



Opposite: Bruce Springsteen and the E Street Band's latest global tour was in support of *The Ties That Bind: The River Collection*.

BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN

The tour that came as a surprise to many, has entertained Springsteen's loyal fanbase across the globe, uniting those who have been with him since the beginning with younger fans that have just been introduced to the legendary singer. TPI's Stew Hume flew to Munich, Germany, to meet the loyal men and women who arguably have the best 'Boss' in the world...

It was nearing the end of the show when suddenly a sign being held up from the crowd was caught on camera. *I want to sing and play with The Boss*, it read on the giant video backwall of the Olympiastadion. With an encouraging cheer from the audience, a 6ft-something security guard was at the barricades to carry a young boy, no older than 10, to the stage. All of a sudden a guitar tech came running from the wings to hand the youngster an acoustic guitar. Before he knew what was happening, he was side-by-side with Bruce Springsteen playing *Dancing in the Dark* in front of 70,000 fans. Only at a Springsteen show...

Bruce Springsteen and the E Street Band's *The River Tour '16* has been out on the road for just over six months entertaining the singer's global legion of loyal devotees. This was Springsteen's first tour in two years and came off the back of the release of *The Ties That Bind: The River Collection*, a boxset released in late 2015 to mark the 35th anniversary of seminal album, *The River*.

RALLY THE TROOPS

This latest tour was a welcome surprise to many Springsteen enthusiasts - amid rumours that he was working on a solo album. The last thing many fans were expecting was a world tour. Tickets went on sale in December with more dates being added in January. In its first incarnation during the US run, Springsteen and the band played *The River* album in full - but once the tour hit European shores, the set list expanded to include more hits from the singer's back catalogue.

Once the wheels were set in motion for the tour, long time Tour Director, George Travis, began to reunite Springsteen's touring family. Heading up the returning members was Production Manager, Ron Cameron. He told TPI about being invited onto the project: "I first got word that the tour was going ahead in autumn which is not a great deal of time to organise a tour

of this scale. But, after putting everything in place, we were ready to move into the rehearsal space at Fort Monmouth, New Jersey in January and then set out on the road." Also making her return to the production office, for her 14th year, is Production Coordinator, Kelly Shaunessy who explained the logistics of putting together the goliath show. "It certainly was a very quick turn around," she laughed. "We had less time to prep for the tour than we usually do and were frankly playing catch up while we were still half way through the US leg. But now we are on the European run we have really settled in."

The 60-strong touring crew was made up of several long-serving members alongside some fresh-faces: "That's what is great about a Springsteen tour," Shaunessy said. "We always have some new faces that keep everything fresh alongside the guys who have been with this production for several years and keep the structure." Cameron added to this, stating the quick turnaround involved in this large scale tour was in part thanks to many veteran crewmembers once again answering the call. "It certainly makes it easier having such a good communication chain between each department and people understand what to expect, not to mention what is expected of them. However, credit really has to go to Tour Director George Travis. He does a fantastic job in pulling all the pieces together."

The River Tour '16 tour also saw the return of many suppliers that have worked with The Boss in the past including Morpheus Lighting, Pete's Big TV, Stageco, TAIT, Edwin Shirley Trucking (EST), Rock-It Cargo and Delico Catering as well as welcoming Clair Global onto the tour for the first time in several years.

Cameron described his role within the tour: "This machine has been running for such a long time and there is an understanding of how people need to work together. Each member of the crew has a fantastic work ethic



After a US run, Bruce Springsteen and the E Street Band visited European shores to complete a run of stadium shows beginning in Barcelona, Spain; Production Manager, Ron Cameron.

and everyone accepts their responsibility to perform at a certain standard.

“The way I see my role is that I need to provide all the information each department needs to do their job well.” He added: “At the end of the day we are representing Bruce and the E Street Band and it’s important that we conduct ourselves accordingly. So far it’s gone really well; every night we get between 60 to 80,000 people coming out so it’s fair to say the results have been pretty exciting.”

RACING IN THE STREET

Making sure that the whole production got from one venue to the next was the responsibility of EST, which supplied 22 trucks for the 12-week tour. The trucking company has worked every Springsteen tour since his first show at Hammersmith Odeon on the *Born To Run* tour in November 1975. Lead Driver Roger Thomas is a veteran of many of the Springsteen tours since the 70s and is well regarded by the production team.

