iq
Issue 45
LIVE MUSIC INTELLIGENCE
An ILMC Publication. Jan 2013

The Time Travellers' Guide to the ILMC

Eight-page registration guide to ILMC 25

25 Years of... Promoters

Quarter of a century entertaining the masses

Market Focus – Germany

Rising expenses threaten robust German business

25 YEARS OF... PRODUCTION

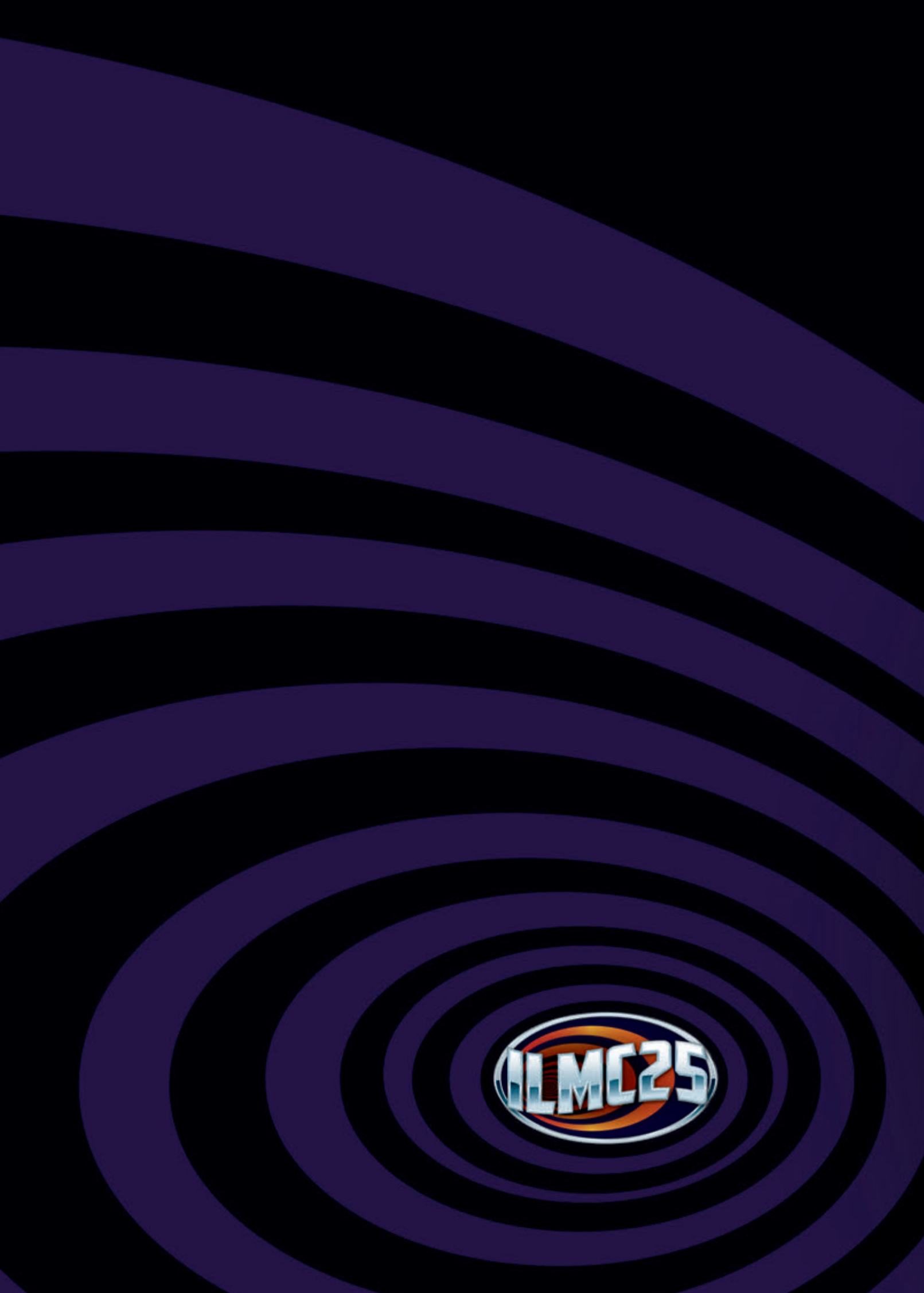
Technological breakthroughs over the last 25 years

