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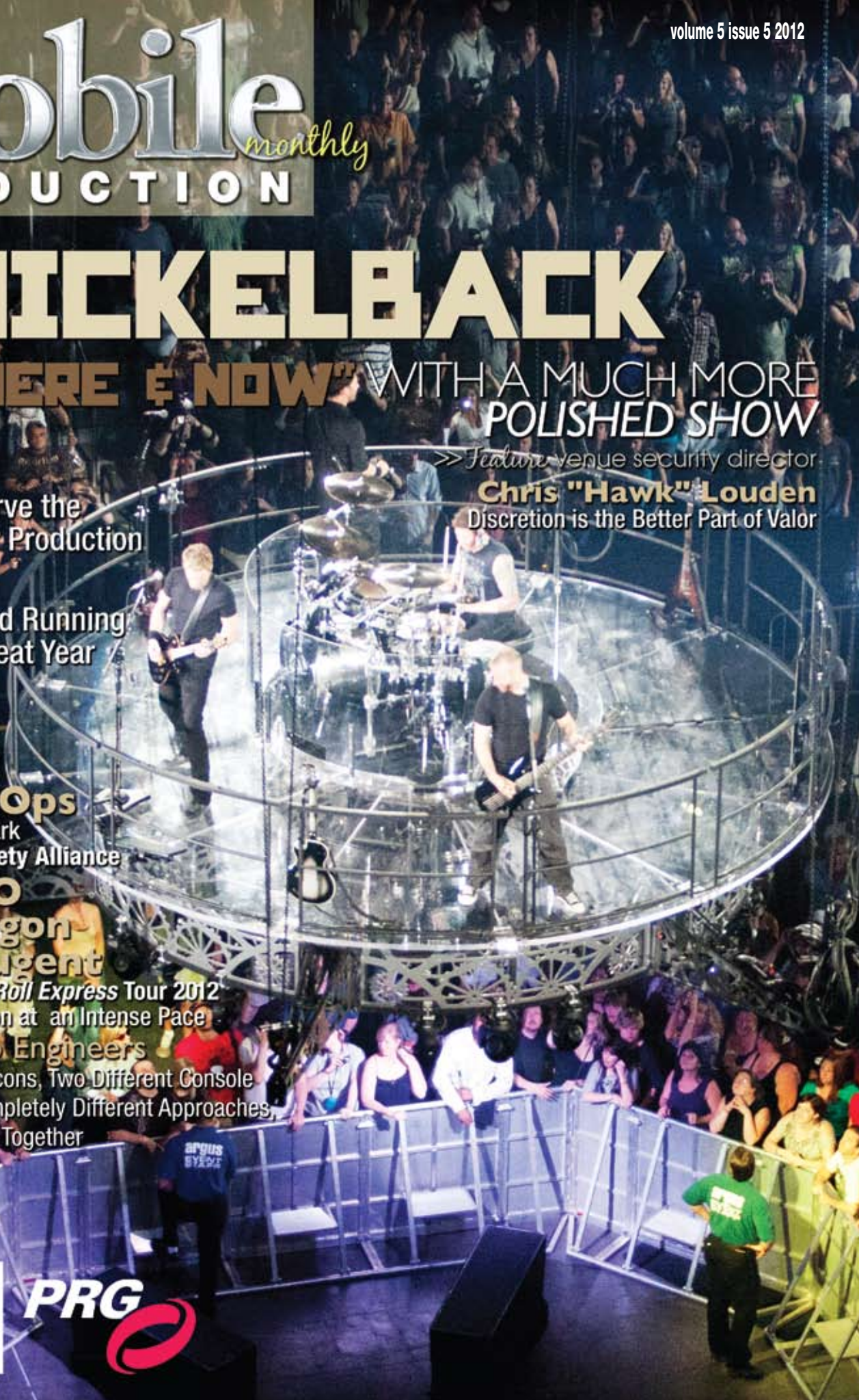
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# NICKELBACK

## "HERE & NOW"

photos by Michael A Beck

mobile PRODUCTION monthly

volume 5 issue 5 2012

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	Fri	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue
May 25	May 26	May 27	May 28	May 29	May 30
Temp	72	73	79	78	80
Humid	65	56	59	63	65
Wind	10%	0%	0%	50%	0%
Wind Dir	E	NE	NE	NE	E
Wind Spd	15 mph	17 mph	12 mph	20 mph	5 mph
Wind Gust	20 mph	30 mph	15 mph	30 mph	10 mph
Rise	5:34 am	5:33 am	5:32 am	5:31 am	5:30
Set	9:32 pm	9:34 pm	9:35 pm	9:36 pm	9:38
Daylen	12:32 am	11:42 am	12:54 pm	12:54 pm	2:01
Daylen	12:47 am	1:14 am	1:38 am	1:38 am	2:00
Daylen	37%	28%	37%	40%	60%



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## FROM THE *Publisher*



This issue of *mPm* features Nickelback's *Hear & Now* Tour, one of the more enduring bands in this era. Supporting the feature are eps america and PRG. As you all know, we try to select features in our magazine that show how the different service companies support specific tours on our cover. I think you will find these two interesting and informative. On a personal note, I want to thank Mickey Curbishley at PRG for his continuing support of our work, both in the magazine and with the Tour Link Conference. He is proof positive that good breeding counts...I knew his father and had a great relationship with him as well for many years.

Not to dwell on second-generation people in our business, but it is gratifying for me to see so many young people coming through the ranks who had or have parents who were in this game from the early years. Growing up in an environment like that has to be a strong motivator. Knowing the difference between real work ethics and slick BS is invaluable and fortunately, so far all of the second generation people I have met recently have that gift of straight talk, straight deals and no BS.

Also in this issue is a story on a weather tracking system being used by Linkin Park that is part of our continuing effort to support more stage safety awareness and positive action. There is no more important issue in our business than saving lives and keeping personnel safe on the job. We will do our best to keep the stories coming and to promote any and all safety-minded activities and activists.

Finally, as we are into the summer touring season, we will continue to look at segments of our business that support touring in so many ways, including transportation, hotels, manufacturers and interesting support companies. Have a great season and keep safe.

*Larry Smith*

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# IN THE NEWS



## Cases

### Scouting For Cases 5 STAR Style

5 Star Cases has donated some of its Arena 600 cases to The Rig Scout Active Support Unit which is based in Huddersfield, West Yorkshire, UK, for their day-to-day use.

'The Rig' is a charitable organization currently managed by Jason Robbins. It was originally set up in 2000 by parents of a local scout involved in the lighting and sound industry to help his group weather financial difficulties, and started off running local discos with some scouts on the crew.

Since then things have grown considerably. A team of 10 regular volunteers and others enable The Rig Scout Active Support Unit to provide a full range of technical production services for stage shows and events, in the process helping to support all scouting activities in the Huddersfield North District.

Robbins approached 5 Star's Keith Sykes asking about the possibility of some flightcases, and Sykes responded with the offer of two of 5 Star's latest Arena 600 cases, complete with removable trays, to add to The Rig's inventory.

He explains that they have been extremely fortunate with support from several major industry players over the years, and so it was brilliant to get another premium brand like 5 Star involved who are "Known for producing some of the best built cases in the industry".

Keith Sykes comments, "I was very happy to support The Rig.



Scouting is a greatly inspirational organization for young people nationwide, and The Rig is doing some excellent work including offering a potential future generation hands-on experience and a glimpse into the possibilities of a career in entertainment technology, theatre production and event staging".

The 5 Star cases are currently being used to help with storage and transport of The Rig's ever-increasing cable stock.

Additionally, the Rig provides schools and community groups with technology and expertise that they might not normally be able to afford, allowing their aspiring young performers and stars to get a "Real sense of the magic of theatre".

The first show on which the new 5 Star cases were used was the West Yorkshire County Scouts Gang

Show, staged over three days at the Victoria Theatre in Halifax, with sold out performances attracting audiences of up to 1000 a night. [5star-cases.com](http://5star-cases.com)

13 x Robe ROBIN 600 Spots, 12 x LEDWash 600s and a selection of generics, so the Robe moving lights were very much the core of the rig.

The lights were rigged on two overhead trusses, on six different height vertical towers onstage and on the deck.

Two LEDBeam 100s were attached to each of the six upright towers and used for colourful, whizzy, chasey effects and to make up zany beam patterns throughout the set. For the MEN show, the count was boosted up to 24 LEDBeam fixtures which helped fill the enormous stage space very nicely.

Eight of the LEDWash 600s were positioned on the back truss, four on drop-arms, with the other four on the floor pointing at the towers and highlighting the metalwork which shaped the otherwise bare stage. They also provided a comprehensive downstage wash.

Farmer used the Robe LEDWash 600s for the first time on last year's Roger Daltrey tour and really liked them. However, he wasn't able to use smoke then, so on the Happy Mondays, with some serious 'atmosphere', was really able to fully appreciate the diversity and richness of the colour palette.

## Lighting

### Happy Days and Happy Mondays for ROBE LEDBEAM 100s

Robe's new, small and funky LEDBeam 100 fixtures made their UK touring debut on the Happy Mondays recent three week outing, with lighting designed by Dave Farmer of THC Design.

Equipment for the major shows, including Manchester MEN Arena and three sold out Brixton Academy's, was supplied by Leeds based Zig Zag Lighting.

The iconic Manchester alt rock/ravers returned to live performance with a huge bang, and the original line up for the first time in 19 years.

The LEDBeam 100s were joined by

He also likes the very versatile 15 - 60 degree zoom. Much of the time the LEDWash 600s were so bright - even for the Mondays - that he ran them at around 50% intensity.

The ROBIN 600 Spots he also found bright and reliable.

On the Monday's rig, one was positioned on the top of each tower, five on the back truss and two on the floor. They were used for supplementary beamwork and for general band lighting. "Very responsive, fast, and offer a good





# IN THE NEWS



## Sound

### SENNHEISER 965 Is The Best Choice For Imelda May

Irish singer-songwriter Imelda May is just coming to the end of a run of British and European shows, before taking a well-earned break to have her first child. As if that and selling out the Royal Albert Hall wasn't enough, she has finally found her perfect vocal microphone – a Sennheiser e 965.

Trevor Gilligan took over front of house mixing duties for Imelda and her band around 15 months

ago and soon started the quest for a vocal mic that would really suit her voice.

phones from a range of other manufacturers, but none of them were quite right. She found most of them too clinical.

“As she likes to sing at a good distance from the mic, both when she’s giving it some power and also when singing softly, I thought a condenser would suit her style as they have a better proximity effect. We tried the Sennheiser e 965 and she loved its bite and fullness.”

The two 965s that Trevor subsequently purchased have been a feature of the shows ever since.

“We have used them everywhere, from tiny venues to arenas and they deliver every time,” he continues. “You can get a very high level before feedback and they are very punchy. They are also

built like a battleship, which is very important for touring.

“All-in-all the 965 is the best choice for us and the support from Sennheiser is second to none. The only thing that would make it better for Imelda is if they could supply one in a tiger skin finish!”

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

### SOLOTECH Provides L-ACOUSTICS Systems for Bruce Springsteen

Bruce Springsteen’s *Wrecking Ball* tour kicked off at Atlanta’s Phillips Arena on March 17 with an L-ACOUSTICS K1/KUDO WST® line source system provided by Solotech US Corp of Las Vegas.

Harnessing the power of Springsteen and his 17-piece band is FOH mix veteran John Cooper who has provided mixing services for “The Boss” for the past 10 years. Cooper also performs mixing duties for many other high-profile artists, including Sheryl Crow, Wynonna Judd, Ringo Starr and Lionel Richie.

The K1/KUDO system provided for the *Wrecking Ball* tour consists of 60 K1 enclosures, 16 K1-SB subwoofers, 24 KARAs, 48 KUDOs, and eight SB28 subs. In many venues, the audience is in 360 degrees as the set design allows for unobstructed views



gobo selection” says Farmer of these.

Generics on the rig included Sunstrips, Molefey’s, ACL’s and PARs – all adding their own distinctive touches of Old Skool magic!

Upstage was a 12 x 3 metre surface of X-sphere’s – supplied by XL Video – fed with colourful ambient video content from Livid’s CellDNA software running on a laptop.

Farmer showed his talents for making an expedient lighting rig go a long way, bringing contemporary flourishes to the movement, excitement and classic club looks that also immersed the audience in the performance, true rave-style.

From a rental company perspective, Zig Zag’s Neil Hunt comments, “The light weight, neat packaging, low energy consumption and huge light output of all the Robe ROBIN fixtures ticks all the boxes for me!

“Reducing both the actual weight of the luminaires themselves and consequently the ‘trucking volume’, coupled with the corresponding reduction in required cabling, allows a rig that would have once needed an arctic of its own .... to fit comfortably into an 18 tonne truck! Everyone’s a winner, most importantly, the environment!!”

ago and soon started the quest for a vocal mic that would really suit her voice.

