LED displays. LMG rigged over 160 lighting fixtures throughout the arena, onstage, and on a circular truss placed in the center over the audience. Lighting was designed to offer the audience a visually dynamic display, dictated by the music, and layered with builds that went from using very isolated assets to everything in the room, to create a wave of energy throughout the night. “The lighting designer (Michael Smalley) likes to take fixtures to their



limit, he chooses products that do more than just a big beam across a room,” stated Strakele. The fixtures included a mix of Martin MAC III’s, MAC 101 Wash LED fixtures, MAC 700’s, Atomic Strobes, and Clay Paky Sharpys. The LED and lighting elements were controlled by the grandMA 2 full size console.

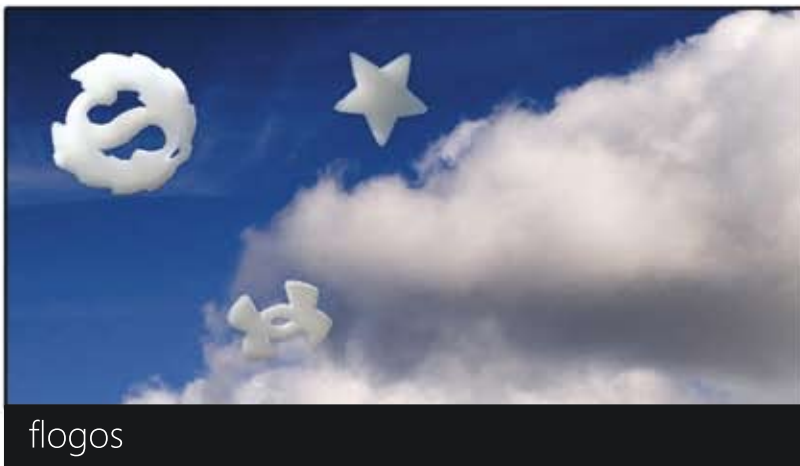
In addition, the timeframe for load-in and setup left no room for error. The Bassnectar crew was flying to Nashville from Lake Tahoe directly from a show the previous night. “This wasn’t a typical show where everything is placed at one end of the room, but the rigging team was phenomenal, especially in the fixed amount of time,” stated Steven “Boz” Bodzoch, LMG’s director of touring and lighting. “We pretested everything beforehand to make sure it was 100%, so when the lighting designer arrived, he could basically plug in, load files, and was ready to go.”

### 3-2-1 – Happy New Year!

2012 rang in with flawless sound, a massive light and laser show, and a party vibe in the arena that kept going for hours. Fans and reviews described this show as “the best concert ever,” as well as “the next level,” and “breaking new ground.” Bob Strakele notes, “for me, the best part was seeing Lorin’s (Bassnectar) reaction when he walked into the arena. He’s very particular about every aspect of the show, especially how the back of the room feels because those people can tend to get neglected.” When the Bassnectar crew arrived at the arena before the show, the production team shut the house lights down, and lit the whole place up with the lights, lasers, and sound to give Lorin Ashton the full impact of the audience perspective. “He was like a kid in a candy store – they were all completely blown away.” 🌟

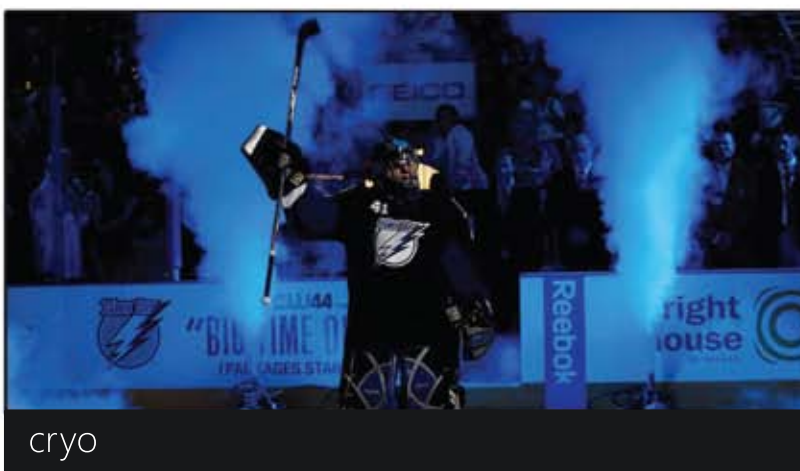


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## Robert Roth "Oh Yeah? Watch Me!" Part TWO



By any estimation Robert Roth casts a long shadow in the world of mobile entertainment lighting. Please join us as we conclude this two part conversation with a true icon of our industry. When we left off, we had reached the point in touring evolution where you couldn't put any more gear above a stage, there simply was no more room.

**At what point did you cross the line into the reality that this was going to be big?**

In 1976 I was actually doing a Mardi Gras gig in the Super Dome with my 36 PARs. Not long after that, I did a four gig run as a vendor rather than working for a band, and we went into four arenas with Marvin Gaye, Natalie Cole, and I forget who the third act on the bill was. We played the old Richfield Coliseum in Indianapolis and the Civic Arena in Pittsburgh, which was the first time I'd seen anyone rig from a bucket truck. The lighting rig was tiny. I think we only had 24 PAR cans and the PA power distribution was in the trunk of the rental car we were all riding in. But you go through all that to find yourself suddenly working in big arenas and you look at the crowd and say, "Wow! Look at this!" The company was in its first year of existence. The jump into arenas was the confirmation that this was the path.

**There came a time when stages had huge canopies of hundreds of PARs over them and the industry nudged up against the point of diminishing returns. Where were you in that design ethos?**

There were two things that influenced my design ethos where large amounts of light over stages are concerned. Going all the way back to the 70s, every time I'd look at a box grid full of PAR cans with all of the lights on the same plane, from a particular perspective it just looked like nothing at all. It might as well have been 50 PAR cans, not two hundred. When certain people got into the big roof looking shows I didn't

think much was being gained. So the direction I went had two elements: creating vertical looks that would fill the frame if you're looking at it through a camera and side light. You may remember when we did about 10 or 12 years of touring PAR and leko rigs for Mikhail Baryshnikov. I was already in the dance mode of thinking from all that R&B music I'd worked with wherein side light was essential to the design be it rear three-quarters or straight side light. It had to do with sculpting a body with the lighting instruments you had because you didn't have moving lights at that point. Moving lights didn't exist until we got into the 80s and when they finally did show up they weren't bright enough to really do anything compared to PARs. So your primary tool at the time was the PAR or my adaptation that saved power while putting up tons of PARs, which was the 600w ACL. What I tried to accomplish with high density truss that had all those lights arrayed vertically and then ultimately those pods, was to create scenic elements out of lighting. At the time other than platforming the main scenic elements was lighting architecture.

**At this point were you still looking up at the major companies in the industry like Showlites, See Factor, Bandit, and TASCOS or straight across at them?**

By this point we were competing with all of those companies because I had my fingers in a lot of different markets musically. I did 12 years with Hank Williams Jr. and a batch of the "outlaw" country guys, then all of the R&B stuff like Kool and the Gang, The Gap Band, and Rick James. On top of this was the north of the border stuff like Triumph and of course there was all of the Southern Rock stuff like .38 Special, ARS, Molly Hatchet, etc. But I always considered us to be the underdog so we were trying harder.

**The answer to get in any door seems to be to make yourself stand out. How did you go about that?**

From the square PAR can all the way through, we were always doing it a little differently. The differential always had to do with where we put the money. Instead of putting it into the housing for the PAR we put it into the patching system. I remember at the ripe age of 24 or 25, we were leasing this new warehouse and it was a build-out to spec. I took the contractor over to a wall and said, "I need a 400 amp service right there." He said, "Why?" I replied that we needed to load test at our preparation of the systems. Back then all the other companies were only testing lamp bars and they were doing it with batteries. We wanted to fly the rig and do load tests so we could see what was going on. This ensured that when we loaded in we were ready to go. And as I became a designer independently of R.A. Roth. I found out the hard way that that wasn't the way everyone did it. To this day I believe the standard in the concert market is to do full system tests so that the designers still have time to program the system.

**That's why Upstaging has that beautiful facility up there.**

That's right.

**At some point Source Point Design came in to the picture. How did that happen?**

We were doing design / build work to a level of quality that we were starting to get noticed for that, and we were getting asked to do design work outside of the lighting hire company. I got together with Jim Chapman and Steve Kaye. Steve was the impetus behind my getting into computerized drafting. Steve was our business man-

ager and he was at the forefront of automating, accounting or really anything. My drafting problem was through put. There just wasn't enough time to sit at a drafting table, answer the phone and make the deals and do all the stuff I had to get done. And the CAD drafting was an outgrowth of that. Steve got copy of AutoCAD, which was version 1.5 or something.

#### Five inch floppy disks.

Yeah those were the days. So anyway, we decided it was time to externalize the design company and we started looking around for a design project and the project we found was Michael Jackson and his brothers.

#### The Victory tour?

That's right.

