





Four-Part Harmony

Revealing the many sides of The Who on the *Quadrophenia and More Tour*

By: Sharon Stancavage

The Who's *Quadrophenia* focuses on a young man who struggles with four personalities, each represented in performance by a member of the band. The second rock opera by Pete Townshend, it was first performed in 1973. In 2012, for the band's latest tour, Roger Daltrey re-envisioned it as the story of the band and those who have experienced the last half-century with them. "This show is a fabulous, intimate look at The Who," says the band's longtime production designer Tom Kenny, who has also worked with the likes of George Harrison, David Bowie, Jimmy Page, Robert Plant, Eric Clapton, David

Byrne, and on a wide variety of TV productions in the US and worldwide.

Once the *Quadrophenia* sequence is over, the band gives the audience some of its favorite songs. "Unlike other bands, The Who always plays their hits, so everyone can enjoy themselves," the designer notes.

Kenny says that the production design underwent several stages of development. "The shape of the set went through varying forms, as it does on every tour. Roger wanted to have the front of a motorbike or a moped, but that wasn't really feasible for the production. The screen shapes are just something [production manager] Roy Lamb came up with

that look somewhat mod." There are three 8mm circular SL-pro 8 LEDs and a 15mm Barae BR15 rectangle that is 39'4" wide by 16'4" high, all provided by Montreal-based Solotech, the tour's video gear supplier. "We had frames made for the circular LEDs by Tait Towers [of Lititz, Pennsylvania]. We wanted them to look like headlights, and I decided I wanted something with a mirror, because, without it being lit, it would still be bright," he says.

The visuals were created by Daltrey; producer and content director Colin Payne, of The Media Machine; and a team including Dan Hardiker and Neil Hetherington, of

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Zeroh, as well as Chris Rule and Des Murphy. “Overall, Roger drew two conclusions: Firstly, the need to move away from a narrator and guests on stage [usually featured in productions of *Quadrophenia*]. Secondly, the desire to focus not just on the personalities of the original band members, but to add a new twist, the dimension of time—The Who now on stage and The Who then on the screens,” Payne explains. The mixing of the past and present is expressed dually through archival footage of the band and historic footage. “We referenced all the excellent postwar footage put together by [graphic designer and music video producer] Aubrey Powell

for the previous shows but crucially were given total access to the entire Who archive,” he says. The archival footage includes Townshend smashing guitars during “Helpless Dancer;” The Who in an earlier incarnation as the High Numbers in “The Punk and the Godfather;” and a wide range of historic news footage. Factories appear during “The Dirty Jobs,” WWII headlines run during the instrumental “Quadrophenia,” and a montage that includes content related to Princess Diana’s death and 9/11 is used in “The Rock,” Payne says. “It made total sense to use footage that tracks the development of the band, very much along the journey we see in

Quadrophenia itself: The pull of youth, growing through difficult periods, questioning, fighting, exploring, celebrating, deeply emotive, angry, and loving—these really came through the films we saw.”

The sea is also a recurring theme within the visual context of the show. “The sea has always been crucial in *Quadrophenia*,” Payne says. “Not only is it reflective of the location of much of the action within the story itself, it represents the universal, the love, the redemption.” The finale of *Quadrophenia*, “Love, Reign o’er Me,” also includes some stunning footage of rain. “The imagery is highly treated film—not CGI—and we really were inspired by the notion of absolute reality being filtered and highly artistic. The pixels shine like diamonds, and because the basis of the image is natural, it has a highly uplifting effect,” Payne says.

