

Lighting & Sound America

\$10.00

plasma media

Dierks Bentley

*The Somewhere
on a Beach Tour*

ALSO:

*Manufacturing Innovation
at The Henry Ford Museum*

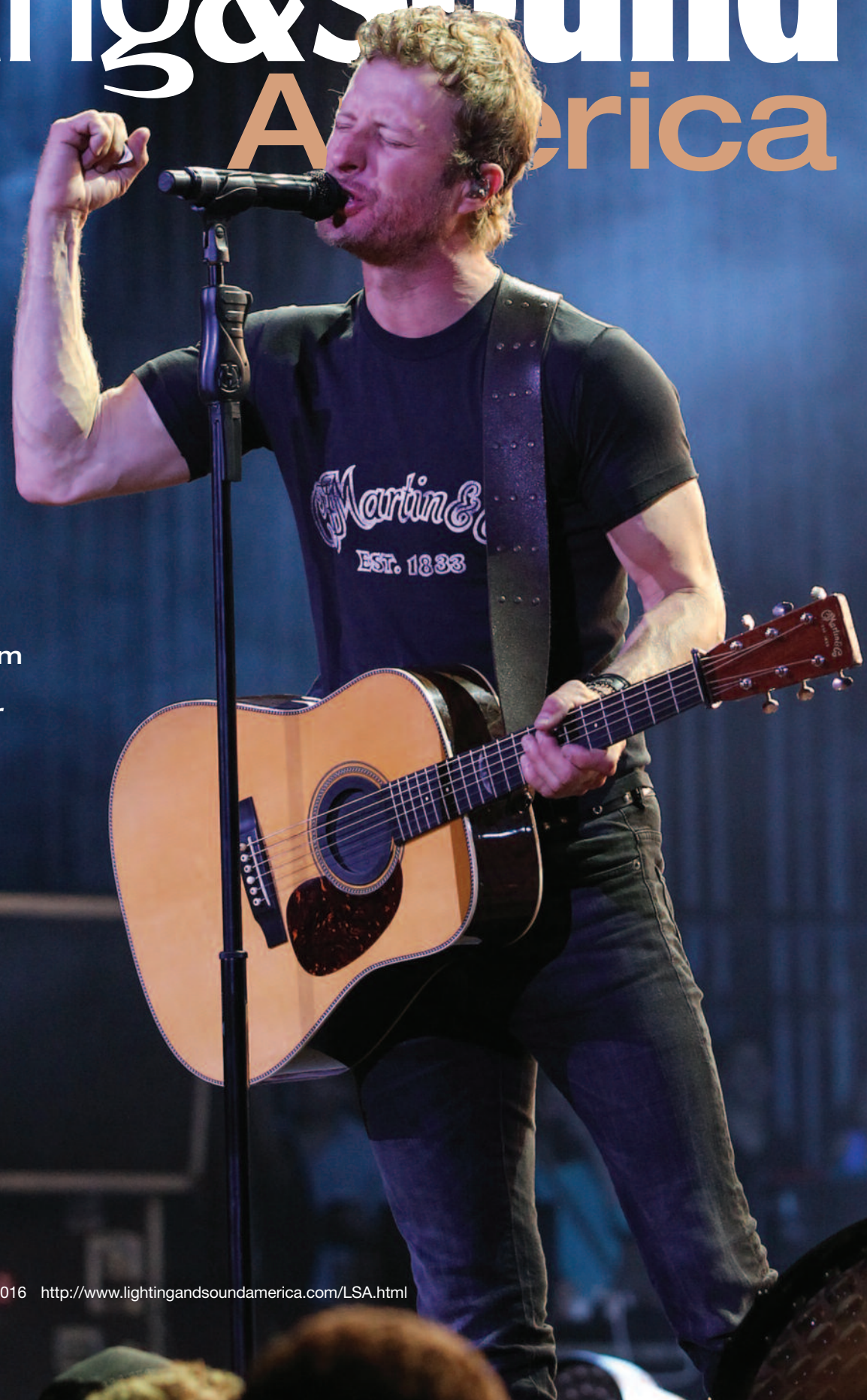
Disturbed's Immortal Tour

Robe ROBIN DL7S

Shure QLXD4

Chauvet Professional
Ovation E-910FC

Drafty Production
Design Software



THE DIAMOND AND THE SPEAR

Creating the
unique look and
sound of Dierks
Bentley's
*Somewhere on
a Beach Tour*

By: Sharon Stancavage



Reade's lighting rig includes a wide variety of gear from Martin by Harman, including the Atomic 3000 LED.