#### What was the time frame? How long was it from the time you decided to externalize the design firm to the time you got the Jackson tour?

It took about two years.

#### How did you get it?

We were on a plane coming home from a creative meeting in Toronto with Triumph. And this is how long ago it was. We were sitting the "smoking section" of the plane because Chapman smoked. We started talking about the fact that Jackson had this big album out called *Thriller* and there was bound to be pretty big tour to support it. We had done a lot of really impressive R&B acts as well as the rock stuff, so we decided to go after it. We were networked up pretty well and one of the people I'd networked with was the late Ian Knight, the set designer for the show. Ian was a great influence of mine and a great mentor. That's how we got our foot in the door and landed the job and it carried through to a great deal of the relationships that I have in this business to this day. As is so often the case you're not hired for your capability but for your accomplishments. And that is when we – as they say way too often these days – took it to the next level. This was a really big stadium project with a whole slew of new challenges on a lot of fronts. It required the first really heavy weight capacity roof. We weren't just hanging lighting from the roof; there were a lot of gags that Michael had envisioned that were being deployed. The stage was this massive thing with all these hydraulics and elevators. There were nearly 1,000 incandescent lighting loads in the stage. It just went on and on and on.

#### What was the breakdown of responsibilities between you and Jim?

Jim toured with the show and directed it. While he was in rehearsals, my job was to be

in the production trailer dealing with all the planning and making design decisions. It was a lot of fun because there was a huge concentration of talent from all areas of the business.

#### Well it was arguably the most high profile gig of its time.

Yep. It was the first show to go above \$10 ticket price. I remember the hue and cry about \$30 prices. There was a whole lot of noise about that. People couldn't believe that you would charge that much for a ticket. Seems kind of funny now doesn't it?

#### What were some of the design accounts that came along after Victory?

It's a pretty long list actually. We were hired for Madonna's *Virgin* tour right after Jackson. We lit a lot of the metal guys like Ozzy, Cinderella, Whitesnake, and a host more. We did live television work such as Live Aid. We actually lit a bunch of television stuff back then, which led to the WCW Live Wrestling gigs, which we stayed with for years.

#### There is the claim that the industry isn't as relationship-based as it was back then because of the corporate feel that vendors have taken on over the years. I tend to reject that premise. What do you think?

It's absolutely relationship based. Now, the relationships may not play as big a part in getting the jobs these days because you're always going to have to deal with the economics of the project, but it will certainly get you considered. There's nothing wrong with that.

#### It seems like the relationship is the truest form of vetting process.

That's right. Anyone can get hired once.

#### It's impossible to talk about the timeline of your career and not hit on the transition from R. A. Roth to what came afterward and how it happened. By outward appearances you were doing great right up to the end. And then it changed. How do you deal with that?

Often times the best learned lessons are the most expensive.

#### And painful.

Yeah. I read a book recently that talked about the fact that you're not really successful in business unless you've been tested past your limits a few times. Most truly success-

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ful business people get tested pretty far. I was a guy who never really had a good financial backstop or partner and I continued to take on more and more and more workload. Don't forget there was a trucking arm at one point. With the trucking, we did really well at solving for service but not at solving for profit. On all fronts, we were always concerned with service before anything else. Growth, lack of controls, and lack of an honest or close business partner or staff on the accounting side proved to be trouble.

### That's a lot working against you.

I was badly overstretched; as much so as many small business owners get. There was a series of events coupled with some dishonesty and it all came together to create significant stress. It was that stress and the change of the capital requirements in the industry that caused me to sell it.

### How did it work?

I sold the company to PRG. This was right at the front of PRG's big run up of acquisitions. They had already acquired Cinema Services and Vanco. The part of the business I'd come to detest was the administration of it. It was forcing me further and further from my customer base. Of course at the time I didn't realize I was the sole and most significant salesperson of my own business. That all came to light as all these transitions occurred.

We had been doing all of our sub-hire from Vanco in Florida. At the time I had no idea how big PRG was going to be and I was thinking that maybe it was time to reinvent myself. If you think of Source Point Design as a reinvention then it was time for another one. The only constant in business is change and if you're not thinking about the fact that the job you're doing today is going to be obsolesced by the job you're going to do tomorrow you're not really paying attention to one of the most fundamental aspects of being successful for a long period of time in business. That doesn't mean you change fields. It just means that you change the way you function within that field. You probably won't see me soldering cables or loading trucks but I've certainly done all that. And I don't think you'd find me drafting a lighting plot but I've done my share of that too. It was just time for me to find a way to get back to doing what I wanted to do. That and the company had been up and down and I was just sick of it.

### So the logical move was to become an account rep for PRG when it bought the company?

That was part of the deal. They were really after the relationships, infrastructure and knowledge of the business I'd built up over the years. It certainly wasn't the capital in the

company. They were looking to expand into the touring market in lighting and you would argue that neither Cinema Services nor Vanco really had a presence in that. Then not long after us, it was Bash and Production Arts, and then of course 18 months after I came on they acquired LSD. Suddenly a lot of the people I had competed with over the years were all working in the touring arm of PRG. We did a lot of pretty significant work there.

### Fast forward to the night I ran into you at a Billy Joel show at Phillips Arena a few years ago. I asked how you were doing and you told me that as of the end of the month you weren't going to be working for PRG anymore. How did Christie Lites come about?

Huntly reached out to me and the first meeting we had lasted nine hours. After this initial meeting it progressed rather quickly and we made a deal. Christie Lites made some very smart decisions as they built their business. One of the things they did was install a standards person before they'd built three offices. Unlike a company that's built by acquisition, every piece of gear this company owns is the same. There's continuity all the way up and down the line. This extends to continuity of process as well as equipment. I've done stuff with Christie Lites I never would have thought I could do. I build pieces of huge shows simultaneously out of several shops and marry them up onsite without a final "prep". This works seamlessly at Christie. As an example, we did WrestleMania 25 for WWE and I literally got two trucks from Toronto, a truck from Seattle, and a half dozen or more trucks from Dallas because the show was in Houston. One week before the show loaded in they changed the dimmer locations by 150 feet from where they were in the plans. When I needed another 200 pieces of 150 foot Socapex to respond to this change, all I had to do was call up a guy in our firm and tell him what I needed. In under an hour he let me know that it was all in Orlando. I was able to pull it all out of one shop. Problem solved.

That is another key item that made the decision for Christie Lites. Everyone on the relationship management side at Christie has 100 percent control of their projects. That control and a short decision making loop provide the edge to respond in an industry where the timelines continue to shorten. You have a large multi-office firm with integrated inventory and an incredibly rapid response time. That kind of support is critical to success in today's environment.

### Do you still enjoy going to shows?

I do. I still get a kick out of seeing certain shows; I always get a high amount of satisfaction out of any show that I'm involved

in whether it's an extreme motocross TV shoot, or a car show press event. But, I have a special place in my heart for music. It's what got me going. Love of music is what started the whole process in the very beginning. However, after what is now arguably closer to 40 years than I'd care to admit of doing concert tours, there are certain aspects of it that I could live without. When it comes to mounting any kind of production whether it's a festival, large or small concert tour, or any kind of special event, it's the process of putting it together that keeps me going these days. I'm not really involved in the art of it any more other than an advisory role.

### In your estimation has the design process changed significantly over the years?

Last year John Weisman, Mickey Curbishley and I were on a panel at the AEG conference, and we all agreed that it has to start with the material. The songwriter or the performer has to have quality or there's nothing to draw from.

### A well lit plate of manure is just that.

Well it's not even well lit at that point.

### Back when we were coming up you didn't have to look real hard to find incredible music. Every band or performer was their own style. There were no genres.

And that's why you could have seen Emerson Lake and Palmer with Humble Pie as an opening act, which is a show I will never forget.

### I remember seeing the Rolling Stones in the Super Dome with the Doobie Brothers and Van Halen opened the night.

Funny you should say that. The first time I ever saw Van Halen was in Atlanta of course. But here's the bill I laugh about this to this day. I tell this story a lot. This was in the Fox Theatre and it was before they re-seated it so it was still 3,900 seats. It was Journey, Ronnie Montrose with a singer by the name of Sammy Hagar, and Van Halen. Van Halen got 30 minutes to open the show.

### It's a completely different world.

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# HOW LOUD ? IS TOO LOUD

BY BILL EVANS

## At What Point Does "If It's Too Loud, You're Too Old" Become A Crutch?

A few years ago, when I first got an iPhone and became enamored with apps, I started to play "Sound Cop". I discovered that my SoundMeter app would send updates to Twitter. Armed with this knowledge and being at a lot of shows (between my gig covering them and my wife's shooting pics), I began to take readings and send them out to my legion of followers. Which numbered like a dozen at that point.