Handling freight was Rock-It Cargo, which has had a long history with Springsteen’s productions. Interestingly the company first worked with the singer’s production back in 1981 for the first *River* tour. Fast-forward to 2016 and Rock-It was brought in to once again to supply its services. CEO David

Bernstein explained: “For the European tour we shipped approximately 18 trucks of gear. Both George Travis and Ron Cameron were able to split production in such a way that half the gear could be shipped via ocean and the rest by air. We were able to provide the door-to-door transatlantic freight forwarding services for the tour handled by Todd Murphy out of our New York Office at JFK airport.” As with all tours there is always a level of unpredictability as Rock-It found on this tour. “The vessel we used from New York to Europe made an unplanned and unannounced schedule change which resulted in us having to discharge the cargo at Southampton as opposed to the port in Antwerp as originally planned,” said Bernstein. “However, due in large measure to the efforts of our in-house ocean freight Guru, Frank Conenna, the load-in took place as scheduled in Barcelona for the first European date.” Bernstein concluded: “It has been a real privilege to work with the Springsteen organisation for the last 35 years and hopefully many more years to come.”

YOU HAVE FIVE MINUTES MR SPRINGSTEEN...

Talking TPI through the show day was Stage Manager, Sean Magovern. Many members of the Springsteen crew have earned their stripes through



Stage Manager Sean Magovern whose family has a proud tradition with working with The Boss; The man everyone was here to see, Bruce 'The Boss' Springsteen; Head Rigger, and Mr Positivity, William 'Stoney' Stonecypher.

the years but Magovern has become part of the furniture, as it has become somewhat of a family tradition to work for Springsteen: "I have been with Bruce for 31 years, starting out as a carpenter in 1985. My father was a member of the organisation for 23 years and I have my two sons out with us at the moment working barriers on this tour. So I'm from a three generation Springsteen family!"

Sharing the view of Cameron, Magovern believes that this current run of success can be credited in part to the many familiar faces being back on the road. "We have the same core production group as we had for the run of shows we did back in the summer of 2012 and 2013. Most of the production elements remained the same from that tour. With the exception of our audio supplier, many of the companies we use have remained the same so the blue print was already very much in place. Most of the heads of departments already knew what they were coming into so for many of us it was just a case of jumping straight back on the horse. From the first date in Spain everything just clicked and we are now at the stage where the load out only takes 2.5 hours."

The European leg of *The River Tour '16* has seen a few back-to-back shows, so the crew generally get a whole production day to prepare the stadium. Magovern explained: "Production days usually take us around six hours once the stage is set. Even though we are usually ready to go, on show days we still come in at 9am but really that time frame is simply to ensure that our backline guys are given enough time to unload their two trucks and sort out their respective areas."

Magovern concluded: "I really could not be happier with how things are going at this point. Everything really has been smooth sailing. We have a great crew and our relationship with all the promoters is very strong." As the

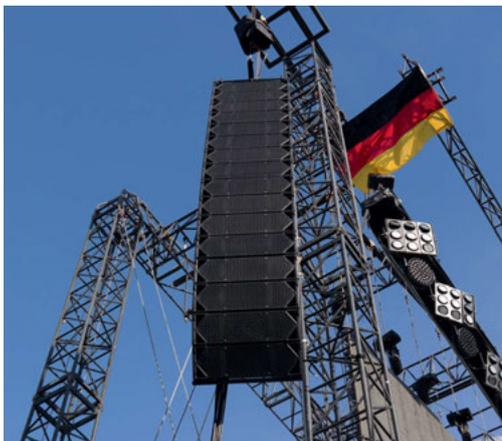
sun beat down on the Munich Stadium, he also commented how Mother Nature had been kind to them recently, a pleasure not always granted in a European stadium run.

MAN ON THE TOP (RIGGING)

To discuss all the various staging and rigging elements TPI spoke to head rigger William 'Stoney' Stonecypher although before we discussed business he insisted we try one of his fresh fruit smoothies; who says touring life has to be unhealthy?