THE GAFFER

Jason Danter's ascent up up the production ladder

Year in Review 2012

TREASURE UNDER THE TICKETING PYRAMID: DAVE NEWTON
IT'S ONLY ROCK AND ROLL – BUT WE LIKE IT: MARC LAMBELET
HEALTH AND SAFETY ARE NOT DIRTY WORDS: CHRIS HANNAM
FROM RUSSIA WITH LOVE: ILYA BORTNUK


ILMC25

A JOURNEY THROUGH TIME AND SPACE

As anyone who's been to March 2013 and back will tell you, ILMC 25 was a resounding success…"the best ever" someone will say; "more networking than O2" will comment another. But bending time can always take the edge off, so ILMC is inviting all time travellers of the universe to join our 25th anniversary in real time. Or some time.

The Institute for Limitless Movement in Chronology is prepared…the flux capacitors are charged…which means that the most important weekend in the live music industry is ready for its next adventure…

LIVE NATION
AEG
INTELLITIX
Showsec
Baloise session

International Live Music Conference 8-10 March 2013 • www.ilmc.com
The Royal Garden Hotel, 2-24 Kensington High Street, London

CONTENTS

News

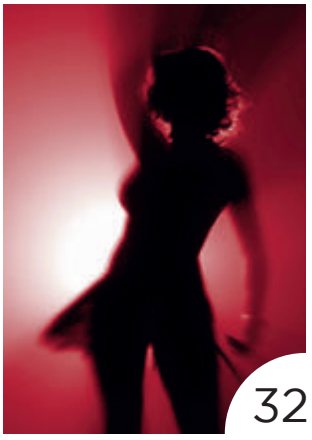
Features

Comments and Columns

3

Year in Review 2012

24



32

40

50

58

TEMPUS FUGIT

Gordon Masson hopes for a return to industry growth in 2013 – and a time travelling ILMC to remember…

TIME FLIES WHEN YOU'RE enjoying yourself, so I'm told, which means I must have had one hell of a 12 months because I can't quite believe it was a full year ago that I was writing my first *IQ* editorial. Such is the life of an editor that at the time of writing this New Year edition of the magazine, there is still a full month of 2012 to go. But we want to get *IQ* to you before the holiday season starts, hence our calendar juggling exploits. I won't go into the various headlines and developments of the last year, as Allan McGowan's excellent review of 2012 (see page 24) does a far better job than I can do in the limited space here. However, looking forward, 2013 promises to be a stellar year, and the ILMC team will be hoping to see hordes of time travelling regulars descending on the Royal Garden Hotel in March to mark the conference's 25th anniversary. For a hint of what we have lined up for ILMC 25, take a look at the registration guide (page 3), if you haven't already.

Hopefully, the forthcoming year will see normal service resume in the festival market as well. The impact of the Olympics, especially in the UK (where they were held), definitely took its toll on live music's summer season, but with the extra demands that the Games placed on production suppliers now lifted and the harmful, free concerts thankfully a distant memory, the return of events such as Glastonbury Festival should hopefully provide a catalyst to jump-start the market in 2013. Fingers crossed.

Ahead of the New Year, we've got a packed edition of the magazine which might prompt some discussion when ILMC 25 comes around in three months' time – not least through our retrospectives on production (page 50) and promoters (page 32), where various luminaries reflect on the ways in which their businesses – and the industry in general – have developed over the last quarter of a century.

Elsewhere in this issue, our German correspondent, Manfred Tari, examines the state of his nation's live music market and reports that controversial changes to performance royalties are prompting public demonstrations against GEMA, while new ecological taxes on energy prices are set to send electricity costs soaring, which will also hit the live business hard.

