

# CHILLING OUT

WITH

KACEY MUSGRAVES



The singer/songwriter's *Deeper Well Tour* aims to create a peaceful, easy feeling

Photos & Text by Steve Jennings

Kacey Musgraves is currently performing in packed arenas, bringing love, understanding, and togetherness to all. The seven-time Grammy Award and four-time Academy of Country Music Award winner is performing songs from *Deeper Well*, her sixth studio album. She is a warm, inviting, down-home presence, often appearing barefoot on the main stage. Getting closer to her fans, an intimate setting on the B stage mirrors her album cover artwork, featuring a moss-covered deck and the planet Saturn floating overhead.

According to the *Arizona Republic*, Musgraves makes “a dramatic entrance through a glowing portal in a thick cloud of billowing smoke to set the tone with ‘Cardinal,’ the opening track on *Deeper Well*.” *Variety* adds, “At the end of ‘Cardinal’...Musgraves climbs to the top of a semi-circular globe that protrudes all night from the rear of the stage, lies down on it, and proceeds to levitate, limbs dangling.” The blog *Stage Right Secrets* adds, “The stage is misty, green, and feels like the lush hills of Scotland.” Many reviewers have noted the almost therapeutic sense of calm cast by the show.

### Rob Sinclair, lighting designer

Sinclair’s first discussions about the *Deeper Well Tour* started a year ago. “I was extremely privileged to get an early copy of the album and immerse myself in it. Kacey is extremely visually astute and came [to the project] with great ideas. She’s always very involved and guides the creative process.” He says greenery and nature were always part of the production concept but went through many design iterations along the way. “In some ways, we ended up close to where we started, but that’s often how things work. This is a show where I touch on most visual elements, all of which are made better by the great team we assembled.”

There’s always a journey with the budget, logistics, and creative, notes Sinclair. “TAIT were great partners in this, particularly [project manager] Erik Fields, [project designer] Sarah Wilson, and [scenic group lead] Karla Ramsey. I don’t think you ever get everything you want but we got very close with this show. TAIT were very supportive of some of the unique ideas. There’s a lyric in [the song] ‘Deeper Well:’ ‘My Saturn has returned.’ It fitted so well with the nature and space themes to have a personification of it. Ours is the inflatable Saturn that hovers over the B stage for the acoustic set in the show. It has a solid ring automated on [TAIT] Nav Hoists.”

This is Sinclair’s first time using 4Wall Entertainment to supply a tour, which he did on the recommendation of management. “They have been awesome. I’m so happy with everything they’ve done with the tour. I have to give huge thanks to Ryan Hodge, our lighting crew chief, and his exceptional team.”

Programmer André Petrus, a longtime Sinclair associate, is, the designer says, “an amazing programmer, brilliant LD, great friend, and wonderful human. Our friendship is based on spending hours in dark rooms talking nonsense and causing damage to our eyeballs. This is our second time working with Kacey, and he was essential to the process. We spent long nights at Rock Lititz with Kacey and management sitting between us, and André’s ability to instantly show any idea makes things so much smoother and quicker.”

About lighting director Danielle Edwards, Sinclair says, “She’s very smart and picks up on things so quickly. To walk into the process after I’d been working on the show for months and instantly get the vibe is such a skill. She runs the show flawlessly, is wonderful with the crew, and takes time to look after the opening act LDs.” Calling her “one of the best touring LDs out there today,” he adds, “It’s always a joy knowing that she’s taking good care of one of our shows.”

“Kacey is a truly unique and breathtaking talent,” he adds. “She has great vision, demands the best from everyone around her, and works tirelessly. We were all so happy to have been asked back and to help make the perfect environment for her music. I’d like to thank [video director] George Elizondo and his touring team, Patrick Eaton from [video gear supplier] Fuse; Blink Inc., who made the creative content; and Simon Roberts who glued it all together.”

### André Petrus, lighting programmer

Petrus notes that Sinclair kept him in the loop from day one of the initial design meetings with Musgraves. It was a rare instance where he knew about the tour seven months before going into previsualization. He programmed the show on a grandMA3 console: “I made the switch from the MA2 in the fall of 2023 and haven’t looked back. It’s taken me every bit of that time to sharpen my skills and become as efficient as I was on MA2 software.”