Seriously, this is an issue that is important—even crucial—and very few want to talk about it. At least not in public. It's an issue I have been interested in for a long time and one I have tried to bring up over and over. Then, a few months back I went out to the Joint at the Hard Rock Hotel to meet up with Pooch, Cookie and Tater (AKA, Ken Van Druen, Chris Hoff and Kevin McCarthy) on one of their last U.S. dates with Linkin Park before heading out for a tour of Asia. And it was the preferred subject for Pooch and Cookie when it came time to do our little interview. You can checkout the video of the interview here: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fivo\\_0sYdeU](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fivo_0sYdeU)

I went back later for the show, mostly just because I get such a kick out of watching Pooch mix. He is one of those guys who just gets lost in what he is doing. It is literally a joy to watch. Truth be told, I'm not a huge LP fan. I think I knew three of the songs in their set. But the show sounded huge and had a ton of impact. The crowd was completely into it and moving and grooving just like you want any concert crowd to be doing. If I had not talked to the guys pre-show and found out they shoot for 102 dB A-weighted LEQ (Equivalent Continuous Noise Level) over 10 mins I would have sworn it was a lot louder.

### Flame It On the Tools?

It's easy to do. Concert sound systems have come a very long way in a relatively short period of time. The combination of line array systems (that allow for the very precise aiming of sound) to next-gen power amp technology (that allows horsepower that would have taken up an entire amp rack to be achieved in a couple of rack spaces at less than 20 lbs) makes it increasingly easy to really turn it up.

"Modern line arrays offer tons of headroom for two reasons," Pooch said. "Low distortion at loud volumes, and protection of components. We used to beat the crap out of a front-loaded PA to try to get even close to what we can do today in terms of SPL (Sound Pressure Level). Unfortunately some engineers use ALL the headroom available because they can, and this leads to really loud, ear-damaging volumes."

As we always say, it's not the car, it's the driver. And that holds true in the volume debate as well. Yeah, the tools allow for really ridiculous amounts of volume, but it's the hand on the faders that ultimately controls just how loud it is going to get.

But that hand has a lot of other hands pushing and pulling at it. Hands that belong to anyone from the band to the venue to management. If the band is having an off night and the crowd is not into the show the way we would all like them to be, it is an easy thing for a manager to insist that we "turn it up." Example: The guy who started this whole discussion, Pooch, was recently filling in for another engineer on some European dates. Big rock bands and the artist Pooch was mixing was opening for an act that runs closer to 107 A-weighted. Running his opener at Pooch's preferred 102 level would make them sound small and wimpy, and that is never a good thing. Plus, he was just doing a short run of dates sitting in for someone else, so those shows went out at closer to 104 or 105.

(Remember your physics... If a 10 dB change is perceived as a doubling or halving of level, that 3 dB difference means the show is 30% louder than it would be at 102. Big thanks to Brad Madix for reminding me that an actual doubling of SPL (6 dB) does NOT equal a doubling of perceived volume. DOH!)



"If I kept a log of complaints about the mix, whether from management or the audience, I'd say that the most common one is that it's *not loud enough!*" Brad noted. "In fact I'd say it would win the 'most-often-heard-complaints' contest running away."

"Further, the audience creates a noise floor you have to stay above, or at least compete with. It's not uncommon for the audience to be well over 102dBA for short periods of time. It's also not unusual for the crowd to drown out the beginning of the show. The engineer at least has to keep up with this." You can find more of Brad's thoughts on the subject here: <http://splnetwork.com/blogs/keep-em-dancing-12232011>

True dat. I remember a Springsteen show in Philly with John Cooper where he was fighting just to stay above the crowd that was singing every word to every song.

"Unfortunately, it is not always just left up to



the engineer to make decisions about how loud a show should be,” Pooch added. “More and more venues have limits, and legislation governing volume is popping up everywhere. Often these legislated levels are completely unrealistic for rock shows, and make it almost impossible to provide a record-quality listening experience in a live environment. When legislation and sound cops are not the issue, girlfriends of band members and management can be. I have found that communication and education are what work best in these situations. Explaining the hazards of mixing at outlandish levels, and how everybody is sue happy these days USUALLY puts an end to the discussion.”

### So Just What Is “Too Loud”?

In some ways it is subjective and dependent upon the show and artist. A couple of years ago I talked with Howard Page who was at that point out mixing Sting with an orchestra. He talked about audience expectations. “Does the audience expect for the show to be very loud? If it is Sting with an Orchestra, no. If it is AC/DC, probably yes.”

Back to Brad. “It’s remarkable what acts want to be loud... *very!* Sure, Rage Against the Machine is going to be cranking, but I had a client whose producer told me to make it “like AC/DC with a chick singer.” Our problem every night was gain-before-feedback, and in my humble opinion (what do I know) we could have easily run that show 5dB quieter.”

So is there an objective level that is too loud? Actually there may be and it is not going to make anyone—crew or artist or fan—happy.

In the wake of the stage collapses last summer it is very likely that we will see an influx of Occupational Safety & Health Administration (OSHA) inspectors at shows when the touring season hits its stride in the Spring. In places like Las Vegas where a lot of OSHA inspectors were hired for a construction boom that is now on the skids, OSHA was already at shows this summer giving out citations for stupid, non-safety infractions. Basically, it is a way to keep OSHA inspectors busy.

And we are not the only ones concerned about it. Robert Scovill weighed in on the subject (his thoughts can be found at <http://splnetwork.com/blogs/too-loud-its-complicated-01032012>.) “If you think the government won’t take the time to legislate it, consider that today’s Congress and the Senate are currently working on legislation mandating the variance in audio when moving from program material to commercials on television. At the heart of the debate is whether the volume at which the commercial is created and presented is a function of creativity or not. i.e. Is volume a form of free

speech? Keep that little ditty in mind as you read through the rest of this.” So what happens if OSHA gets involved? According to OSHA standards (the chart can be found at [http://www.osha.gov/pls/oshaweb/owadisp.show\\_document?p\\_table=standards&p\\_id=9735](http://www.osha.gov/pls/oshaweb/owadisp.show_document?p_table=standards&p_id=9735)), at the 105 dBA typical of many rock shows, a worker can only have 1 hour of exposure per day. Note this is not a union thing. Every worker—even freelance audio types—are covered by OSHA regulations. And even if you take us out of the equation, every venue has employees.

More from Scovill... “Frankly, I’m not at all looking forward to the day that OSHA and

the courts get involved in our world of concert sound, but I’m of the opinion that it’s likely to happen at some point. Once it does, you’re sure to see insurance companies lining up to sell liability insurance to EVERYONE and ANYONE involved in concert audio because the lawsuits are sure to follow.”

It’s not a pretty picture. Can you smell the lawsuits coming yet? And it is not just a U.S. thing. The legal exposure limit in the UK is 85 dB.

Do we have a solution? Nope. Except to learn how to mix with impact at lower levels. Wanna talk about it? There is a forum dedicated to the subject on



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## EVENT SAFETY ALLIANCE puts spotlight on staging safety at live events

Recent news relating to the Indiana State Fair stage collapse last August has once again cast the spotlight on safety at live events and added weight to the objectives of a newly-formed coalition that has come together to combat safety issues at large-scale events.

Doodson US CEO, Roger Sandau, and Executive Vice President, James Chippendale, are founding members of the Event Safety Alliance, which was officially launched at the Tour Link Conference in Arizona late last month. Leading members of the live events and music industries, including Director of Touring and Production Manager for Linkin Park, Jim Digby, and Karl Ruling of PLASA, also form part of the coalition, which will push for more comprehensive safety standards.

The coalition's mission is to unite the live event industry for the purpose of assembling key technical and production information, which can be used to establish formal guidelines to improve safety at live events across the United States.

Using extensive combined personal experience, the group will establish guidelines based on approved ANSI codes, to be used by those responsible for the planning and execution of large-scale events.

A proposed safety checklist for outdoor event structures has already been put together by the Event Safety Alliance.

This is the first step in opening discussions with key players in the live events industry to gather feedback and gain support for an industry-wide accepted standard.