And last, but certainly not least, I had the privilege of speaking to this year's recipient of The Gaffer award, Jason Danter, who took time out from a manic schedule that currently sees him steering Lady Gaga's spectacular show, *The Born This Way Ball*, from South Africa back toward Europe. One of the international touring circuit's most sought after production managers, Jason is truly one of the most likeable gentlemen in the industry and the story of his voyage through the ranks of both the Royal Navy and the music business makes for a fascinating read for anyone looking to carve out a career in the production sector.

All that remains for me to do is wish you all the very best for the holiday season from everyone involved in *IQ* and the ILMC. 2012 was a challenging year for many, many reasons, but as Marc Lambelet points out in his comment piece (page 21), we're lucky enough to be working in the coolest business imaginable. So with that in mind, let's try to approach 2013 in a positive frame of mind with the goal of making it one of the best years for live entertainment ever. Happy New Year!

Issue 45

LIVE MUSIC INTELLIGENCE

THE ILMC JOURNAL, Jan 2013

IQ Magazine
140 Gloucester Avenue
London, NW1 8JA
info@iq-mag.net
www.iq-mag.net
Tel: +44 (0) 20 3204 1195
Fax: +44 (0) 20 3204 1191

Publisher
ILMC and M4 Media

Editor
Gordon Masson

Associate Editor
Allan McGowan

Marketing & Advertising Manager
Terry McNally

Design
Martin Hughes

Sub Editor
Michael Muldoon

Production Assistant
Adam Milton

Editorial Assistant
Joanna Stevens

Contributors
Christopher Austin, Ilya Bortnuk, Chris Hannam, Marc Lambelet, Dave Newton, Greg Parmley, Manfred Tari, Adam Woods

Editorial Contact
Gordon Masson, gordon@iq-mag.net
Tel: +44 (0)20 3204 1195

Advertising Contact
Terry McNally, terry@iq-mag.net
Tel: +44 (0)20 3204 1193

25 Years of… PRODUCTION

Giant leaps in technology during the last quarter century have transformed the ways in which artists communicate with their fans, none more so than the live performance. **Adam Woods** investigates how the production business has evolved since the first ILMC...

No one could be said to have truly mastered the large-scale rock production 25 years ago, and if everyone had taken the advice of a man who did as much as anyone to address the challenge, it's likely that no one ever would have done.

"Tours [like that] are extravagantly dangerous to do because they're so fucking tiring," David Bowie was still grumbling, four years after his 1987 *Glass Spider* tour set a new standard for unwieldy but ambitious stadium spectacle.

"Just the pressures of organising the event – and it's no longer a show, it's an event; there's God knows how many people running around, and everybody's doing something… and it's a mass of confusion and somehow it's all supposed to come together."

Madonna hit the stadiums that year too, along with Michael Jackson's *Bad* and U2's *Joshua Tree* tour. A debate is said to have raged before that last one about whether a big screen would distract the crowd from the stage. This from a band whose most recent tour included a video wall with a million components. Clearly, much has changed.

Amid head-scratching, nail-biting and failed and successful experiments, the scene was gradually set for an era of mega-tours. Plain old screens would be just the beginning of a remarkable audio-visual revolution that would see lights merging into video into stages. As the years went on, computerisation and increasing know-how would allow lavish productions to hit the road without necessarily driving artists to the point of nervous exhaustion.

"You can see computerisation as a thread through everything that has happened in production over the past three decades, from moving lights in the early-80s to motor control systems and tracking systems and putting musicians up on lifts and everything else," says Guy Forrester, director at All Access Staging & Production.

You can see ravenous demand as the other thread, as every development is constantly one-upped and jaundiced audiences call for ever greater thrills and more seamless entertainment.