Petrus adds that 98% of the show is run on time code. “It’s great-looking, just not complex or cue-heavy. It’s all about the atmosphere and getting the feeling right. I didn’t have anything out of the ordinary as far as programming goes: It was about elegance, mood, and getting some bold looks. We love linear color gradients, so the [CHAUVET Professional] PXL Bar 16 and PXL Curve 12s carry a lot of the show.” The former is a motorized tilting batten with zoom capabilities and the latter is a fully pixel-mappable, motorized, IP65-rated RGBW LED batten with individual control of zoom, tilt, and color across 12 independent heads.

### Danielle Edwards, lighting director

“I feel incredibly lucky to work with both Rob and André,” Edwards says. “Not only are they a wealth of knowledge,



Previous spread: The levitating effect at the end of “Cardinal.” TAIT provided the tour’s staging. Above: The show’s abundant fog effects are created using MDG theOnes.

but they’re also just great to be around—we share a lot of laughs! André is awesome at getting the show ready to go; by the time he hands over the show file, it’s in great shape. Of course, once the show is live, things change and evolve a bit. Sometimes it’s as simple as adding a fade time to a light, and other times it’s a bit more involved, like giving a moment that extra punch. By the time I join the process, most of the design and creative decisions are in place. There’s always some refining and fine-tuning as the show evolves, but Rob and André have already set a solid foundation. I’ll often sit with André while he’s programming, which is a great way for me to understand the intent behind each focus, position, color change, and so on. Whether the show is time-coded or not, having that insight helps me feel confident that I’m staying true to the original vision.”

Edwards says the transition to MA3 was a bit intimidating at first because she was so comfortable on MA2. But, she adds, “There are a lot of cool new tools and features in the MA3 software, and I’m excited to keep learning and exploring what it can do.”

The tour’s rig includes Vari-Lite VL3600s on an upstage truss providing side light and along the horizon line of the upstage hill. The units also provide key light for the band

members. “We’re using a lot of CHAUVET Color STRIKE M [motorized strobe/wash units]—they’re mostly on the curved truss just above mid-stage, but there are also several on the floor and a few on the B stage.” Noting that the COLORado PXL Curve 12s are fun to work with, she adds, “We have two upstage trusses and three vertical towers on each side with the PXL Bar 16s. Finally, we’re using some Robe Pointes for the disco ball specials.

“There’s probably more gear than seems at first glance,” Edwards says. “Everything we’re using is super-intentional and a bit understated. The programming doesn’t overwhelm; even when the rig is running full tilt, it won’t give you sensory overload. Each element has a purpose, and everything works together to create a beautiful piece of art.”

### George Elizondo, video director

Elizondo was first contacted for the tour by his good friend Matt Moynahan, a project manager at Fuse TG. Elizondo was working with the heavy-metal band Pantera; the opportunity with Musgraves seemed something different and intriguing. Fortunately, he says, “Between the two different gigs, the planets lined up for me to work both into my schedule. I am a freelancer but, for this particular job, I worked in conjunction with Fuse and Vis-A-Vis Video Ltd.”

With Musgraves wanting a cinematic look for her IMAG video screens, Elizondo elected to use the URSA broadcast camera with Canon camera glass. “We are running two URSA on the Blackcam rail system, two URSA at the front of house with [Canon uhd-digisuper 90s], and one URSA which is wireless and follows the singer from the main stage to the B stage. Seven Blackmagic Micro Studio 4Ks are placed around the stage as confidence cameras for all the techs working under the stage.” The system consists of, from Blackmagic, an ATEM Constellation 8K live production switcher, Videohub 12G-SDI video routers, an ATEM Camera Control Panel, three SmartScope Duo 4Ks, an ATEM 1 M/E Advanced Panel 20, and two Teranex Mini 12G converters, plus assorted fiber conversations. Imagery, using Siri, is delivered to the screens provided by Disguise servers.

Imagery is seen on a combination of ROE Visual solid and see-through screens with Barco UDX-4K 40K projectors pointed at the stage and additional 40Ks for the side screens. Upstage are Vanish V8Ts in a configuration 23m wide by 9m tall). The eyebrow features ROE CB5s, in a configuration 25.2m wide by 3.51m tall.

“I am nothing without my video crew on whichever job I’m on,” Elizondo says. “The hard work and hours they put in are truly inspiring. The Kacey Musgraves crew are all very professional and pleasant to be around. Rob has designed a classy and timeless set, which is used to its fullest.”





The lighting rig, supplied by 4Wall Entertainment, includes 88 CHAUVET Professional COLORado PXL Bar 16s, 70 CHAUVET Color STRIKE Ms, 66 Vari-Lite VL3600s, 22 COLORado PXL Curve 12s, six Robe Pointes, five Robe BMFL followspots, and four MDG theONE hazers. Control is via two MA lighting grandMA3 full-sizes and one MA3 light. The production also utilizes 921' of Tyler GT truss.