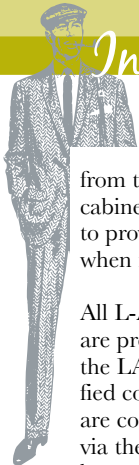
“After a couple of shows, I realised that the dynamics in her incredible voice really needed a microphone that would make the best of them,” he says. “We tried micro-

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# In the News

from the rear. Sixteen V-DOSC cabinets are also brought along to provide delay fill in venues when necessary.

All L-ACOUSTICS speakers are processed and powered via the LA8 four-channel amplified controller and all LA8s are contained and interconnected via the LA-RAK. The tour also boasts the first wide-scale use of L-ACOUSTICS' LA Network Manager 2 software providing advanced control and monitoring of more than 76 LA8 controllers.

"Solotech personnel have been outstanding; they show a great attention to details," says Cooper. "At this point in time I have not heard a more refined, accurate and musical sound system."

Springsteen's first concert tour since 2009 is presently scheduled to play dates in North America and Europe through September, with stadium dates recently added for Boston, Vernon (NY), Chicago, Washington DC, Toronto, Moncton (NJ) and Philadelphia. Solotech is providing full audio production services for the entire US *Wrecking Ball* tour. [l-acoustics.com](http://l-acoustics.com)

## Special FX

### 2012 Billboard Awards Light up the MGM Grand Stage with PYROTEK SPECIAL EFFECTS

The 2012 Billboard Music Awards took to the MGM Grand Arena Stage in Las Vegas, NV May 20th 2012. Pyrotek Special Effects and its sister company Laser Design Productions provided the effects for the night's ceremony. Working with Show Producer Brian Stonestreet and Art Director Alana Billingsley, the telecast had the feel of a full fledged concert experience.

The event opened with LMFAO performing a medley of their hits. Laser Design Productions Director of Operations Victor



Tomei worked closely with Designer Hokuto "Hok" Konishi, and Production Manager Tim Miller to create a stand out opening number. Twelve Cryo Jets were used to surround the duo as they rose onto a center stage riser. Two 20 watt full color laser systems were placed on 7' risers on stage right and left, while two 25 watt full color lasers were placed on stage left and right. Laser Operator Eric Taylor, also had two 25 watt full color systems placed on a truss above the stage in order to shoot onto the down-stage edge to create an all encompassing look.

Linkin Park performed their new single "Burn It Down". Collaborating with Production Manager Jim Digby and Designer Travis Shirley, Pyrotek President Lorenzo Cornacchia, had three 7' long Dragon Tail Units placed behind the industrial set to ignite the band from behind. Low Lying Fog units were inverted and placed within prop piping on stage left and of the band as they stood atop 5' and 3' risers across the stage. Inverted Gerb fans that held six 20 x 20 Silver Gerbs were hung center stage.

Pyrotek worked with Creative Director Baz Halpin, and Production Manager Harold Jones on Usher's performance of his new single "Scream" as 1 x 25 Silver Gerbs exploded over the set and Low Lying Fog was incorporated into his performance. Carrie Underwood, who performed "Blown Away" incorporated Low Lying Fog as well as Silver Technoflek confetti and eight Cryo Jets.

Cee Lo Green, joined by Goodie Mob performed "Fight to Win" and "Fight For Your Right" a tribute to The Beastie Boys member Adam Yauch who recently passed away. Double Headed Dragon units were used behind the four performers as they stood on risers spread out across the stage.

Back on the awards stage, Nelly Furtado brought her "Big Hoops (The Bigger The Better)" to the elated crowd.

Native American Hoop Dancers joined Furtado as she rose center stage on a lift using six Cryo Jets to create a rocket "lift off" look.

British Sensation The Wanted brought their hits "Chasing the Sun" and "Glad You Came" to the Billboard stage as Low Lying Fog as well as Silver Gerbs were used. With the help of Designer Brian Freidman, The Wanted proved the new generation of boy bands is here to stay.

Freidman also had a hand in creating the performance of Justin Bieber along with Production Manager Tom Marzullo. Bringing his single "Boyfriend" to the Awards stage for the first time, the number opened with blue emergency lights surrounding Bieber as he danced his way across the stage. The set which included black lights and Low Lying Fog also integrated multiple Silver Gerbs and Cryo Jets into this elaborate performance.

## Trussing/Rigging

### MILOS Moves The House (literally)

When rigger and engineer Peter Samzeilus from Tanumschede in Sweden learned that the local council were replacing a certain dwelling garage in the village with new sea cabins, he contacted the owners and offered to help with the challenge of moving the building from its current location.

They generously said he could have the substantial dwelling - made from timber and ideal for a summer house - in return, provided it was removed in time for the sea cabins to be installed. Peter then applied his imagination, lateral thinking abilities and experience using MILOS products

which he owns, to help solve the problem of moving the entire building to its new location.

At 7.5 metres wide by 9.5 long and 7 metres high the building was too wide to fit onto a vehicle and negotiate the village roads whilst travelling safely to its new concrete foundations 1.5 km away. A bit of research and advice from structural engineers revealed that the dwelling's design and construction meant that it could potentially be split into two halves lengthways.

The idea was that the inside of





each section was shored up with the help of a MILOS trussing grid structure, and this would ensure that the two halves remained rigid and stable for the journey to the new location, whereupon they could be reunited.

He comments, "MILOS products have helped me many times in unusual situations that are outside the 'standard' scope of use, so this was yet another chance to prove their versatility".

First, he produced some detailed CAD planning on his laptop and double checked all the parameters to be sure the scheme would work. Then he and a team of five friends removed the dry-wall in the center of the building and erected the bracing structures for both sides of the house utilising a combination of MILOS M290 and M390 QuickTruss, I-beams, cell clamps and aluminium tubes. The wooden house's roof and walls were then completely cut in half using a powerful sabre saw. The open edges of both sides, already braced, were lifted separately onto a flat-bed truck using a 60 ton crane.

The two halves of the house then made their journey to the new site, a 10 minute drive with a few stops to lift low flying telephone cables, tree branches and other obstacles.

At destination, the process was repeated in reverse.

## Venues

### COMMUNITY Cover's University of South Florida Sporting Venues

Founded in 1956, the University of South Florida has grown to become one of the largest universities in the US. Famous alumni include actors Lauren Hutton and Drake Hogestyn, wrestler Hulk Hogan, and Major League Baseball player/manager Tony La Russa. USF's sprawling main campus in Tampa is home to a range of varsity sports teams, including football,

baseball, soccer, and softball.

Magnum Audio Group of Tampa recently provided powerful sound systems for three of the campus' sporting facilities: a 4500-seat baseball stadium, a 1500-seat softball stadium, and a 750-seat soccer stadium. Despite the magnitude of the three design-build projects, Magnum's Randi Crooks reports things ran quite smoothly.

"We do a lot of athletic venues," says Crooks. "I've been the head Audio Engineer for the Tampa Buccaneers for 19 years now, and we also handle audio for the BUCS at Raymond James Stadium, and for the New York Yankees at Steinbrenner Field here in Tampa."

Indeed, with that level of expertise, it's hardly surprising that these jobs went off without a hitch. "Baseball and softball venues in particular are fairly simple distributed systems, and the soccer stadium wasn't all that different," he explains. "The seats at the soccer stadium are only located on one side, but they have long landscaped berm areas where people can sit on their lounge chairs. We set up the Community R1 loudspeakers to fire down the base lines, because we knew it was powerful enough to provide coverage to that entire area."

The baseball stadium is covered by eight Community WET-Series W2-2W8 dual 8-inch systems, along with two R1-66 medium-



The system is powered by three Crown DSi-4000 amps. Another DBX Drive Rack 260 covers system DSP, and another Ashly MX-508 mixer provides input channels.

Four more R.5-99 short-throw loudspeakers are installed for the Baseball and Softball batting cages. That system is powered by a pair of Crown DSi-2000 amplifiers, with a six-channel Ashly MX-206 mic/line mixer.

Audio for the soccer facility is handled by four R1-66 medium-throw loudspeakers and four more R.5-99 short-throw systems. Powering the system is a pair of Crown DSi-4000 amps. Another Ashly MX-508 mixer and DBX Drive Rack 260 round off the system.

In addition to coverage and performance, Crooks points to the all-weather durability of the WET-Series and R-Series as another factor in their selection. "We do get our share of extreme weather here in Florida, and Community's weather-resistance has proven itself time after time," he observes. "After Hurricane Wilma came through in 2005, we used R-Series loudspeakers to replace the destroyed systems in 13 football stadiums in Palm Beach County, and they're all still working great."

throw loudspeakers and two R.5SUB subwoofers. Four Crown DSi-4000 amplifiers power the loudspeakers, with system drive and processing provided by a DBX Drive Rack 260. An Ashly MX-508 eight-channel rack mount mixer completes the system.

Over at the softball stadium, five WET W2-2W8 systems are installed, along with a pair of R1-66 medium-throw loudspeakers and two R.5SUB subwoofers.



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# WeatherOps Supports Linkin Park and the EVENT SAFETY ALLIANCE

BY MIKE WHARTON

Following the Indianapolis, Indiana stage collapse tragedy in 2011, a lot of time and energy were spent by various agencies looking into why it happened, and who was to blame. During that time a coalition of entertainment touring industry professionals were formulating the embryo that became The Event Safety Alliance. Their response was to formulate a plan to prevent such tragedies from happening.

Initially, Tour Link founder Larry Smith and members of The Tour Link Advisory Board, Stuart Ross of Red Light Management and Jim Digby, tour manager for Linkin Park discussed a way to bring the matter to agenda at Tour Link 2012. More participants from the industry joined in what soon became biweekly calls numbering twenty people or more. The Adelman Law Group, Doodson Insurance Brokerage, Pollstar, AEG Live, a wealth of production managers, Clair, Tomcat, Stageco, and Tim Roberts of The Event Safety Shop, Ltd., added their support. Karl Ruling, safety standards director of PLASA, brought up the fact that an official document already existed in the UK.

Known as HSE 121, and commonly referred to as *The Purple Guide*, it detailed technical regulations establishing the standards needed to be met when constructing a temporary stage or outdoor roofing system. The Event Safety Alliance was formed to adapt the guide creating a similar document to be known as *The Event Safety Guide US*. ESA teams of four or five have broken out chapters of this document to analyze for this purpose. Deadlines for completion are set for Tour Link 2013.

The history of ESA's formulation began when Digby attended the International Association of Venue Managers Advanced

Venue and Safety School (AVSS). During the five day event, Digby met Harold Hanson, director of the school. Out of their conversations came the realization that though artists and venues had the same vested interest, common ground regarding safety had never been discussed. Bridges needed to be built to include tailoring of the class curriculum toward artist and production participation. Hanson suggested Digby attend the Severe Weather Preparedness Class which AVSS was sponsoring, at the National Weather Service (NWS) facility in Norman, Oklahoma.

Michael Eilts, CEO of Weather Decision Technology was one of the presenters. "He seemed to get the direction ESA is trying to establish providing a model for the event industry and a protocol for what kind of weather data is relevant," Digby recalled.

WDT's main facility in Norman acquires data directly from NWS. The company's location is literally across the street from the NWS and on the south research campus of the University Of Oklahoma. This facility, which also houses the National Weather Center, the OU School of Meteorology, Severe Storms Laboratory and Storm Prediction Center, creates a "triangle of collaboration" as Senior VP David VandenHeuvel at WeatherOps calls it.

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

WeatherOps, a WDT subsidiary, worked with the NWS to develop special trigger points unique to the entertainment industry. These trigger points run along the lines of wind speeds and proximity of lightning.

Recognizing that each outdoor event is unique, WeatherOps saw the need for a Green, Yellow, and Red status alert system to be put in place. ESA then developed a matrix decision system encompassing the triggers and status alerts. "The time to make these decisions is in green status, not later," states Digby.

One of ESA's goals is to get venue management on board with the safety plan. Digby emphasizes the importance of all senior management parties; promoter, venue, stage vendor, security, and production, meeting daily to discuss updates on the weather situation.

Digby says, "We're gonna share our data and allow everyone into our decision making matrix, but we won't be controlled by outside forces in the case of life safety."

WeatherOps develops an Operations Forecast Model packet of information for each tour's routing and conditions surrounding the event. iMap, the company's proprietary software program, services over three thousand weather information websites. VandenHeuvel and his staff customize the program to fit each tour's needs, utilizing their capability to download information from a global network of satellites. "We provide forecasting, not 'now' casting," states VandenHeuvel.

Brown United utilizes WeatherOps services on all its sites. Bonnaroo and Wakarusa Festivals have signed on, as has the Red Rocks Casino in Las Vegas. Hadden "Hap" Hipsley, the PM for Bonnaroo uses the service for Phish and the other festivals he manages.