Drinks in hand, Stoney took TPI backstage to point out the staging highlights, but not before he talked us through his philosophies as a Head Rigger: "I have always believed that I am the first person in the venue and it's my job to set the attitude for the local crew members who come in every day. Ultimately you are relying on these people so I strive to show up every day with enthusiasm."

For this European leg of the tour, Springsteen's production deployed a Stageco roof system along with staging elements supplied by TAIT. Headed by Stageco Crew Chiefs Stef Angillis, Patrick Vonckx, Martin Beckers and Andreas Deubach, four teams from the company were assigned the task of building four identical staging systems for 14 of the shows in Europe. In all cases, the 49.3 metres wide by 20.7 metres deep by 21.7 metres high stage has been a regular Stageco four-tower model with double truss wings added, from which to hang video screens. Measuring 23 metres by 20 metres, the roof has a clearance of 16.7 metres and supports 23.4 tonnes of the total rigging load of 38 tonnes. A pair of delay/spot towers, two camera platforms and the FOH mix riser have also been included in the Stageco package.



Clair Global's Cohesion CO-12 hung with pride in Munich alongside the German flag; The Audio team surrounding FOH Engineer John Cooper, Monitor Engineer Monty Carlo, Bobby Taylor, Audio Tech, John 'Boo' Bruey, System Engineer, James Cooper, Assistant (and John Cooper's son), Niall Slevin, Monitor System Engineer, Matt Moser, Monitor Systems Engineer (and temporary Monitor Engineer), Katie Hughes, Audio Tech, Ben Rothstein, Audio Systems Engineer.

"It's essentially the same stage that we provided for Bruce's last tour in Europe, the *Wrecking Ball* tour in 2012-13," said Tom Bilsen, Stageco's Operations Director who has managed the project. "There are always elements that are a little different but you would be hard pressed to notice them. The stages we build for Springsteen are very straightforward, solid constructions - very much like the music itself!"

Project Manager from TAIT, Aaron Seibert, discussed his company's contribution to the tour: "For this tour we provided a rolling stage complete with backline bunkers, band risers, apron decking and fascia. A good amount of the equipment was able to be reused from past Springsteen tours with minor tweaks to update it." Brian Levine, the second Project Manager on the tour commented about the demands from the singer's production in regards to set design: "Everyone on the tour from the singer to the backline techs have very specific layouts for all of the gear. We started on the stage in mid-January to be shipped by mid-February. This meant we only had three weeks but with the help of the amazing tour staff that came to TAIT it was no problem at all."

Stoney discussed some of the more technical aspects of the rig: "Weight-wise we are looking about 65,000lb, 25,000 of which is made up of the video backwall. The advantage of having the consistency of the Stageco roof is that the hang steel lives in the motor box. Before we headed out on the road we were able to sit down with the guys from Stageco and they gave us spreader beams so I don't have to bridle and lose trim. Everything in the roof is dead hang which makes it incredibly user-friendly." Stoney went on to recount his experience with Stageco: "The guys that Stageco have in their office are second to none and they know what I expect. If I have a problem and I call them on the radio their crew will come running." Rigging equipment including motors were supplied by vendors Clair Global, Pete's Big TV and Morpheus Lighting.

As he talked through the set up for the show it became clear that Stoney doesn't see his job as merely rigging: "In the morning when we enter a stadium one of the first things I do is find out where the seats have been sold which will determine where the video wall is placed. Today, for example, we moved the screen as far forward as possible so it can be seen from all seats, even those on the far left and right. I personally run up to the 'worst' seat in the house to make sure the person sitting there has a good show and gets their money's worth. There are some riggers that may think their job ends as soon as they are all rigged but I want to be continuously involved. If there is anything I can do that will make the crew's lives easier, I want to do it. I like to look at the bigger picture of the show to make sure everyone is safe."

For all the tour's safety barrier needs, Springsteen's production once again called on Mojo Barriers. The barrier specialists supplied 265 barrier sections, including special elements such as corners and snake gates. Mojo Barriers also supplied two specially made mega exits to fit the barrier layout, as well as a 20 metres of security walkway for Springsteen to walk behind the front of stage barriers.