### Mike Fanuele, front-of-house engineer

Prior to this tour, Fanuele had used the Yamaha Rivage PM10 console a few times on one-off events. But he always liked its sound and feel. “The sound of the PM10 reminds me of some of the high-end studio preamps I have used over the last 25–30 years, where you can hear the transformer a bit more in the end result. The preamps sound fast to me but have a little saturation, which rounds the edges a little. I’ve always strived for a ‘big sound’ when mixing, so these preamps help me get there while doing less processing along the way.” Fanuele also finds the feel of the console is important. “The faders on the PM10 are a solid step above any live console I’ve used in the past and, as silly as it may sound, I think it really helps deliver a more consistent product from night to night.”

Fanuele says the effects used during the show are crucial to each. “[Musgraves] has an incredible ear. She works with me to make sure the songs are represented the way she wants them to be heard. On the more intimate songs, she may not want to hear any effects at all, while [in other cases] she prefers the arrangement be supported by lush reverbs that become a larger part of the instrument sounds. Almost all effects come from the Yamaha effects engine. The most impactful change in switching to Yamaha is that I

have multiple Bricasti plug-in instances that are snapshotted to complement the arrangements from song to song.” Fanuele works to replicate sounds heard on Musgraves’ records, mostly with the onboard Yamaha effects plus a few UAD effects. “I have 12 effects sends to the onboard Yamaha, while three go to [Universal Audio] UAD—one on the snare reverbs [an AMX RMX 16], the acoustic reverb [Lexicon 224], and her super-long vocal reverb throw [also Lexicon 224—set to about ten seconds]. The remainder of the effects all come from the console. I’m using a few instances of Bricasti, a few [Eventide] H3000s, the onboard delays, and the onboard chorus.”

Regarding EQ and compression on the channels, Fanuele likes to stick with what is in the console. “They sound great, and if there is a bigger issue to tackle on an input, I’ll address it directly at the source with sound coming from the player. I use a few plug-ins for buss treatments that offer specific results I have used in the studio for years. In UAD, I’m using a Fatso Jr. for my Drum Crush group as well as an SSL buss compressor for my music buss (very minimal compression). I am using a Waves server running SuperRack for a few utility inserts—X-FDBK for Kacey’s B-stage vocal and a light mastering chain for the mix that goes to the cameras.” He has found that the onboard



Imagery is seen on a combination of ROE Visual solid and see-through screens with Barco UDX-4K 40K projectors pointed at the stage and additional 40Ks for the side screens. Upstage are Vanish V8Ts in a configuration 23m wide by 9m tall). The eyebrow features ROE CB5s, in a configuration 25.2m wide by 3.51m tall.

Yamaha Neve Master Buss Processor, blended into the vocal buss just a touch, helps the vocals sit in the mix.

"I've been using the d&b GSL/KSL PA system with a number of bands since 2021. I feel it's the best PA on the market for the rejection of audio behind the PA to the stage. Kacey is a very quiet singer, and the backing vocalists sing quietly to match her tone. Also, we are using microphone pickup systems in all the acoustic instruments onstage rather than under-saddle pickups. All these factors mean that controlling feedback is a priority. Furthermore, Kacey does not like the rumble of subs on stage. A cardioid system that allows me to mix the show with the low end the audience expects while not affecting Kacey's ability to perform was paramount in the design and PA decision."

Fanuele did about a week of pre-production in early 2024 before heading out to do the UK/EU leg. "Kacey's vocal is the star of the show, and I craft everything around it," he says. "She is looking for a mix that reflects her albums in a live environment. While some arrangements are a little different, a bit is left up to interpretation." He started his career in the studio and still works in that envi-

ronment, so he says he's always striving for a polished, more "studio," mix in his live shows. "I feel it allows me to mix at a more enjoyable volume for the audience while keeping all of the lows and low-mids that transmit some of the emotion of the songs without feeling like it is muddy.

"As a younger engineer," he continues, "I spent so much time intensely focused on presenting the perfect vocal that I would lose a bit of the bigger picture. Now I spend a lot more time just trying to listen as if I were an audience member. I want the vocals and music to sound great as a unit and translate an emotion. As engineers, we can easily get wrapped up in obsessing about the perfect sound on a specific input. I used to take intense pride in crafting an input that sounded exceptional, almost like I was trying to display my technical abilities for all to hear. I make almost all of those decisions now in pre-production or on virtual soundcheck and spend a lot less time worrying about technique during the show. I mix a wide variety of music styles. If you focus on connecting the emotional impact of the song on the listener, they will be moved."