Two tiers of service are offered. One is completely automated (i.e. no human contacts) to transmit weather information via email, land line or cell phone. The second provides a live meteorologist 24/7 with eyes on the area surrounding the event. Both provide "push" technology capabilities to continued on 38



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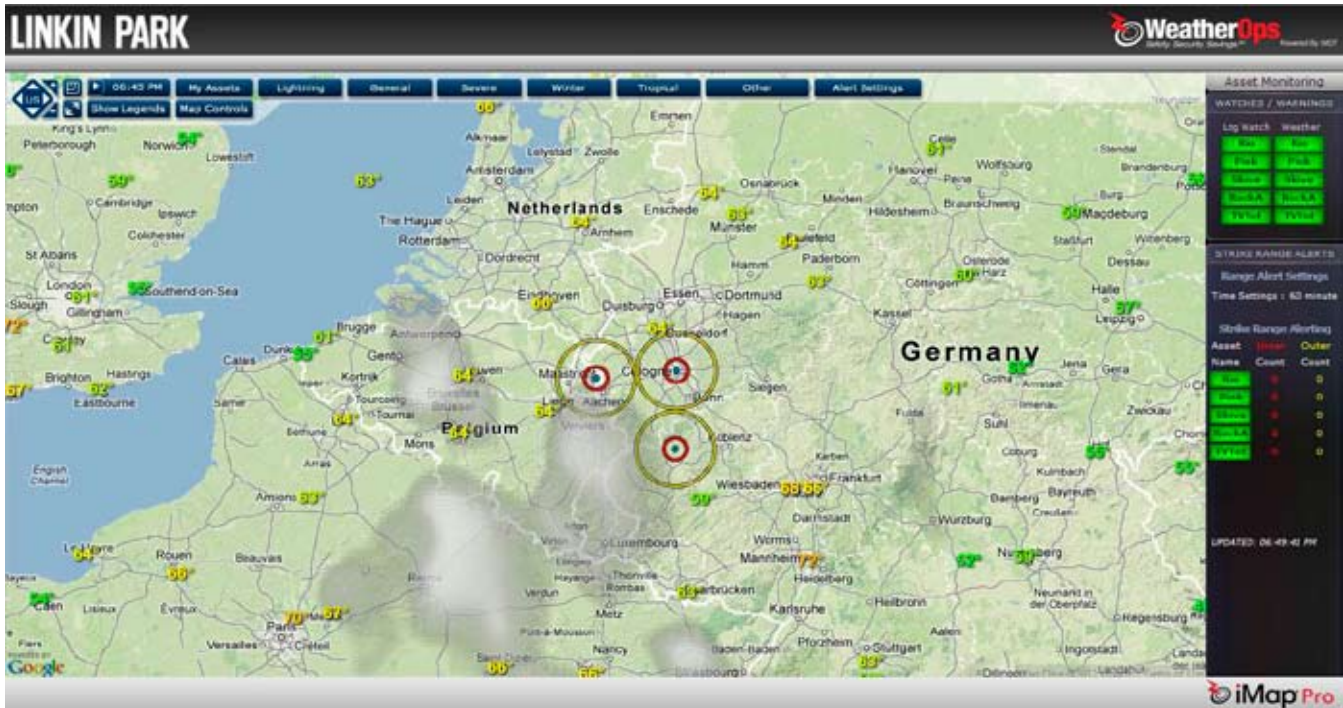
# Event Planning Outlook - Linkin Park - Landgraaf, Holland

Updated on: Fri, May 25, 2012

2:00:00 AM Local (GMT +2)

Pinkpop Festival Landgraaf, Holland	EVENT																														
	Fri May 25			Sat May 26			Sun May 27			Mon May 28			Tue May 29			Wed May 30			Thu May 31												
WDT Weather Triggers	7am	1pm	7pm	1am	7am	1pm	7pm	1am	7am	1pm	7pm	1am	7am	1pm	7pm	1am	7am	1pm	7pm	1am	7am	1pm	7pm	1am	7am	1pm	7pm	1am	7am	1pm	7pm
General Thunderstorm	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	Y	Y	Y	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	Y	Y	Y	
Severe Thunderstorm	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	Y	Y	Y	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	Y	Y	Y	
Non-Convective Sfc Winds > 25mph < 40mph	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	
Non-Convective Sfc Winds >= 40mph	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	G	
<b>High Temp</b>	<b>72</b>			<b>73</b>			<b>79</b>			<b>78</b>			<b>80</b>			<b>74</b>			<b>77</b>												
<b>Low Temp</b>	<b>55</b>			<b>56</b>			<b>59</b>			<b>63</b>			<b>65</b>			<b>59</b>			<b>61</b>												
<b>Forecast</b>																															
<b>%Prob of Precip</b>	10%			0%			0%			50%			0%			0%			40%												
<b>Wind Direction</b>	ENE			E			NE			NE			E			E			NE												
<b>Average Wind Speed</b>	15 mph			17 mph			12 mph			20 mph			5 mph			5 mph			20 mph												
<b>Maximum Wind Speed</b>	20 mph			20 mph			15 mph			30 mph			10 mph			10 mph			30 mph												
<b>Sun Rise</b>	5:34 am			5:33 am			5:32 am			5:31 am			5:30 am			5:29 am			5:28 am												
<b>Sun Set</b>	9:32 pm			9:34 pm			9:35 pm			9:36 pm			9:38 pm			9:39 pm			9:40 pm												
<b>Moonrise</b>	9:25 am			10:32 am			11:42 am			12:54 pm			2:09 pm			3:26 pm			4:46 pm												
<b>Moonset</b>	12:16 am			12:47 am			1:14 am			1:38 am			2:00 am			2:22 am			2:46 am												
<b>Moon Illumination</b>	19%			28%			37%			49%			60%			71%			82%												

Current Satellite/Surface Observations - 02:00 am 25 May 2012  
 For Latest Map Click -> <http://imap.tv/linkinpark>



Professional Weather Maps for Safety and Efficiency sample: Linkin Park - Landgraaf, Holland  
 Forecasts and alerts are provided via Internet, SMS, mobile apps, mobile push alerts and phone access to one of WeatherOps' meteorologists regardless of time of day. Expert meteorologists monitor assets 24/7. Starting 7 days in advance of significant weather events, e-mails are sent every 6 or 12 hours with expert detailed forecasts. These threat matrix alerts are also available within the WeatherOps iMap (interactive map). 24/7 access to meteorologists for additional consultation and pre-scheduled conference calls.

# INTENSE → COOPERATION AT AN INTENSE PACE

BY MICHAEL A. BECK

When three acts that could all headline in their own right tour on the same bill, there will always be the risk of clashing identities not just among the bands but with the crews as well. However, such is not the case with the *Midwest Rock n' Roll Express Tour* featuring REO Speedwagon, Styx, and Ted Nugent. Everyone who has been around the touring industry for more than 10 years can recall that one hellish tour during which they were locked in with one or more people who had "It's not my job" tattooed on their forehead as they headed for the bus as soon as their "job" was complete regardless of what kind of shape the overall production was in.

The *Midwest Rock n' Roll Express Tour* essentially has four different crews, one for each act and a universal crew that handles lights, sound, video, rigging and production coordination. Despite the large number of distinct areas of finite responsibility, it is difficult to distinguish who works for whom during set change because of the overall air of support among the four teams. With a hard deadline of 20 minutes for both set changes, that support is vital to the production.

The job of maintaining a smooth platform upon which the production can flow falls to the tour's Production Coordinator Tim Rozner who was assigned to the task the first time this [co-headlining] package went out in 1999. It was agreed upon by Charlie Brusco of Red Light Management (Styx) and Tom Consolo of Azoff Music, Inc. (REO Speedwagon) that there would have to be a neutral party who could regulate the process of getting a show down the road that included two bands

from the same genre and the same time period. Rozner explained, "Even though these two bands have been great friends and competitors throughout the years they said, 'This [tour] is a good thing. So let's do it in a way so that everyone continues to get along for a long time.' The only way for that to happen was to set it up in a manner that ensures everyone is playing on a level field."

Rozner admits the job can have it's rough patches, "Frequently it's a thankless position that I have because there are times when I have to make decisions that affect one more than the others. Perhaps one band has an element in their set that acts a little as a wind sail in an open air more than the others, and I may have to make a decision based on safety that will affect one band's production."

However, the value of Rozner's position is not lost on the individual band crews. "Tim [Rozner] did an excellent job of preproduction," said Ted Nugent's

Production Manager, Frank Trzaskowski. "His communication with everybody was great. Everything was surprisingly easy, and I don't say that too often. It's really important when you go out with three bands that there's one neutral person who is just looking at the facts and making it all happen without the personal concerns of the artist coming into play. Tim did an excellent job on that."

That being said, Rozner has an interesting gage of how well his job is being done, "If everyone thinks they're getting f----- equally, I'm doing my job."

When asked if there are any serious logistical challenges on the tour, Trzaskowski didn't think long before answering, "Not Really. Everyone out here is super professional. When you look around at the people on this tour they all have 15, 20, 30 years experience. You can name any hard rock or classic rock band and these guys have been out with it. That is the case with Ted Nugent's crew."

As is typically the case on any tour, the biggest issues occur at the confluence of budget, logistical management and creative aspiration. That is most certainly the case with this show, which is admittedly not the highest budgeted production on the road. However, that does not impede the intention to deliver a high level of visual impact. For that reason, the entire pack has to fit into four trucks. Efficient set design is a big part of that effort. Long time REO Speedwagon Lighting and Set Designer Paul Dexter rose to that occasion when he redesigned the band's set for this year, "We knew this tour was coming. We'd been using the other set for three years and the band was ready for something new," said Dexter. "They wanted something that would be a little more intimate and high tech. So we did some 'back of the napkins stuff' in dressing rooms and from those early beginnings, I brought in some 3D drawings of what I had in mind. It evolved from there."





# Speedwagon & Ted Nugent



Midwest Rock n' Roll Express Tour 2012

photos by Michael A Beck

At the heart of the design is a move to present the band in a less disjointed manner than occurred on the previous set. To that end, the drum riser was lowered from four feet to 30 inches. This not only allowed the band to interact with drummer Bryan Hitt but it also made Hitt more visually accessible to the audience.

Additionally the entire set is one long riser upon which band members can walk freely from one end to the other. There is also more room on the drum riser, which makes it easier for band members to engage Hitt.

The set has a high degree of practicality both in terms of functionality for the band and set up, strike and transportation. "It was built in a tightly engineered way so that we would not be backing ourselves into a corner in terms of making set changes and load-ins happen," explained Dexter.

The issue of high engineering standards was not lost on Joey

## REO Speedwagon

Neal Doughty  
Kevin Cronin  
Bruce Hall  
Dave Amato  
Bryan Hitt

### REO Speedwagon - TOURING SUPPORT OFFICES

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Gallagher of Gallagher Staging & Productions, as this set construction was one of the first projects under the company's new name. "We don't do things the old school way," Gallagher explained. "Everything is laser cut or CC cut and it's all put together to aerospace standards. We had to fit the project into a pretty tight budget and part of that was refitting their old risers,



### Styx

Tommy Shaw  
James "Y" Young  
Chuck Panozzo  
Todd Sucherman  
Lawrence Gowan  
Ricky Phillips  
Charlie Brusco  
- Red Light Management



# REO Speedwagon



# REO Speedwagon

which we only had for a week-and-a-half. We were told that the set had to be able to leave the stage in five minutes.”

Cost, efficiency and portability were not the only matters to be addressed. The set also had to be lit. In keeping with the penny wise zeitgeist of re-tasking everything possible, Dexter also wanted to save the LED nodes from the previous set. “We had 392 channels of DMX running the LED nodes in the old set and I really wanted to use the modules we so carefully constructed. But when it came time to do the work it wasn’t a practical solution, and I decided upon using the adhesive light spools.”

Those spools are light strips called RGBW E-Tape put forth by Dallas based Pyro Tecnico (formerly Excitement Technologies Group). Each zone of the set had a separate array of E-Tape - three strips; one RGB and two white. The control signals come from a Celestial Audio 32 channel DMX controlled LED / 10-Amp LED cluster dimmer. Because the E-Tape uses only 1 DMX channel per color and each color runs the length of the set zone, each zone only requires five DMX lines.

“On the last set they wanted to control each color of every node which is where the high number of DMX channels came from,” said Kelly Sticksel of Pyro Tecnico. “We wound up giving them 64 channels on this one.”

The set also includes six pillars that stand upstage and are also internally lit. The lighting for the pillars was the recycled modules from the previous set and reengineered by REO’s Monitor Engineer Peter Roberts. Each pillar has a disc shaped topper that has E-Tape lighting its edge.

The biggest concern of the new set was the question of how fast can they get it on and off stage during a reasonable fraction of the total 20 minutes allowed for set change. “Certainly it was a concern when we were designing it,” recalled REO Speedwagon Production Manager Michael Richter. “I like to call the set change ‘20 minutes of chaos’.