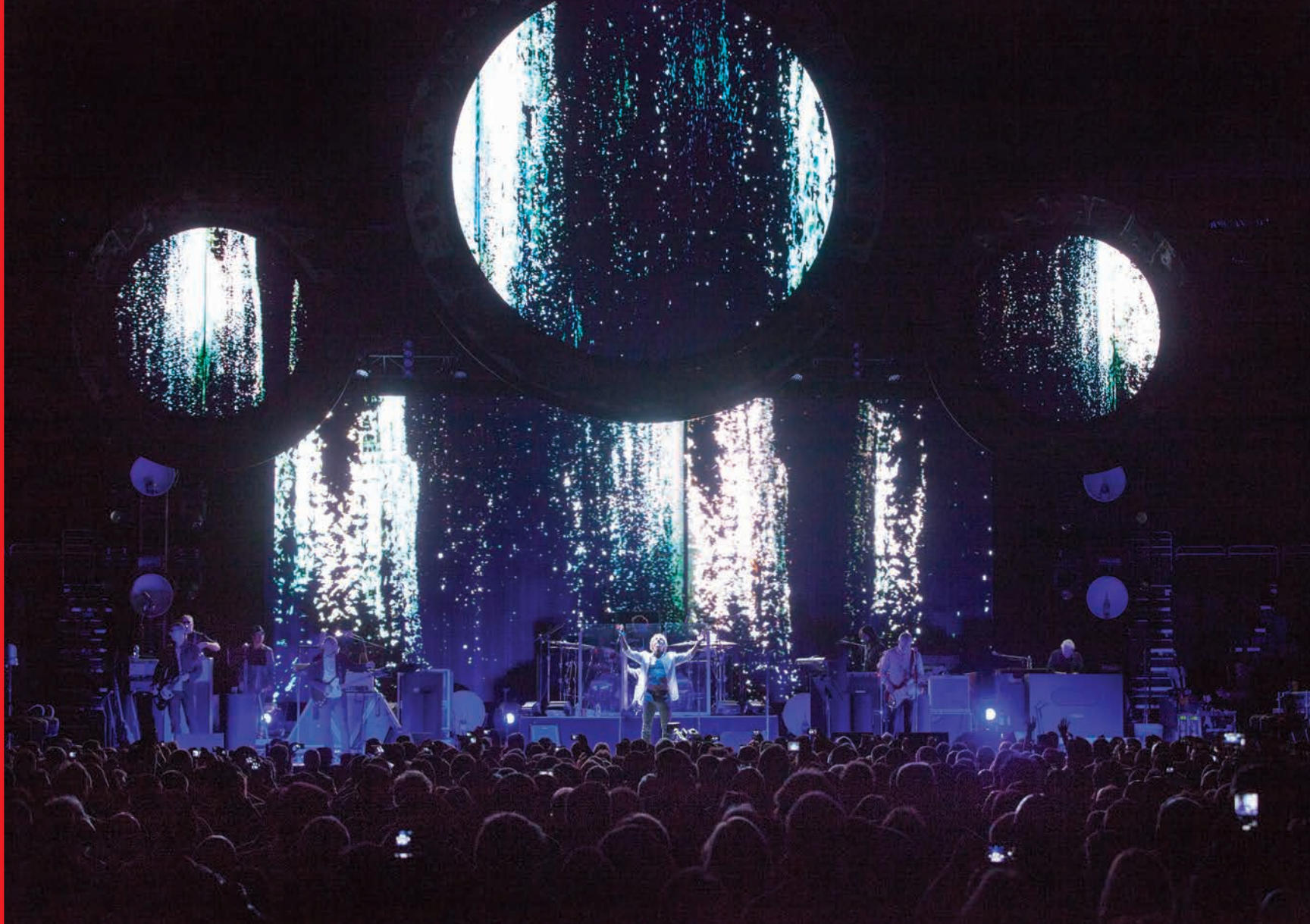
While the visuals for *Quadrophenia* are thematic, the approach to the songs in the hits section is distinctly different. “We view this section as a constantly evolving, live experience—we have banks and banks of cool visuals, which we can adapt and VJ along with the band, depending on song choices, mood, and energy,” Payne says. “We can follow and enhance and, in this way, the video can become as flexible as any of the musicians.”

Giani Fabricio, the show’s touring content director, uses an Avolites Sapphire media console working with four Avolites-Immersive Ai media servers. It’s the first time Ai has been out with a major tour. “Overall, the production needed flexibility. They knew that some of it was perhaps going to be preprogrammed with time code, but the band doesn’t like having the rigid structure of having to play with a click track and time code,” Fabricio says.

When visuals and vocals of the late Keith Moon and John Entwistle were added (to “Bell Boy” and



Both Daltrey and Townshend requested throwback lighting for the hits section of the show, specifically to 1973, the year *Quadrophenia* was released.



The three 8mm circular SL-pro 8 LEDs, supplied by Solotech, are framed with mirrors and integrated into the design to look like the headlights on a motorcycle, Daltrey's original design concept.

"5:15", respectively), it became apparent that the show would need some sort of time code system. "Some parts of *Quadrophenia* are on time code, and that's something that's set up beforehand," Fabricio notes. "I use the system to put it on timelines and then do the offset to get the right synching, and that generally never changes. But the rest of *Quadrophenia* is mostly operated live. There are never two time-coded bits one after the other, and it generally switches from a fully live operated track to a time-coded one."

The set "was a challenge to start with," Fabricio admits. "I've done shows, with other artists, where it

comes to a situation in which, for the sake of everything being perfect and in synch, the artist gives up their live performance quite a bit, removing any suspense from the show. These guys said, 'No, we're not going to do that. We're going to do our thing, and we might take a bar out here, another one there, and I might just go into a guitar solo for 20 minutes, and you just deal with it.' One reason they gave me the job is that Colin wanted somebody who had a musical background—not just a programmer, but also a musician."

