

Going Wide

Kane Brown's
*Worldwide Beautiful
Tour* gives the star
room to breathe,
visually and vocally

By: Sharon Stancavage
Photos: Todd Kaplan

Kane Brown burst upon the music scene five years ago when his cover of the George Strait song “Check Yes or No” went viral online. From there, he released a song of his own, “Used to Love You Sober,” which led to a deal with Sony Music Nashville. The *Worldwide Beautiful Tour* is his second headliner outing, as well as the second with production designer Trevor Ahlstrand. “For his last tour,” the designer says, “we went with something modern—like his style of music—which mixed a lot of set LED accents with tighter beam fixtures. This new tour wanted to grow and expand on that feel. At the same time, I wanted to keep it fresh, adding new elements that the audience hadn’t seen in any show prior to this one.”

As Ahlstrand notes, Brown’s music isn’t strictly country: “He has elements that represent many different genres, and I wanted to have a show that fits that. This show is not specifically country, it’s not specifically pop, not specifically anything; I feel it’s just him.”

Last year, Ahlstrand says, “Kane started to utilize all available stage space for dancing, which he loves to do, and the audience loves as well. I also wanted an overall wider feel and stage. He utilizes the thrust but, watching him in festivals throughout the summer, he takes the width into consideration and spends a lot of time out there, with the fans, in one direction or the other. So, I definitely wanted to incorporate some ego risers to make the overall production feel much wider.”



Last year, Ahlstrand says, “Kane started to utilize all available stage space for dancing, which he loves to do, and the audience loves as well. I also wanted an overall wider feel and stage.”



Speaking about the 12 cryojets supplied by Strictly FX, Ahlstrand says, "We have four around the B stage at the end of the thrust, one on each ego ramp, and six to make a line across the front of the stage."

The set, fabricated by Gallagher Staging & Productions, is 60' wide. "We have some ego ramps that go to the dasher with stairs," Ahlstrand says. "They're 8' tall x 12' wide. We will be hitting some amphitheaters and festivals, and a lot of those places have a lot of widths, but they feel cold, like concrete bowls. The ego ramps are 5' rolling riser sections with 3' set extensions built on top; when we get into amphitheaters, we're going to take that 3' section and build it so it has the same feel as the arena show, out wider, past your 60' space. I think we've come up to something that is quite spread out but, at the same time, is totally doable almost every day."

The 8'-wide x 24'-long sloped thrust leads to a 16' x 16' B stage, which Ahlstrand says, "is 3' off the ground. It gets him much closer to the audience than in the past; he is able to slap hands, take selfies, and do whatever he wants. The audience in the pit gets a much better viewing angle with the staging at this height, whether he is on the main stage or the B stage."

Onstage are four-angled risers. "They tier in to make a

really wide 'V' shape," Ahlstrand says. "The whole middle section is his open dance floor and an area for the band to interact with one another."

The set is illuminated. "We have the entire perimeter and every set piece accented with [Martin by Harman VDO] Sceptrons [118 Sceptron 1000s and 22 Sceptron 330s], which I love doing and I think it fits his modern feel," Ahlstrand says. The Sceptrons, which are run in video mode, are controlled via a Martin P3-300 controller and MA Lighting grandMA2 console.

A 52' 6" x 24' 7" video wall, with custom Gallagher touring frames, is located at midstage. "We're using an extremely new product, especially for US tours," Ahlstrand says. "It's a 75% transparent HOXLED screen." It is controlled via a PRG Mbox media server provided by MooTV, the overall video vendor. "We are using Mbox with three outputs that Moo TV custom-built," the designer adds. For occasional IMAG effects, Video Dust software is employed.

In terms of cameras, Ahlstrand says, "There are four

static POVs, three robos, one pit, and one at the front of house. Our video director, Joe Marcario, is cutting two separate IMAG feeds, one for the side screens and another for the video wall." Two Barco HDF-W30 FLEX projectors deliver IMAG to the side screens.