Fortunately all four crews work together cohesively to get the sets changed out and it works in that 20 minutes. But to be perfectly honest, until the first show in Hidalgo, Texas, we were wondering if we were going to get it done in the time we had allocated.”

Possibly the most impressive [functional] feature of the set is that it travels in two set carts. That’ll make any production manager happy. Because Styx and REO Speedwagon are co-headliners on the bill, both bands get the full amount of available stage area, which means the entire stage has to be cleared in order for the other set to be placed. In the case of most sheds there is enough room upstage to hide the closing acts set behind a 48-foot black upstage drape.

Although it’s not new for this tour, Styx’ set has the same combination of maneuverability and functionality as that of REO Speedwagon. *mPm* covered the show at Verizon Wireless Amphitheatre at Encore Park in Alpharetta, Georgia, which has a very deep stage. On this particular night Styx was the closer and, therefore, their production set was able to slide far enough back out of the way to not be seen.

When it was pushed into place it moved in four pieces. Obviously the centerpiece of the set is the drum riser, which has an opaque fascia that’s back lit with Colorblast 12 LED. Flanking the drum riser on either side is what looks like walls of amp stacks reminiscent of the old Marshall stacks of the 80s. And while at one time the amp stacks were functional [guitar amps] they are now set pieces that also have a back lit opaque panel where the grill is. The amp lines also serve as backline stations. Each of these set pieces are themselves flanked by step units rising to the tops of the faux amps. There is also a very austere circular keyboard riser that stands alone downstage right. The entire backline rolls in three pieces and connects as one unit once in place.

Ted Nugent, who is also a co-headliner, has a serious presence in the show. Whereas the Styx and REO Speedwagon both play with full access to the entire stage, Ted Nugent’s set plays downstage of the middle act in the standard stacked formation one would expect to see on a multi-act bill. By contrast to the Styx and REO Speedwagon sets that are very clean and polished, Ted Nugent’s



set is quite the opposite, incorporating walls of functioning amp stacks decorated with a large collection of classic Gibson collector guitars. In keeping with the Motor City Madman’s tough rebellious style of performance, there is nothing clean about this set whatsoever. “Ted is just as outrageous as he has ever been, maybe more,” says Trzaskowski. “Rock n’ Roll should be gritty, raw and in your face and we definitely bring the grit to this tour.”

That rebellious style also figures into the way Trzaskowski mixes the band... REAL LOUD. Because most of the shows on this tour are shed dates, db levels are of critical concern... to most people, “Most of these places were built a long time ago,” says Trzaskowski, “and they came in and built homes around them without informing the buyers of the consequences, which are that every weekend there will be an event and there *will* be noise. Afterward they tried to enforce db limits. They talk about the health





dent than in their lighting designs. Ravitz leans toward the use of fully automated system, “The PARs are bright, of course, and fill the stage nicely,” said the long time Styx designer, “but they are one color only and must be manually focused every day on a tour that sometimes has quite a time crunch.”

Although Dexter agrees with the logistical assessment of the PAR can, he insists that the extra work and fixed position and color are

goes with a far less saturated look. That being said, this system was wisely designed in order to brilliantly accommodate the lighting styles of all three bands on the bill. One element to the Styx lighting team that can never be overlooked or understated is the work of Lighting Director Libby Gray. Ravitz described Gray’s work, “It used to be that I’d go out on the road running these cues myself all the way back in the early days. Now I design it and send it out and there’s always that worry

addressed in a story in this issue of *mobile Production monthly* written by *mPm* contributor Bill Evans.

All tours love to tout that they have a flowing sense of harmony in their crew, and if they don’t they’re certainly not going to tell this writer. The *Midwest Rock n’ Roll Express* Tour is no different with regard to the “kumbaya” feel of the tour. But in this case the claim couldn’t be more accurate. “We’re the luckiest crew out there,” said Rozner, “because we



**Ted Nugent**  
“Wild” Mick Brown  
Greg Smith  
Derek St. Holmes

issues and I tell them that rock n’ roll is not something healthy in the first place. You want something healthy? Go to a spa.”

The visual anchor of the show is a sensational looking 15mil 46’x13’ GTEK LED video wall supplied by Pete’s Big TV that was used to stunning effect by all three acts. This is beautifully contrasted by the lighting system that was co-designed by Jeff Ravitz and Paul Dexter. The system has 46 automated lights (14 Mac2000 XB Wash, 18 VL3000 Spot, 4 VL3500 Spot, VL2500 Spot - floor mounted, 6 Mac 101 - floor mounted) and 6 Martin Atomic Strobes. That array of gear is fairly common place on any of today’s shows. However, there are actually 104 fixtures in this rig with 52 being PAR 64’s (36) and ACL’s (16).

Despite the aforementioned fact that both bands came from the same genre and time period there are significant stylistic differences. Nowhere could this be more evi-

worth the challenges they present, “The reason it is so important for me to have the PARs is twofold,” counters Dexter. “One is, it’s an 80s group and that’s what we all used in the 80s and it’s about retaining some history in that regard. The second part of my reasoning is layering. I really don’t think there is any substitute for a PAR can and the quality of light that it produces. And used in conjunction with automated lights, the layers that they achieve cannot be duplicated.” In the end both agree the show looks good and both designers met in the middle to get it there. “I like Paul a lot,” added Ravitz, “and I think his design sense is really good. So, that [the inclusion of PARs] was my concession. He certainly yielded to me on several issues.”

The choice of lighting instruments is not the only place where the two noted designers vary in their approach to the execution of this design. Where the Styx show is lit in a deep, rich, vivid pallet, Dexter

about how am I going to translate and teach somebody else to run the cues that are in my brain as the designer, and Libby is just so intuitive. She can take what we’ve worked on and make it even tighter on the road day after day. I’m continually impressed with her abilities.”

Tim Rozner agrees with Ravitz’ assessment of Gray’s talent, “She’s got a great sense of timing. It really is a pleasure to go out and watch her work. She calls spot cues as well as anyone on earth. We get compliments from local crews about her work all the time.”

While there are many audio related facets to this show, they are

work for bands that don’t just know how to do a show, they know how to do a tour.”

“I don’t know what it is about the camaraderie between the crews,” mused Michael Richter, “but we’re like best friends and brothers to one another, and everybody’s there to help each other. That is a huge contributing factor to the success of the way the set changes are going down. To be honest with you it all worked from day one.” ♦





Doug McKinley - Sound Crew Chief, Kevin Dennis - Sound Tech, Greg Mackey - Sound Tech



Glen Rupert - Lighting Crew Chief, Will Anglin - Lighting Technician, Mark Abra - Lighting Tech



Brian Wong Stage Manager/ Carpenter, Tim Rozner - Production Coordinator



Reo Speedwagon Crew: front: John "Scratcher" Aldridge - One Armed Drum Tech, Guitar Tech - Steve "Smooth" Summers back: Jimmie "John Wayne" Emerson - Bass & Keyboard Tech, Peter Roberts - Monitor Engineer, Tony "T-Bird" Byrd - Guitar Tech, Paul Dexter - All Things Visual, Ricky Lathrop - Merch/Stage, Michael Richter - Production Mgr, Neil Schaefer - FOH Engineer



Paul Dexter - All Things Visual



Walter Versen - REO Speedwagon Tour Manager



Chris Leahy - Bass Tech, Chris Maguire - Lighting Director, Francis Ruiz - Drum Tech, Frank Trzaskowski - Production Mgr/FOH Sound Engineer, Paul Karoutas - Guitar Tech for Nugent, Mark Harvey - Monitor Engineer



Universal Crew: Bobby Carrel - Tour Rigger, Kevin McGrath - Video, Dale Long - Tour Rigger Tech, Wendy Catto - Asst. Production Coord., "Elvis Presley" - Production Coordinator, Brian Wong Stage Mgr/ Carpenter, Jeff Heintz - Keyboard Tech, Michael Richter - Production Mgr



Styx Crew: Paulie Carrizzo - Drum Tech, Libby Gray - Lighting Director, Brian Wong Stage Mgr/Carpenter, Greg Mandelke - Guitar Tech, Jimmy Johnson - Guitar Tech, Evan McElhinney Monitor Engineer, FOH Sound Engineer - Gary Loizzo, Jeff Heintz - Keyboard Tech



"Howie the Great" entertains Styx FOH Engineer & Bassist Gary Loizzo & Ricky Phillips in catering.

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### Coaches

Senators Coaches

### Video

Pete's Big TV

### Credentials

Cube Services

### Publicity

ABC Public Relations

### Video Content

Tocrok Productions





### *Styx Crew*

Tour Mgr - George Packer  
 Production Mgr - Keith Marks  
 Assistant Tour Mgr - Jason Powell  
 FOH Sound Engineer - Gary Loizzo  
 Lighting Designer/Show Director - Jeff Ravitz  
 Lighting Director - Libby Gray  
 Monitor Engineer - Evan McElhinney  
 Guitar Techs: Jimmy Johnson, Greg Mandelke  
 Keyboard Tech - Jeff Heintz  
 Drum Tech - Paulie Carrizzo  
 Stage Mgr/Carpenter - Brian Wong  
 Styx Tour Merch - Casey Compton  
 Styx Band Bus Driver - Tom Gregorio, Don Galloway  
 Styx Band Truck Driver - Kelley Sparger

### *REO Speedwagon Crew*

Tour Mgr - Walter Versen  
 Production Mgr - Mike Richter  
 FOH Engineer - Neil Schaefer  
 All Things Visual - Paul Dexter  
 Monitor Engineer - Peter Roberts  
 Guitar Techs: Tony "TBird" Byrd, Steve "Smooth" Summers  
 One Armed Drum Tech - John "Scratcher" Aldridge  
 Bass & Keyboard Tech - Jimmie "John Wayne" Emerson  
 Merchandise/Stage Mgr - Ricky Lathrop  
 Truck Driver - John "Uncle Fester" Ruiz  
 Band Bus Driver - Jerry Burnside  
 Crew Bus Driver - Mike Mallatt

### *Ted Nugent Crew*

Tour Mgr - Bob Quandt  
 Production Mgr/FOH Sound Engineer - Frank Trzaskowski  
 Tour Assistant - Toby Nugent  
 Lighting Director - Chris Maguire  
 Monitor Engineer - Mark Harvey  
 Guitar Tech for Derek St. Holmes - Eric Gormley  
 Bass Tech - Chris Leahy  
 Drum Tech - Francis Ruiz  
 Guitar Tech for Nugent - Paul Karoutas  
 Ted's Pilot - Joe Jordan  
 Bus Driver - Josh Meredith  
 Truck Driver - Ted "Okie" Paiva

### *MRRX 2012 Universal Crew*

Production Coord. - Tim Rozner  
 Tour Riggers: Dale Long, Bobby Carrel  
 Asst. Production Coord. - Wendy Catto  
 Lighting Crew Chief - Glen Rupert  
 Lighting Techs: Will Anglin, Mark Abra  
 Video Tech - Kevin McGrath  
 Sound Crew Chief - Doug McKinley  
 Sound Tech: Kevin Dennis, Greg Mackey  
 Production Bus Driver - Fred Anderson  
 Production Truck Drivers: Jim Bond Lead, Les King, Vid Tidwell



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# A Tale of Two Engineers



Two Classic Rock Icons, Two Different Console Platforms, Two Completely Different Approaches, and Yet They All Work Together

BY BILL EVANS

**Neil Schaffer** and **Gary Loizzo** work together a lot. Neil has been REO Speedwagon's guy since sometime in the 90s. Ditto Gary with Styx, a band he has mixed live since 1996. He has also engineered every Styx record since *Cornerstone*. He's also been nominated for a couple of Grammy's for that work.

REO and Styx tour together a lot. The interview with Neil took place on one of those co-headline shows at the Joint at the Hard Rock in Las Vegas. The interview with Gary was before a solo Styx show a few months later at Green Valley Ranch also in Las Vegas. That night they were working out the final details for a summer tour with both bands plus Ted Nugent. At least that was the plan as of the time this was written. With all the fallout from the Motor City Madman's recent political comments, who knows.

Back to the audio... The show at the Joint was especially enlightening. Two bands with a ton of hits makes it hard to decide what to leave out of a typical 75-90 minute set. There is no lull. The show is hit after hit after hit. Neil and Gary are both really good and both understand what the audience wants. They both serve their artists really well and yet their approaches to mixing are very different.

Neil designs systems as well as mixing shows - that informs his

approach. REO sounds like a really live band. Like that really good band in your favorite bar but better and a lot louder.

Gary started as a performer and became a recording engineer and studio owner. After working a lot with Styx, he was asked by former frontman Dennis DeYoung to mix his live solo shows before he took the helm for the band in 96. That studio background is instantly apparent in his mix. It is controlled, and even live has a kind of studio sheen.

