

AUDIENCE

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Grateful for the legacy

John Mayer out again with Dead & Co

Coronavirus devastates live industry

ICM acquires UK's Primary Talent

US ticket fraudsters jailed

‘

We are dealing with the present situation,
but also working for the future

’

Barley Arts Promotions' Claudio Trotta in Italy





Staging a comeback

Coronavirus may have brought the live music industry to a virtual standstill and all companies are facing unprecedented challenges over the next few months, but here we focus on the sector's achievement and vision for the future, post COVID-19. **Christopher Barrett reports**

The demand for more complex, unique and ultimately heavier concert production has meant that the world's leading staging suppliers have had to continually evolve their offering.

A multi-faceted operation with a truly global reach, UK-based Area Four Industries (AFI) has provided staging for events in Asia, the US and Europe, including Germany's Lollapalooza (cap. 70,000) festival.

AFI incorporates Milos Structural

Systems, which was founded in the Czech Republic in 1994 and grew into a global operation with bases in the UK, US, Germany and China.

Milos became part of the AFI group when it was founded in 2012 and the Tomcat, James Thomas Engineering and Litec brands were brought under the same roof.

Litec is also a major supplier of staging and concert and festival structures, it has supplied many large events including

Tomorrowland Festival (60,000) in Belgium and Italy's The Heineken Jammin' Festival (50,000).

In October last year AFI acquired Prolyte, which following its launch in 1991, grew to become a major producer of temporary structures for the entertainment industry, including truss, staging products and hoists.

AFI's product portfolio includes concert stage roofs, aluminium and steel trusses, front-of-house towers

and LED screen support structures. It has bases throughout Europe and in the US and China.

"Area Four is the world's largest manufacturer of truss staging systems and with the acquisition of Prolyte the business is vast, but each brand has its own development resources, its own niche products and accessories," says AFI UK sales & marketing director Glen Brown.

"Video has become a predominant feature on any stage and



All Access Staging with Years and Years

superstructures to support them," he says.

"That has been the biggest change and it has been dramatic. So we have looked at new technology and solutions to increase the load capacity of the roofs.

"Milos and Lytec developed different systems to tackle the same problem. Milos worked on ultra-high tensile steel technology that has resulted in an exponential increase in strength of the product, while Lytec focused on weld-less aluminium structures that are much stronger as a result of the heat treatment process being avoided during manufacture."

Brown is as concerned as everyone else in the music industry about the devastating impact of the coronavirus Covid-19, but says that during the slow down in business the team will focus on catching-up on compliance and administrative paperwork.

With bases in China and Malaysia, UK-headquartered Star Live offers a range of event services including technical design, engineering, fabrication and supply of everything from grandstands and seating to rigging and mother grids as well as stages and structures.

Among events it is scheduled to work on this year are tours by Little Mix, Westlife and Kasabian, along with festivals such as the UK's All Points East (40,000) and Tramlines (30,000). Among the highlights last year was a stadium tour by the Spice Girls.

Star Live head of structures Peter

Holdich says the company is a

global business that operates wherever client demand takes it. "Despite the ongoing situation with the Coronavirus, our office in Shanghai has seen rapid growth in the Chinese events market and supplied services across the vast nation," he says. "We are also looking at various opportunities in Saudi Arabia and across the Middle East.

The company has a dedicated logistics team and has developed a computer system that provides real-time visibility of the whereabouts of all its resources, both technical and human.

With concert productions becoming increasingly complex as artistes demand ever more originality,

"The biggest challenge this year will be dealing with the Coronavirus and not only in Europe, but worldwide"

Hedwig De Meyer



Hedwig De Meyer

has been continually evolved since its was first used, at a Stone Roses concert on Spike Island in the UK in 1990.

"The nature of their rapid and versatile deployment means they can be used at multiple events over a single weekend," says Holdich. "We continually invest in this product range offering enhancements for increased canopy clearance or more efficient deployment."

Playing safe

One of the longest-established and biggest staging operators globally, Stageco is headquartered in Belgium and has bases throughout Europe and North America.

The company was founded in 1985 by its president Hedwig De Meyer, who has been supplying concert stages since the early 1970s.

He says 2019 was the company's best year in its history, with the operation supplying structures worldwide to tours by acts including Rammstein, Metallica, Bon Jovi and Muse.

Stageco not only supplies custom-built tour stages for clients such as U2, Taylor Swift and Coldplay, it also provides an extensive range of festival stages and front-of-house structures.