Providing power for the European run was CAT Entertainment Services. CAT's Crew Chief, Lauren Ackert, discussed what the company supplied for the shows: "We brought out two rock-solid 800kW generators that are linked and synchronised, operating as one. Three crew members (including myself) set up the generators which distributed voltage around the stadium at 120/208V as well as 230/415V."

THE NEW TIMER

Although Clair Global supplied this tour, the PA specialist has crossed paths with The Boss before, albeit several years ago. They were reunited for *The River Tour '16*, which FOH Engineer, John Cooper, explained: "The decision to move back to Clair came down to the company's latest release, the Cohesion CO-12. It was the piece of the puzzle we were looking for in our audio setup. We love the company's support and the new generation of people that currently work at Clair. The whole family - from the owners to the guys that load the trucks - have been fantastic. Their attention to detail is spectacular and they have a very extensive support network worldwide." Cooper went on to point out that when you opt for a new supplier there is always a slight uncertainty. However, any doubts he had were wiped clean after the first few weeks: "By the first few shows it felt like we were really successful and I am very pleased with the result. It's a relationship I hope continues for the rest of my career. And, on top of all of that, the PA sounds amazing!"

The Cohesion CO-12 was distributed throughout the stadium for the main hang as well as the delay towers. Altogether, Springsteen's audio team deployed 112 boxes along with 24 Cohesion CP-218 subs. "It's a very good system," continued Cooper. "It has been spectacular and this tour has been able to handle all the various environments we have put it through. For instance, on the US run in the autumn, we will be moving from a football stadium to an amphitheatre to a baseball field all in the space of a week. The system's versatility certainly has been very beneficial for this tour run." With a show of this size you might expect more sub cabinets but this setup was a conscious choice for Cooper: "I personally think that many modern sound systems have far too much low end. This show requires power and punch but the low end never really overwhelms the music."

Also present in the audio arrangement was another member of Clair's Cohesion range, the CO-8 which were deployed as front fill. The CO-8 is the latest line of compact high output line arrays boasting flexible coverage and premium sound quality. Cooper explained: "We have been using a centre cluster for some time now, particularly for vocal reinforcement in difficult areas at the front of the stage. In my experience it is very difficult to keep the vocal presence in this show as the stage volume is so loud. The front fill alignment seems to combat that."

On site at the Munich show was International Business Development Manager for Clair Global, Philipp Kaetel, who evaluated how the latest Cohesion CO-12 system had been handling its outing in Europe: "We currently have the Cohesion system on four stadium tours including Bruce Springsteen, Elton John, Black Sabbath and Paul McCartney. The response to the new system has been fantastic and, to be honest, rather overwhelming. We never planned to roll out the system by 2016 and at the moment we never have enough of the boxes in stock!" Kaetel went on to describe how the system was ideal for shows like *The River Tour '16*, which made its way through a variety of different venues from arenas to stadiums. "It was certainly one of the main design goals with the Cohesion CO-12. We wanted to build a system that fitted easily in a truck and is light enough to deal with the demands of touring, yet powerful enough to deal with a variety of venues. We have been getting great reports back from all our clients with nobody complaining about its ability, throw or volume."

Anybody that has had the pleasure of witnessing The Boss in a live

environment knows that it's a loud show, a fact that Cooper is keen to uphold. "There are ballads within the set but make no mistake, this is a rock show!" The 10 musicians on stage (with only half on in-ears) made for quite some volume. Cooper went on to discuss some of the issues this created for audio management: "There is always a balance that has to be met by the band's indirect sound from the stage and the direct sound that comes from the PA. My goal as a FOH mixer is to make sure the audience gets a proper representation of the music. However, decibel restrictions mean having to strike a compromise. I must admit it's one of my least favourite things to deal with but manoeuvring around restrictions does make you a better engineer and still deliver the impact the performance should have."

There are certain things that Springsteen fans have come to expect from his shows, one of which is a versatile set list. This presents an interesting challenge for the crew. Cooper explained: "By the end of the last tour, I had 278 different songs programmed into the console! We get a set list anywhere between an hour and five minutes before he walks out but there is no guarantee that he will stick to it. It certainly is a very dynamic show but in many ways that is what makes it fun. There is nothing boring about mixing this gig!"