"The content was video created by Alex Alvga, who is also the band's videographer and Kane's video director for most of his music videos as well," Ahlstrand says. "He's been part of Kane's team from day one and is a resource for knowing Kane and his brand or style, which makes him invaluable in the overall collaboration. I might have an overall vision for a certain section of the show, but he'll come up with a great video concept that will shift a mood and we'll pivot and go from there."

Lighting and rigging are provided by DCR Nashville. "Jennifer Moore and the whole DCR team have been great partners throughout the tour last year with great gear and amazing support," Ahlstrand says. "This year has been no different; they've been fantastic to work with." (Moore adds, "The entire DCR team quickly rose the occasion when Trevor came to us with this innovative design. We are thankful for the ongoing relationship with the Kane Brown family and their confidence in our competence. We worked closely as a collective team and brought in new technology to give fans something unique.")

"The lighting rig is based around three triangular pods in the air," Ahlstrand says; "each pod has 16 Robe Spiiders. They're my wash fixtures but they also do effects and eye candy throughout the show. I am a huge fan of the moonflower in the center of the Spiider; to me, it feels like it's a completely different fixture. I probably use that 50% of the time, so I feel like I have two different styles of fixtures to choose from up there. Between each row of Spiiders I have a row of Sceptrons that help complete the big picture and tie what's going on in the air to the floor."

The lighting pods are automated, as are the upstage truss and video wall truss; all are on a Kinesys K2 system, provided through a partnership between DCR and PRG. "We are using the K2 system with Exacto—a custom plug-in that runs in the background of K2—for programming and integration of PSN for 3D information to the [MA Lighting grand] MA console," Ahlstrand says. "There is quite a bit of automation; even though there are not many automated motors, there are a lot of moves that build with the dynamics of the music throughout the show."

For profile units, Ahlstrand has 52 Claypaky Scenius Profiles. "The majority of light for the band—the workhorse of the show—is the Scenius Profile. I used them on Kane's tour last year; we were around the same trim height and was really happy with the output. I went from having Scenius Spots last time to Scenius Profiles this time, to give me a different choice in texture, and for the shutters, which we use for some of the band. It's the perfect light for what we need this time around."