Staging

"The audience got more spoilt," says Hedwig De Meyer, founder and president of Stageco, as he reflects on what has happened in the past few decades. "They have seen it all, so you need to come up with something new that they haven't seen, which is getting harder and harder."

You also have to come up with something more spectacular but more sustainable, safer and – given the commercial importance of touring to artists – more profitable. Artists need perfection on a budget, so where sets might once have been laboriously constructed and then dumped, these days they are more likely to be cleverly combined from separate, hired parts.

"At the beginning of the era of stadium shows, it was perfectly acceptable just to trash the sets or burn them," says Carol Scott, Tait Technologies director of sales and marketing. "In today's environment, where sustainability and stewardship of the planet are crucial, you can't do that anymore. It's immoral, it's impractical and it's a bad use of the world's resources."

So, inevitably, the staging and production hire business has become more sophisticated, and components more ▸

Take That, June 2011

standardised and re-usable. Even The Claw, from U2's *360⁰* tour of 2009-11, was essentially a vast skeleton full of LEDs and other elements that are currently blinking and flashing somewhere else. "Although The Claw itself is still in existence somewhere, it was made up of all sorts of elements," says Scott. "We built a camera deployment system on the front of the stage which is now part of our rental inventory and has gone out with other tours since."

Sustainability presents a challenge, but the spectacle obviously can't be allowed to suffer, and needless to say, standards have only risen on that front, at least in the last 20 years. While the big shows of the late 80s may look rather under-produced from this vantage point, by the early 90s, reckons De Meyer, cutting-edge stadium acts were producing spectacles that would still pass muster nowadays. "Look at Pink Floyd and the show we did with them in 1994 [the *Division Bell* tour, the band's last to date, with a 130-foot arch designed to resemble the Hollywood Bowl] – if you saw that show today, it would still be a very modern show, even when you stand it next to the technology we have today."

Stageco also had an important hand in The Claw (now three years old) which still arguably stands as the defining example of stage-as-art-in-its-own-right. "If you look at the U2 stage, it doesn't look like a stage anymore. It's part of the show; it's a big part of the show," De Meyer says. "It becomes a determining factor in the show. That is the main evolution over all these years."

Stageco's gradual re-imagining of the role of a stage started in the 1980s, when Genesis's *Invisible Touch* tour abandoned scaffolding in favour of three towers, supplied by Stageco and ESS, which went up faster and gave more rigging capacity, with, for the first time, a waterproof roof on top. Moving into the 1990s, stages became more stylised and started to play an increasingly major part in the production, bringing staging companies fully into the production fold for the first time, as they were called upon to work alongside architects and specialist designers.

> "The audience got more spoilt. They have seen it all, so you need to come up with something new that they haven't seen, which is getting harder and harder."
>
> *– Hedwig De Meyer, Stageco*

A series of Rolling Stones tours made a dominant contribution to the trend: Mark Fisher's stage sets for *Steel Wheels* (1989), *Voodoo Lounge/Urban Jungle* (1994-5), *Bridges To Babylon* (1997-8) and *A Bigger Bang* (2005-7), creating instantly recognisable visual personalities for each. "The designs on the Stones I have always really loved a lot, because they were the first ones to really do stadium tours," De Meyer says. "In one way, if you look back at the Stones' first outdoor tour [the 1981 *American* tour, though the band had mixed arenas with occasional stadiums on previous excursions] you would say, 'well, yeah, it's big, but it is what it is'. Now, we have more possibilities."

Not every show walks the earth with such pounding footsteps, but efficiencies have evolved that make a difference to all sorts of touring productions. The advent of rolling stages gives far greater flexibility when loading in, while

allowing for plenty of customisation from tour to tour.

Timo Mathes, head of international sales and project management at German stage specialist Megaforce, likewise cites such mobile, hydraulic stages as a major, relatively recent step forward. "Looking at how much effort is being put into the engineering element of those structures, you really can tell that stages keep constantly attracting inventors and engineers, and that they will always be a major column in the event industry," he says.