However, it is not simply the order of songs that keeps Cooper and the rest of the crew on their toes during the set; the actual structure of each song can also change. "You often find that the songs have evolved through the years. The solo structure within the songs can alter depending on how Bruce and the band feel on the night. There is a lot of volume and dynamics management on my end."

So how does the crew deal with a set list? The impressive chain of communication keeps all departments in the know. Each crew member from FOH audio, lighting and the two monitor engineers have teleprompters that pull feeds from the band's screens on stage and give prior warning before the next song comes in, as well as the lyrics. The crew described how the chain of command begins with Springsteen who informs his long time guitar tech, Kevin Buell, who then informs the teleprompter crew. However each department agreed this was really a safety net and crew members had to develop a feel for the show - keeping an eye on The Boss to see which song is next.

For control, Cooper opted for an Avid Venue Profile, a console he has used since its initial release and one that he has not substituted since. Out on *The River Tour '16* two full Venue Profile systems were deployed with one used as a back-up. "Both our systems are completely independent," explained Cooper. "We can alternate between the two systems. They can be rapidly switched if we have a failure. Fortunately we have never had to use the back-up but every day we test both systems. We also pull a feed from the monitor console in case we lose everything from FOH." Cooper deployed a APB Dynasonics Mixer to bring the A and B systems and monitor stems together giving him control at FOH if he needed to switch to any of them. "When we line check I bounce between all the channels to confirm that there is continuity across all three." A multi-track recording is made of each show on to Pro Tools which is sent out for the purpose of digitally archiving each performance.

One final point Cooper was keen to make was to commend all the hard work for all the other members that made up the audio department. "To be honest I always prefer to call myself a music mixer than a FOH Engineer. Now days you have to be an IT guy to be able to be an 'engineer' and as I was 35 when I got my first computer I don't think it's in my future. I'm the lucky guy who gets to sit in the chair but I can't do it without the rest of the audio team. They are the backbone of the whole operation and they are all spectacular."

TWO HEARTS (AND TWO MONITOR ENGINEERS)

Holding down monitor duties was tag-team, Monty Carlo and Matt Moser. Moser, Clair Global's Monitor System Engineer, stepped in to fill a few dates for Carlo's monitor partner; Troy Milner. Both were at the helm of a DiGiCo SD7 (one each) with Moser handling stage right and Carlo taking stage left. With 10 musicians on stage at any one time, the two engineers certainly had their work cut out. During TPI's conversation with the FOH Engineer, Cooper highlighted just how loud the Springsteen stage was, "It's a fool's errand to try and gate these drums because it doesn't work and if you did you would miss half the stuff that Max [Weinberg, drummer] does with a lot of his parts, which are very subtle. You have to make the leakage work." Carlo had a similar response: "A live, loud stage is part of the charm of the show. Through the years we have tried a couple of different microphones to reduce on stage spill but at the end of the day, Bruce really likes the sound of the Shure SM58." After all his years on the road the singer still leans towards the industry-standard cardioid dynamic vocal microphone. As Carlo states: "It works for him so we work around it."

Onstage sound came courtesy of the Cohesion C0-12 for side fills as well as the Cohesion CM-22's and the older 12 AMs model. Just like Cooper, the two monitor engineers had nothing but good things to say about the new PA system. "It goes up quickly and sounds great," stated Moser. Carlo added: "Some of the guys on stage have even told me to turn it down from time to time which is always a good sign. It has plenty of horsepower!"

For the European run, the audio team made some changes to the wedge arrangement. "We used to hang Bruce's wedges underneath the stage to reduce the number of obstacles," explained Carlo. "But we played a show at Rock in Rio a few weeks ago and he got really excited when the wedges were right in front of him. He came off stage saying he could hear everything 'fantastically' and since then we've put them back on the stage." For the other musicians the monitors are still sunken into the stage allowing for a clearer stage which allows the performers to move freely throughout the show.

The contingent of musicians was divided between those who use IEM and those who don't. For those that did, Clair provided Shure PSM 1000 transmitters with the musicians using Audio JH Roxanne in-ear moulds. The two monitor engineers also used the PSM-1000's.