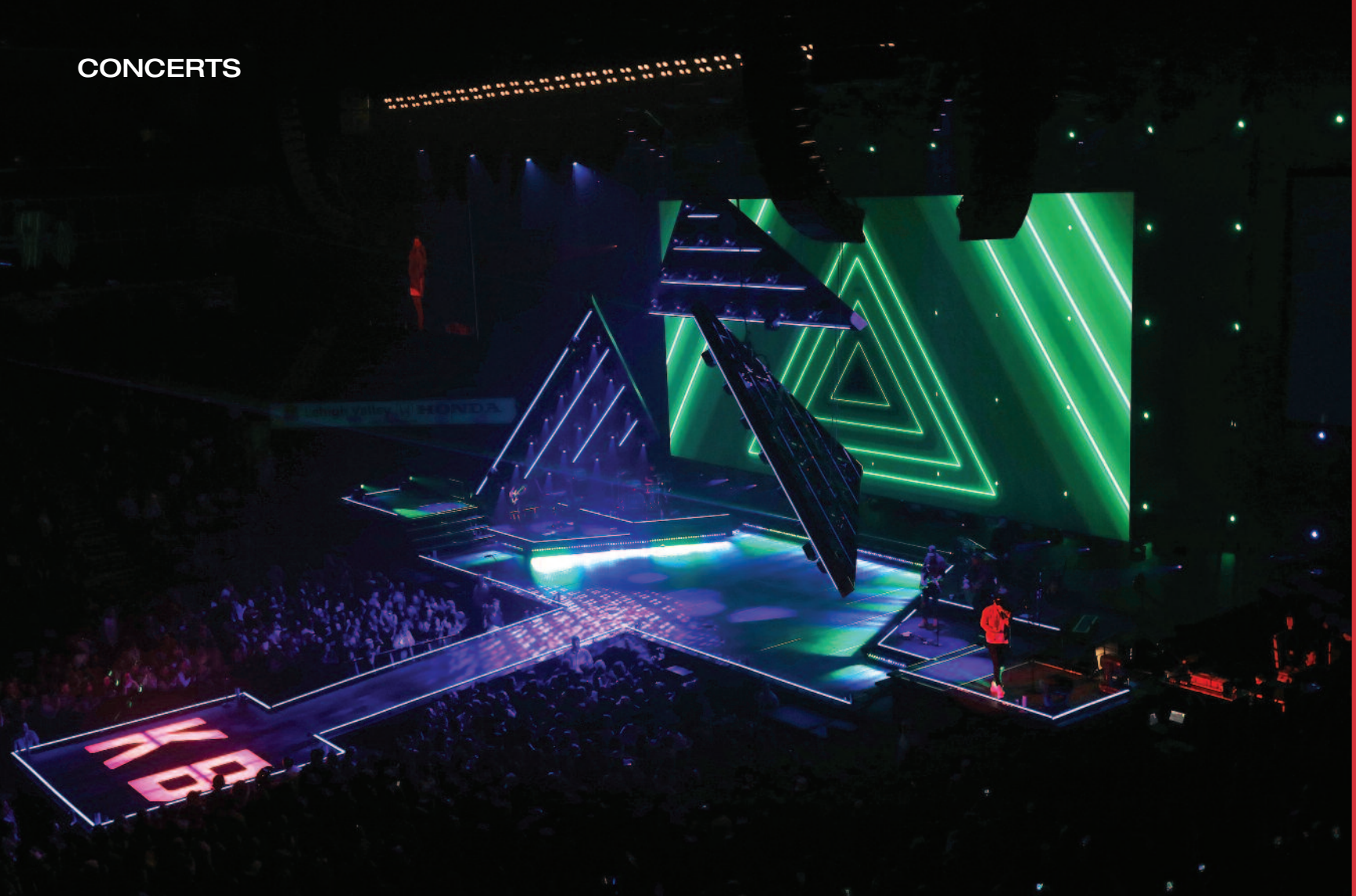
For the upstage lighting truss, which has a trim of 5', there are 22 GLP JDC1s, about which Ahlstrand says, "I am a huge fan. I do a lot of quick sweeps with both the white cells and colored cells. It's an extremely bright strobe and, overall, an amazing fixture. You can do way more with them than you can with a traditional strobe—or a colored LED strobe."

Between the JDC1s are 22 Elation Professional Smarty Hybrids, a compact CMY color-mixing spot/beam/wash hybrid with an 11,000-lumen output and motorized zoom ranges of 1° – 33°, depending on the mode. "I tried the Smarty out for the first time, last year with Kane," Ahlstrand says. "It's a really powerful fixture with a really small footprint. It does the profile side of the light extremely well; it looks like a much bigger profile source than it is. When I put it in beam mode, it cuts through anything and everything, including the video wall."

And he needs power behind the video wall. "Whatever I put up against it, I needed to cut through it and [the Smarty Hybrid] doesn't have a problem doing it at all. When we were playing festivals or supporting other artists last year, it was one of the few fixtures we carried. They cut through every festival rig and video wall. It was an easy choice to go back to the exact same thing when we needed to do it again."

"Upstage of the 48' stage is a truss that is 88' wide with ladders; we have 12 ladders and each has five lights, for a total of 60. For the ladders, we are using the Atomic Dot, a newer product from Martin. You can route video through it or do DMX. It's a very punchy, very narrow white strobe that looks like an extremely bright pin spot; in the atomic mode, it's incredibly bright." The VDO Atomic Dot is a video-controlled Aura backlight and a bright strobe/blinder dot in one fixture; the 60 units are controlled by the P3. "I patch them into the console and P3," Ahlstrand says. "I have them patched in the P3 in the full-blown mode, which is something like 68 channels. I can have color doing video, and then strobe over the top with DMX." He runs the Atomic Dots primarily through the grandMA2. "They are phenomenal for what you get out of them, and because they are static units, they're very cost-effective. In terms of color and intensity, I can't imagine anything else more impactful in that price point; they can make a small rig look so much bigger. They really have added so much to the overall look and scale of the show." The lighting rig also includes 24 Elation Chorus Lines, 30 Elation DTW Blinder 700IPs, two LSG 300s from Le Maitre, three Reel-EFX DF-50s, and three hazebase Base Hazers.

