

# CONCERTS



Photo Credit: Todd Kaplan

# The Jonas Brothers, RELOADED



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

By: David Barbour

**W**hat 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 multi-level 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 feel-

ing 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





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 high-speed 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

**“During previsualization, I was able to go wild, because I knew the guys better, how they work the stage, and are constantly moving.”**

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