Neither approach is right or wrong and both bands sounded great, but it literally sounded like two different PA rigs. Perhaps the interviews will shed some light on the situation. Or maybe not. However, both guys are interesting, fun and know their stuff. Read on...



## Neil Schaffer "How Can I Make It Better?"

There is one fact about Neil that has nothing to do with audio which, nonetheless, illustrates his approach to live music and he never told us about it. We found out from Gary. In his off time, one of the things Neil does is design golf clubs.

The duffers reading this will know that minute changes in the mass, weight, density, weight distribution or tiny change in the face of the club can totally change the way it performs. It's why there is not just one kind of driver or putter. Or to move back into musical terms, some people are Gibson guys and not a fan of skinny maple necks, while others may play nothing but Tele's and 335s would feel like a foreign object in their hands. Closer to the audio tip, some guys like Yamaha and others swear by DiGiCo and some insist on Midas. None of the choices are wrong,



photos by Linda Evans

they're just different.

Neil's weapon of choice is the Avid Venue Profile. He likes the size and layout and workflow, and he has used everything. In fact, he was among those pioneering spirits who were very early adopters of digital consoles on the road. He adapted the Yamaha DM2000—a digital "production" mixer designed for recording and maybe installation in something like a small theater but the designers certainly never envisioned it on a rock tour.

"I started digital in, I think, 2003. I saw an ad. I think it was in Mix for the DM2000. I looked at it... and looked at it. I called them up and introduced myself and said, 'I'd like to take it out with REO.' The guy I was speaking to said, 'Why would you want to do that?'"

"Neil was the first guy in North America to tour the DM2000. When the initial wave of audio hackers—guys like Neil and Jim Roese—were done proving a small





digital board could work on the road and companies like Yamaha and DiGiCo started making digital consoles specifically made for touring, Neil tried a bunch of different stuff before he settled on the Avid Venue Profile.

“I had a short run with the PM1D and then had the 5D for several years and then moved over to this (Venue) platform and, I’m happy with it. I have no intention on changing it.”

One of the oft-cited reasons engineers give for going with the Avid system is the easy integration of third-party processing plug-ins, but Neil is not a big plug-in guy. He’s not a “just plug it in and turn it up” guy, but he’s not big on a lot of processing, either. That said, he does have stuff from McDSP, Eventide, and Crane installed and recently bought the Waves Live bundle.

“I may have a bunch of stuff but I’m pretty straight forward. I like a good compressor on the vocal. A good de-esser, a good EQ. Nothing to fancy.”

It seems Neil’s approach is right for the band. It’s a big part of why he has been with them as long as he has and why they continue to keep him away from his Michigan home



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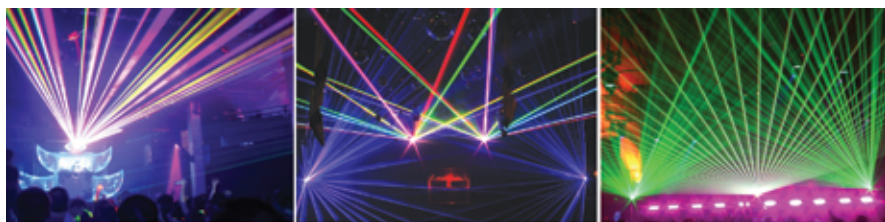
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photos by Linda Evans

# NO TEMPLES OR

with about 100 dates per year from January through October.

"It's great. I am very grateful for this schedule. Not only does it pay the bills, but it keeps my chops up working with these guys (Styx). Over the years we have done probably 100 shows together so it's smooth. You almost don't even have to say anything. It just happens."

## Gary Loizzo

"It's Like the Records, But More..."

When we finally sat down to talk with Gary, it was after seeing him on a bunch of Styx gigs over a period of about 10 years. Every show we went to that Styx was on, we were there to talk to the crew from the other artist on the bill. Of course, when we finally did connect, it was not on a gig in a great room. The Joint at the Hard Rock is a great room. The "Event Center" at Green Valley Ranch is a typical Vegas hotel ballroom. High ceilings, huge chandeliers, the whole nine yards. (Irony is that upstairs in the same building there is a club space that boasts one of the priciest systems in Vegas including a pair of Midas XL8s. You can stop doing the math in your head, that's about \$700K in just consoles...)

After a bit of idle chat, we started out with the standard "how did you get into the business" ques-

tion and got a *very* non-standard answer.

"Well, I started out as a performer," Gary says. "I had a band called the American Breed. I was the lead singer on the cut 'Bend Me Shake Me. Small world, right?"

That song was a big hit in 1968. Sold something like two million copies. ("It would have been have been four million if the Amen Corner hadn't recorded another

version and released it in England," Gary notes.) During the process of recording that song and others, Gary became enamored of the studio process, so he used the money that "Bend Me Shape Me" had generated and opened Pumpkin Studios about 50 miles outside of Chicago.



"I worked with all of the Chicago area bands during the 70s. Producers knew me and knew I was musical and they sent their bands to me for pre-production work all the time. Many times, when it came time to actually make the record, they wanted to be closer to the city so they would go to Paragon."

Gary still has Pumpkin and still records bands but the rhythm of his life changed when the singer from one of the Chicago bands he had worked with chose Pumpkin to record some solo material he was

working on and then convinced the band that the less harried vibe away from the city would do them good. Then he started mixing the singer's live solo shows and then the band asked him to do the same for them. Gary has been with Styx ever since then.

Considering his studio background, Gary keeps it pretty simple. Yamaha PM5D with minimal external processing and no plug-ins.

"I'm a Pro Tools guy. My studio went Pro Tools in 2000, but for me it doesn't work live," he says.

When we first heard that Styx was playing at Green Valley, we wondered where exactly. We did not know about the "Events Center." (BTW, the rig was L-Acoustic V-Dosc provided by PRG.) Knowing that Gary was a PM5D guy, we asked if he would take advantage of the XL8 in the room. The answer was no.

"Most of the digital consoles are just so crystal clear and I need something with a little more diffuse. I am an analog guy and I know I'm fighting a losing battle," explains Gary. "The kids don't know what analog even sounds like but to me the PM5D just has more analog warmth and roundness. Everything is in the console so I don't have to bring an iLok or my plug-ins which is a pain in the butt."

So what about that approach to mixing things? Styx is a very controlled band. There are no

amps onstage. The color-changing LED screens on the front of all of the dummy speaker cabinets onstage should hint at that. They want their shows to sound like the records and that is what their fans come out to hear. Gary learned quickly that live is different from the studio even when the goal is to provide a live experience of the record. It is all about exaggeration.

"I approach it like I was mixing



photos by Linda Evans

a record but instead of a subtle collage of sound it's almost a caricature. I poke at people," he states. "If there is a vocal part or a solo that is really a memorable part of the song, I make sure that really stands out. To make sure I am not remembering it wrong, I go back and listen to the original material all the time. Even though I engineered a lot of it, I still listen



to the originals to make sure I am staying true to the spirit.”

It’s an approach that really works for this band and part of why Gary has been around for the better part of two decades. “I still do it because I love the work. I hate the travel but I love the work,” Gary confesses. So how does one get around that? Well, it helps that everyone in the band has families so they tend to do a lot of short runs throughout the year. “I’m good for about three weeks at a time and after that, I miss my wife. If they book a six-week run, I do the first three then sub out a week and come back for the last two weeks.”

Back to that “event center.” As the show was getting ready to start, Gary looked around at the less-than-ideal acoustic setting and said, “Now, don’t be judging me on just this show. Of course you would come out for a small show in a ballroom,” he said laughing. He had nothing to worry about. It sounded like a big bad rock show. It sounded like Styx. It sounded like the records, just more so. ♦



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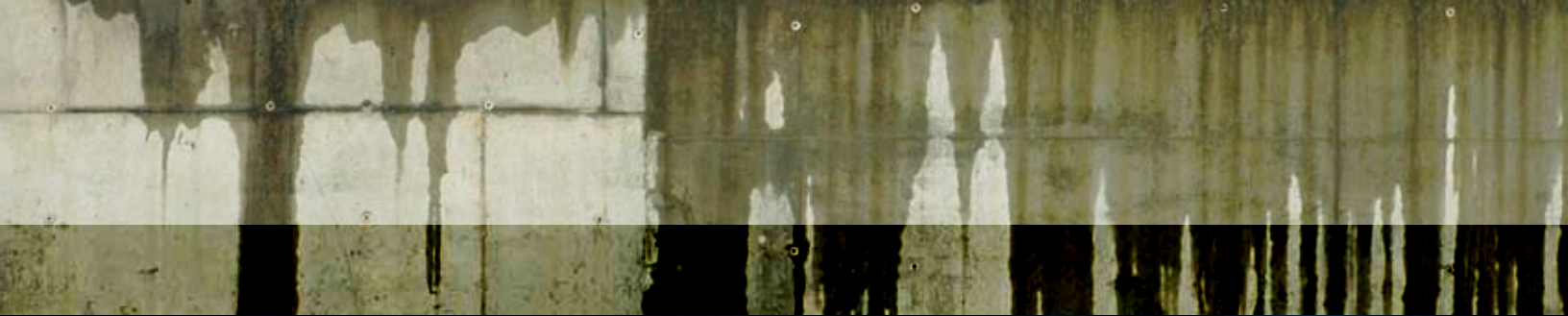
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photos by Michael A Beck





# NICKELBACK

## "HERE & NOW"

With a Much More *Polished Show*

BY MICHAEL A. BECK

**"Nickelback comes out and plays their show and it's like this party that everyone is invited to and your favorite band is playing in the backyard." Those are the words of Show Designer Butch Allen when asked about the design theory of the production. However, in a 28 minute conversation Allen never once took sole credit for the design of the show. "I was thinking exactly what they [Nickelback] told me to think."**



That being said, the show has a lot of moving parts to it. At the heart of the design is the concept of time, which is in keeping with the title of the tour and CD – *Here & Now*. This theme is carved into the show on many levels right down to a time piece painted on the stage as well as on the skin of Daniel Adair's kick drum.

With the exception of two 16'x20' side projection screens getting IMAG from 20k projectors, all of the video imagery is delivered via PRG Nocturne V-28 LED product. A 72'x3' riser runs along the upstage line that is faced out with V-28. A 3' high wall of V-28 rises up from the upstage edge of the riser that makes up the center 68' of the riser. Flying above the backline is a wall comprised of six vertical panels of V-28 each measuring roughly 6'x22'. The panels are flown off of a trolley that travels horizontally. This allows them to be configured as six, three or two separate panels or one wall measuring 36' across.

The video team on the tour, headed up by veteran director Jonathan Beswick, has a compliment of eight cameras; two long lenses, two handheld in the pit, to POVs on the drum kit, one wireless "guitar



photos by Michael A Beck



The last hand that touches the video before it appears in the show is the programmer. Chris had never done anything like this before. We threw him into the deep end of the pool and tied a couple of Hippo's around his neck to make it even harder to swim, and he just killed it." ~ Butch Allen – Show Designer