One of Fabricio's primary responsibilities is to keep the visuals—even those in the non-time-coded

segments—aligned with the music. "I keep tight control over the speed of the clips, so that if the band drifts and goes a bit faster or slower, I'm ready to adjust the synch," he says.

While Fabricio is handling the content at the front of house, there's another aspect to the video system backstage, he says: "There's one person doing all the camera cutting; there's another person who looks at colors and calibration, the treatment of cameras; another who operates the [Vista] Spyder, channeling the different signals to the screens." The IMAG system includes four Sony cameras, a Barco FSN-1400 switcher, and two Christie Roadster S+20K DLP



In an effort to retrace the past of The Who and its audience, the *Quadrophenia* section of the show includes a wide variety of historic news footage, from World War II to Princess Diana's untimely death.

projectors for the left/ right screens. Although there are numerous content/IMAG configurations, it is less random than one might expect. "If we're going to put camera feeds on the central set screens, it's going to cut out content, so it is carefully choreographed," Fabricio says.

The signal path between the front of house and video world backstage is complex, and it includes front-of-house sound. Fabricio explains, "SMPTE time code comes from the ADAT machine on stage to Robert [Collins, front-of-house sound engineer]; from Robert, it goes to my MIF4 MIDI time code interface. That's where SMPTE is converted to MIDI time code and goes to my servers to trigger the video clips. The video signal then goes out of my Ai servers, through the DVI matrix, and to a DVI to fiber transmitter, which sends that signal behind the stage to the Spyder, from which the Solotech guys route it to the correct screens."

The key to making the system work is the Ai media servers. "The Ai system is perfect for the job because of its 3-

D visualizer and the live performance-driven user interface with the corresponding hardware, the Sapphire media console," Fabricio says. "What I find most interesting about the system is that it is built with a node-based visual programming language, Salvation, which means that, besides having the typical interface with all of its options, you can also access the background of it all and reconfigure the system to fit your needs, which is not something you can do with your typical software. Visual programming languages are great because they give even nonprogrammers the ability to create new patches or even alter the basic architecture of the software with just minimal training. For media servers in the entertainment industry, this is particularly interesting, as an experienced user can reconfigure the system on the spot to fit the specific needs of the show without needing to contact the original software programmer or even quickly create content using generative video patches without the support of a graphic designer."

Behind the lights

Discussing how he worked to blend the lighting with the video, Kenny says, "I learned that you have to complement whatever color is in there." During *Quadrophenia*, Kenny's palette is fairly subdued and includes steel blues, lavenders, and ambers. That changes somewhat when the band goes into its hits. "I keep it very live and very electric, because it's all down to what Pete and the band do every night," he adds.

Both Daltrey and Townshend had input into the production's lighting aspects. Kenny says, "Roger rang me up and said, 'First of all, I want you not to light it like a Who show; think of it as dark and moody.'" Also, he recalls, "Roger said, 'I want you to think of 1973, and basically light it theatrically—think PAR cans.' Basically, we've gone back to 1973 using 2012 technology." He adds, "Pete said, 'You're going to do your traditional Tom Kenny Who lighting, aren't you?'" That style is in evidence in the latter part of the show.

The lighting rig, provided by

PRG, is extremely streamlined. It includes 36 Philips Vari*Lite VL3500 Washes, 18 Martin Professional MAC III Profiles, 24 Mac 2000 Wash XBs, 24 Coemar Infinity Wash XLs, and 24 Mac Auras. The latter, Kenny says, “is the most beautiful light in the world. They are absolutely stunning. The color from them is the best, the absolute best. I’ve used them on the MTV Video Music Awards, and basically I use them as much as I can.” The Auras also have another claim to fame. “They’re the only lights that have ever been downstage of The Who that they haven’t kicked over on stage,” he says.

The lighting rig also includes 24 SkyPan 5K open-face tungsten floodlights from Mole-Richardson on the vertical trusses upstage. “I wanted something that looked like a motorbike bulb, and they fit the bill,” Kenny says. “I’ve used them everywhere. It’s a beautiful old lamp. They’re like a candle; there’s something very beautiful and attractive about them.”

There are also numerous four-light Mole-Richardson Molefays and Martin Atomic strobes, which give the latter part of the production the traditional The Who/Tom Kenny big-rock look. “I just wanted to liven it up,” he says. “In *Quadrophenia*, I’m holding back all night, so the video screens are the star then.” The daily needs of this aspect of the production are maintained by lighting crew chief Corey Tom and his staff.