Ahlstrand programmed the show, which is time-coded, himself; on the road, the show is the hands of Nick Chang: "He calls all of the automation, handling the video elements and routing and calling spots for a very active artist and band on a large stage. It's a lot but he is absolutely crushing it!"



"We have the entire perimeter and every set piece accented with [Martin by Harman VDO] Sceptrons, which I love doing and I think it fits his modern feel," Ahlstrand says.

The tour also features special effects, courtesy of Strictly FX. Ted Maccabee, co-founder, notes, "The Kane Brown team wanted a creative, cost-effective way of adding something different to their show, which we are more than happy to provide. Kane Brown was directly involved and actually spent some time with our team in Nashville."

Specifically, the tour needed lasers and cryo. "On each lighting pod," Ahlstrand says, "we have two [X-Laser 5W] Facet audience scanners for a total of six, as well as two [Arctos Coral Series] 15W units in the air and two 15W units on the ground." The lasers are used generously throughout a third of the show, in songs like "Vodka & Cranberry," "Be Like That," "One Thing Right," and "Heaven." "We thought lasers would be the best effect for this tour, allowing us to accent the different styles of music while creating unique environments each time they are utilized," Ahlstrand adds. The lasers, which are also on time code, were programmed on Pangolin Beyond by Strictly FX's art director, David Kennedy, and

programmer Jeff Jowdy.

Speaking about the 12 cryojets used, Ahlstrand says, "We have four around the B stage at the end of the thrust, one on each ego ramp, and six to make a line across the front of the stage." Strictly FX's laser operator, Jeff Kasdorf, notes, "It's a cool country-pop show with EDM influences and very distinct looks; it is definitely a huge show for an up-and-coming artist."

Sound

Audio is handled by David Loy, who has been Brown's front-of-house engineer for several years. "We are doing our second tour with Clair's Cohesion CO-10 system," he says. [Clair Global provided the audio package.] "We did a similar tour to this last year with CO-10 and loved the response that we got out of them. It's the punchiness, the clarity, and the amount of space they take up in the truck; they're smaller than the CO-12s, which saves us on truck space and amp racks. In fact, we can power a whole side of PA off a single amp rack and spare PakRak from Clair.



"The show is running about 70 inputs this year," Loy says. "For a pop-country show, that's fairly sizable. We're a little under what most pop shows run, but for the country genre, 70 is starting to get up there." The Kinesys K2 automation system was provided via a partnership between PRG and DCR.

For the amount of power and output we get from them, as well as looking at truck space, cost, and overall efficiency, they absolutely rock."

Loy has twenty CO-10s per side for the mains, 12 to 16 for the side hang, and four CP-6s across the front of the stage for the front fills. He adds, "We are doing three CP-218 subs flown per side in cardioid and four on the ground per side."

Loy and monitor engineer Adam Hart are on DiGiCo SD10 consoles. "I have been a DiGiCo fan for a long time," Loy says. "I love the flexibility of the consoles; I love being able to be meticulous in my setup with them. We recently also upgraded to 32-bit [preamps] this year, and that changed a lot of our mix immensely. We noticed there was a lot more space with 32-bit pres, and we found that the inputs responded to EQ and compression a lot better than in the past. Adam first noticed that all of his monitor mixes had much more space and a lot more headroom than in previous years. I noticed it with the stereo image; there was much more depth and clarity available. Moving

to those pres at 96K really helped our overall product pretty quickly."