The story begins almost five years ago, when Tribe Inc. production designer Bruce Rodgers met Dierks Bentley at the Country Music Awards. “Dierks was at a point in his life where his music was more and more a direct result of who he is as a person,” Rodgers says. “As a designer, I had this cool opportunity to help create some visual cues of who I think he is as a person and a performer.” What Rodgers found was an artist who is at home singing about having a good time and who also has a knack for storytelling. Rodgers adds, “We discovered some things that we couldn’t get away from—there’s darkness and honesty and a rugged kind of thing as well. There’s a love for America and freedom; he loves old-school country music, respects his family, his lineage, and his ancestry. He and I clicked on many levels and I’m thrilled to work with him every chance I get.”

For his *Somewhere on a Beach Tour*, Rodgers says Bentley had some concrete ideas: “In previous designs, we had the drummer off-center, and we left the middle

open for clean background. Dierks had the idea of having Steve [Misamore], the drummer, at center and slightly elevated. He also wanted places for everybody to get to him so they could be a tight band at moments, and then spread out, depending on the energy of the song.”

Rodgers began developing concept sketches. Describing how he works with Bentley’s team, he says, “Before I present thumbnail ideas to Dierks, I’ll meet with Jay Ballinger, the production manager; Mary Hilliard Harrington, his manager; and Chris Reade, our lighting designer, and I’ll run really high concepts by them, to see how they’re feeling.”

At this point, Reade brought in a very solid, workable concept. “For years and years, Chris has wanted to have an automated rig, so he wondered if we could use that as the home base,” Rodgers says. “It got all of us excited about the way we could process any one of the designs, depending on which one Dierks gravitated to.”

One design resonated with Bentley; Rodgers titled it “The Spear.” “It was a spear head—like the tip of a spear



Only five truss sections don't move; the rest are automated via a Nicon RAYNOK system from Five Points Production Services.

that's pointed straight up," he says. "It's aerodynamic—Dierks is a pilot—it's very iconic, and I haven't seen the combined use of that particular shape with a foreground centerpiece. I got deeper into the design with Chris and Jay, then pulled it into CAD with my two assistants—Maria Maria Garcia and Bruno Oliveira."

Reade says, "I started drawing, using Bruce's CAD of the stage and the video and drawing around that, to see what would fit in venues versus what we could do with automation from a structural standpoint. Then I ran everything by our tour rigger and lighting crew chief, Marc 'Chainsaw' Wuchter, so he could tell me how realistic the design was for our tour, and what it would take to make it happen, day in and day out."

"This is the largest set and production that we—and Dierks—have ever taken on the road," says Ballinger, a longtime member of Bentley's team. "Once the show is together and loaded into the rehearsal space, it's a collaboration between all departments—everyone's input is taken into consideration and it becomes a team effort to produce the best show possible."

Many vendors are veterans of Bentley's tours. Ballinger notes, "When you're dealing with great set builders like Accurate Staging [of Nashville], or lighting companies like Christie Lites [the Nashville office] that will always go above and beyond for you, or Moo TV [based in Madison, Tennessee] who have seen some extremely difficult video looks from us the past few years and yet always make it work, it makes life much easier on the road."

The nexus of the set is the drum riser. "We refer to the center section as the '16 diamond,' which is just that—a 16' x 8' tall diamond [comprised of 10mm Digiled MC10] that has an 8' x 8' x 12" drum riser on the bottom," Ballinger says. "The front of the drum riser has an LED video product on it [12mm ROE Visual Linx] and stairs that go up either side." Rodgers adds, "I needed the fascia on the riser to be at least as tall as Dierks and maybe a little more. You want Dierks to have a background that's closer to him; we also wanted to play that trick where you have content in the foreground and content in the background, which provides a bit of a 3-D effect."

