



DIXIE CHICKS

LESS GEAR MEANS MORE SHOW

by MICHAEL A. BECK

Compared to their last outing, the Dixie Chicks' *DCX 06/07* tour focused more on the music and talent of the Chicks than on the production surrounding them. Lights, sound and video were aimed at being just what the show called for and nothing else. "This tour is very different from what the last tour was," explains production manager Bill Leabody. "The last one was this huge undertaking. It was an extravaganza. Of course, that's the most noticeable aspect of this one. They wanted to scale it all back and make it more about the music than the show."

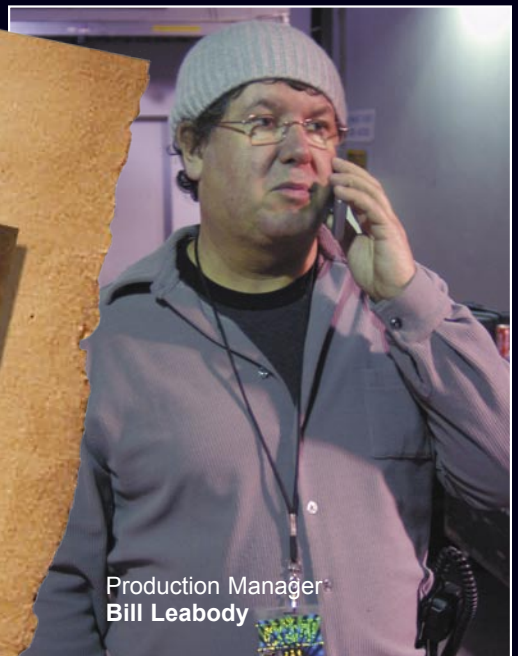
The production was designed by well-traveled designer Alex Reardon.

"They used Roy Bennett on the last tour," says Reardon. "They didn't discount using him on this tour, but they wanted to see who else was out there. I'm glad I didn't know who else was going for this. If I had, I would have shot myself. It was the likes of Woodruff and other enormously talented designers on that level that I came up with a plan and did some very serious renderings and made my presentation. I didn't present it to them as a finite plan. I told them, I saw this as a starting place, and they liked that I was flexible. The most important thing I did was to shut up and listen to what they had to say."

Reardon was very precise in his attention to every aspect of the production, even to the point of metering the follow spots early enough in the day so that changes, adjustments or repairs could be made in time for them to be corrected or replaced by showtime.

The rig was minimalistic—there was nothing in it that wasn't needed to put the appropriate light on the stage for a beautifully accented concert.

right bottom: FOH Engineer **Fern Alvarez**, Monitor Engineer **Marty Strayer**, Audio Tech **Christy Spradley**, Band Monitor Engineer **Scotty Reikowsky**, Audio Crew Chief **Brad Ervin**, Audio & RF Technician **Kevin "Kap" Kapler**



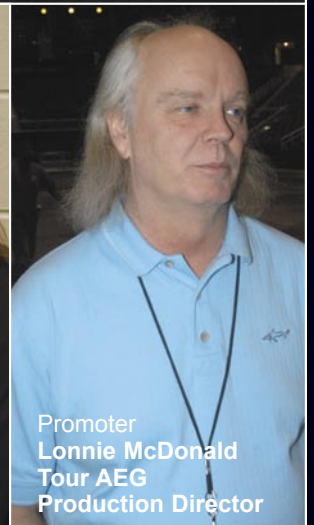
Production Manager
Bill Leabody



Security
Garry Terry and
Richard Pollock, Director



Production Asst.:
Marcia Camarillo



Promoter
Lonnie McDonald
Tour AEG
Production Director



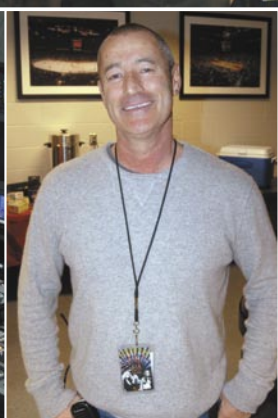
DIXIE CHICKS

DCX 06/07

Lighting Crew **Troy Smith**, Head Rigger **Ken Mitchell**, Lighting Tech **Chris Stinebrink**, Lighting Crew Chief **Johnny "Tosser" Tosarello**

Dixie Chicks' Tech/Backline Crew Chief **Robert Bucky Huck**, Keyboards and Programming **Chad Miller**, Bass, Guitar and Strings Tech **Jeff Kerstein**, Drum Tech **Donny Clay**, Guitar Techs **Jerry Holmes**, & **Doug "Red" Redler**

Tom Wilson
Stage Manager/Carpenter



Video Engineer **Jason Varner**, LED Tech **Adam Dragosin**, Video Director **Deb Collins**, Video Crew Chief **Peggy Adams**

