

# The Jonas Brothers, **RELOADED**

## The teen pop trio gets a super-sized production for a summer tour

By: David Barbour

What a difference a tour makes. At the beginning of the year, the Jonas Brothers was a promising pop act, one of many contending for the attention of tween and teen music fans. Then the Jonas Brothers went on tour, opening for the Miley Cyrus/Hannah Montana Best of Both Worlds tour, which burned up the box office wherever it went and spawned a 3-D concert film that turned into an unexpected blockbuster. By March, the Jonas Brothers were on tour again, this time as headliners. The show was planned for theatres, but was quickly bumped up to arenas. "I think we played one theatre," recalls the tour production designer, John LaBriola.

The spring tour was intended to last through the summer, but it quickly became clear that this was the time to capitalize on the group's popularity, and so, beginning on July 4th, the Jonas Brothers returned with the *Burning Up* tour, a bigger show with a considerably expanded design and tech package.

As before, LaBriola designed the set with Rob Brenner, the tour director, his collaborator from previous gigs with the Backstreet Boys and Mary J. Blige. Again, the set had three levels, and, as before, he set out to create a video-heavy design with, he says, "the lighting being a big, industrial accessory to the video." This time, the set came packed with gags, resulting in what one of the vendors. Santa Fe Springs, California-based ShowFX, Inc. has called a "video-filled pyro-blasting, laser-emitting multilevel playground."

"Originally," says LaBriola, "they wanted to do lots of stuff, but they decided to be sensible and wait until next year" before launching on a really large-scale tour. However, he says, "There was an underlying feeling that this was happening now and we needed to take advantage of it. So we decided to start over and make a full-court press."

The result was a show that set out to dazzle the fans from the get-go. It opened with the trio on a mechanical lifting platform known as the Magic Carpet, which floated 15' in the air from upstage, landing near the edge of the deck. The Magic Carpet and its computerized control system was engineered and built in four weeks by ShowFX.

Construction of the set was split between ShowFX and Lititz, Pennsylvania-based Tait Towers. It consisted of three levels—the deck, a set of three risers for singers and musicians, and a third level for the brothers. Video screens (supplied, like the rest of the video gear, by Screenworks) were used as facades on the risers. The set was backed by one large video screen that provided IMAG, surround a by a series of smaller video screens.

Tait Towers built 1"-thick acrylic stairs and ShowFX contributed 35'-long-by-8' high ramps, covered in video panels. The ramps were

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designed to be modular and can be configured to different heights—a useful feature, as, now that the tour is over, they have joined the company's rental stock. Other key set pieces included two elevators supplied by Tait Towers and three ribbon lifts supplied by Show FX. Tait also developed a pressurized foam gun system that allows the singers to shoot foam as far as 100' into the audience.

#### Expanding the rig

LaBriola's original rig consisted of a mix of Vari\*Lite VL2500s and VL500s, as well as Martin MAC 2000s and Little BigLites from Zap Lighting. This time, he says, "we were going outdoors, so we needed to get even brighter." Thus the VL2500s were replaced by the company's VL3000s, currently one the most popular units in the concert and theatre lighting worlds. One of the light rig's real novelties was the new MF3 unit from Main Light Industries; it's an intense, multi-head moving LED unit, which can provide a soft wash of considerable power and, when needed, accept a direct video source as well. The unit features LEDs in red, green, blue, amber, and white. "They're a blast," says LaBriola. "They're just ridiculously bright."



Additions to the tour include two elevators (top), three ribbon lifts (bottom left), and pyro and lasers (above center and right.)

The key to the design seems to be the decision to increase the video element to keep pace with the rest of the production. "We had LEDs everywhere on the last show, but there was much more set to cover here," says LaBriola. "The video ramps were a last-minute idea—but, since we were putting LEDs everywhere else, why not there as well?" Also new was a set of Coemar Infinity XL wash units. LaBriola says that representatives from Inner Circle Distribution, which distributes Coemar gear in the U.S., demoed the units for him when the previous tour was in Orlando, Florida, earlier in the year. "They were outstanding," he says, "and the beam shaping effect in a wash light was a real plus." For the record, the light rig for the tour, supplied by BML-Blackbird Theatrical Services, includes 45 Vari\*Lite VL3000 Spots, 40 Coemar Infinity wash units, 20 VL500s, six VL1000s, 11 Mainlight Industries MF3s, 10 Zap Technologies Little BigLites, 55 Pixelrange PixelBricks, four PixelRange PixelPar 90s, 20 Martin Professional Atomic strobes with color changers, ten 8-light Photos left page: top and bottom left Courtesy of ShowFX. Photos bottom center and right: Jim Schorer. Photos right page: Todd Kaplan



At center is a Toshiba 10mm LED panel, surrounded by six Screenworks custom panels.