The console of choice for Kenny and his lighting director/programmer, Jim Mustapha, is an MA Lighting grandMA1. “I’ve programmed in very normal states,” Kenny says. “They’re not beamy, because we don’t have smoke, due to Roger’s allergies. They have very nice, colorful, gorgeous looks, but then I take over on every song where the band takes over.”

The real mix

Robert Collins, who handles front-of-house audio, has worked with The Who before and with Daltrey and Townshend on solo projects. He says simply, “I just love mixing.” To mix The Who, he has a DiGiCo SD7. “It’s a brilliant desk,” he adds. “Unlike most digital consoles, it’s very musical, and for me it mixes like an old analog desk.” This is Collins’ first time touring with the SD7. “I had no reason to use it earlier, as my old faithful D5 was doing just fine,” he says. Speaking of the SD7’s capabilities, he notes, “It will run a small country if you want it to.”

As for processing, Collins isn’t necessarily a fan. “We strive for a natural-sounding show,” he says. He uses a TC Electronic M6000 plus two Summit Audio TLA-100 tube leveling amps and four dbx 160 XL compressors. “The rest is SD7-internal.” While many front-of-house engineers won’t leave home without Waves, Collins says passionately, “No. Absolutely not. I don’t even use Snapshots.”

As a vocalist, Daltrey has always had the reputation of someone who isn’t afraid to let go and scream. To handle these vocal machinations—most notably in “Baba O’Riley” and “Won’t Get Fooled Again”—Collins keeps it simple. “No big compressors on Roger. I don’t like squashing things. I use a very subtle TLA; they’re so smooth, and actually my finger is the best compressor.”

From an aural standpoint, *Quadrophenia* runs the gamut, encompassing quiet moments like the plaintive cries of Daltrey asking “Is it me, for the moment?” during “Dr. Jimmy” to intense moments like the end of “Love, Reign o’er Me.” Collins gives the band control of that. “The dynamics are huge for them. They should be huge,” he says. “On the guitar, Pete likes to go quiet to loud, and when somebody wants to shout, they shout. And it should be louder. It’s up to them; it’s not up to me to decide what’s louder.”

On stage, Collins has a variety of microphones, most of them quite familiar. When asked why Daltrey isn’t



Touring content director Giani Fabricio, production designer Tom Kenny, and lighting director/programmer Jim Mustapha.

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using the newest, most expensive vocal mic, he replies, “Why? Roger is only going to throw it around on stage and smash it into something.”

The mic that Daltrey swings around on stage is the Shure SM58. “We have a case of them for Roger, and he’s not going to change now. He’s been using them for years,” Collins notes. In fact, the SM58 is the vocal mic of choice on The Who stage. Townshend and his brother, Simon, who sings vocals for “The Dirty Jobs,” are also on SM58s.

As for the rest of the stage, there's a nice range of brands represented. "It's a mixture of Audix and AKG on the drums—there's an Audix D6 on the bass drum, a D4 on the toms, an AKG C414 on head, an AKG C 451 B on high hat and ride, and, on the snare, a Shure SM57 on the top and an Shure SM80 for the bottom."


When asked about the key to mixing a very musical, acoustically

dimensional band like The Who, Collins has a simple answer: "Listen to the sounds that you're reproducing and let things sit there so you can hear them." It's also similar to his advice for newer members of his profession. "I try to tell the young mixers coming up—go and listen to the instrument, and reproduce the sound of it. Don't have it in your head what you think a saxophone should sound like. Go and listen to the actual instrument."

For the PA, a d&b audiotechnik J-Series line array is provided by Eighth Day Sound Systems, of Cleveland. There are 18 front cabinets, 12 side fills, and six J-Series subs. The main hang has a mixture of J8 and J12s with J12s on the side hang. There are also three B2 subs on each side of the side, and the back stage hang, if used, is loaded with Q1s. Although Collins could have gone heavy on the subs and loud overall, he chooses not

to. "Subs are overused, and generally we tend not to go that heavy with the sub sound," he says. "I—and the band—want a really big sound but not a really loud show. And that's the art of it."

As the show ends, Daltrey and Townshend perform a touching and intimate song called “Tea & Theatre”—the two passions of English gentlemen. It is just another personal moment of a very personal show that traces the history of the musicians on stage and the collective history of the audience as well. Kenny, who is out with the tour, leaves the front of house to head off with the band. “Isn’t it a good bit of fun?” he asks with a smile.

The Who continues the *Quadrophenia and More Tour* across the United Kingdom with additional shows in France and the Netherlands through July 5. 

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