Fanuele's advice for young engineers: Don't stop learning. "Make a mistake, don't beat yourself up. Just try to



figure out where you went wrong, to not make that mistake again. If you want to work on the sound of your snare and you hear someone's snare that you love, ask them how they're doing it. I still spend hours being nerdy on the Internet, looking for new ways to do something. The foundation you create by learning and locking in different techniques will get you out of a corner one day. Being a positive member of the touring crew is just as important as excelling at your job."

### **Martin Strayer IV, monitor engineer**

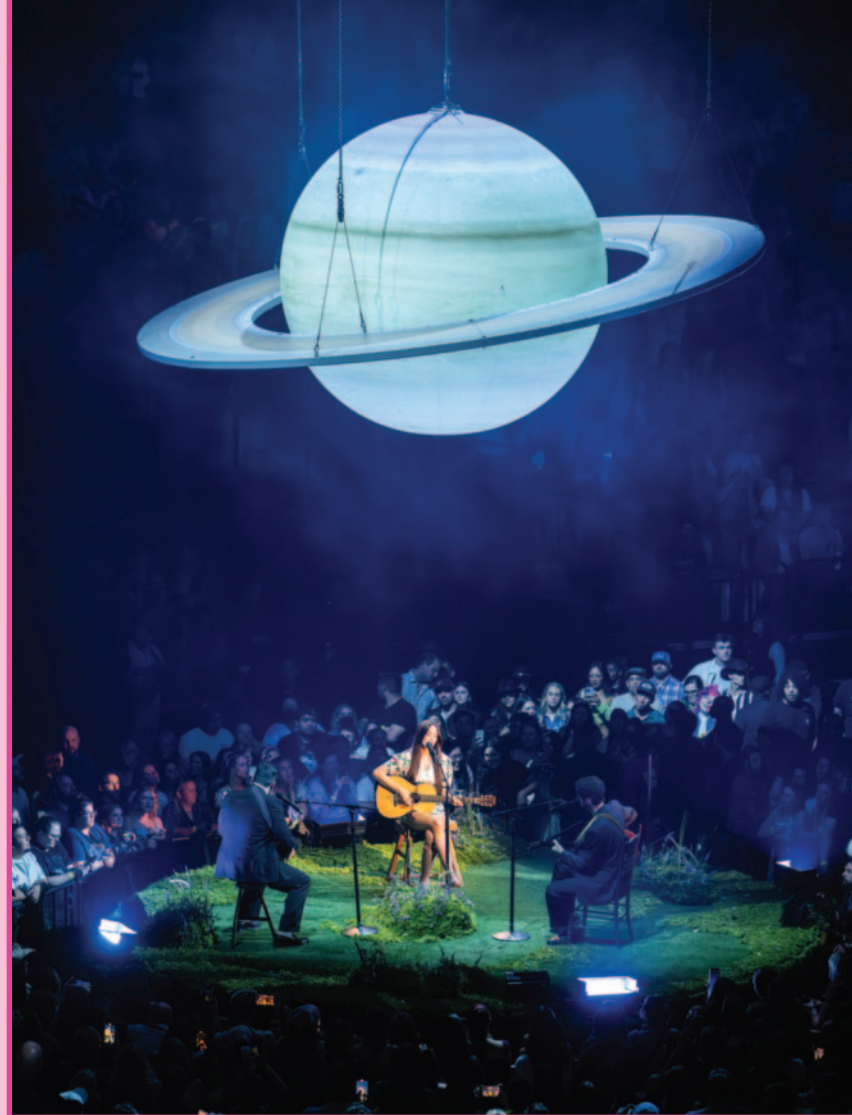
Strayer also mixes on a Rivage PM10, having used the console since it came out. "It sounds great and has so many options...basically anything I can think of, I can do," he says. "My amazing tech, Ben Scanlon, is really the knowledgeable one; I tell him what I'm thinking and he makes it happen. I've got it so dialed in. It takes time to do that but, after a few weeks of rehearsing, it's pretty easily dialed, and then we adjust as we go and tailor it for our specific needs."