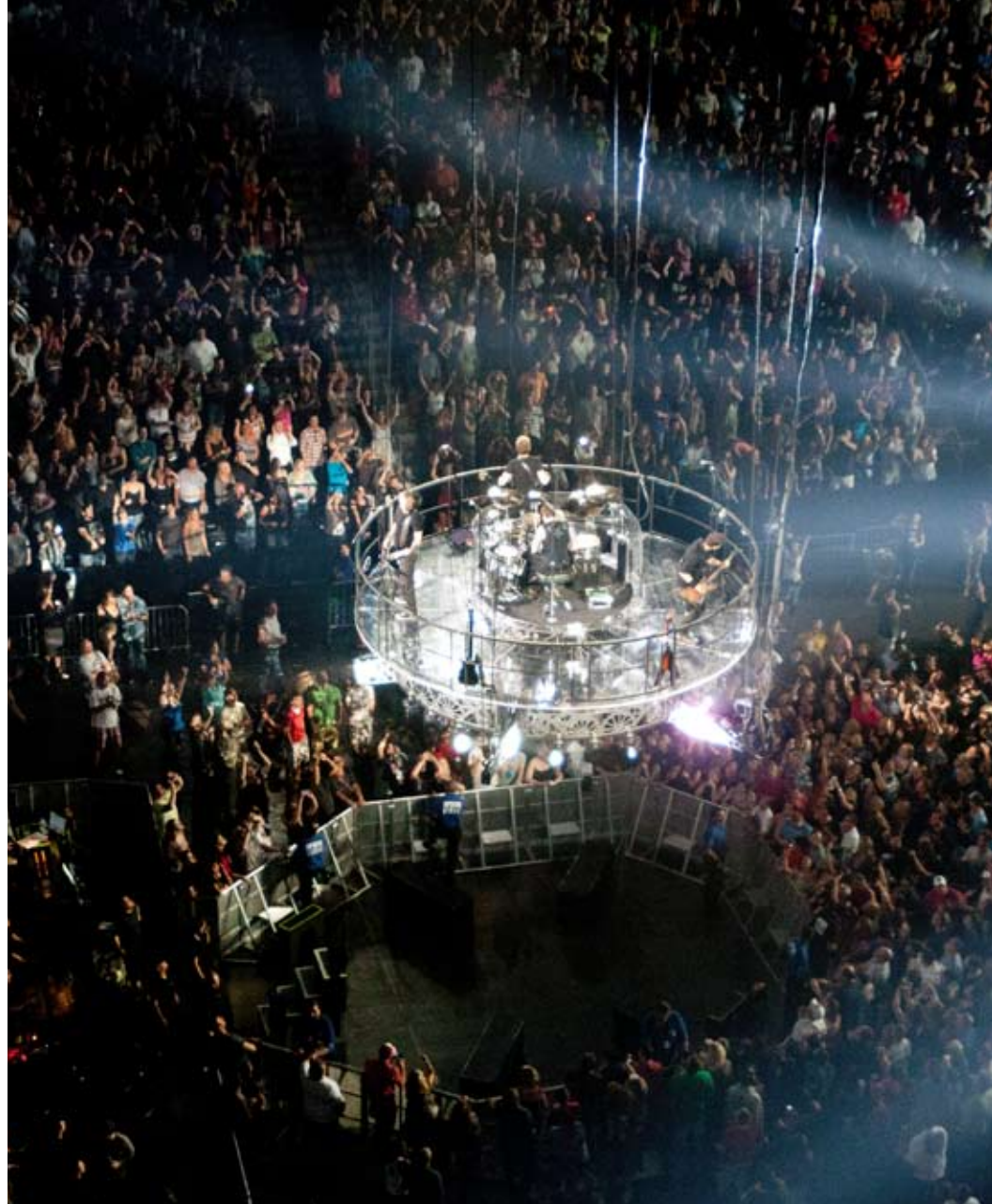
I was thinking exactly what they [Nickelback] told me to think.”

~ Butch Allen – Show Designer

cam” mounted on the neck of guitarist Ryan Peake’s guitar shooting down the neck at his hands and a “Chad cam” which is a wireless handheld camera lead singer Chad Kroeger carries out into the crowd at three different times during the show.

Whereas many productions put content on the main video presentation and relegate IMAG to the side screens, that is not the case on this tour. There are times – as in the song “Burn it to the Ground” – when Beswick is switching a conventional IMAG set for the side screens but has isolated cameras hitting the V-28 display in its three panel configuration. “Burn it to the Ground” is also the only song during the show during which Beswick uses the “guitar cam”.

The video content of the show was created by Mark Devlin of Mark Devlin Designs and Olivier Goulet of Geodezik Design. Devlin had an interesting inspiration for the design of one piece of video, “I got the some direction from Butch [Allen] that the band wanted one – if not more – videos that were nothing but white lyrics on a black background.” He recalled, “My initial response to that was, ‘Isn’t that karaoke?’ Tragically at that same time my father had a stroke and a few days later passed away. That put me in a very different mindset that made me extremely emotional and that emotion combined with the request to do something with white lettering on a black background encouraged me to do what I did for ‘Something in Your Mouth’. I used a technique called ‘Frantic Type’, which delivered



photos by Michael A Beck

the black and white I was asked to provide but the way the words come in it illustrates the lyrics and tempo of the song. I did the whole piece in 18 straight hours immediately after hearing of my father’s death. I’d found a wonderful peace with the fact that he wouldn’t be lingering for years in the aftermath of his

stroke. I had a wonderful peace that said everything’s good now, ‘one monkey don’t stop no show’. We’ve gotta do this.”

Allen was pleased the product he got from Devlin and Goulet, but was quick to add that the video content wasn’t completed when it was submitted by its

producers. One very good example of this was the content for the song “Far Away” during which the video content was animation of the internal gears of a clock. Allen made the decision to take the video slightly out of focus in order to create an illusion of depth of field.

Allen lays the success of the design squarely at the feet of the entire team, “Olivier Goulet did a piece for this show that was off the chart beautiful and Mark did some really cool stuff as well. Chris Maeder, the LD on the show, did all the video programming, and he also composed quite a few of the pieces and Benny Kirkham, who was my associate designer on this one did an unbelievable job of programming the lighting. We brought all these different artists together to create the look of this show. The result is it’s got a wide variety of looks in it.”







into the deep end of the pool and tied a couple of Hippo's around his neck to make it even harder to swim and he just killed it."

Riding over the top of the fact that everyone down the line is considered by Allen to be an artist, there can be a bit of trepidation that takes place when the video is handed off. Devlin explained, "I had to trust another artist with whom I had never worked. I had to turn my vision over to another artist I wasn't communicating with or with whom I couldn't share my vision and let him take a look at what I did and let him finish it off. That's a pretty uncomfortable feeling. And when you've got this amount of work and only 10 days to do it, you kind of hope that artist is a Butch Allen."

As is the case in almost every show that

tours, lighting and video in this production are an inseparable visual one-two punch. The most prominent facet of the lighting of this show is without a doubt the 96 Clay Paky Sharpies. Fifty-five of the sharpies are mounted on the back side of the edges of panels of the video wall so that when the panels come together they can form a seamless unit. But when the panels separate into six pieces and the sharpies are lit up the effect is explosive.

Although the Sharpie is fast becoming as ubiquitous as tour buses, this is without a doubt the boldest presentation we've seen so far. Lighting Crew Chief Matt Burden agrees, "If ever there was a production to showcase Sharpies, this is it. I've done a few shows with Sharpies and they didn't look like this."

That could be why Allen called the show



Although Maeder was grateful for the nod, he takes a nonchalant position on the matter, "We had carried media servers before and I'd done some updating to the [pre-existing] programming. But this was the first time I did the entire show. Butch and I were on the same page with what we were doing and that made it a lot easier. If he wasn't really into what I was doing it definitely would have been a lot more difficult."

Another interesting aspect of the creative team was that Chris Maeder, who has been with the band since it was playing bars, had never done this level of video programming. Allen described the situation, "The last hand that touches the video before it appears in the show is the programmer. Chris had never done anything like this before. We threw him



### BAND

#### MANAGEMENT

Union Entertainment Group

#### BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

Gudvi, Sussman & Oppenheim, Inc.

#### BOOKING AGENCY

The Agency Group

#### PROMOTER

Live Nation- US

Agency Group- Canada

#### RECORD COMPANY

Roadrunner Records

Emi Music – Canada

#### TOURING SECURITY

The Westpac Group

#### BUSES

Celebrity Coaches

#### TRUCKS

Upstaging Inc.

#### LIGHTS

PRG Lights

#### AUDIO

Clair Global

#### VIDEO

PRG Nocturne

#### FREIGHT

Horizon Entertainment Group

#### STAGING & MOTION CONTROL

Tait Towers

#### PYRO

Stage & Effects Engineering

#### TRAVEL AGENT

Pro Travel, Inc

#### INTERNET TOUR

Tech Support

#### BAND CATERING

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#### MERCHANDISE

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#### PASSES

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#### BARRICADE/CABLE RAMPS

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“Sharpageddon”.

In addition to the 55 sharpies on the wall, there are also 41 on the floor. Eleven of those are posted along the top of the upper fascia of the upstage riser with the rest positioned on the off stage ends of the main stage apron. Allen also placed several Vari\*Lite 3500 Wash units blowing through the video panels of the upper fascia as well as around the foot of the drum riser. Down light was provided by eight pods over the stage. Each pod is loaded with eight VL 3000 Spots and two Martin Atomic Strobes. All of the visual elements of the show are backed up by a massive scrim that is washed with eight Color Kinetics ColorBlaze 72s.


A standard part of the Nickelback show has long been the B stage and this was no different, although the stage itself is a huge departure from tours past. As opposed to walking down a runway to the stage, which is what happened in the past, they come through the house as the stage, which was created by Tait Towers, is being lowered from the roof. The unit has a very mechanical look due to the metal fascia that was cut out to look like the internal working of mechanical clockworks. As it descends, the bottom of the platform is the only part of the structure that is visible because it's lit in a vibrant green by 18 German Volkslicht LED units. Because the show is general admission on the floor, the audience is able to gather around the barricaded area where the stage is landing. It has the distinct look of an H.G. Wells-esque spaceship.

The stage has a drum kit already placed upon it and the backline and carpentry crew place guitars and a bass on stands so that when the band members get to the stage they can just



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photos by Michael A Beck



We did the 'pyro all night long' thing through the '04 to '09 years. And as their budget and fan base expanded, they wanted to go bigger and bigger. Eventually it got to the point where we decided to show our hand in the beginning with a big display, wind them back up in the middle, and then finish off strong in the end..." ~ Stephen "Steve J" Joseph – Stage & Effects Engineering

step onto it and play. Once the band members are safely aboard the stage, the stage takes back off to an altitude of about 20 feet, and they play while the Lexand deck rotates.

The stage is lifted by 8 Vario Hoists at 4 points. Each point has one chain being pulled at both ends through a block at the hook, which was also built by Tait, and attaches to the stage. This is as much about safety and backup as it is load distribution. In the highly unlikely event that one of the hoists quits, the other one can take the entire load of the point and continue functioning safely.

Another place in the production where motion control is used is the runways that extend diagonally out from the downstage corners of the stage. Each of the runways has a tread mill that can carry one of the band members out to the end of the ramp. The conveyer is always running in one direction or another so that all they have to do is step onto it like a moving walkway at an airport and get off at the end. When they step off at the far end of the ramp a motion control operator reverses the direction for the trip back to the main stage when the band member decides to come back. The belts are pickle controlled by Motion Control Tech Bianca Beauregard and Set Carpenter Jack Deitering.

Another long standing element of a Nickelback show is pyro. Stage & Effects Engineering has

been the perennial pyro vendor for several tours. Co-owner of the company Stephen "Steve J" Joseph designed the pyro looks for this tour. Joseph, who introduces himself as "the guy you keep in a glass jar with instructions to break the glass in case of Led Zeppelin reunion," designed a smaller show this time out than in tours past. "We did the 'pyro all night long' thing through the '04 to '09 years," said the ever vivacious Joseph. "And as their budget and fan base expanded, they wanted to go bigger and bigger. Eventually it got to the point where we decided to show our hand in the beginning with a big display, wind them back up in the middle, and then finish off strong in the end. It makes the effects more powerful when they occur and it also leaves more room to polish the rest of the show."

The show has 24 flame heads along the upper level of the riser fascia. Twelve are LaMaitre flame nozzles, and 12 are Smart Cube units developed by Stage & Effects Engineering which allows for more precise control over the flame. During the last song of the night, they drop 200 purple "Falling Stars". When the song is over, the band says goodnight and does a musical outro during which the remainder of the pyro inventory (300 pieces of product) is unleashed.