For microphones there was an assortment of brands including Shure Beta91A, SM57's, KSM137's, SM58's, Sennheiser MD-409's, Neumann KM 184's, Heil PR 28's, PR 20 UT, Audio-Technica BP4027's. All wireless microphones for horns and vocals used the Shure AXT600 Axient Spectrum Manager. Carlo handed all RF management, coordinating 70 channels between the backline crew along with his own monitor equipment. It is also worth pointing out that this was Moser's first tour stepping up to the plate as monitor engineer for Springsteen as long standing crew member Troy Milner had to take some time away from the tour due to injury. "I started at the beginning on the US leg as a monitor tech and technically, that is still my role, but I am also filling in as monitor engineer on this run. Manchester, UK was my first show and I have been learning on the fly and working very closely with Matt Payne [Drum Tech] who has helped me get through the show." Carlo had nothing but praise for Moser.

"Matt had a big seat to fill and has done an admirable job. It is never easy to step into the shoes of someone who has been working with an artist for over 10 years. With a show like this, there are so many cues that you just store in your head and it becomes second nature. But working with our drum tech closely he has done a great job."

BLINDED BY THE LIGHT

Back in 1984 Bruce Springsteen's tour found itself in need of a new Lighting Designer. However, luck would have it that a friend of then tour accountant was rather handy when it came to a light console; enter Jeff Ravitz. At the time Ravitz was working with Yes and had some pushback from that band for jumping ship, but 32 years later and he's still working with The Boss. It seems he made the right decision...

Although his touring days with Springsteen came to an end in 1992, Ravitz has continued to take on the role of Lighting Designer. Ravitz talked about his work in the current *River* tour: "In terms of prep time it really only came down to a few weeks. Originally, there was an even tighter deadline with Bruce wanting to go into the rehearsal space following a TV performance on *Saturday Night Live*. However, with it being the Christmas season rental houses were sending their staff home, so it was decided to shift the timetable by one month. That helped the planning phase considerably and we were ready to go into the rehearsal space by early January."

The whole tour is a celebration of Springsteen's famed album; thus, the design team conceptualised an 80s revival with a contemporary twist aided by long term lighting supplier Morpheus Lighting. Ravitz took up the story: "While I was creating the design I got into the mind-set of the decade the album came from. However I didn't want to limit myself or the production with a lot of outdated technology. During the initial planning stages the word "PARcan" was mentioned, but I thought there must be a way to mix the essence of the old look with the advantages of contemporary equipment." To avoid using the out-of-date technology Ravitz opted for the Ayrton NandoBeam S9, the company's next generation ultra-fast moving



The lighting team consisting of Brad Brown, Lighting Crew Chief, Adam Beasley, Lighting Tech, Steve Gertsman, Lighting Tech, Tom Marty, Lighting Tech, Todd Ricci, Lighting Director, Hadyn Williams, Lighting Tech, Rainer Matzke, Spot Tech, Tony Cerasuolo, Lighting Tech, Brandt Gentry Lighting Tech; Delico Catering's Chef Clara Seipp with Owner, Woody Wahlen.

head fixture. The S9 is made up of 55 high-performance Osram 15 Watt RGBW LED emitters, each behind its own lens, arranged in rings around a central LED with astounding 8-40° zoom.

"If used correctly they can give you the look and feel of a PAR but with variable focus and colour. We have programmed the S9's to produce a more 'beam' look than we have used for previous tours," explained Ravitz. "Bruce traditionally prefers a softer, less defined beam look, but on this tour we allowed ourselves to indulge a little to harken back to the look that was more prevalent in the 80s. Ultimately, to be truer to the time period, we were trying to not showcase the technology. So there are not a lot of visible moves or colour changes in the part of the concert that showcases *The River* album."

As well as the NandoBeam S9 there were also several other Ayrton products on the rig including the MagicRing R9 from the Ayrton Radical range, and the Ayrton MagicBlade R, an RGBW moving striplight. "One of the frustrations I have had over the years is that we don't have any upstage background, so the band are usually seen as lit in front of a black void," explained Ravitz. "The MagicBlades - which I placed in pairs one above the other on the hand rail of the far upstage runway - have finally solved this problem. Through most of the show we keep them fairly static and as the evening wears on we start to use their movement capability more and more. Like many Ayrton products, the MagicBlade can pan and tilt continuously, so we can orientate the lights in a variety of ways to achieve almost unlimited looks, whether stationary or in movement that ranges from subtle to absolutely wild." Other Ayrton products utilised for the rig include 12 NandoBeam S6's and 44 Wildsun 500Cs.