Richard Coble
Tour Manager

Crew

Production Manager: Bill Leabody
 Production Asst.: Monica Camarillo
 Stage Mgr./Carpenter: Tom Wilson
 Tour Mgr.: Richard Coble
 Road Mgr.: Mindi Pelletier
 Lighting Designer: Alex Reardon
 Lighting Crew: Jonny Tosarello (crew chief), Troy Smith, Chris Stinebrink
 Video Director: Deb Collins
 Video Engineer: Jason Varner
 Video Crew Chief: Peggy Adams
 Video/Led Tech: David Adam Dragosin
 Audio: Brad Ervin (crew chief), Christy Spradley (tech), Kevin "Kap" Kapler (tech)
 FOH Sound Engineer: Fern Alvarez
 Monitor Engineer: Marty Strayer
 Head Rigger: Ken Mitchell
 Backline Crew Chief: Bobby "Bucky" Huck
 Guitar Tech: Jeff Kerstein, Jerry Holmes, Doug "Red" Redler
 Drum Tech: Donny Clay
 Keyboard/Systems Tech: Chad Miller
 Security: Gary Terry (director), Rich Pollack, Steve Denelsbeck (venue)
 Lead Truck Driver: Ricky Bain
 Bus Drivers: Dwayne Harper, Scott Davis, Joe C. Bush, Tom Gray, Tony Gornay
 Tour Accountant: Jeff Mauss

Vendors

Video: Nocturne Productions
 LED Contractor: Element Labs
 Audio: Showco
 Radios: AAA Communications
 Security: Assured Protection Agency
 Trucking: Upstaging
 Bussing: Hemphill Brothers Coach Co.
 Freight: Rock-It Cargo
 Credentials: Cube
 Itineraries: Knowhere
 Merchandise: Cinder Block

Tour Offices

Management: Strategic Artist Management
 Accountants: O'Neil Hagaman
 Booking Agency: CAA
 Travel Agency: Left of Center/New Act Travel
 Publicist: PMK, Front Page Publicity
 Legal: Gordon, Martin, Jones & Harris



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While the show wasn't technologically heavy, there was an interesting piece of video gear that was designed to Reardon's specifications. The crew called it the "Shower Curtain." It was so new that it had not been given a proper name by the time it left Element Labs for this tour. It was a grid that looked like webbed cargo net. Only it was made out of heavy gage plastic that did indeed have the look of the material of a plastic shower curtain. At regular intervals of the grid, there were RGB LED nodes.

The whole array flew in a series of panels that were eight feet wide and hung from the lighting rig to the stage level with about two feet between them. They served several purposes. There was the obvious and primary use of creating a very impressive low-res video look. The unique part of the look was the gaps between the panels. These gaps allowed the look to be accented by the well-lit drape that flew upstage of the video drapes. It was a lightweight neutral colored rag that had the look of crushed velour (a Rose Brand product called Lava) that worked quite well as a cyc. The texture in the cyc (for want of a better word) added depth to the overall look.

The plastic material the "shower curtains" were made of was clear with a dense enough opacity to allow it to hold texture and be lit. Because the material was not completely flat, again giving it texture, it could be lit from any number of different angles. So now, what you have is a video wall that can be seen through, lit from several angles (front and back) and without losing any of the intensity because of the LED video source. Being that they were made of high strength plastic, they were very easily transportable. Indeed, they traveled in a soft bag.

There was an I-MAG display that was intelligently placed directly above the stage which kept the focus in the middle of the room as opposed to screens on the outside of the rig, which encourages the audience to look away from the stage. The "shower curtain" was only used for

I-MAG in the very last song of the night. Because the wall hung in panels with separation between them, the camera operators had an interesting challenge. They could not use their viewfinders for the song. Using the viewfinder to frame the shot could conceivably place one of the artists at a place on the display where there was a considerable gap between panels despite the fact that the shot was well composed. So for that song they simply looked out past the viewfinders and watched the screen. This way they were able to make sure that none of the principals were caught in the gap.

Including the Chicks themselves, there were 11 people on the stage. Certainly this was not the 60-piece orchestra that Barbra Streisand was toting down the road, but there was a lot going on and keeping it articulate was 10-year Chicks veteran FOH engineer Fern Alvarez, Jr.

"A lot of how good this show sounds is the inputs," he explained. "We have 11 top notch musicians who make my job very, very easy. I don't over-complicate the situation. I keep it as simple as possible, and we get some pretty good results on a nightly basis."

The backline guys had the busiest slice of this pie. The three principal members of the band: Natalie Maines, Marti McGuire and Emily Robison are all extraordinarily talented musicians and singers. Over the course of the show, they displayed their instrumental talent by playing a plethora of different instruments. The backline result of that were roughly 70 instruments. These guys were jumping all night long.

The watch word of the show was simplicity. It was boiled down to its most necessary components and what was left was a stage with just enough technology to have a cutting edge look while leaving a huge hole perfectly shaped for the incomparable talent of the Dixie Chicks. ☼