"Despite the thousands of live events that are successfully staged every year, there are still a few that end prematurely as a result of insufficient planning or safety measures," said Doodson's James Chippendale. "As an industry it is up to us to work together to put a stop to this, as even one unsafe event is one too many. Recent news regarding the unfortunate incident in Indiana has highlighted the need for greater focus on safety at live events and proved the requirement for the Event Safety Alliance and the work that we are trying to do. It is absolutely vital that we work together to set new standards in the live events industry and raise the bar in terms of how we share information with our peers." ✪

For more info  
visit [eventsafetyalliance.org](http://eventsafetyalliance.org)

### Event Safety Alliance founding members:

Ken Barber - Clair Global  
Keith Bohn - TOMCAT USA  
John Brown - Brown United Staging  
Lyle Centola - Production Mgr  
James Chippendale - Doodson Insurance Brokerage  
Benny Collins - Production Mgr / Tour Link Board Member  
Jim Digby - Production Mgr / Tour Link Board Member  
Mary Lou Figley - Stageco  
Tim Franklin - Structural Engineer  
Charlie Hernandez - Production Director  
Hadden Hipplesley - Production Mgr  
Dave Lester - Clair Global  
Steve MacFadyen - Pollstar  
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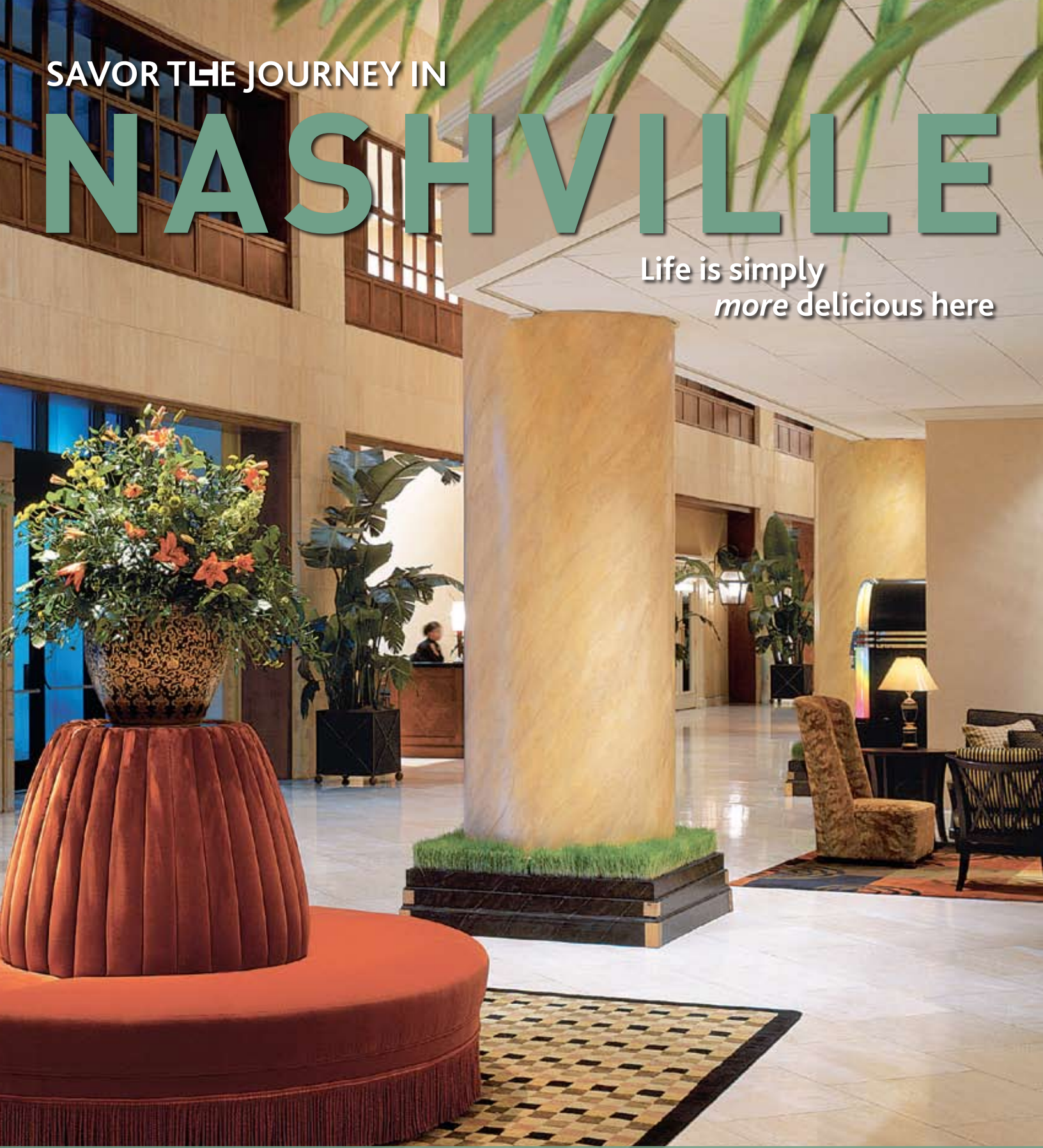


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# Winter NAMM 2012

## MUSIC TO THE EARS, EYES AND SENSORY OVERLOAD

by TODD "TK" KRAMER



Drum Craft

**W**hen over 100,000 people descend on one place for four days of music, mayhem and magic, one of two things can be certain. Either they have returned to Max Yasgur's farm to reenact Woodstock or they have come to the **Winter NAMM (National Association of Music Merchants)** in Anaheim, California.

This year's NAMM drew huge crowds to the home of the Magic Kingdom for a sensory overload event hosting manufactures of everything and anything related to making music from guitars to drums, to pedals, mixers, lights, cellos and brass. Many exhibitors were reporting outstanding response. Excited about 2012 stating sales were up, traffic to their booths was good and have high expectations of retail sales in the coming year.

Although it is impossible to see everything at NAMM in just four days, the exposition saw many innovations and new products premiering. From guitars to drums to sound, NAMM served as a backdrop for manufactures to showcase new ideas. The following is but a small representation and sampling of the innovations to be seen at NAMM.

Martin Guitars premiered several new products including their Mama and Papas Artist

Edition guitar, a reissue of a 1940s Golden Era instrument, crafted from Madagascar Rosewood which features a famous photo of the group in mother of pearl inlaid in the headstock. Martin also introduced a nylon string, a first for Martin. Chris Thomas of Martin states, "It's a hybrid of nylon and steel string technology for more of a steel string feel. Martin is also proud to announce our new line of FSC (Forest Stewardship Council) guitars at NAMM. It's the first to have this certification. The tops in this line are made of reclaimed woods from bridges in Canada and part of our Performing Artists Series."

Borgeois Guitars, a boutique manufacturer that builds around 350 guitars a year, brought out its Ray Lanantain Signature Series along with its new Luthier Series, a product in which only one instrument will be made by Dana Bourgeois from extraordinary woods.



Boulder Creek Guitars



Sennheiser

Kim Breedlove and Breedlove Guitars, a company acquired by Two Old Hippies a year ago, premiered its Voice Series, a venture between Breedlove and LR Baggs, with 6 different models featuring noise cancelling mics. Known for their custom shop work, Breedlove also premiered its 2012 Master Class and Atlas Revival Series and its new website with the entire 2012 lines. Breedlove states, "Smaller size bodies are becoming more popular along with larger size instruments that seem to be trending."

Boulder Creek Guitars, a company known for its unique sound hole placement and acoustic





Borgeois Guitars



Behringer

Behringer introduced the X-32 console and X-16 digital snake at NAMM, developed in conjunction with its sister company Midas. Behringer plans to ship the X-32 later this year. Also new is the P16 headphone system and developing an iPad app for control.

Sennheiser showcased its new X5 wireless system, a value priced system for both vocals and instruments. Thom Salisbury of Sennheiser explained, "We're showing our new HD-700 headphones which we launched at CES. It's a new line of headphones targeted at the studio and audiophile market."

In the arena of audio technology, Wave Machine Labs, known for its Drumagog product line, brought out Auria, a full blown studio, live and editing iPad app. Featuring a number of built-in effects, Auria is capable of 48-track playback and multi-track recording that will accept third party plugins as well. Auria is expected to hit the App store in the next few months.

Although JamHub's Silent Rehearsal Studio has been on the market for the past two years, it made a splash at NAMM this year. Their booth was alive with traffic testing its portable monitor mixing system designed to go anywhere from rehearsal space to the tour bus.

In need of additional real-estate, Ultimate

Ears drew large crowds to get in ear molds made for the custom products they were showcasing. "The crowd seems to be growing faster than our booth," jokes Chuck Reynolds, Ultimate Ears' World Wide Director of Sales.

Joseph Farriella with Gallien-Kruger was busy demoing the new MB, Neo and MVE series of bass amps and cabinets in an activity filled booth.

Going green and creative thinking appeared to be the trend in the percussion world as several boutique companies were showing environmentally friendly new products, including Ancient Tree Drums. Ed Mendel, owner and builder of Ancient Tree creates an interesting instrument made of woods harvested 150 years ago of mostly cypress and long leaf pine found in a Florida river. "We uncovered a musical quality to these woods, The growth patterns were extremely tight and we're the only ones with this wood," he shared.

Vince Mancuso, marketing director for three year old brand Drum Craft, a company based in Germany and relatively new to the US market, showcased its "Certifiably Green" line of products to the US.

Debuting its Snare-within-a-Snare was SJC Custom Drums. Mike Cipari, owner and designer, took an idea of an 8-inch snare

guitars, is breaking into new arenas this year. Sam Whittaker of Boulder Creek told us, "For 2012 our biggest growth is the launch of our electric line as well as expanding our Gold Series line."

Art Director Paul Reed Smith and Head of Sales Mark Quigley felt this year's NAMM was very strong. "We've been seeing a big upswing growing about 9 percent over 2010. We launched our P-22 Piezo 22 fret solid body electric this year. We reinvented our acoustic Piezo system and shrunk it down to fit into an electric body. All the artists and engineers who've heard it have flipped over the sound."