Ravitz also requested that two Martin by Harman products - 17 MAC Auras and 26 MAC Viper Profiles - be added to the fixture count. This tour marked the first time that Ravitz had used the MAC Viper Profiles, which created individualised, lower-profile backlighting for each member of the band. He commented: "The MAC Viper Profiles are doing a great job for us. They provide excellent colour with plenty of brightness and top-notch optical qualities while offering the important ability to change gobos quickly."

The Lighting Designer added that the MAC Auras were fitted into little crevices and shot through the front of the stage. "Their high power and low form factor created the perfect solution for that purpose," he explained. 24 Morpheus CP-9 Blinders were also added, each of which are comprised of nine Chauvet Professional COLORado 1-Tri IPs. Ravitz continued: "We deployed enough of them to allow us to densely light the audience in strong colour or white and also provide us a 'nine-light' appearance reminiscent of the customary rock 'n roll blinder. They are over-scaled, twice the size of a traditional nine-light, which in the stadiums creates a very powerful visual." Dealing with the outdoor conditions and direct sunlight is always an issue when designing a show for an open air stadium run.

However, Ravitz complemented the lighting system with four Robert Juliat Lancelot followspots, which have the ability to punch through natural light. "We are really trying, at that early segment of the show when there is still a lot of lingering daylight, to compensate for the intensity and directionality of sunlight, so we try to fill with the spots. This benefits both the audience and the IMAG video." Three Robert Juliat Manon follow spots, nine PRG Ground Control remote spots, 34 Clay Paky Sharpys, 14 Philips Vari-Lite VL1100's, 20 Vari-Lite VL3000's and 16 SGM Q7 RGBW Strobes completed the rig.

Taking on the job of Lighting Director was Todd Ricci and, with the aid of Lighting Crew Chief, Brad Brown, drove the show. For this latest *The River Tour '16*, both crewmembers used an MA Lighting grandMA2. Ricci discussed how the two men split the workload of the Springsteen show. "The simplest way to explain how we split the load is that Brad does position and colouring and I do intensity. Brad also takes care of some of the slower songs and I am calling the followspots."

Just like the audio department, both Ricci and Brown have been prepared for the changeable set list within Springsteen's show. "It's a challenge that every department has to face," explained Ricci. "We will never know what is going to happen from song to song and you have to anticipate the band's next move, so that we are all locked in at the top of the track. It might sound stressful but we are all happy to work like this. The tour could all get a bit mundane otherwise. Lots of shows these days run on time code but techniques like that simply wouldn't work on a Springsteen show."

Networking needs for the tour were handled by a Pathport Control Distribution System. The Springsteen production actually took one of the first touring systems out on the road for five years ago and, have used it ever since: "We had to do a few updates but it's been a very solid platform for data distribution," explained Ricci. "We have a few MA NPUs in use with the console, all of which goes right into the Pathway system. I can't say enough great things about it."

One notable addition to the lighting setup has been the inclusion of PRG's GroundControl Followspot along with PRG's Bad Boy fixture. "During the show we have eight of them in use with one extra as a spare," said Ricci, who explained that PRG's latest creation has eliminated various headaches such as intercom issues that were common with the traditional elevated followspot set up. "Intercom issues are one thing that have reduced dramatically since we deployed the GroundControl. I would say almost 90% of the failures have been removed now that our operators are based on the ground. One other benefit of the system is that there are some really talented followspot operators who may be getting to a stage in their lives where they can't climb up on the truss, but having a control system based on the ground means they can continue to work."

In conclusion Ricci wanted to give thanks to all the other members of the lighting crew: "We had a wholesale change in crewing on this tour but it has run incredibly smoothly. We have people like Brad and myself who have been doing it so long - we can see things before they happen, prepare accordingly, deliver the show that we are supposed to deliver and flow with different personalities that come on board. I guess you could say we keep the train rolling - and we are proud to do so!"