As for the rest of the set, Ballinger says, "Off of either



The floor is home to a number of Martin by Harman MAC Quantum Washes that do double duty as the plane's runway.

side of the diamond are 8' x 8' x 5' platforms—stage left is for the pedal steel player [Tim Sergent] and stage right is for the bass player [Cassady Feasby]. Off of those landings are the bridges—which are adjustable so that we can scale the width to any venue—that attach to another 2' x 2' landing with stairs or the front and the back of the set. It started out 60' wide and 18' deep but we scaled it down to 50' long and 20' deep,”

One of the more surprising moments of the show happens during “Drunk on a Plane.” Rodgers explains, “We wanted the drum riser to open up so an airplane could come through. It was difficult; you’re opening a wall with stairs attached to it, so the wall and stairs have to open like doors, and there has to be room for the doors to open without the drum riser falling and caving in.”

“This was the most challenging part to design and build,” Ballinger admits. “We had to have 8' x 16' of open space to house the plane. With the doors open, essentially the drum riser appears to be floating on an 8' x 13' cantilever. We had to make sure that when we unlocked the doors to open them, that the rest of the set was stable. We

did this by using three crossbeams that had a cut out in them for a 13' I-beam down the center to keep it from bowing or bouncing under the drums.” James McKinney and Tye Trussell [of Accurate Staging] helped solve the mechanics of the door effect; to keep things simple the doors are mechanical, as opposed to being automated.

The plane is comprised of three pieces; when assembled is 6' 8" tall x 14' long. Ballinger adds, “The plane sits 4" off the ground on a caster plate that is connected to an aluminum skeleton that has an aluminum sheet metal mig welded to it. It has over 1,000 rivets in it all done by hand.”

Video

Wes Edwards, who directs all of Bentley's music videos, and Molly Gray, of the content provider Tantrum, are also part of the visual collaboration. Rodgers explains, “Molly and Tantrum have done the last four tours as well, and have gotten better at helping us find these perfect marriages of custom content, custom lighting, and custom show design. Wes is a guy that, for moving visuals, has his

CONCERTS

fingers on the pulse of what Dierks is, so it was natural to bring him and help him guide the moving content.

“We let Wes and Molly and their teams go off and think of cool visuals that fit each song, and we give our feedback,” he continues. “In general, content is expensive; instead of doing content for 20 songs, and finding that ten of those songs might go away, we work with Dierks and Mary to choose the ten songs we know are going to be in the show.”

The content is found on the upstage spear and the front of the drum riser. At left and right are Gtek 15mm LED screens for IMAG as well as an extensive camera package. “There are eight total cameras: one at FOH, handhelds on stage left and right, two Marshall [Electronics, located in El Segundo, California] cameras on drums, one Marshall on the steel guitar, one Marshall on the top of the set looking over Dierks shoulder into the crowd, and one Sony robo cam,” remarks Ballinger. The production also uses four Dataton WATCHOUT 5 media servers.

Lighting

Reade created a configuration based on eight automated trusses controlled via a Nicon RAYNOK system from Nashville-based Five Points Production Services. He explains, “I’ve laid out five sections that don’t move, and they’re on angles, to give it a halo when the trusses are down. Upstage center, there’s a 16’ truss that doesn’t move, and stage right/left of that are 16’ trusses angled at 25° to give it a round feeling.” A pair of double-stacked trusses, downstage left and right, completes the halo.

Programming the automation was done with Five Points’ Sebastian Richards. Reade explains, “Sebastian is incredible, so it came together a lot easier than I thought it would, and a lot easier than it could have been.”

