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TOUR GUIDE

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BOB SEGER


Face the Promise Tour

the band

Vocals/Guitar/Piano: **Bob Seger**
Bass: Chris Campbell
Saxophone: Alto Reed
Keyboards: Craig Frost
Drums: Don Brewer
Guitar: Mark Chatfield
Guitar/Keys/Vocals: Jim Brown
Backing Vocals: Shaun Murphy,
Laura Creamer, Barbara Payton
Horns: John Rutherford, Mark Byerly,
Keith Kaminski, Bob Jensen

Just Like It Used To Be

by MICHAEL A. BECK



Typically the cover story of any given issue of *Tour Guide Journal* is chosen for reasons that usually involve the technologically complex nature of the show or its immense size or some other standout reason. But in the case of the Bob Seger *Face the Promise* Tour, it is none of the above. The story here is quite simply that the show is, well, quite simple. It is just lights and sound. That is it. No I-MAG, no video B-roll behind the stage, no pyro nor lasers.

Bob Seger could have just as easily gone to work on the assembly line of any one of the automotive plants in Detroit. When you see him interacting with people or just walking through the hall backstage, you get the feeling that this no frills guy could show up at your Super Bowl party, and no one in the room would be the wiser. Indeed, Bob was insistent (much to the chagrin of many promoters) that the ticket prices be low enough that his blue collar fans could come and see the show and not go broke. That same easygoing meat and potatoes style was the watchword of the tour.

Production designer Bob Peterson has worked for Seger since 1976. While he does television lighting now, he came back into the concert world to design this show.

“The thing was designed around being unpretentious because that’s who Bob is,” he explains. “I don’t know if it was Punch Andrews’ (Seger’s manager) requirement for efficiency or my belief that one or two beams used properly can be more effective than 5,000. Even today in my television work, I’ve the philosophy that says ‘if it looks bad, turn something off. Less is certainly more.’”

The show had a conspicuous absence of video.

“Punch and I’ve been against using video from the beginning,” Peterson says. “Bob was of the opinion that because of the expectations of promoters and the audience, we were going to be forced into using it. There was a lot of pressure from a lot of different directions to do it. Bob Brigham over at Nocturne was great about bringing all sorts of different ideas to our attention, but in the end we went without it and it worked.”

Given that Seger has not toured since ’96, there was a desire to allow the audience to maintain whatever memories it wished.

“It’s kind of set up to be impressionistic of sorts where you paint on it where memories and video doesn’t get in the way of those memories,” says Peterson.

Rather than video on the upstage, the backdrop was a huge cabernet drape. It was rarely lit, but when it was, it was lit in shades of orange, red and yellow, which brought the drape wildly alive. Indeed, during “Sunspot Baby” it was hit with 14 slowly rotating gobos of a smiling sun that was the most beautiful look of the whole show.

The lighting look was also truss-warmer heavy. There was not a right angle in the lighting system. Apart from the up and downstage sticks, the whole thing moved. The main body of the system was made up of eight curved sticks that were independently hung off of 20 motors. At times the rig hung symmetrically and would at a mouse click, fly into a presentation of abstract art. Through it all, the rig achieved some really dramatic looks.

With rare exceptions, truss-warmers and silver aluminum truss usually succeed in drawing attention away from the stage and up to the rig.

“I do regret that the truss couldn’t be powder-coated charcoal or cabernet, like the backdrop so it would periodically disappear,” explains Peterson, “but there was neither the time nor the financial resources to make that happen.”

At times, parts of the rig would be flown in to within 10 feet off the deck, and there wouldn’t been any way to hide the silhouette against the backdrop. The only option was to light it like a set piece. So, in this case, it really added to the show in a big way.

Audio had its old school approach to this tour as well. The FOH system was comprised of Showco Prism boxes. When asked about it, FOH engineer Brad Divens explained, “The prism is a big rock and roll box and this show needs a speaker that moves a lot of air. As long as you know what you want to get, you can get it out of this rig. It’s just that simple.”

The other reason why there was not a line array on this tour is that Seger does not like them.