Strayer likes to keep things simple: "I grew up on analog and I keep that approach. I am of the mindset that source is key. I gain it, use minimal EQ, and mix it to ears. Good source input and minimal processing; I use very little compression. I use all the channel EQs and dynamics mostly. Really, the only plug-ins I use are on [Musgraves'] vocal: [Rupert Neve Designs] 5045 and that multiband comp." In addition, Strayer uses stock reverbs and no outboard gear. "Any minimal stuff I use is on the desk, stuff that comes with the Yamaha package."

Musgraves' vocal handheld mic is a wireless DPA 2028. "It's great-sounding, and its rejection is fantastic," Strayer says. "We use all Shure IEM systems—the PSM 1000s all are extremely reliable—along with our brilliant RF guy Tom Lawn. Ben [Scanlon] spec'd the whole thing for me. I trust him implicitly; we switched to Shure this year from Sennheiser." Band IEMs are a mix of JH Audio JH16v2s and Roxannes and 64 Audio U12ts, with one member on a FiR Audio product. "Kacey has JH-6s and recently got two pairs of 64 Audio A18ts, which are amazing."

Strayer mixes from below the stage in a position upstage center, right under the onstage hill. He uses video monitors to see Musgraves and the band. "Everyone has talk-backs if they need anything, but we are so dialed in at this point, they rarely make changes. All our songs have snapshots and the band, being such great musicians, makes it easy for me to dial up great mixes. Kacey is simply an amazing talent. Her vocal dynamics are incredible. I ride her vocal to her mix because of that; she always likes it really upfront and present. Everyone onstage has things panned and spread out real nice."

Strayer feels blessed to have worked with so many A-list artists and Musgraves is no exception. "She is extremely talented, an incredible songwriter, vocalist, and player, but,



The inflatable Saturn, hovering over the B stage for the acoustic set, has a solid ring automated on TAIT Nav Hoists.

most of all, so kind and down to earth. She really cares about everyone and everything on the tour. Kacey has really put together a fantastic team and I'm happy to be a part of it. The show has a great pace and never gets old. Kacey and the band work hard at that, that personal touch and it really shows...leaving the crowds so happy."

### **Elad Kleiner, systems engineer**

An independent systems engineer, Kleiner has worked for [the tour's audio supplier] Clair Global for seven years on various projects and tours.

As Fanuele noted, the tour utilizes a d&b audiotechnik rig. Main hangs consist of 16 GSL8s per side and four GSL12s in compression mode. The side hangs feature 16 KSL8s and the rear hangs are 12 KSL8s. Eight SL-SUBs are flown, with ten SL-SUBs on the ground in an arc around the stage. Front fills are six Y10Ps hooked under the stage in an arc around the stage plus three V12s per side on the ground, filling the gap on the floor under the side hangs.

"The production scale is quite big with the lighting, video, and the B-stage rigs, making the load-in quite tight



Musgraves on the upstage hill. "The stage is misty, green, and feels like the lush hills of Scotland," one journalist wrote.

on a schedule which doesn't leave a lot of margins for error," Kleiner says. "Luckily with this great audio crew helping with the PA or staging as needed, adapting quickly to any schedule hiccups happening along the way has not affected things being ready on time."

Kleiner says the SL Series' main selling point is the quality of the rejection on the back of the speakers. "This becomes much more predominant when your main hangs consist of 20 cabinets each. With a stage that has a large number of acoustic instruments with open mics, keeping as quiet as possible from the surrounding noise helps quite a lot with keeping the original integrated sonic attributes of the mix, not just for the audience but also for the musicians onstage. All this helps to amplify and distribute their great performance evenly across the venue every night."

The *Deeper Well Tour* is scheduled to run through December 7, concluding with two nights at Bridgestone Arena in Nashville. [📍](#)

### **Kacey Musgraves** *The Deeper Well Tour*

**Production Crew:**

Lighting Designer: Rob Sinclair  
Lighting Programmer: André Petrus  
Lighting Director: Danielle Edwards  
Lighting Crew Chief: Ryan Hodge  
Video Director: George Elizondo  
Front-of-House Engineer: Mike Fanuele  
Systems Engineer: Elad Kleiner  
Monitor Engineer: Martin Strayer IV  
Monitor Tech: Ben Scanlon  
Tour Manager: Bobby Simmons  
Production Managers: Aaron Draude, Arthur Kemish  
Production Companies:  
Lighting: 4Wall Entertainment  
Video: Fuse  
Creative Content: Blink Inc.  
Staging: TAIT  
SFX: ImagineSFX  
Audio: Clair Global