The continuing development, of course, means a high capital outlay for suppliers, as they continually invest in the latest gear, but it is vital to do so, Mathes adds. "Always having state-of-the-art systems available on stock means more clients will prefer you in the end," he says. "That's what some competitors don't realise. They are still offering their 20-year-old material and selling it as modern."

Lighting and video

Where lighting is concerned, a breakthrough made in the early 80s was still being explored a decade later. In a similar vein, the key lighting breakthrough of the 21st century so far offers a platform for many more years of successful experimentation.

Until the 1980s, stage lighting systems for concerts were bulky rigs with countless fixtures, often numbering in the thousands. Each of these had to be manually focused beforehand, and colours were varied using celluloid gel, applied in an equally labour-intensive fashion. To change colours in mid-song, the relevant lights had to be turned on and off using electronic dimmers, albeit controlled by a computer lighting console.

Internal glass filters and metal halide bulbs eventually allowed colours to be changed almost instantly and offered a new range of saturated tones, but it was the idea of adding two motors (hatched at a barbecue in Dallas in 1980) that made the first Vari-Lite system, trialed by Genesis in 1981, such a game-changer.

Guy Forrester was working for another lighting company across the road from Vari-Lite developer Showco at the eureka moment, and still remembers the impact. "From my point of view, it gave me the opportunity to move from being effectively a technician to being able to operate moving lights, and from there to become a lighting designer."

Several decades on, the arrival of LED lights has legitimately been the next major leap in lighting. They haven't yet replaced their PAR-can cousins for heavy-duty applications, but certainly the integration of LED into staging and video offers enough creative possibilities to keep lighting and production designers busy for decades more.

"In the old days, you would have a very standard stage with a couple of risers, and the lighting guy would come in and basically do a light show above the stage," says Forrester. "The change now is that the light show incorporates the stage, it incorporates the video screens, the whole lot. Everything is crossing over and becoming more integrated, and the video and lighting guys have to work together, where once it was a battle between the two groups."

Bluman Associates' 'Transmission' show

> "Technically, the audience experience is a hundred times better now. But our audio memory is very short. I talk to people who say to me, 'I remember Knebworth in 1974, and it was fantastic!' It must have been dreadful, in fact; but we thought it was great."
>
> *– Bryan Grant, Britannia Row*

Needless to say, the LED union of lighting and video isn't just about light, and it isn't just about pictures – it's about texture and effect. "Production designers aren't just using LEDs for TV images or IMAG [image magnification]," says Adrian Offord, director of business development at video production and hire specialist Creative Technology. "You look at *Strictly Come Dancing* and they are using LED screens as proscenium arches, just to give movement."

Scott cites Madonna's *MDNA* tour as a prime example of the LED-as-staging philosophy. "She had a matrix of 36 LED lifts that came out of the stage floor," she recalls. "They had video content, they could be used as blocks of colour, and they were all automated to give her a dynamic working platform."

Before lights became screens and vice versa, screens had a rapid evolution all of their own, starting with the popularisation of LED to replace CRT [cathode ray tube] screens in the 1990s. While it might be tempting to sniff at yesterday's technology, early LEDs still survive and continue to do a job.

"Jumbotrons were the first screens that we had, and they would tend to be used for big outdoor stadium shows, like Michael Jackson, " Offord says. "You would lift those old things in place with cranes. Everything is so much lighter now, but then again, I sold our last bit of Jumbotron to Millwall Football Club and that's still running, so that's a good reflection of how well it stood up."

Audio

One unfortunate conclusion of any long, hard look at developments in live music production over several decades is that, technically, all the great old shows of any size can't have been all that great by today's standards, with primitive lighting, bad sound, crude production and probably

a bad, un-enhanced view. And still, somehow, a crowd had a fine time, both because you can't miss what hasn't been invented yet, and because live music is a mysterious thing.