This is a very small tour that puts out a lot of product. That comes first from the fact that Bob Seger and The Silver Bullet Band are what they are and always have been; serious back beat rock and roll. It doesn’t just feed

the crew

Production Manager: Tim Lamb
 Production Asst.: Corey Vadala
 Stage Mgr.: Donnie Floyd
 Tour Mgr.: Bill Blackwell
 Security/Asst. Tour Mgr.: John Rapp
 FOH Engineer: Brad Divens
 LD/Tech: Chris Stuba
 Monitor Engineer: Peter Thompson
 Drum Tech: Dave "DJ" Johnson
 Guitar Techs: Al Rogo, John Cromer, Dylan Ely
 Key Tech: Kurt Wolak
 Bass Tech: Mike "Spike" Rush
 Rigger: Tom Cusimano
 Carpenter/Gr. Rigger: Manny Medeiros
 Sound Techs: Michael Dunwoody, Paul Jump, Myles Hale
 Lighting Crew: Andrea "AJ" Patterson, Jim Michaels, John "Cheetoh" Chiodo, Steve Schumi
 Merchandisers: Eric Wagner, Bob Swan
 Truck Drivers: Edgar Wagner, Tommy Grace, Rob Tison, Randy McDonald
 Bus Drivers: Eddie Easter, Joel Lockwood

vendors

Trucking: Upstaging
 Bussing: Roberts Bro.
 Lighting: Upstaging
 Sound: Showco
 Stage Set: Accurate Staging
 Cargo: Horizon Entertainment Cargo
 Tour Passes: Tour Supply
 Itineraries: TMP Entertainment
 Travel Agency: Night Flight Tours

tour related offices

Management: Punch Enterprises
 Tour Mgmt.: Bill Blackwell
 Production Mgmt.: Tim Lamb
 Booking Agent: CAA
 Record Label: Capitol Records

pictured: left to right 1. Audio Tech Michael Dunwoody, Monitors Peter Thompson, FOH Brad Divens, System Engineer/Audio Crew Chief Paul Jump, Audio Tech Myles Hale 2. Lighting crew: Jim Michaelis, Andrea "AJ" Patterson, Steve Schumi, John "Cheetoh" Chiodo 3. Guitar Tech Dylan Ely, Drum Tech Dave "DJ" Johnson, Bass Tech Mike "Spike" Rush, Guitar Tech John Cromer, Horns Marty Gelhaar, Key Tech Kurt Wolak, (lurking in the back) Production Manager Tim Lamb 4. Stage Mgr. Donnie Floyd 5. Carpenter/Gr. Rigger Manny Medeiros, Rigger Tom Cusimano 6. Production Assistant Corey Vadala 7. Guitar Tech For Bob Seger Al Rogo 8. Production Manager Tim Lamb 9. Tour Manager Bill Blackwell, Security/Assistant Tour Manager John Rapp, 10. Lighting Director Chris Stuba



PHOTOS BY MICHAEL A. BECK



PHOTO BY MICHAEL A. BECK

into what comes off of the stage. It also contributes to the affect and performance of the crew. This truly is a classic rock and roll icon. Like or dislike the music of Bob Seger, the chances are good that you can identify with his music when it comes on the radio.

The people on this tour are happy to be here because they enjoy working on a tour that has this much historical cache, packs this much punch and can travel in such a small package (five trucks). While there is a lot going on in this show for an audio engineer to harness, Divens is not that concerned.

“It’s pretty simple,” he adds. “Set the mix of the band and put Bob just on top of it. The real fun is that I know all of his music. I knew what was coming my very first day on the gig. This is classic stuff here. When I came in on my first day and started running things up with headphones on, I was thinking this is going to be the most fun gig I have ever had, and it is.”

That sentiment was echoed by system engineer/audio crew chief Paul Jump.

“It’s just lights and sound,” says Jump. “There’s nothing complicated about it. The problems start happening when you start making this stuff into something it’s not.”

Lighting director Chris Stuba couldn’t stand still during the show. This was a guy who really dug his gig.

“I grew up listening to this guy,” says Stuba with a big grin on his face. “It’s one of the most enjoyable gigs I’ve ever had. It’s real easy to lean into this music and make it look good.”

Peterson, whose first touring design gig was Seger in 1976, was thrilled to be back on this one.

“ON THE FIRST NIGHT I CALLED THE SHOW,” HE SAYS, “I COULDN’T FINISH CALLING CUES FOR ‘TURN THE PAGE.’ I WAS CRYING.”

Over and above all of that, there is the attitude of Seger himself. There is the great story of when he went to Milwaukee and visited the Harley Davidson plant. The plant lined up five of the latest models of their bikes and asked him to take his pick. He thanked them profusely and declined the offer saying, “I don’t want to take anything from you. But the sale starts next week, and I can’t wait to buy one.”

This guy is as real as his music was and is. He understands that good rock and roll needs no frills. He has surrounded himself with people who get that, too, and they are proving it on a tour that is slated to run through March. Based on the smile that was on Seger’s face at the joy of being back on stage, this writer is betting that this thing will go well beyond March. Look for it to go until he just gets tired of doing it. ☺