THE (VIDEO) WALL

Through the years the treatment of video at a Springsteen show has changed as much as his set list. Ravitz furthered: "We got to the point a few years ago when our sensibilities evolved for the look of the IMAG video and with Bruce's encouragement, we endeavoured to make the content shown on the screens to look more cinematic. I spent a lot of time working on an updated lighting configuration that would provide more flattering, images of Bruce and the rest of the band. Along with Chris Hilson, Video Director we spend a lot of time colour- and intensity-balancing the show properly for the cameras." However, Ravitz insisted that it has not been detrimental to the show: "We still have plenty of colour, theatricality and plenty of rock 'n'

roll while really smoothing out the rougher edges, giving the IMAG a high-quality appearance.”

Hilson, who has been with Springsteen now for 17 years, has seen first hand the changing nature of video content: “The IMAG content of the show has grown enormously since my first time with Bruce in 1999. Apart from the physical size of the screens and the extra cameras we have with lighting a more cinematic look. The aim of every show has evolved over time but you still have to capture every single moment.”

The tour’s video supplier Pete’s Big TV, supplied digiLED MK7 LED tiles for the two IMAG screens with digiLED MC15 tiles for the back wall video. Rob Villalobos, Video Crew Chief, explained how they had changed the video product used from previous tours due to digiLED’s higher intensity, which operates perfectly in the direct sunlight faced the stadium run. Pete’s Big TV also provided a camera package including five Sony HDC 1500HDs and four Sony HDC1 HD box cameras on robotic heads. For video switching, Hilson used a Ross Vision 4MLE. Also deployed was a Sony SRW HDCam tape, which was used for archival recording of the show.

Throughout the show footage of the band and Springsteen were shown on the screen along side multiple shots of the crowd, especially those luck enough to hold exclusive tickets close to the stage. “Every audience at a Springsteen show is as unique as the performance itself,” stated Hilson while talking about what he looks for during the show and if there are any shots he tries to create. He said: “I try to capture the emotion and joy that thousands of people bring every night. However it is always hard to plan what to create in advance until the music starts and another adventure begins.”

HUNGRY HEART

Keeping the Springsteen crew nourished throughout the European tour was Delico Catering. *The River Tour ‘16* marked the fourth time Delico were called upon on by Springsteen’s production, which owner Woody Wahlen and the rest of his crew were clearly happy about. “We have a crew of 10, many of whom were really looking forward to this gig, as most of them had done previous tours with the artist. They are a really loyal production.” Wahlen’s company feeds 180 to 190 for dinner with 80 for breakfast

and 120 for lunch, on average. Wahlen ensured he provided familiar US delicacies for the majority American crew but joked that some of the English crewmembers insisted on their weekly Sunday roast! “We have a very diverse kitchen made up of chefs from Germany, Australia and France so there is a great variety of culinary expertise bringing brought out on this tour. That’s the beauty of this job. If you work in a restaurant, it’s the same menu for at least four or five months. Here, it’s much more creative...”

THANK YOU AND GOODNIGHT...

As Springsteen thanked the crowd one last time and the show came to its blistering end, I was left to watch the crowd stream past FOH in their thousands. As they did, I noticed the Springsteen t-shirts that adorned the smiling patrons told a history of Bruce’s live shows. Some wore the official *The River Tour ‘16* shirt, others sported merch dating back to European runs from the 80s. Just like many of the crew members TPI met that day, these fans have been with Springsteen for years; all showing, in their own way, dedication the legendary singer. But as I joined the river - pun intended - of people keen to get the next train home, something that Tour Director George Travis said came to mind: “The real Boss at a Springsteen show is the fans. He does everything for them and we, as the crew, try and do the same.”

TPI

Photos: TPI & Stageco
www.brucespringsteen.net
www.clairglobal.com
www.morpheuslights.com
www.petesbigtvs.com
www.intensityadvisors.com
www.taittowers.com
www.stageco.com
www.mojobarriers.com
www.yourrock-weroll.com
www.rockitcargo.com
www.delico-catering.de
www.es-cat.com