He adds, "The show is running about 70 inputs this year. For a pop-country show, that's fairly sizable. We're a little under what most pop shows run, but for the country genre, 70 is starting to get up there."

In terms of plug-ins, Loy says, "Monitor world and I are not using Waves or UAD. We're pretty big believers in keeping the signal as low-latency as possible and not inducing any other failure points. I have a handful of analog pieces at the front of house that I am using post-console, so the stems leave my console, and hit those units, and go straight to the PA from there."

He adds, "My centerpiece this year is an Antelope Goliath [HD]; it was provided to me by Antelope to use for all of my AD/DA conversions, my clocking, and any sort of AES conversion for openers or support acts. It has 64 channels of line level I/O (32 in and 32 out), 128 channels of MADI, and 16 channels of AES connectivity. It's a USB and Thunderbolt recording interface meant for the studio

CONCERTS

that is actually serving me well out here in the live concert world.”

Loy uses the Goliath as a converter. “I’m doing a lot of things with it. You can route any input anywhere you want, channel by channel, to any multitude of digital streams. Most converters do it in blocks of eight or blocks of four, but the way I’m routing right now, I have all my MADI streams routed, one to one, for analog ins and outs, and I have openers coming into that via AES; they are asynchronously clocked to my master clock. I route those AES inputs into the PA through this unit. Honestly, using the Goliath has really changed my routing game at the front of house; it has brought my overall conversion quality up and the dynamic range on the conversion is about 6dB – 7dB higher than the converter I was using last year.”

The Goliath is essentially a utility piece. “It’s made for getting signal from point A to point B in the cleanest, fastest, most quality way possible,” Loy says. “Conversion is step one in making sure your analog pieces sound good. You can have a great-sounding Neve piece on your snare, but the quality of the conversion to that unit could be hindering you from using it to its fullest extent. I was looking for an awesome powerhouse that could handle clocking and conversion with finesse and I think Antelope delivered.”

In terms of signal flow, Loy says, “The Goliath feeds stems off my console into a Neve 5059 satellite summing mixer. All my stems feed that; I have a SMART Research C2 [stereo compressor] on my Crush Drums, and an API 2500 on my band buss that is compressing the band and bringing it back into the 5059 and summing it with my vocals before sending it to the PA. I also have a [Wave Distribution] UBK FATSO [Full Analog Tape Simulator and Optimizer] modified by Kush Audio and that’s doing my guitars’ buss. I’m also using a Neve 5045 for vocal noise compression, a distressor on Snare, and my final piece is a Neve [Portico II] Master Buss processor. I’ve been using that for three years now and I love it.”

For vocals, Loy is using a Focusrite ISA 430 MKII producer pack. “Kane’s vocal comes analog to me at the front of house, and then I hit the Focusrite,” Loy says. “The major reason I’m using the producer pack is because it has multiple stage outputs in the back that I can use to record his vocal. It allows me to do virtual playback properly and accurately.”

Loy’s drum microphones include “a Shure 91A for the kick in, a SE Electronics V-Kick for the kick out, and Beyerdynamic TG 58Cs on the toms; they’re little right-angle condensers, similar to the Beta 98 but with better low end and SPL handling.” On the snare bottom, he has a Shure SM57 and a Sennheiser e 609 on snare top. The latter, he says “is kind of a weird flavor, but we’ve really been enjoying it. I have two AKG C414s on overheads—that’s a standard—and Shure Beta 181s on the high hat



and the ride.” The production uses three Kemper rack units for guitar needs and an API Transformer LX for bass.

For Brown’s vocals, Loy says, “We’re using a



"We're using an extremely new product, especially for US tours," Ahlstrand says. "It's a 75% transparent HOXLED screen."

Telefunken M81 with a Shure Axient transmitter, and we've been using that one on him for a long time. It handles SPL well and handles gain before feedback exceptionally well.

It's something that we've really enjoyed."

The *Worldwide Beautiful Tour* is currently scheduled to resume in June and has dates through October. 📶