At Midas, Technical Support Manager Jason Kelley says, "It's all about the Pro2 and Pro2C consoles. This was the first show in the US for our newest line in digital consoles. We spent a lot of time designing as small a control surface as possible while retaining all the features of our larger desks," he says. "We focused on our navigation; the most important improvement is our MCA (Mixed Control Association) feature."

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within a 14-inch snare and brought it to fruition at NAMM. “We take crazy out of the box thinking and push the limits of what drums can do. I just wanted to see what it would sound like and experiment. We thought of the idea a month ago and built it a week before the show.”

The big boys in the percussion world were also talking “Green”. Remo’s Sue Kincaid was proud to say, “Remo has always thought Green, building our drums from acoustic foam. We’re selling our first wood drum this year with the Mondo Cajon imported from Spain. Remo along with partner Ford Motor Company is very proud to be supporting ‘Warriors in Pink’ and the special work it does in cancer research. Remo created a special edition line benefiting ‘Warriors in Pink’ with donations from each sale of the line.” Remo premiered its Vintage Emperor Clear and new X14 snare head at the show this year as well.



JamHub

Remo was not the only one showing its charitable side at NAMM. Musicians Bootsy Collins and Malina Moye played on the John Lennon Bus Stage to the foot weary attendees. Malina played the new Fender Swarovski Crystal encrusted Bootsy Girl guitar to be auctioned off later this year to benefiting the Bootsy Collins Foundation, helping to keep music education alive in schools and an instrument in the hands of every child.

The John Lennon Bus had a strong presence in Anaheim. The Prevost XL-2 designed and built by Tantrix travels over 150,000 miles per year reaching out to 250,000 visitors furthering music education. Equipped with audio, video, editing and a green screen provided by 38 sponsors including Avid, Audio-Technica, Gibson Guitars, Apple, Neutric and Sony. The three engineers living on board full time are proud to be a part of the music industry’s effort to further music education, inspiring a new generation with every mile. Ryan L’Esperance, on board producer/engi-



Malina Moye & the Bootsy Girl guitar



JamHub



Gator Cases



Bootsy Collins and Malina Moye

neer told us, “We’re fortunate to get to do this and excited about expanding. We’re shooting to have a bus in Europe and follow the path of The Beatles by September. We want to take music education to the next level. We’re proud to be associated with such a great project and with every student who comes on board.”

Tour Supply Inc. had a lot to offer, showing several new items from Tour Supply, Palmer Audio, G-Lab and AFW. Catering to the touring professional Tour Supply Inc. and its affiliates covered everything from gaff tape, batteries and instrument supplies to Palmer Audio’s speaker simulator system, G-Labs guitar FX pedals and AFW’s road cases, built in Los Angeles California and designed for space and weight efficiency catering to touring applications.

Lighting was not to be without representation at this year’s show either. Elation had its EPW video wall on display. “Something we’re very excited about,” said Mark Haney Senior Marketing Manager Broadcast, Video and Lighting. “We’re also premiering our EL Series LED Blinders here this year. The show has been very busy, we’re looking forward to seeing growth in 2012.”

Omni Systems’ Burt Gilland saw NAMM as huge with lots of quality traffic this year as they debuted several new products from LED walls to trussing, a line arrays, road cases and wireless lighting products.

With the 2012 Winter NAMM over and done, exhibitors, buyers, press and other visitors can give their feet a needed break leaving the show with a feeling of joy and an overall feeling of confidence that 2012 will be an exciting year with expected growth potential as they look to the Summer NAMM July 12-14 in Nashville and to NAMM Russia taking place in Moscow in June. ✨





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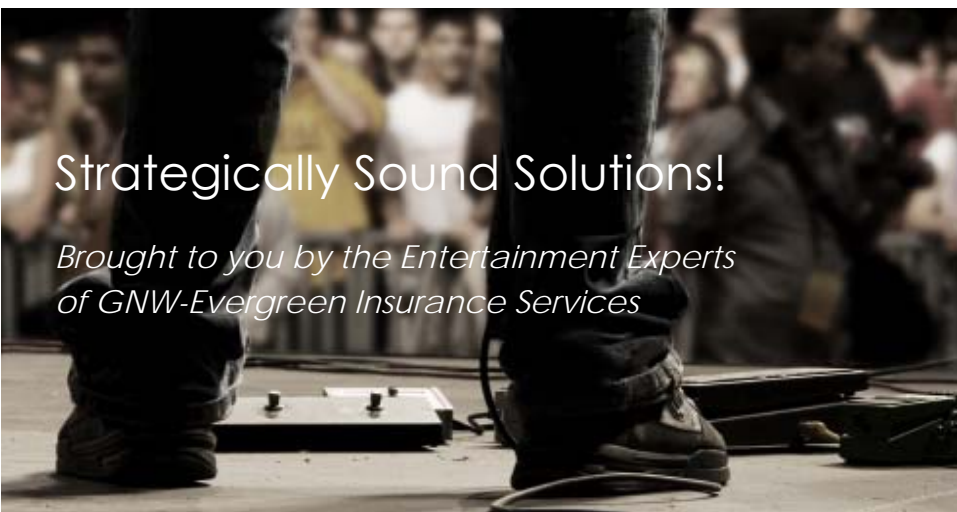
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# Celebrity Coaches A Long & Open Road

BY TODD "TK" KRAMER

"On a long and lonesome highway East of Omaha, you can listen to the engine moanin' out his one note song." The drivers and staff at Celebrity Coaches charge on through the night while the roadies and band slumber safe in their bunks traveling the miles of city highway and rural country backroads en route to the next day's load in.

Since January 2005, Jeff Michael and his crew have kept the busses running down the long road Bob Seger described in this classic road tune. Logging in an average of 120,000 miles per year in each of its 39 coaches, Celebrity Coaches has been living the long and open road for the past two and a half decades.

Michael and a full time staff of 11, with five in the office and a shop of six, has kept its fleet of Prevost coaches running smoothly down the road since Motley Crue's first reunion tour back in 2005. "Coincidentally, Crue was my first tour in the industry somewhere way back in the 90s," he noted. Michael has a long history with the entertainment coach industry going back to his youth when his father, Larry Michael, owned and ran Pyramid Busses, "Back when the Eagle was King". "My Dad, who was my biggest inspiration in the business, started Pyramid back in 1990; the first time I ever drove a bus was with him. We went down to Brownsville Texas to pick up a shell Dad had bought. When we got there they said they had a cancellation and had another shell if he wanted it. Dad bought it on the spot. When the guys at Eagle asked him how he was getting it home, he threw me the keys and told everyone, 'no problem, Jeff will drive it.' I was really inspired just being around him and all the busses growing up. The Pyramid days were also responsible for the start of Celebrity. In 1999 a group of investors bought Dad's company and we had a five year non-compete clause. The new owners asked us to buy some busses for them to manage and by the end of the non-compete we owned 15 busses which led to the beginning of Celebrity."



Michael and Celebrity have come a long way since 2005 and Motley Crue, building an impressive client list including Jason Mraz and Melissa Etheridge, two longstanding clients who are very "green" thinkers. "We get some requests for biodiesel aside from Jason [Mraz] and Melissa [Etheridge], who like to run biodiesel as often as possible," explains Michael. "There's a big push to tour green and we're doing every little thing we can too. All the new busses we're buying have better emissions; we're looking into solar panels; we have biodiesel vendors all over the country, and we prepare budgets for biodiesel and plan stops for biodiesel trucks to meet the busses at certain locations and think more environmental."

From one bus to 12, Celebrity is always prepared, as was the case on Roger Waters' *The Wall* tour this last year and The Zac Brown Band as well. "We started out with one custom bus for Zac who now fluctuates between 10 to 12. Zac grew fast over the last four years, I think faster than we did," jokes Michael. "Even with the fluctuating economy, I always felt the

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entertainment industry was insulated from it. We've continued to grow every year; last year was one of the best years we've ever had. We develop a good relationship with the tour managers and bands to make everyone feel at home on the bus. Every so often we'll take our BIG barbeque out to a gig and cook for the band and crew. We'll usually do about 500 pounds of meat on those days. One other thing we do that's turned into a good revenue stream for us is all inclusive tours. We pay the drivers, the fuel, the tolls, permits, logs and the accountant gets one bill which they seem to like. We also devote a lot of time to planning and

logistics. To meet the requirements on Poison's 2011 tour we were flying drivers in and out regularly."

Over the years Celebrity has done some interesting conversions according to Michael, "Just when you think you've heard everything someone comes up with something new. We've installed tanning beds in a bus and even a small workout gym for Poison's Brett Michaels

Rising Sun Exterior



in another. Being from Tupelo Mississippi, the birthplace of Elvis, we even retrieved The King's tour bus and restored it to its original condition," Michael laughs. "I think it's for sale in Nashville somewhere now."