While some choose to have their trusses move during blackouts, Reade does it during the songs. “It’s never movement for sake of movement,” he says. “It’s movement for that song, because it fits that song. There are a couple of songs where it’s moving during the chorus and then it stops during the verses, so we get some really abstract looks. In the song ‘Sideways,’ all the trusses are just kind of going all over the place. We wanted to make that last song before the encore be pretty over-the-top, so it’s moving consistently throughout the chorus, and then during the verses, it stops at different spots every day.”

Reade programmed the show, and is out on the road with a Jands Vista console. “It’s the most stable console I’ve ever been on in my career,” he says.

“It’s more of a visual console, so I can go into the time line—which is a lot like video editing—and I can see the parameters per instrument that are active in that cue, and I can change the parameters in seconds. It’s very logical, as well as intuitive—it makes sense, everything flows really



The magical engineering of the drum riser, the open stairs, and the “Drunk on a Plane” plane in full view.

well and I can do fairly complicated things in a much simpler way.” Reade has worked on other consoles, but keeps going back to the Vista. “The Jands Vista is my console and I love it,” he concludes.



The cueing runs the gamut from intense to subtle. “It all comes down to the music—the music is your guide,” Reade says. “There are some songs where there are only 12 cues, because it’s just intro, verse, chorus, verse, chorus, solo, so it’s the same looks, only copied. But then there are songs with a ton of cues.”

The lighting package for Bentley’s tour includes gear from a variety of manufacturers. Reade says, “We use a lot of Martin products, which I actually prefer. We have the [Martin by Harman] MAC Viper Wash DX [34 of them], which is the better version of their wash light and MAC Viper Profiles [22]. The workhorses of the show are the



A full-stage render from Rodgers of the spear design.

Vipers, both the Washes and Profiles. They're great lights."

"I have a lot of MAC Quantum Washes on the floor [a total of 22], and MAC Quantum Profiles [16] are used for up light from behind, because I didn't need the output of a Viper Profile when it's at that level," he adds.

Reade also has 37 Martin Atomic 3000 LEDs scattered around on the moving trusses. "The aura effect adds cool color blocks on the trusses, which look pretty strong when the trusses are moving," he says.

The lighting rig also includes 35 Ayrton MagicBlade-Rs—behind the garage door, and across the set—and 27 Elation Professional Platinum Beam 5Rs. "Under the B stage, we have 12 Altman Q-Lites, which are incredibly bright, and 12 Chauvet Professional Nexus Panel 4 x 4s." Fourteen Nexus Panels are also on the stationary "halo" trusses. For truss toners, Reade uses 30 Elation SixPar 200s. He adds, "Martin is coming out with a new light called the Axiom; I imagine we might be getting a bunch of them." Two JEM ZR 44 foggers are found under the drum riser as well.

Lighting is an integral part of the finale. Reade explains, "I make the runway with the Quantum washes—they go along the side of the stage, then they go along the front of the stage, and they go out on the thrust. The video has a runway on it, and I have the Quantum Washes cycling as an extension of the runway video. When you hear the plane coming in, that's when the wings light up." Twelve

horizontally oriented MagicBlade-Rs on either side of the set suddenly become the wings. "I spent a bit of time looking at videos of real planes and how the lights react and I recreated it," he adds. "The offstage parts of the Blades are flashing as if they're the lights on the end of the wings—one side is green, one side is red."

In terms of his color palette, Reade explains, "I do a lot of work with color temperature—the standard open white, CTO, steel blue, a bastard amber, and so on. Then I use the standard blue-red-amber-congo." Certain colors are missing in the show. "Right out of the gate, when I was first talking to [Bentley] years ago, I said, 'I don't see magenta and I don't see green.' They're both great colors, but I don't see them for Dierks or his music."

Sound

"In my tenure with Dierks at the front of house, I have mixed on every PA out there, and, because of that, I know what most rigs are going to do and what they're not going to do. The key is to find what it's going to do and make it do that as efficiently as you possibly can," explains James McDermott, who has been with Bentley for almost 11 years.