Although FOH Engineer Oris Henry is never overly talkative about his show and the System continued on 38

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## CREW PHOTOS

**1** Donnie Floyd – Stage Manager

**2** Casey Lake - Pyro Tech, Freddie Price - Pyro Tech, Anthony Greene - Pyro Tech, Jason Jones - Pyro Tech

**3** Kevin "Chief" Zaruk - Tour Manager, Claire Van Herck, Assistant Live Nation Tour Director, Chris "Hawk" Louden - Venue Security, Bradlee Kind - Band Assistant/Meet & Greet Coordinator

**4** Kimo Silva - Band Security

**5** Mike Farese - Head Rigger, Ina Jacobs - Tour Accountant, Yvette Uhlmann - Production Coordinator, Kevin "Chief" Zaruk - Tour Manager, Jesse Sandler - Production Manager

**6** Roger Gibbons – Clair Global - Nashville

**7** Wendy Smith - Band Assistant/Wardrobe, Chris "Hawk" Louden - Venue Security

**8** Front: Orris Henry - FOH Engineer, Michael Allison - Crew Chief/System Engineer, Erik Rodstol - Wireless Tech, Chris Holland - Monitor Engineer  
Back: Michael Mule - Monitor Engineer, Phillip Kriz – Audio Tech

**9** Front: Phil Kriz - Lighting Tech, Matthew Burden - Lighting Crew Chief, Chris Maeder - Lighting Director  
Back: Clayton Stewart - Lighting Tech, Thomas Dubas - Lighting Tech, Jason Hicks - Lighting Tech, James Jones III - Lighting Tech

**10** Video: Jonathan Beswick - Video Director, Carson Austin - Crew Chief/LED, Steven Tomanek - Cam Op/LED Tech, Rick Trimmer - Cam Op, John Moore – LED Tech, Jason Lipton - Video Engineer

**11** Bianca Beauregard - Motion Tech, Aaron Levy – Motion Control Crew Chief



These guys are one of the only bands I've ever worked for that really get involved in the day to day functions of the tour. They're very involved in the design process, and they really care about the crew. It's not uncommon for them to come into the office and ask how the day is going or check on very specific aspects of the load in." ~ Jesse Sandler – Production Manager





# NICKELBACK

## CREW



### BAND

Chad Kroeger - Lead Vocals/Guitar  
Mike Kroeger - Bass  
Ryan Peake - Guitar/Vocals  
Daniel Adair - Drums/Vocals

### PYRO

Crew Chief/Shooter - Steve Joseph  
Pyro Techs: Casey Lake, Jason Jones, Fred Price, Anthony Greene

### RIGGING

Tour Manager - Kevin "Chief" Zaruk  
Band Assistant/Meet & Greet Coordinator - Bradlee Kind  
Band Security - Kimo Silva

Head Rigger - Mike Farese  
Rigger - Danny Machado  
Rigger - Rick Wilmot  
Rigger/Motion Tech - Kenny "Skippy" Ruhman

### PRODUCTION CREW

Production Manager - Jesse Sandler  
Production Coordinator - Yvette Uhlmann  
Band Assistant/Wardrobe - Wendy Smith  
Stage Manager - Donnie Floyd  
Tour Accountant - Ina Jacobs  
Venue Security - Chris "Hawk" Louden  
Catering/Production Assistant Backline - Dawn Jeronowitz

### MOTION CONTROL

Crew Chief - Aaron Levy  
Motion Tech - Bianca Beauregard  
Motion Tech - David Hernandez

### CARPENTERS

Head Carp - Greg Gish  
Carpenters: Jack Deitering, Dale Bryant, Jerry Prater

### BAND CATERING

Band Chef - Jason Perry

### BACKLINE CREW

Guitar Tech- Ryan - Kris "Daws" Dawson  
Pro Tools Operator - Gordini Sran  
Bass Tech- Mike Rob Dawson  
Guitar Tech- Chad - Takumi Suetsugu  
Drum Tech - Tom Wilhelm  
Backline Tech - Ernie Hawkins

### LIVE NATION

Live Nation Tour Director - Keith Keller  
Assistant Live Nation Tour Director - Claire Van Herck  
VIP Coordinator - Genevieve "Jenny" Neace

### MERCHANDISE

Head Rep - Jared Gery  
Assistant Rep - Luke Underwood

### SOUND

FOH Engineer - Orris Henry  
Monitor Engineer - Michael Mule  
Crew Chief/System Engineer - Michael Allison  
Monitor Engineer - Chris Holland  
Audio Tech: Phillip Kriz, Matthew Moser

### BUS DRIVERS

Stephen W. Headley- Ryan Driver, Albert Harrilal - Chad Driver, Charlie Warren -Mike Driver, Ricky Presley - Daniel/Chief Bus Driver, Lead Crew Driver - Jeff Feightner  
Crew Drivers: John Paul, Newton Drivers, James Clifford Lee, Sidney Terrell Davis Jr., Billy Ray Nelson Jr.

### LIGHTING

Lighting Director - Chris Maeder  
Lighting Crew Chief - Matthew Burden  
Lighting Techs: Clayton Stewart, Thomas Dubas, James Jones, Jason Hicks, Eric Marshall, Phil Kriz

### TRUCK DRIVERS

Lead Driver: Gary Nall  
Drivers: Randy Rhoton, Tyler Rhoton, Bill Phillips, Marshall Mclane, Richard Genereux, Russ Imperiale, Mike Puckett, Geoff Cox, Tim Heeren, Kevin Thompson, Randy Ennis, Ray Niles, Hans Smith

### VIDEO

Video Director - Jonathan Beswick  
Video Engineer - Jason Lipton  
Crew Chief/LED - Carson Austin  
LED/Cam Tech - John Moore  
Cam Ops: Steven Tomanek, Rick Trimmer





# CHRIS "HAWK" LOUDEN

## DISCRETION IS THE BETTER PART OF VALOR

BY MICHAEL A. BECK

**Chris "Hawk" Louden is the straight talking no nonsense venue security director for Nickelback. He's also one of the busiest people in the industry. When we decided to sit down and chat, it seemed like it would be a pretty straight forward discussion about the career of a well seasoned security guy. But from the very onset, the exchange went places that fortified the the rule of never, ever assuming how an open conversation might turn out.**

### HOW DID YOU GET ON THE PATH OF SECURITY?

I grew up at the Zappa House, and before I got out of the Marine Corps Frank had offered me a job. Frank was like a father to me.

### HOW DID YOU COME TO GROW UP AT THE ZAPPA HOUSE?

I grew up with Dweezil and Scott Marshall, (Garry Marshall's son), and I was the kid from the wrong side of the tracks. My parents weren't really ever around, so the Zappa's kind of adopted me, and I lived up at the Zappa House. Now I had no idea at the time who he was or what he did or that he was a famous musician. I was a kid playing Little League with Dweezil and Scott.

### IT NEVER FILTERED DOWN TO YOU?

In 1984 I wanted to play the guitar because Dweezil was doing it, and my mom and dad could never afford one... we were poor. I mean really poor, and they couldn't afford to get me a guitar, so Frank built one for me. It was a blonde Stratocaster. It's the same one that he played on "Shut Up and Play Your Guitar". It's still in the case. It hasn't been out of the case since I was 12. I burned my fingers on the strings and said "no way" and never picked it up again.

Let's back up a bit. How did a dirt poor kid from the wrong side of the tracks fall in with certainly more affluent kids like Dweezil Zappa and Scott Marshall?

There was only one thing to do in the neighborhood when I was growing up and that was

to play baseball, and I was really good at that. I played at a place called Toluca Lake, and they played in the same Little League program I did, so we became friends. Now remember, the only thing I knew about Dweezil was that he had a funny name. I would be up at that house and people like Adrian Belew would come by, and I had no idea who they were. I watched Steve Vai teach Dweezil the guitar. To me, this was really cool. To me he was just Mr. Zappa. Not long after I met him, I was probably 10 or 11, I asked him if he wanted a door shut. I said, "Mr. Zappa, do you want this door shut?," and he came back with, "If you're going to be cool and hang out up here, you're going to have to call me Frank." I remember when I was 13, I went and saw Missing Persons at the Whisky [A Go-Go]. Even then I had no idea what kind of royalty I was in.

### YOU SERVED IN THE MARINE CORPS. WHAT SENT YOU IN THAT DIRECTION?

When I finished high school, I felt like I wanted to serve so I joined the Marine Corps. After Desert Storm and Desert Shield I returned. Because there were some parts of that conflict that kind of scared me, I went back and saw everyone I had not seen in a very long time. The Zappa family were the first people that I went to see, and Frank was just getting sick. He got up out of bed and gave me hugs and we sat down, talked, and he offered me a job. He wanted me to get out of the Corps. He was going to run for President, remember that? He was going to make me the Chief of Staff if he won. However, right before I got out Frank passed, and Mrs. Zappa said, "He offered you a job, and we're going to honor that. As soon as you get out, you come work for me."

### HOW LONG HAD YOU BEEN IN?

10 years.

### WAS THAT WHERE SECURITY CAME INTO YOUR SIGHTS?

Well, Dweezil and Ahmet were going to Europe and asked if I wanted to do security for them. Now I had never been in this type of environment. I was fresh out of the Marine Corps, and I didn't know anything about that work.

Let's back up for a second.

### WHAT WAS YOUR DESIGNATION IN THE MARINE CORPS? DID YOU DO ANYTHING THAT MIGHT HAVE PREPARED YOU FOR A SECURITY GIG?

I held a top security clearance. I worked on an aircraft that was highly classified.



We'll just leave that there and move on then. That aside, you had no experience in the service that might have prepared you for doing entertainment security nor did you have any experience in the concert environment?

None whatsoever. The only thing I did in the Marine Corps that came even close to that was I drove a commanding officer around. While I was in, I studied Judo. It wasn't long before I was getting mentored by Dave Molder who did bodyguard work for Ozzy and Duran Duran. He was a Royal Marine Commando, and he kind of took me under his wing and showed me the ropes.

### SO WHAT HAPPENED AFTER YOU DID THE EUROPEAN RUN WITH DWEEZIL AND AHMET?

After that I went to work at the office of Zappa Records and Barfko-Swill.

### WHAT DID YOU DO THERE?

I worked in the office, and I did odd security jobs when the boys or Gayle [Zappa] wanted to go somewhere, or when they needed the house watched, I'd go up and stay at the house. After about three years, I met a young singer there, and he asked me if I'd like to go out on the road with him and train in martial arts. That singer was Maynard Keenan from Tool, and that was my first actual touring gig. He was just getting into Brazilian Jujitsu, and I also did an art called Danzan Ryu, which is another form of Jujitsu.

### WHERE DID IT GO FROM THERE?

It all took off from there. My first tour manager, Rick Smith, had worked with everyone. He and Chris Gratton – who is production manager for the Pumpkins now – pulled me aside and



told me exactly how to give a security brief, what to look for, how to set the barricades correctly... all that stuff. I owe my touring career to those two guys.

#### WHAT TIME PERIOD WAS THIS?

1996.

#### DID YOU STAY BUSY FROM THERE ON?

Yeah, but there was more to it than just loving being out on the road. I had to work because I had a daughter Andrea, who was born mentally handicapped.

I wasn't aware of that.

She's now 21, and she's still with me. It's a beautiful thing, and she's a wonderful young lady. Remember when you did that story on me and Chico [Christopher Loudon Jr.]?

Yeah.

At that time I was a single parent. I had to pull him out of school so he could watch his sister, so I could keep working because his mother turned into a heroin junkie.

#### BUT EVERYONE IS DOING WELL NOW RIGHT?

Amazingly, yes. Chico is a bounty hunter down in LA, and Andrea is at home with my fiancé. Andrea kicks butt in Florida and goes to school, so it's amazing.

Okay, let's talk Chico for a minute. He toured for a while. I met him out on Nickelback the first time I covered your tours, and then he got into bounty hunting. But when you first told me about that a couple years ago, you said something that was a little startling.

#### CHICO ONLY GOES AFTER THE BIG CASES. DID I GET THAT RIGHT?

Yes. At the time he was chasing after gang bangers and pedophiles. He looks Hispanic, and anything that came over through South Central or East LA, I'd send him out on those.

#### WHAT DO YOU MEAN YOU'D SEND HIM OUT ON THOSE?

My company has a fugitive recovery unit, and Chico handles all that.

That's the Westpac Group, right?

Yeah. We're in California and Florida.

#### HOW LONG HAS THE COMPANY BEEN IN EXISTENCE?

Since 2003. Back then it was just me, and it was called Hawk Inc. After that I partnered with Mike Kroeger, the bass player for Nickelback. That was about eight years ago. When that happened, I opened arms that did loss prevention, security, personal body guard service and the fugitive recovery unit.

#### WHAT'S MIKE'S INVOLVEMENT IN THE COMPANY?

I needed more direction in my company, and Mike is a great business guy. He's very security focused. If any security related issues come up on the road, he wants to know about it. I asked him if he'd like to come aboard and he did.

#### HOW MANY PEOPLE ARE INVOLVED IN THE COMPANY NOW?

15 to 20.

#### HOW INVOLVED IS MIKE ON A DAY TO DAY BASIS?

Mike has since moved on. He got too busy with the band so I just took it back over. It's just me as the CEO. As I get older, I'm starting to move away from touring and I'm just overseeing the company through my managers. I have an LA manger and a Florida manager.

#### HOW DID CHICO GET INVOLVED?

Well when he was 16, I had to bring him out on the road with Nickelback because I had no other place to put him. He stayed with us until he was 18. Nickelback put him to work as a carp. I have to tell you that every band I've ever worked for are very special to me because they each did great things for me. Aside from the pay, they were each in tune with my feelings and needs. They each helped me out hugely. I wouldn't be here if it wasn't for all of those bands.

When I saw you on the most recent Nickelback show in Atlanta, you told me that your staff wanted to get you nominated to the Top Dog Award for security, and someone told you that your profile wasn't sufficiently high enough to get the nod. That brings up an interesting question.

#### ISN'T A "SUFFICIENTLY HIGH" PROFILE COUNTERINTUITIVE TO WHAT YOU DO?

Absolutely. I'm not the one who's on stage, so I'm not the one the light should be shining on - EVER. If I make a stupid mistake, my general liability insurance is going to pay for it and I'm not going to get any work. I'm not a thug. I'm not there to smack people around. Those days ended decades ago. My sense of urgency about the job should never be visible either. If security issues do come up, the band should never notice it. What I like to hear is, "Man, the show was an easy tonight, right?" "Yes it was." ♦



## EPS AMERICA HELPING PRESERVE THE QUALITY OF YOUR PRODUCTION

**What do you bring on tour? Probably lights and sound equipment. Maybe your lucky black shirt.**

### How about infrastructure?

For a tour to run smoothly, accurately, and efficiently, all the parts have to come together like a well-oiled machine. That means no surprises. And that means dealing with the same equipment. Every show, every city.