The company has been at the forefront of calls for improvements in safety standards across the sector. It was among the creators of the Guidance for The Management & Use of Stages and Temporary Event Structures and part of safety advisory groups including the European CEN TC 152, a ▶

Holdich says Star Live's designers work hard to make its products look exceptional for each tour.

"We have an amazing Design and Visualisation team that enables us to create seemingly unique custom stages from our vast inventory of modular structural components," he says.

The company's most widely used stage systems among its VerTech range, which includes the VerTech Orbit and VerTech Ultra, is the VerTech Mobile Stages. The VerTech technology



Pete Holdich

that means we are now supplying stages that carry much higher capacity weight requirements and bigger wind-load requirements because the big video walls need

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technical committee handling temporary structures for events, and the Memento Ensemble Demontables in France.

De Meyer's biggest concern is, understandably, dealing with the fall out of the Coronavirus.

"We don't know what will happen, everything in April got cancelled and also the rest of the summer looks uncertain," he says. "So, the biggest challenge this year will be dealing with the Coronavirus and not only in Europe, but worldwide."

Germany's Megaforce supplies stages to events worldwide, from Mexico to Hong Kong. Clients include Austria's Nova Rock Festival (55,000), Switzerland's Greenfield Festival (30,000) and Germany's Southside (50,000). Among touring artistes this year are Iron Maiden, Udo Lindenberg and Die Tooten Hosen.

Twenty-seven metres wide and with a load capacity of 65 tonnes, the TVG R28 is one of Megaforce's most in-demand stages.

"TVG is the most popular festival stage because of its extremely large useable area, weather safety and flexibility," says Megaforce CEO and owner Michael Brombacher.

"We are about to finalise a new system with a load capacity of around 100 tonnes, which will be available next year,"



Michael Brombacher

The demand for heavier and more complex productions comes at a time when the industry has had to cope with increasingly erratic weather.

"We strictly comply with safety regulations, no matter what region we are doing business in. We offer training and certification for crew members at our headquarter in Weingarten, and on-site our construction managers have daily safety meetings," he says.

"We have also recently started working in Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates, with our partner AES."

A new high

Denmark's European Staging was launched in 1993 by Mikkel Brogaard and formed a joint

venture with UK-based High Post Structures and the operation was rebranded.

High Post Structures supplies all-steel, crane-free, staging solutions to tours, concerts and festivals around the world. In 2017 it began supplying hydraulic stages to Ed Sheeran's world tour and two for Rod Stewart's 2019 tour.

The company's seven stages include four hydraulically raised structures that range in size from 20 to 28 metres wide. The entire roof, side covers and stage structure is completed while it is only a couple of metres off the ground and once it has been hydraulically raised it is fully locked.

Brogaard says that the reduced need for crew and expensive cranes makes the hydraulic system not only very safe but very cost effective.

Like every company in the staging sector, High



Megaforce - Bühnenshow5 © Martin Diepold



Staging • Temporary Structures • Event Overlay • Project Management



Star Live stages for The Spice Girls

Post Structures's business has been heavily impacted by the spread of COVID-19.

Says Brogaard, "Right now we are laying low, we have had some good years so we are not panicking, and have requests coming in for August, but I can see the whole year's business being wiped out."

Born in the USA

Launched in the US in 1991 by Clive Forrester and Erik Eastland, All Access Staging & Productions (AASP) is headquartered in Los Angeles and has bases in New York and London. The company's structures, which include patented Versa Stage products, are designed and built in AASP's HQ.

Among its extensive offering of staging equipment are flown automation, drape effects, stager conveyors and mobilators.

Among tours the company supplied staging to last year were Garth Brooks, Childish Gambino,



Matthew Bull

Jennifer Lopez, Eros Ramazzotti and Dave Matthew Band. The Coronavirus means many of its upcoming tours have been moved to next year or postponed until later this year.

AASP's festival clients including US's Coachella (125,000), for which it supplied the stage and roof for the Mojave Stage site, a complete festival band riser package, viewing platforms and crowd control barriers.

AASP sales and marketing manager Matthew

Bull says, "Creating bespoke and interesting parts for staging has always been part of the process. Colour and printed surfaces are currently among the ways designers are finding cost-effective solutions."

"Stage lifts and automation are always popular, and we have a new lift product launching in Europe soon."

Eastern promise


In December 2018 the inaugural Saudia Ad Diriyah E-Prix became the first event in Saudi Arabia to have a gender unsegregated audience. With a site capacity of 23,000, the three-day event included concerts by acts including Enrique Iglesias, David Guetta, One Republic and The Black Eyed Peas.

That landmark event was supplied by Middle East regional equipment rental company Production Technology (Protec), which recently opened a large warehouse in Saudi Arabia.