McDermott has outfitted Bentley's show with a Meyer LEO/LYON PA. "I was a lifelong opponent to Meyer systems, until I heard this rig last year," he says. "It is quite possibly the best rig I've ever heard—whoever is respon-

sible for this Leo/Lyon system has been doing their homework in regards to what mixers need. I think they finally understood that there were things about the previous systems they had designed that people didn't care for, recognized them, and fixed them."

The change happened when McDermott did a benefit gig for Bentley last year with a Leo/Lyon rig. "I was blown away," he says. "I heard things I had never heard before. It wasn't because I was digging into things in a technical way; I just did it, and I did it as quickly as I possibly could, and the results were phenomenal."

With the budget—and the encouragement of his friend, system tech Kenneth Sellars—McDermott specified the Meyer rig. "I had a better-than-average first show [at the PNC Bank Events Center in New Jersey, a challenging venue], and my second show was exponentially better; in fact, I would consider it one of the top five shows I've ever mixed. This thing is my best friend," he admits with a chuckle.

"There was definitely a learning curve with the Meyer rig, and that had to do with some of the features that are involved in the Callisto [array processor] system—in the U-shaped filters and things like that," McDermott says.

"The concept was foreign to me until Kenneth [Sellars] explained to me what he did and how he implements them in his rig."

The designer has 12 Leos, four Lyons that are underhung, six 1100-LFC subs that are flown (cardioid fashion), 12 Lyons for the side hang, and four 1100-LFC ground stacks in groups of two. "It's a heavy PA, and that's something I have to contend with on a daily basis, but I feel I have enough between the Leo and the Lyon to do what we need to do in every venue," he says. The PA was provided by VER Tour Sound, of Nashville; it's the band's third year with VER. McDermott adds, "Ralph Mastrangelo, Beau Alexander, and Chance Stahlhut, from VER Tour Sound Nashville, have provided superior support and logistics."

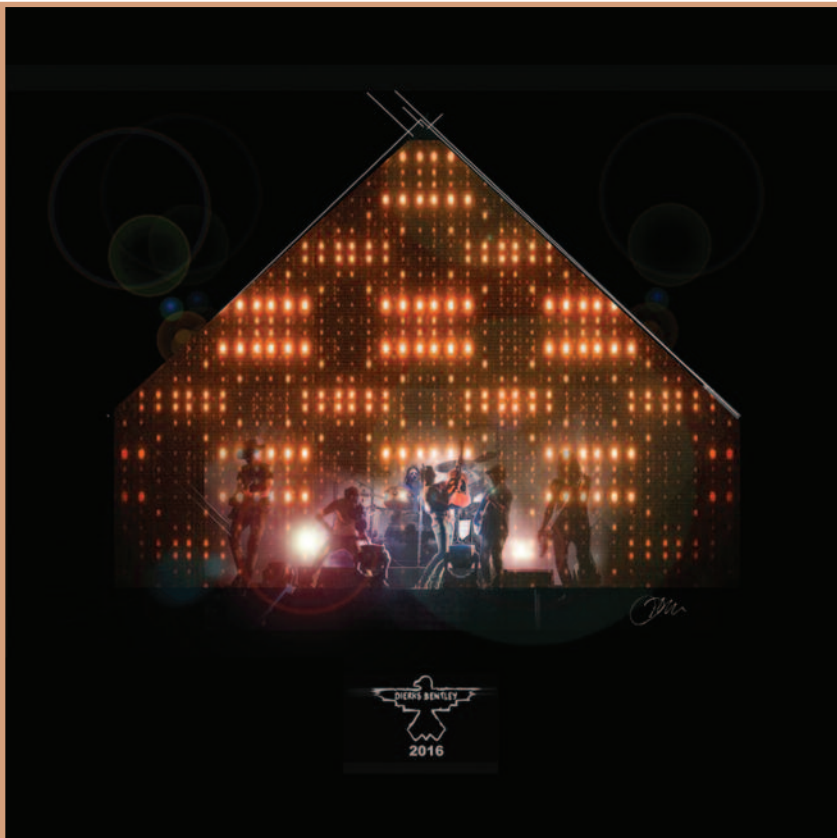
"The front of house is nearly all analog, and I think that my analog signal path, my analog console [a Yamaha PM 5000], and the way that I mix is one of the big reasons that I won a CMA FOH sound engineer of the year award in 2015," he notes. VER purchased the console for McDermott several years ago off of eBay. McDermott says, "It sounds amazing, and I have not been able to accomplish that with a digital desk." He also has an Avid S3L-X System, used to multitrack the show and also for video playback and walk-in music. "When we do fly dates, I just use an Avid profile; I really don't like the desk, but you can find them everywhere and it's super-easy just to plug that USB stick in there and hit 'load'," he comments.