Along with its roster of performing artists including Nickleback, Staind, Allison Krauss, Jane's Addiction, Coldplay, Shinedown, Miranda Lambert, No Doubt, Theory of A Deadman, Steve Earle and Lady GaGa, Celebrity Coach plays host to many politicians and corporate types traveling the road in search of votes, promoting their latest and greatest products and business developments across the country. Michael explains, "There is a difference between entertainment people and the others as entertainment people seem to handle the road life better. They're better equipped to deal with the pleasures and the difficulties of bus life."

Looking down the road five or 10 years, Michael confidently states that he and Celebrity will, "still be in a positive direction with a comfortable 50 to 55 coaches for star, band and crew. We started out with 15, so I think 50 to 55 is a comfortable place to be. We're into sales now too, although that's a small part of what we do."\*

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# ODYSSEY







# ODYSSEO *Presents* the Perfect Example of Subtle Enormity

BY MICHAEL A. BECK

When Cavalia opened its latest production titled *Odysseo* it embarked on one of the most aggressive touring projects in history. Like its predecessor “C1” (as it’s called internally), the show has the task of taking a small self-contained and self-reliant city down the road. The difference is *Odysseo* is much larger in every conceivable way. For starters, this show has 71 horses. All other traveling equestrian shows play in arenas. The shows in the Cavalia franchise have to build their venues.

*Remember when we say we work with the horses, we’re not using them to deliver milk. We play with them. In fact, all of the training is based upon the fact that the horses have to see the experience as one wherein they are playing with us. It has to be fun for them.*

~ Stable Director André Boulais

Grand Cavalia VI | Credits: François Bergeron



Grand Cavalia | Credits: Pascal Ratthé

One of the largest challenges of this production is logistical. Prior to anything arriving in a given town the task of acquiring a site begins. As with anything, location figures heavily into the process. When C1 came through Atlanta it played at Atlantic Station, which bills itself as a live-work-play community located in the Midtown area of greater Atlanta. The site was chosen for its direct visual access to the merge of Interstate routes 75 and 85. Unfortunately, that site wasn’t large enough to accommodate the 250,000 square feet of the *Odysseo* compound.

The first option was situated across the highway from Atlantic Station. Rather than one location, it was a parking lot the size of a city block and an empty lot of equal dimensions across the street. The parking lot sloped with a total vertical drop of about 15 feet and the empty lot was at a lower level than the parking lot and it too had a gentle slope. Logistically the location was problematic so the hunt continued. There was space in the parking lot of Atlanta’s Turner Field, which houses the Atlanta Braves baseball franchise. However, the visibility of that location left much to be desired. Because the clock was running out, it was decided to revisit the first site that covered two city blocks. Ever confident Tour Director Duncan Fisher assured all that anything can be done and the decision was made. That wasn’t the end of it.

Now permission had to be acquired in order

to use the location. This means a lot more than just going to the owners of the space and cutting a deal. There is also the matter of permitting and running it past the local neighborhood. The whole process from soup to nuts took roughly two months. Once the location has been secured the publicity team goes to work with a monstrous ad buy that encompasses every form of media. In the case of the Atlanta show, there was a huge amount of work to be done in order to customize the grounds in order to erect the aforementioned small city.

The first order of business was to level the playing field (as it were). This was done by bringing in roughly 23,000 tons of crushed recycled concrete and packing it onto the site. It is absolutely critical that this is done correctly due to the nature of what will sit upon it. Because the fill material had to be contained in order to condense it tightly enough to support the weight intended for it, a retaining wall was created around the lower part of the lot. This wall was made up of precast concrete blocks that have three knobs on top and three corresponding indentations on the bottom. They locked together like Legos.

As was mentioned earlier, this site encompassed two lots roughly the size of a city block each, which are separated by 8th Street, which was closed off for the duration of the show’s run. The parking lot was the



area designated for the big top and the empty lot was used for everything else. While leveling out the two areas was a large job, it was fairly straight forward with lots and lots of dump trucks (roughly 1,000 trucks), steam rollers and a surveyor keeping a watchful eye on the whole job. As this process progressed over a few days the gear started rolling in.

When the parking lot was deemed to be level, it was now time to erect the big top. The tent was supported by four massive arches. Each of the arches consisted of 8' x 30' sections that were assembled on the ground and craned into position using a 250 ton crane. Once assembled, each arch peaks at 90 feet with a 200 foot span. Once the arches were placed, four 125 foot masts were also built.

When the structure was completed, it was time to fly the tent. The largest in the world, this canopy is comprised of 220,000 square feet of canvas. It attaches to the arches by way of five drum wenches per arch. When the canvas is flown into place, it is dead hung off of static points adjacent to the hoist positions. The dead hang points also functioned as rig points for the production grid inside the tent. When it is in place, the big top covers a footprint of more than 100,000 square feet and has a load capacity of 80 tons. This tent will sustain a 160,000 pound load.

After all was said and done, the big top requires 1,310 stakes and anchor points, 166 poles to assemble the side walls and 3.6 miles of steel cable are used to attach the structure to the ground. The tent houses not only the “arena” but also a theatre lobby and VIP lounge.

As impressive as the sheer mass of the big top is, it only comprises one half of the area needed for the production to function. In Atlanta, the other half of the site was on the other side of 8th Street and the stables were fully 15 feet below the level of the floor of the big top. This meant that something had to be done in order to get the horses from the stable up to the show. Earlier we mentioned the large interlocking “Lego” blocks used to contain the leveling material. Those same blocks were used to contain the same recycled concrete in the construction of a covered ramp that rose gently from the stables, across the street and into the backstage area of the big top.



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*While leveling out the two areas was a large job, it was fairly straight forward with lots and lots of dump trucks (roughly 1,000 trucks), steam rollers and a surveyor keeping a watchful eye on the whole job.*

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Because this is an equestrian show there is a lot of science involved in determining what the ground cover will be in the tent. Before that could be addressed the production gear had to come in while the floor of the tent was still the [extremely] hard packed material first laid down a week earlier. Once the grid was assembled and the production elements that needed to attach to the grid were flown, the “playing surface” was laid in.

The most prominent physical feature of the set in this show is a huge 14 foot tall mountain that has a core of 6,000 tons of the recycled concrete used to level the site and covered with rock dust that holds the mountain together. Once the rock dust is in place it is covered with fine grain sand in order to cushion the horses’ hooves. Several times during the show measures had to be taken to prevent the sand from sliding off the slope due to the relatively large numbers of horses and people ascending and descending the steep mountain. The answer to this was achieved through a combination of mulch and a stabilizing agent to keep the

sand in place.

It is important to understand that this show has a stage area in the same way that any other show might. That area is the size of two hockey rinks placed side by side running lengthwise away from the audience with the crest of the mountain being the upstage line. At the foot of the mountain where the stage levels out, the floor is composed of a different set of ingredients. Technical Director James Richardson explains, “Nothing around here is just sand or just dirt. It all has a specific reason for being





photos by Michael A. Beck



here. At this point I can tell you more about sand than I ever thought I would know.”

To that point, the sand on the flat portion of the stage is a black sand chosen for a number of reasons not the least of which being its ability to hide that fact that it’s wet as the entire area below the mountain is a lake. In C1, there is a water feature that could be filled and emptied during the show. However, it only covered a small area and contained 900 gallons. The water feature in *Odysseo* is something all together different utilizing 80,000 gallons.

Rather than employing a concave basin insert with a drain at its lower apex the “lake” in *Odysseo* is a huge three foot deep leach field that is constantly filled with 40,000 gallons of water. This is because there isn’t enough time to pump in the full amount in a timely manner during the show.

Keeping that in mind, the ground cover has to be able to sustain its firm structure despite being covered with water. Richardson offered a

rather useful comparison, “When you go to the beach the sand at the very edge of the water is nice and firm. But when you go three or four feet into the water it becomes too soft to run through. Our challenge was to create a surface that is equally firm both dry and wet.”

The process of solving that puzzle took the better part of a year and was finally resolved with only one week to spare before production rehearsals began.

At the same time the R&D on the sand was taking place, the issue of how to deploy and remove the water was also being dealt with. The answer was remarkably elegant. The delineating line between the audience and the stage is a barricade roughly three feet high by two feet wide. They ran the water feed system inside the barricade and pushed it out through openings at the base of the barricade. The effect of this was to see a lake roll out away from the audience. The water feature was used in the last number of the show. When the house was cleared, the water was evacuated by using a technique similar to the sub-air system used to suck the water on a sports field down through the grass and out of the stadium. That system is also used to compact the sand by sucking the water down through the sand at high volume.

By the time the tent is show-ready, a total of 8,000 tons of various kinds of dirt, sand, mulch and other filler are used to create the stage. That’s a total of 348 dump trucks. Richardson explained, “To build the mountain and the stage takes five days. We bring in a team of people who do nothing but move dirt, and they

are the best on the planet at what they do. But the last part of the job is done by hand and no matter how many rakes you give people, it can only be done so fast.”