Protec was founded by Stephen Lakin in 1999 and also has facilities in Abu Dhabi and Dubai, United Arab Emirates, with more than \$50 million of equipment. It is able to build up to 11 stages simultaneously using equipment from its main three locations.


Lakin's operation offers lighting, sound, audio-visual, staging, rigging, hydraulics, SFX and backline. Among the artistes it has worked with are Nicki Minaj, Flo Rider and Sergio ▶

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Mendes, while festivals work includes UNITE With Tomorrowland at Abu Dhabi's du Forum (4,500).

One of the main challenges of supplying concerts in the Middle East is that artists often only come for one-off shows, but overshadowing all issues currently is the spread of Coronavirus.

"There is zero business in the Middle East at the moment because of Coronavirus, and the whole industry is collapsing globally," says Lakin.

"It depends on how long it lasts, if it last two or three weeks then most people will pull through. If it last two to three months some will pull through, but if it lasts six to nine months nobody will pull through."

Russian support

Since its launch in 2009, Moscow-based Install Profi has worked on more than 2,500 events including concerts and festivals in Russia and beyond. Its broad range of equipment for sale and hire include roof systems, aluminium trusses, steel trusses and stage podiums.

Among the music events Install Profi has equipped are Rock over the Volga (85,000) and the Eurovision Song Contest.

"Our company's reach is very extensive; we work in Russia and abroad in countries such as Georgia, Greece, Armenia and Montenegro," says Install Profi art director Victoria Teterkina.

"As developers and manufactures of stage structures we have seen requirements change dramatically during the past five years; people want something unusual, something that can move, something that will surprise even the most experienced spectator."

She notes that one of the more remarkable structures it has created in recent years was a stage for the WorldSkills event in Kazan last year.

"It was a 340 tonne inverted pyramid with four dynamic folds, each weighing 20 tonnes, that were lowered during the show," says Teterkina.



Stageco with Rammstein stage

Planning ahead

Launched in 1996 by Alexander Strizhak to work on a Michael Jackson concert at Dynamo Stadium in Moscow, JSA Europe is headquartered in Riga, Latvia, and operates across the region.

Its projects have included the Eurovision Song Contest in Kiev, Ukraine, in 2017 and the 7,000-capacity festival Dunaiska Sich in Izmail.

Naturally this year's work will depend on the situation with Coronavirus, but it is due to be involved in the production of annual major events in Ukrainian cit-

"We're a strong and resilient business that has traded through some of the tough times ... and will bounce back"

Peter Holdich

ies this summer and autumn, including the Leopold Jazz Festival (30,000) in Lviv, Festival Faine Misto (16,000) in Ternopol and UnderHill Music Festival (25,000) in Ivano-Frankivsk.

Earlier this year JSA partnered with Karabas Promotion to provide production and technical support for concerts in Kiev, including Deep Purple, Ricky Martin, Björk, Rammstein and Elton John.

"We have great plans and hopes but currently it is very difficult to be fully

confident of what the future will bring," says Strizhak.

Among systems the company supplies are SIXTY82 aluminium trussing, stage constructions and podiums, and Layher structural systems.

Strizhak says the demand for interesting and alternative stage set ups is having a positive effect on the industry.

"It encourages imagination and creativity and, as a result, the continual development of the industry. We work in partnership with ArtMax Engineering in Lviv, which makes original and unique stage designs for show and non-standard structures for events," he says.

The company is working on a new mobile, modular and re-designable 30,000-capacity stage set-up called Flexodrom.

Headquartered in Helsinki, Finland's Roudaamo Event Warehouse supplies everything from stages and risers, to bar counters, stairs and ascending stands.

Clients include Ruisrock Festival (20,000), Pori Jazz (30,000) and Flow Festival (10,000), and worked with acts such as Enrique Iglesias, Scorpions, Aerosmith and Profeetat.

Roudaamo's CEO Juha-Pekka Maakannas says he is unable to focus on anything, but the impact of COVID-19. "The Coronavirus has brought all business to a end now so I have to keep focusing all my energies on finding ways to keep our company alive."

With the huge, ever-evolving and wide-ranging impact of the Coronavirus being felt by the entire live music industry, many believe it is important to focus on the light at the end of the tunnel.

Star Live's Peter Holdich says, "It's hard to calculate the impact this will bring, but we're a strong and resilient business that has traded through some of the tough times, including the [the UK's] foot-and-mouth disease and 9/11.

"When the world recovers from the current situation and the bounce back happens, we'll be able to support our clients and continue to deliver amazing events." ■



Alexander Strizhak



JSA at Underhill festival