McDermott minimizes the amount of digital-analog conversion in the audio signal. We have a Meyer Galileo [616 AES loudspeaker management system] at FOH passing AES signal to the stage into [Reidel's] RockNet network to distribute AES signal to stage left and stage right with an additional analog backup from FOH," he explains.

There's a bevy of outboard gear at the front of house with McDermott; some of it can be found on the vocal path. "This year, I've added an API 7600 channel strip for pres, so I'm using the pre EQ and dynamics on that," he says. "I also have an Empirical Labs Distressor and an XTA D2—the D2 is the linchpin, due to the vocal tone I'm able to get out of it." He's also using a Portico 5045.

"That's Rupert Neve's prime source enhancer; it's basically a really super-sensitive vocal gate. I needed it when we were touring a couple of years ago with Luke Bryan, where Dierks spent the entire show in front of a massive stadium PA. As long as he had his head in front of the microphone, I was fine, but if he stepped away from that microphone for any second, it was feeding back immediately. This thing was actually able to tame it."

McDermott uses Alan Smart C1s for the lead guitarist and pedal steel guitar player. "It does amazing work on two incredibly dynamic players who tend to be on the bright side of the world, especially on a couple of songs



Members of the band grouped together on the drum riser in front of the video spear, envisioned in a render.



Rodgers' close-up render in reality with Reade's automated lighting rig echoing the lines of the video wall.

where the guitarist is playing an old-school Telecaster, and he's trading off solos with the pedal steel player who is playing high on the neck. It can get kind of bright sometimes, and those C1s really tame that down and makes it very smooth." He's also using Drawmer gates and compressors, and a [Radial Engineering] 500 Series rack with four new dbx by Harman 560A compressors. He adds, "Also in there are some SSL 4000 G compressors and two channels of Chandler Limited Little Devil compressors on an audio subgroup for the kick drum plus an audio subgroup for the snare."

In terms of outboard gear, McDermott says, "I'm using Bricasti Designs M7 stereo reverb processors; the first one is for the snare, and the second one is for the vocals. I also have two Yamaha SPX 2000s—one is on the toms and the second one is for all of my acoustic instruments: the banjos, fiddles, mandolins, all of it." He also has two TC Electronic D2 delay units, one for tape slap, and another for long-delay special effects and the like.

Dierks Bentley is a Shure endorser, and that brand is indeed represented on stage. "We are using Beta 58

capsules on Shure wirelesses for all the vocals," McDermott says. "I feel that there is not any technology out these days that can handle high levels of SPL and loud stage volumes and still be able to reproduce the vocal appropriately. So I'll stick with the old standby." The two kick mics are Shure Beta 91As, while the snare top is a [Shure SM] 57, and bottom is a Beta 56A. He adds "There is a secondary snare with a Beyerdynamic Opus 88 on it, and there's a Heil PR 40 mounted inside the kick drum." Neumann KM 184s can be found on the high hats, while Audio-Technica AT4050s are on the overheads.

"Making sure that I am putting the PA in there right is my major concern. I want to cover the venue as best as I possibly can within the limitations given and ultimately as safely as possible," says McDermott, who is also the system engineer on the tour. The audio team also includes monitor engineer Scott Tatter, who is on an Avid F6 console, monitor/PA tech Thomas McNabb and assistant system engineer Cody Seaver.

Dierks Bentley's *Somewhere on a Beach Tour* is traveling the US until the end of September. 📶