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## REPORT ISSUE



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Staging companies realise that sustainability and value are the qualities that now excite producers and promoters of all kinds. Where the three 60-foot Glass Spiders of the 1987 David Bowie tour of the same name were reputedly taken to a field and burnt when the tour concluded, Stageco's three U2 stages, known as "the claw," are currently for sale.

Recycling is a theme that chimes with West Yorkshire's LS-Live, the staging, set construction and equipment rental firm which also operates an arena-size rehearsal room that allows road crews to put large-scale indoor productions through their paces. General manager Ben Brooks reports that in spite of the continued demand for show-stopping staging and production effects, a new spirit of shrewdness is emerging.

"When tickets are harder to sell, everything ultimately has to be more

cost-efficient," says Brooks. "That means not necessarily making everything brand new, but maybe using standard parts. Partly, it's about being greener and more environmentally friendly, and partly it's because, globally, people aren't quite as flash as they were."

Even in the image-conscious world of hip hop, Brooks says smart artists are getting good value for money from their staging. "Tinie Tempah at the end of last year was a truly, truly impressive arena tour and it was done on a relatively small budget," he says. "It looked like a multi-million pound stage set and it wasn't – it was built entirely from standard components."

So, as the northern hemisphere moves into spring, for those staging companies who straddle the indoor and outdoor businesses it's a question of one eye on the costs and the other on the skies.

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## U2: The Claw

"The claw" as the four-legged stage sets from U2's *360° Tour* of 2009-11 came to be known, currently sits on two continents awaiting a buyer – two structures on Stageco lots in the US and the third in the company's yard in Belgium.

Stageco's Hedwig De Meyer won't forget the job in a rush. "It was something that had never been done before - the logistics, the design, the structural calculations, the lifting procedures, the way we were building it," he says. "The one that gave us the most headaches was the lifting procedure, because at a certain point we were lifting 180 tonnes."

Stageco forged some new alliances in the process of working out such challenges, including experts in the offshore industry. It also emerged with some new staple products, among them a stronger, larger



modular staging system, the XL Tower.

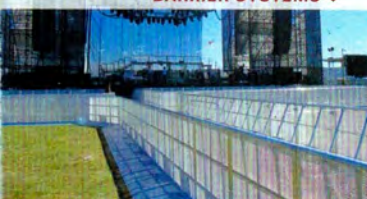
"We designed it with new tours and new projects in mind, but it came out of the engineering we did on U2," says De Meyer.

If nothing else, the technology involved in the most recent U2 tour goes to illustrate the changes the staging industry has undergone in less than two decades. "In the beginning, you did not need a lot of money to get into this business," says De Meyer. "These days you really do. But the way it all moves forward is, you do a project, you pick up the good pieces and you try and use them in other projects."



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