Moles, and seven 4-light Mole strips. Crew members included Richard Steffa (crew chief), Richard Jackson, Howard Giddens, Kevin Pampel, Gerald Kaiser, and Michael Brancato.

One of the major additions to the tour involves pyro and laser effects, supplied by Pyrotek Special Effects and Laser Design Productions, twin companies based in Ontario and Las Vegas. Brenner has worked with the companies on tours starring Britney Spears and Justin Timberlake. Knowing that Brenner was looking for something big, Pyrotek opted to use its new fire screen technology, building 64' of customized fire screen into the set. It's a modular, programmable, pixel-based product, with six heads per 4', offering the ability to control height, and could also shoot different sized flame balls and columns. The effects were transmitted via a DMX-controlled Ethernet network.

The show opened with a highspeed fire chase sequence that raced up the video ramps and around the drum risers into a full flame-bar cue, while four dragon heads shot flame columns from an upstage position. The first song, "Good Night and Goodbye," featured a comet sequence that shot from the video ramps across the upstage area. "Gonna Get You Good" included six fireballs and nine airbursts off the ramps and throughout the trussing. "Pushing Me Away" featured a 1 x 20 gerb chase that began downstage right and left and maneuvered around the set's perimeter, meeting upstage center

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various propane flame effects from high to moderate speeds. The effect was custom-built to attach along the outside of the video ramps at left and right, and surrounding the two upstage drum risers. The screen could create adjustable flame-bar looks up to 4' in and cueing an airburst look that fired off the ramps and trussing. "Can't Have You" featured a 20 x 20 gerb waterfall on the upstage truss and "SOS" came with a customized gerb effect built into Kevin Jonas' guitar head, designed with a pushbutton



Sony and Panasonic LED modules on the set's facade.

control system that shot a 1 x 10 gerb at the song's chorus. "Burnin' Up" featured the fire screen and four dragon heads pulsing to the song's beat.

Arguably the most original effect appeared in the finale—it was a customized Jonas Brothers sign, spelling out JB, which hung over the downstage area, and near the show's end, burst into flames. The sign was built by ShowFX, using stainless steel to withstand the high temperatures, and was custom-fitted with a propane flame manifold by Pyrotek. A set of sprinklers were positioned over the stage, for safety's sake.

Lasers were integrated into several numbers, including "Hold On, "Tonight," "SOS," and "Can't Have You." Lorenzo Cornacchia, senior vice

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Above: Sony 15mm LED modules on the ramps. Right: The burning JB sign.

president of Pyrotek/Laser Design Productions, worked with Jason McEachern, the programmer, on incorporating effects that included on 10W white light diode laser system positioned upstage center, two 4W white light diode laser systems left and right of the drum risers, and two more 40W high-powered Yag lasers systems located offstage left and hot bursts, six large regular fireballs, 14 white flashes with bangs, and five propane effect dragons, in addition to the 64' of fire screen. Pyro effects were handled by Kevin Hughes (pyro crew chief), Nick Zangari (pyrotechnician), and Hans Lundburg (gas specialist). Laser-related personnel included Gordon Hun (laser crew chief) and Brian Van Trigl (laser technician).

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right. Each of the latter included a 12-position laser projector, with two fiber-fed remote scanners, while 40 bounce mirrors were positioned on the downstage truss and stage floor.

The total lineup of pyro effects included 16 silver gerb waterfalls, four silver gerbs, 14 gold flitter mines, 28 red comets with tails, twenty 1 x 20 silver gerbs, twelve 1 x 15 gold gerbs, nine gold airbursts, nine concussive LaBriola notes that, in terms of cueing the songs, the second time out was easier, if only because he was much more familiar with the material. "During previsualization, I was able to go wild, because I knew the guys better, how they work the stage, and are constantly moving. And I knew who solos on which song. That all made it a lot easier." Generally, however, he says, he hewed to the style of the earlier



tour, working in a pop-rock style that kept the energy level high throughout.

Lighting and video were controlled by an MA Lighting grandMA console, with the grandMA video used to deliver the images. The full control system included a grandMA full-size console with a backup, and three grandMA video servers, one for each output. The central 12' by 21' video screen consisted of Toshiba 10mm panels. The riser facades were covered with a combination of Panasonic 20mm modules and Sony 15mm modules. The ramps at left and ramp were covered with Sony 15 millimeter modules. Also featured were six panels of Screenworks custom-made low-res panels. A Ross Synergy 3ME switcher moved the video between imagery and IMAG; the latter was delivered by two Barco 12K projectors. Steven Fatone was the video director. Kevin Tokunaga was the engineer, with Adrian Brister, Wiliam Duncan, and Bill Quinn serving as camera operators.

The tour ended in September, but, LaBriola says, the Jonas Brothers "are already obsessed with ideas for next year's tour." Given the level of spectacle offered this year, the next tour will have to truly remarkable.