Because the construction of the site is a very involved and loud process, the horses are not allowed on site during that time or during the strike of the production. That means the horses have to be boarded at a farm during the change over from one city to the next. During the last show in a city, horse trucks are moving into position for the horses to be loaded for transport. Within an hour of the end of the last performance, the process of loading the horses begins.

In the case of C1, the boarding period is roughly one week out of the 12 days needed to get the show moved and show-ready. With *Odysseo* it’s a whole different story. The move from Montreal was the first time the show traveled. Because it doesn’t have the ability to leapfrog tents, and the logistics of transporting this show were still getting the *shake-down* treatment, the process took 30 days. Even after the move has been trimmed down to the desired 20 days, that means the horses will have to be boarded for all but a week of the transition period.

This is not to say the horses are dropped off and picked up in time to



have them to the next city for rehearsals. The entire stable staff stays with and looks after the horses the whole time. While this down time would seem to be something the horses crave and look forward to in the same way humans look forward to a few weeks away from our jobs, Stable Director André Boulais points out that such is not the case. “When we take them to the farm between cities, they enjoy that time because they are allowed to roam freely in the pasture a minimum of half of every day. But you have to understand that they have a daily routine here and when they get back here from the farm they are relieved to be back into that routine.”

Boulais went on to say, “Remember when we say we work with the horses we’re not using them to deliver milk. We play with them. In fact all of the training is based upon the fact that the horses have to see the experience as one wherein they are playing with us. It has to be fun for them.”

That being said there is a great deal of energy devoted to caring for the stars of the show. Almost half of the 250,000 square foot compound is devoted to looking after the horses. The site contains a stable big enough to house 71 horses, seven showers, office space for the staff and tack storage. Every horse performs during the show. When the horses come out of the big top after the first performance, they are walked in order to cool down, showered and prepped for the next performance in the second half of the show.

In addition to the massive stable tent, the compound also has a warm up/practice tent and eight paddocks. There is also a catering tent that sports a full restaurant kitchen that prepares all food on the site including crew meals and the food that supplies the VIP lounge during the performance. There are also administrative office trailers, box offices, restroom facilities and a fabrication tent. The fabrication tent was important in Atlanta. Duncan Fisher explained why, “This was the first time the seating system has been moved on this tour and when it showed up the carts were what came from the factory. But we have to plan for the eventuality of this show going overseas so we’ve been adapting the carts for that purpose. Once that gets done there will always be things that break down and get damaged.”

So now the venue is built, the horses are here and all is show-ready. Let’s talk production gear. Every square foot of this “stage” has to be lit as is the case with any stage. However, this stage has enormous area to cover. The task was met with a combination of 302 fixtures made of an eclectic blend of gear including Vari\*Lite 3000 Spots, Vari\*Lite 3500 Wash FX, JBL LED Wash A-7, MAC 101 LED Wash, Eldo LED Lights, 108 Par 64’s and Theatrx Par LED.

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*Nothing around here is just sand or just dirt. It all has a specific reason for being here. At this point I can tell you more about sand than I ever thought I would know. ~ Technical Director James Richardson*

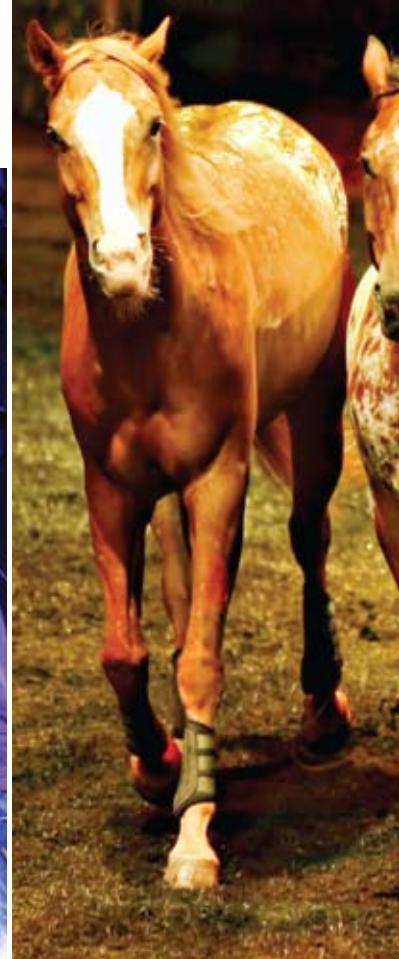
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When the show opens, the bulk of the stage area is closed off by a scrim that is textured to look like a forest as horses wonder in the area upstage. The scrim is hit with a projection from two Christie Digital 30k Roadster projectors. The “mountain” discussed earlier rises up in front 45’ x 285’ cyc. The cyc is hit with seven out of a total of 19 Christie Digital 20k Roadster projectors. Four of the 20k’s are aimed at roll drops that come into view during the show and the rest of the units are used not only to assist in lighting the stage area but also to give the stage dimension, texture and movement. Rather than having rapid fire dynamics of a high intensity rock show, *Odysseo* is a lesson in subtlety despite the bold statement made by the tent to anyone approaching it. Part of the decision on the material used in creating the mountain was

how it would react under light so that the esthetics can be gently manipulated.

There are times when the projection on the cyc is that of a huge mountain range while the projection on the stage looks like lush green grassy foothills. This is actually created as one big image to be split between the floor and cyc with the center 12 feet between the floor and the cyc cut out. The rub is that while this is taking place, there is also action on the stage that has to be specifically if not delicately lit from the lighting system without blowing out the video content.

Lighting, sound, rigging and video were all provided by production giant Solotech. However, while the server



**ODYSSEO**





The Call of Africa | Credits: Pascal Ratthé



Oasis | Credits: Pascal Ratthé



The Travelers



The Tribe | Credits: JF Leblanc

package (11 Coolux Pandora Box Media Servers and 1 Coolux Media Manager) was part of the purchase, all of the projectors were leased. Solotech Senior Vice President of Touring Richard Lachance explained, "Although there were budgetary concerns, there was also a desire to see what new projection technology might be coming soon including 4k laser units. We thought it would be a better idea to supply the projectors in a rental package."

That was probably a fortuitous arrangement for the production given the issues incurred when the show got on the road. After opening in Montreal, the show's first real road stop was Atlanta where humidity is an issue even in the winter. That is accentuated by the moisture that is a natural occurrence when you put 71 horses, 2,000 people and 50,000 to 80,000 gallons of water in close proximity within a tightly enclosed environment. Added to that issue is the dust kicked up by the horses. Airborne dust was a strong consideration when the composition of the dirt was being determined. However, despite that consideration the problem of airborne particulate matter can never be completely overcome.

James Richardson described the approach to solving the problem, "The avenue we're taking is to build climate controlled enclosures for the projectors, a projection booth if you will. We've been having a Christie verses Barco conversation and that's why we haven't finalized the solution yet as we don't want to build something for these projectors only to have to do it all over again if we go in another direction." That conversation took place in Atlanta with the next stop being Miami where humidity is a much greater issue. However, when the show got to Miami the heat of the area mandated the use of the tent's powerful HVAC system and the humidity problem went away.

Lachance discussed the approach to the problem, "They're working on the problem themselves and we're trying to help but in the end moisture and dust are harmful to the inner workings of moving heads and projectors. They have to be cleaned and maintained on a constant rotating schedule."

The element that was truly an overarching issue of the production in every way was the enormous mother grid created by Canadian truss manufacturer Arcofab. Every aspect of the show that flew hung on the mother grid. There was simply nothing else to attach to. This was critical in many ways, however the largest challenge was not in the engineering but rather the timing. "The time from to build



it was crazy,” recalled Arcofab owner Bernard Thériault. “From the time we got the contract to the time we had to deliver the grid was three months. There were many, many changes along the way.” The game came down to the wire so much so that the first time the grid was assembled on site was the first time it was *ever* assembled.

“We have great faith in our engineering,” Thériault added. “The only thing that had us concerned was the question of how easily it would go together. We were very happy to hear that there was no grinding or hammering needed. The first time it went together all they needed was rubber mallets.”

The second challenge was distributing 70,000 pounds over minimal points on a grid that had to contour the tent in order to cover the area needed. Because the only place anything could be attached was the on the dead-hang points on the external arches. The arches only had 16 points available. That was the primary area of interest in the design process at Arcofab. However, there was one other concern. Because there was no way to completely stabilize the tent in a wind, measures had to be taken to ensure that when the tent *did* sway, everything would sway in unison due to the amount of the video projection happening throughout the show.

This production is billed as an equestrian event. Whereas its predecessor *Cavalria* was entirely about the horses, *Odysseo* has acts that don't include horses. One of the most notable utilizes an 18,000 pound carousel that flies in from the grid upon which acrobatics are performed. The show doesn't use winches due to weight limitations. Therefore, the carousel has to be flown in and out on one ton chain hoists. But because the move has to happen quickly the motors can't be double reeved. Additionally there is a necessity to minimize the number of chains lifting the unit for esthetic reasons. The solution was to use two Variolifts per point. Each hook is on a roller through which a chain travels that is pulled through a motor on each end. This way the load capacity is doubled and the hoist speed of 32 feet per minute is maintained.