With 54 dates in 54 venues on their *Here and Now Tour*, Nickelback's production carries infrastructure products from **eps america**. They started their latest North American tour on April 10th. A few days earlier, less than 200 miles away, eps america's Chicago storage facility was preparing to deliver barricade, cable protectors, and an entire set of VIP-area furniture to the first tour stop at Moline's i wireless Center.

More than 250 feet of eps america's GIGS stage barriers were delivered, in a combination of straight, vario corner, and flexi pieces. The variety of GIGS units allows them to be built around the uniquely shaped stages and FOH units. For Nickelback, vario corner barricade pieces create an inside corner near stage left and stage right, allowing for a slight audience thrust that allows fans to get closer, safely. Their configuration also creates passageway space for security personnel – who are able to pull out concertgoers with the help of integrated steps on the back side.

At the completion of the show, production crews transport the GIGS stage barriers to the next venue - while this tour elected a dry-hire, eps america offers full-service options as well.

Carrying GIGS along with the tour is often preferable over dealing with house barricades, which may not be properly stocked with specialty pieces needed to accommodate a custom stage layout. And eps america's GIGS barricades are made of a lightweight but sturdy aluminum construction, making set-up and break-down quick and easy for the many back-to-back tour dates.

For the VIP sections on the left and right

of the stage, eps provided 100 black metal bar stools and 24 tables. While carrying these furniture pieces on tour might seem cumbersome, eps america worked to ensure ease of equipment transport, load-in and load-out, so Nickelback can provide the same quality experience to VIP guests in each city they play.

eps designed and built specialty furniture carts, focusing on a few qualities they knew would be desired by production crew: they made the carts as compact as they could, able to hold the maximum amount of tables and bar stools in the minimum amount of space; and they made loading and unloading the carts as quick and easy as possible, knowing that the VIP furniture is often the last equipment set-up and the first loaded-out.

For good measure, eps also supplied the *Here and Now Tour* with a set cable protectors. Yellow jackets, an industry standard, are used throughout. Also included are diamond plate metal ramps which are ideal for a confluence of cables and have a long leading edge on the ramp - no harsh bumps or sliding if driving a fork or case over. The variety of products eps keeps in its inventory allows tour production to get a whole range of equipment from just a single vendor, making eps america a one-stop-shop.



eps america's Managing Director Andreas Sengebush & Account Executive Knute Brye, at the Tour Link Conference in January

Over two decades, and in countries all over the world, eps has provided the fundamentals to make events, and tours, happen. Everything from ground cover to barricades, access gates, sanitary systems, flagpoles, cable protectors, and more. They've been on tour with some of the biggest names in music, following the likes of AC/DC, the Rolling Stones, and Madonna all around the world.

If you went to the U2 tour and didn't notice eps equipment, you were probably standing on it. For the *360° Tour* stadium shows, eps provided as much as 90,000 square feet of Terraplas, and up to 100,000 square feet of aluminum Arena Panel ground cover. Perhaps you found yourself up against the railing during the Lady Gaga's last tour, or Jay-Z and Kanye West's *Watch the Throne Tour*. Then you would have seen eps' GIGS stage barriers up-close.

With additional offices in Germany, Denmark, Poland, and Australia, eps can provide infrastructure and handle logistics when tours go abroad. When Nickelback plays select dates on their European tour leg, eps equipment will be there, helping to preserve the quality of production even after it crosses the ocean. ♦



VIP sections to the left and right of the stage feature bar stool and high tops supplied by eps america

GIGS barriers surround the stage for Nickelback's *Here and Now* tour

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# PRG

# HITS THE GROUND RUNNING FOR ANOTHER GREAT YEAR

BY MIKE WHARTON

**Mickey Curbishly is President of Concert Touring for Production Resource Group with 30 years of experience in the live production industry. So, when he says this is the busiest he's ever been for this time of year, he's drawing on a wealth of history.**

Trying to carve out some time from his schedule for an interview certainly backs up that statement. Over the course of two days while in the field at the Coachella festival, Curbishly graciously filled *mobile Production monthly* in on what PRG Lighting has going on these days. Out of the 150 acts appearing at the festival, 10 percent are PRG clients, some of which are AVICII, Dr. Dre and Snoop Dog, Bon Iver, Florence and The Machine, Pulp, The Black Keys and Justice.

With Van Halen, Elton John, Mike Snow, Bryan Adams, and The Fray all out on tour, PRG has a good mix of well established artists and upcoming bands.

Curbishly attributes the workload to the efforts of Julian Edwards in the USA, and Scotty Sanderson in the UK in adding newly found bands to the PRG roster. "I've known these two guys for almost 20 years, and they are very enthusiastic, really technically minded; so they speak the lingo to these younger bands," he says.

PRG also helps these newer bands out get a bit more bang for their buck. Budget constraints will keep the lighting director from getting his ideal vision for the band when they're first starting out. "We try to throw in a special effect here and there, which hopefully will create some loyalty too as the bands career progresses," says Curbishly.

The electronic world is a component of PRG's concert touring makeup as well, with artists like Swedish House Mafia, Tiesto, and Deadmau5 on tour.

A typical day for Curbishly starts at 6 a.m. in his Los Angeles office, conferencing with the UK staff, since he is responsible for Europe, too. Around 8 a.m., "the rest



MORE INFO [visit prg.com](http://www.visitprg.com)

of the world wakes up. Really someone is always awake somewhere. It's a 24 hour, 7 day role. Just when things are slowing down here, Australia is waking up."

A huge endeavor that, perhaps only PRG could have pulled off, Australia is where the *How to Train Your Dragon* tour launched. All elements of the production; light, sound, video, and scenic were awarded to PRG.

Which begs the questions, why would a seemingly Broadway type production fall under concert touring and what determines which division in PRG does the work? Usually the lighting designer is the determining factor, but Curbishly is quick to point out that a show like *How to Train Your Dragon* tours like a rock n' roll show. "A lot of the people we deal with on the Rolling Stone's tours are involved in this project, because it's got to go in and out of arena's and trucks on a daily basis, which is what we do," says Curbishly.

As for the awarding of projects inside PRG, he points out that the concert touring division wouldn't dream of trying to mount a Broadway show since that is not where their expertise lies. "There is a different skill set to that and another part of the company has people well versed in those skills," he says.

Consciously aware of the daily cost of touring, PRG built a rehearsal sound stage in LA to better serve its clients. Just about every tour out the door gets hung there. In effect, this means that the first actual load in will be more like the second day of the tour. The lighting system will have been fully prepped and show ready. At the time of this interview the lighting rig for Roger Waters was being prepped there for the 2012 tour.

Nickelback, a long standing client of PRG Nocturne is currently out and utilizing PRG's Lighting division for the first time. Curbishly attributes the change in lighting company's to the fact that production is mounting a world tour which requires global support and not to any dissatisfaction with the bands previous vendor. Chris

Maeder, who has been with the band since it's inception, is still at the helm as Nickelback's Lighting Director, while Butch Allen continues as Show Designer. The majority of the lighting rig rides permanently in custom built pods by Tait Towers. Initial prep of fixtures, and cable management was done over 10 days in PRG's Las Vegas facility. The gear was then sent to Lutz, PA to be mounted into the various pods by Tait's crew under the supervision of Lighting Crew Chief Matt Buren.

Of equal or perhaps more importance to prepping and hanging a show before it tours is the gear itself. PRG has always had an eye towards proprietary gear in their brand. Acquisitions of Light & Sound Design, then later Vari\*Lite Production Services have melded together to create new unique products. The LSD ICON desk best components have found their way into the V676 Console, while the ICON Luminaries speed and strength have been combined with the Vari\*Lite optics to create the Bad Boy fixture. The Best Boy is the company's newest product, which they are introducing to the market place this year. Several of the fixtures are currently out on Sugarland. One hundred of them will be in the Madonna lighting rig this year making them the predominant lighting fixture on the tour.

"Proprietary products are key," says Curbishly. "We place a lot of value on them such as our automated truss system. It's the best in the marketplace and has won us a lot of work. With the addition of Nocturne we now have a proprietary video system as well." As Curbishly puts it, "Lighting and video are virtually joined at the hip now. Video content is often in the lighting designers tool kit. In fact the two disciplines practically compete with each

continued on 38





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**RIGGING & AUTOMATION**

**PRG** is the world's leading supplier of entertainment technology for the concert touring market , as well as corporate and automotive events, sporting events, theatre, television, and permanent installations.

Engineer Michael Allison and Clair Global Account Rep. Roger Gibbons were able to talk about what Clair is doing on the tour, “We’re using the Stack Rack amplification system on this one,” said Gibbons. “It used to be that an arena system would take up a truck of amps to run it. But now you’ve got a block of maybe eight feet long, four feet high and that’s running half the PA. We’ve invested heavily in the PLM 4000, which is four channel digitally controlled amplifier that has given us a great weight savings along with incredible performance. That all figures to the bottom line of the tour.”

In addition to the space savings offered by Clair Global on the tour, there are functional measures being taken as well. One such measure comes in the form of the Lake LM 44 digital matrix system. Without this system, once the audio consoles for the opening acts are placed, FOH Engineer Oris Henry can’t come out and do anything with his console without affecting the other acts coming on before Nickelback. However, with the LM 44 in the system Henry can do whatever he wants. Allison explained, “Back when we were running Pro Tools we could do an instant soundcheck through the [Digidesign] Profile console during Bush’s set if we wanted to.”

Although it doesn’t take long for a tour like this to slip into auto pilot especially when one takes into consideration the people who are steering the ship. They make a point of creating an environment wherein the crew wants to come to work. According to Production Manager Jesse Sandler that starts at the top, “These guys are one of the only bands I’ve ever worked for that really get involved in the day to day functions of the tour. They’re very involved in the design process and they really care about the crew. It’s not uncommon for them to come into the office and ask how the day is going or check on very specific aspects of the load in.”

Of course as with any tour the odd difficult day happens when you pull into a venue with only one loading dock. The ever entertaining and pragmatic Stage Manager Donnie Floyd has the perfect solution for those instances, “Just go on and do it. Because you know the band ain’t gonna cancel.” ♦

cut through the standard clutter inherent to SMS or texting information. The current Linkin Park world tour subscribes to both. Also packaged with both services is data provided by a company WeatherOps partnered with, Earth Lightening Network, because as VandenHeuvel points out, “Lightening kills more people per year than any other weather phenomenon.”

All WeatherOps meteorologists have a PhD. During an event, two meteorologists are on per shift specifically dedicated to that particular event. This aspect of the service provides the client help interpreting information received.

Says Steven Adelman, “Weather predictive technology has improved so much that there is no excuse for having anything other than site specific and time specific weather data.”

Digby fully acknowledges what he was told at the seminar. “Weather forecasting is not an amateur sport. There is more to the data on radar than a layman could interpret, even though I’d like to think I know it all.”

Linkin Park’s Stage Manager, Ethan Merfy, had attended the Norman safety training class with Digby. In early May Merfy was out with Avenged Sevenfold in Jakarta. He pointed out safety concerns to the PM, promoter and venue. The show was cancelled because the problems could not be rectified.

“In my humble opinion, ESA has already saved lives,” concludes Digby. ♦

other in the budget process, since each is equally important in the show presentation.”

Visualization suites are a tool in PRG’s arsenal as well. Each of the offices in Los Angeles, Las Vegas, and New York are constantly in use creating presentations for clients or programming shows for lighting designers, according to Curbishly.

In today’s virtual mobile society these visualization tools can of course be taken to site when necessary. At Coachella, a suite was up and running for incoming LD’s to tweak their rig by LA “WYSIWYG guru”, as Curbishly calls him, Milton Diego. “The kid is amazing and constantly in demand,” he says.

During the last few years PRG has also instigated an internship program. These days you’ll find more college degrees on a stage than in the past due to this internship program and the spectrum of technology that is constantly changing in lighting and video.

One thing hasn’t changed though, and it still separates the wheat from the chaff. That is the degree of passion possessed by the people putting these shows together. “I’ve got 20 guys out here at Coachella, and I swear they are all technical geniuses. They can be solving the most complex problems in any given instant, but when the time comes to run 4/0 in this 90 degree heat, they go for it without a complaint.”

He then said that rain was coming in and doors were in an hour, so he had to go, and besides, “I’m just here to hand out the t-shirts,



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A great concern when touring internationally is always, "Will my gear be in London, Paris, Japan, Rio or New Jersey when I get there?" Plenty of time is built into the process of getting a show where it is supposed to be in the event that something goes wrong. However, given that every tour is distinctive and has its own needs, just moving across the water isn't enough. Indeed, this is just the beginning.

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