"Put it this way: technically, the audience experience is a hundred times better now," says Bryan Grant, managing director of audio rental company Britannia Row. "It's a million times better. But our audio memory is very short. I talk to people who say to me, 'I remember Knebworth in 1974, and it was fantastic!' It must have been dreadful, in fact; but we thought it was great."

In the past 25 years, never mind the past 40 or so, live audio has submitted to an absolute transformation, driven by electronics and onrushing developments in audio science. Line arrays arrived in the 1990s, giving focused, efficient, directable sound, and, as in every walk of technological life, everything got smaller and smaller.

"Clair [Brothers Audio Systems] used to have these great S4s, and Showco had big cabinets of their own, and then they had the pyramid system," remembers Forrester. "That obviously all changed, and everything reduced in size with innovation in sound."

Speakers may not have the same bulk or heft as they once did, but it's just as well, because while a typical large show in, say, 1980, could probably have fit in four trucks, its equivalent today needs four times as many, purely because of the rise and rise of the increasingly elaborate production. A shrinking part of that growing bulk are the ever-lighter consoles, digital processors and portable effects clustered front of house, all entirely computerised and operated by people in constant wireless and Blackberry contact with the rest of the crew.

"At a Depeche Mode concert a couple of years ago, I was standing at front of house and started idly counting the number of computers. I got to 23 and I got frightened – I had to go back for a cup of tea," says Grant. "There's a whole plethora of changes in the hardware, and the software – which is what I call people – has had to change too. Everyone has to be computer literate – you can't just pick this stuff up anymore."

While the mixing tools have changed beyond recognition, many of the instruments themselves seem to have reached their evolutionary peak many decades ago. "In keyboards, Hammond organs, Wurlitzer and Rhodes electric pianos and acoustic pianos are as popular now as they have ever been, in spite of the development of sampling synths that replicate their sounds," says Pepin Clout, special projects manager at north London hire company John Henry's.

"In guitar and bass amplification, while manufacturers constantly develop new product, Fender and Marshall, to name but two, make large amounts of money reissuing designs from the 60s and 70s." ▸

Effects and safety

Beyond the video, the lights, the audio, the stage and set itself, there's always more you can do. Make huge projections, for instance, like those seen at the Jodrell Bank *Transmission* shows, where the enormous satellite dish became a canvas in its own right.

Such processes depend on the fairly recent conjunction of three technologies: a new generation of powerful, sophisticated projectors; increasingly powerful media servers that can serve high-definition content within virtualised, 3D environments; and the 3D and motion graphics software that creates the images themselves.

"We had been projecting onto buildings and mapping content for years," says Pod Bluman, founder of Bluman Associates, *Transmission*'s chosen projection mapping specialist. "The French especially have got a tradition of son et lumière displays. But the last three or four years have seen the transition from the analogue way of doing it to the digital way of doing it. Some purists will argue that using photographic processes will always be better than using video, in terms of resolution and colour. However, most people wouldn't notice that stuff."

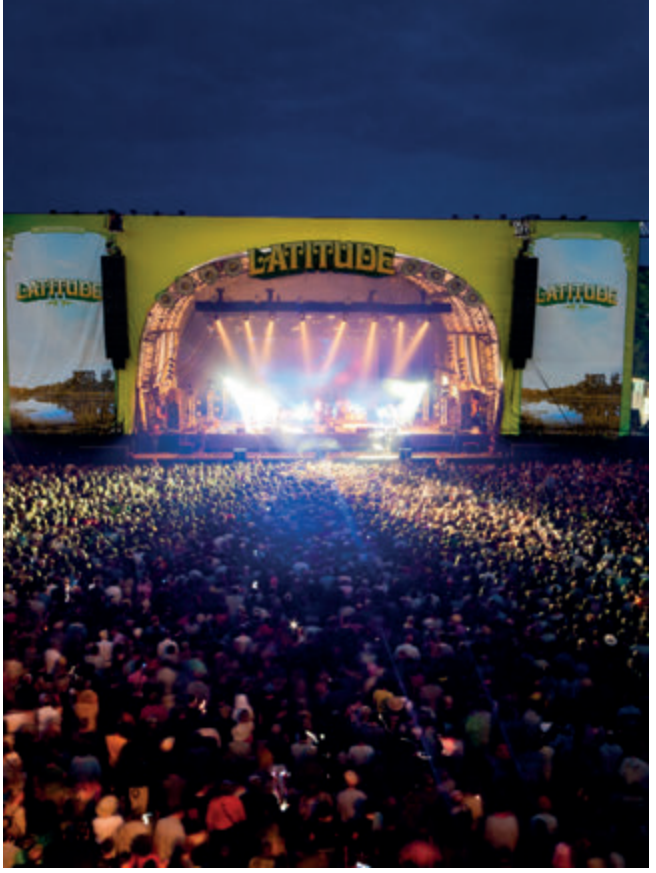
Further everyday elements of the production arsenal are the pyro, lasers, haze, cryogenics, ground fog, confetti, even inflatables that, while not new, have never been quite so ubiquitous.