There is no way to completely describe every aspect of *Odysseo* in the space allotted for this story. There's simply too much to it. This isn't just a show that moves from city to city. “We're moving a small city here,” says Logistic Director Jackie Dettwiler. “We have to deal with sewage, water, electricity and we have to be able to set it all up in a field or parking lot where none of that stuff exists.”

The production rented 50 apartments in Atlanta in order to house its personnel. The list of considerations is dizzying. The logistical challenges have military proportions.

It's a dangerous thing for anyone in the live entertainment industry to say “that can't be done” about anything. The big movers of the industry have made a living of proving that anything can be done if the conviction to do so exists on the part of the creators of a given show. While there are those who say that shows like *Odysseo* don't fall into the same milieu as the traditional concert model, there are others who laugh at the contention. That is a fascinating debate that is worth having and a key point to be discussed is that if there is a limiting factor regarding what can and can't be done it is found in the physical parameters of fixed venues.

In the case of *Cavalria* and *Odysseo* that issue is disposed of with one sentence... Let's build a bigger tent. 🌟



Logistics Team



Stables Team



Artistic Team





Tour Service Team



Front of House Team



JD



Technical Team

# ODYSSEY

## CREW







# SOLOTECH Reaches *Bigger*

BY MICHAEL A. BECK

Solotech first came on the scene in Montreal as an audio company in 1977. In the 35 years that have passed, Solotech has become huge production force with full service capability. “When you bring our company on board to supply all production needs you don’t have separate crews doing lighting, sound, rigging and video,” says Solotech Senior Vice-President, International Business Development François Leroux. “You have one production team. That allows us to maximize quality and efficiency by supplying a fully integrated production system. It beneficially effects the bottom line as well.”

Leroux admits that it’s a tough business and it’s rare that Solotech is asked to put a fully integrated system on a tour. However, it is the goal of the company to make a stronger push into that touring model. Despite the size and scope of Solotech’s rental, which reaches into the worlds of corporate production, sports events, TV, film and festivals the company doesn’t have the touring portfolio that it would like. That’s not to say that Solotech doesn’t tour. With major touring clients like Cirque du Soleil – including the current “Michael Jackson: Immortal” – Celine Dion, Britney Spears, Michael Bublé and Kylie Minogue among many others, the company definitely has chops.

One step that Solotech has taken in the direction of a larger touring footprint was the 2011 purchase of Audio Analysts. The transition of the acquisition took place over the summer of 2011 after which the operational aspects of what was Audio Analysts now function out of Solotech’s U. S. (Las Vegas) office.

Another large part of the Solotech corporate picture has been permanent installation, which functions as a “Sales and Integration”

wing of the company. Leroux explained that breakdown, “Typically it’s been 60/40 with rental being 60 percent of our global business and permanent installs making up the rest. Because the number of long tours has been down in the past couple years we’ve had to make up the lag in the other sides of the business. These days there are specific areas wherein people are more in the mood to buy than rent but that’s not generally the case in the touring world.”

One example of that is the goliath production of *Odysseo*. “This was a very, very daring show,” said Solotech Senior Vice President of Touring Richard Lachance. Solotech designed, built and delivered the production system for the show. However, the only part of the show that was a rental was the 19 Christie Digital 20k Roadster projectors and two Christie Digital 30k Roadster projectors. Because the projection world is on the verge of rolling over into a new phase of technology such as super efficient 4k laser based units it made sense for the tour to rent the projectors rather than to buy them at this time.

Lachance also addressed the measures being taken to account for the still delicate economy. “We’re adjusting to the market which determines the way we structure our pricing

in both the rental and sales markets as well as the hybrid deals we enter into.” Lachance added, “Offer and demand in certain areas are dictating a compression of the prices that we can charge. We can charge less percentage of value today than we could five years ago, but that’s normal. Prices of cars and homes and a lot of things have lowered and we all have to adjust. I think the days of one or two companies creating an empire around them are gone because clients can go online and get an educated look at who has the best gear and technology for their productions or who has done stadium shows or big top shows.”

While there has been much talk in this story about integration in terms of packaging lights, sound, video and rigging on a tour, that all falls under the departmental title of “Rental” at Solotech. However there is a Sales and Integration division of the company. Within this arm of the company Solotech offers design, custom fabrication and installation of everything from basic systems to extremely complex projects for clients ranging from airports to arenas and stadium to the Hard Rock Hotel & Casino and Cirque du Soleil’s production of *Love* in Las Vegas. Indeed, Solotech has done installation jobs all over the world from Macau to South America and the Middle East and beyond.

In addition to the work being done in the areas of rental and sales/integration, there is the third arm of Solotech which is retail, which sells new and used gear in the areas of lighting, audio, recording, video and DJ equipment. The Solotech store has locations in Montreal and Quebec.

Both Lachance and Leroux offer firm assurances that there isn’t a production or design project that can’t be enhanced by Solotech’s far reaching technical, design and logistical capability. ✪

For more info: [solotech.com](http://solotech.com)

*pictured on opposite page: Cavalia's  
Odysseo & Michael Jackson: Immortal*



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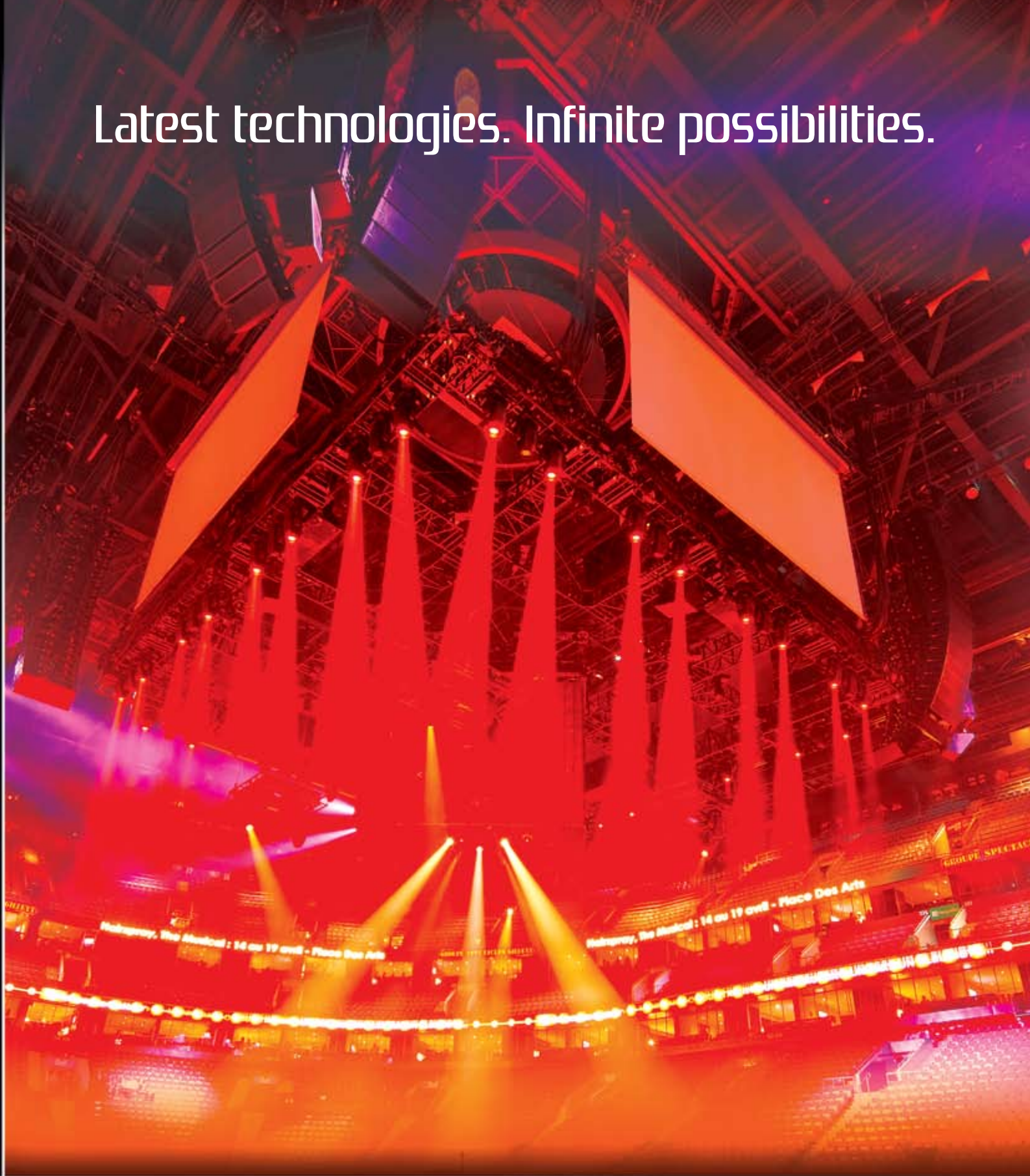
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