And they aren't necessarily all about sound and fury. For the Trafalgar Square Poppy Appeal, effects specialist BPM SFX recently created a confetti shower of poppy petals. For the Radio 1 Teen Awards at Wembley Arena in October, it was random air bursts and gerbs; multiple hits of confetti and streamers; low smoke entrances and huge hits of various pyrotechnic lifts and chases, plus balloon drops.

Live music has become an ever more dynamic business over the past 25 years, in every sense, and it is no coincidence that with the arrival of stadium and festival scale, there also arrived an increasing emphasis on safety.

"Safety was a big concern 25 years ago," says Mojo Barriers director Cees Muurling. "That is basically the reason Mojo was developed, but I think, worldwide, there is a growing attention to safety even now." That attention took a while to reach its current level, Muurling notes. "Twenty, twenty-five years ago, if you did a project that needed 150, 200 or 300 metres of barricades, it was the event of the year, and the entire office would head out to get it done," he says. Nowadays, 1500m of barricade on a single project is not unusual, and in January, Mojo will work at the inauguration of US President Barack Obama.

But where the development production in general has been a story of increasing technology and sophistication, Mojo offers only a tale of education. "A barricade still pretty much looks the same as it did 25 years ago," says Muurling. "It's no longer steel, it's aluminium, but other than that and the add-ons we do – the turnstiles, the counting systems – the basic principle has not changed. It has had a huge impact, not through development of the product, but through a development in the understanding of how to use it."



Creative Technology's Obelisk stage at Latitude Festival in 2011 © Rob Whitworth

> "Always having state-of-the-art systems available on stock means more clients will prefer you in the end. That's what some competitors don't realise. They are still offering their 20-year-old material and selling it as modern."
>
> *– Timo Mathes, Megaforce*

Internationally, that kind of thinking has been a major force in the development of new markets. "For Gearhouse the most significant development, production-wise, has been the arrival of international shows and the resultant uplift in the technical standards in this country," says Ofer Lapid, managing director at Gearhouse South Africa.

"We were basically pushed by international production managers to deliver properly and safely. The demand for a particular standard of equipment made us realise that we had to find the resources to purchase equipment that would meet the demands of international riders."

Undoubtedly the last 25 years have seen the live entertainment industry evolve into a truly global business and the companies and individuals involved in the production side of things have been quick to learn about new developments from their peers to transform today's concerts and festivals into the spectacular events that audiences have, quite rightly, come to expect. Now, with more and more calls from within the production sector to agree and adopt international standards, the future for live music in the next 25 years looks secure, although with the speed of technological advancement, quite what shows will look and sound like by ILMC 50 is anyone's guess. ●

ALL ACCESS®

STAGING & PRODUCTIONS

WWW.ALLACCESSLTD.CO.UK

TEL +44 (0) 1483 765 305

LOS ANGELES · NEW YORK · LONDON · BRISBANE · SYDNEY