

What Love Takes

Maroon 5's *Love is Like
Tour* shows how concert
touring continues to evolve

Photos and text: Steve Jennings



Above and opposite. "The only outboard equipment I use is a [Rupert Neve Designs] 5045 to reduce background snapback when Adam [Levine] is singing on the thrust," Rupsch notes. "There were a few technical aspects to sort out in rehearsals regarding the length of the thrust and Adam singing in front of the PA." Above: "We're using a curved wall with ROE Visual Vanish V8 [high-transparency video panels] upstage, and our floor is Yestech 3.9[mm pixel pitch], both provided by Fuse," Coutu-Dumont notes.

Maroon 5 is on the road in support of its eighth studio album *Love Is Like*, playing to packed arenas. The show combines the band's hits with new material packed in a high-energy production. We spoke with members of the production teams that put this show out on the road for enthusiastic audiences around the country. It offers a window into how shows are created in the 2020s, a methodology that has evolved considerably over the years. Creative teams are becoming more expansive, and new technologies are being implemented as the demand continues to grow for ever more sophisticated visuals and sound.

Baz Halpin, tour producer and director

The creative complexity of concert touring increases year after year, Halpin notes, adding that there are far more roles in creating a show than a decade ago. "More responsibilities have fallen to the creative team than have in the past. As I see it, my role as the director is to work directly

with the artist and lead the creative vision. Decisions and direction regarding the lighting, set, costume, content, special effects, props, choreography, and all other creative decisions are formed by the director, in collaboration with the artist, and disseminated to the team. As a producer, separate from my director's duties, I'm bridging the gap between the production and creative teams. A producer is responsible for all things logistics and budgetary as they relate to the creative. I worked hand in hand with the tour manager, Fred Kharrazi, and production manager Alan Hornall, along with management and the promoter, to ensure that the creative is delivered to the artist's and director's vision within budget and on schedule, along with taking responsibility to find the solutions, collaborators, and teams to deliver the creative intent."

Halpin and Maroon 5 frontman Adam Levine spent many months iterating on creative direction and aesthetic. "He wanted a clean and uncluttered design that could deliver a cinematic experience for the audience," Halpin

TOUR TALK

says. "We worked on many versions of setlists and show flows, ultimately landing on something that has all the hallmarks of a traditional rock show whilst still being able to deliver a more cinematic visual."

Silent House, Halpin's design firm, has longstanding relationships with many vendors, which, for this tour, included Upstaging (lighting), TAIT (scenic), and Fuse Technical Group (video). "The associate director for the tour is Lihi Catriel [from Silent House], who was responsible for maintaining the decks, drawings, and schedules, along with disseminating all of the scheduling and creative notes to the various departments," Halpin says. "The role of associate director is increasingly needed, especially as timelines shrink and the margin for error decreases. Clear communication is key to success."

Brian Jenkins, associate lighting designer/director/programmer

"I'm the general blame catcher for Maroon 5," Jenkins jokes. "The design process is a really collaborative one. Baz and I have known each other for many years and have worked together on various television award shows, but this was our first time really teaming up on a tour. We all had a great time, Baz brought the big-picture creative direction, and I took that framework and developed the lighting approach and show flow to match the energy of the music." Jenkins welcomed a fresh take and new perspective on songs the band has been performing for years. "The goal was to build something that felt bold and cinematic with the size of the back screen, but still has that live, spontaneous Maroon 5 feel."



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Jenkins had about 11 days of previsualization time before rehearsals kicked off. The setlist was roughly 75% worked out from earlier sessions. "Once rehearsals got going, we fine-tuned transitions and dialed in the pacing," he says. "By the time we hit the road, it was locked in. The setlist stays consistent most nights—we might make a few musical tweaks or adjust transitions, but, overall, it's a tight, consistent show. Now and then, I'll touch something up on the road if a new cue or moment needs a little polish, but nothing major." Out of 25 songs, about 20 are time-coded. The other five are looser: "The band likes to stretch and feel those moments out, so we run them manually. It keeps the show from feeling overly mechanical. We're running grandMA3 hardware on the latest MA3 software. A few nerd stats: We're hovering around 4,900 cues, 1,230 recipes, and 53,140 timecode events."

Jenkins notes that the rig was built to be as adaptable as possible since the tour is hitting a few challenging venues. "We've got a 'B plan' that lets us shrink or reshape the screen setup when space is tight. Most days it's pretty straightforward: We'll do a focus check, knock out any notes from the previous night, and then grab a local coffee and get ready for doors. Each department has a lovely crew, so the days stay pretty smooth."

Providing support from Upstaging are John Huddleston and Dan Curley. "Two of the best in the business, along with a rock-star technical crew," Jenkins says. "Their prep and attention to detail make everything easier. They were able to supply almost everything we spec'd, and the few tweaks we made were really minor. We went through a few design iterations early on to balance creative vision, trucking, and availability, but it all landed in a great place. The collective years of experience at Upstaging really come into play when you need to find creative solutions." The lighting rig consists of 11 Robe Forte LTX Robospots for key light, high-sides, and backlight; four ACME Lighting SUPERNOVA moving heads for long-throw key lights; 13 ACME LYRA LED spot fixtures for band high-sides and backlight; 92 Robe MegaPointes for the main beam fixtures hung over the stage; 109 ACME PixelLines for overhead effects and texture; 24 TMB Solaris Flare LRs upstage on the floor, blasting through a curtain of High End Systems FQ-100 foggers; 18 Vari-Lite VL5 LEDs WASH units grouped in threes on custom TAIT structures; 104 CHAUVET Professional Strike M strobe/wash units placed around the stage and behind the upstage blow-through LED; 14 Elation PROTEUS MAXIMUS framing profile fixtures for upstage floor effects, 24 Astera AX2 Pixelbars for in-house and B-stage platform moments, 98 ACME TORNADOs lining the stage and runway on custom TAIT shelves, with two MDG The Ones, two Hazebase THE FABs, and four FQ-100 units for haze and atmosphere.

Gabriel Coutu-Dumont, video content producer

Coutu-Dumont notes that the tour's video content was created by his firm, Silent Partners Studio. "We had a strong direction coming from Baz early on, and we worked with him throughout pre-production and rehearsals to adapt the concepts to match the show's evolution. Most of the looks in this show were thought of and designed specifically for IMAG integration, so it was vital to work in layers and keep the concepts open until the crucial moment when staging, lighting, cameras, and content come together. It's always quite magical to see it coming together and how it evolves from the drawing board to the first show. We're using a curved wall with ROE Visual Vanish V8 upstage [a high-transparency video panel], and our floor is Yestech 3.9[mm pixel pitch], both provided by Fuse."

Manny Conde, video programmer

Conde notes that the tour requires three Disguise GX 3 media servers, all running Notch. "This show has a very heavy use of Notch and background removal, which these machines handle great. Everything is being controlled via a grandMA3, and the entire show is programmed, sock-puppet-style, to have maximum flexibility. We treat media servers not in the classic sense, and aside from simple content and Notch playback, we are working with a bit of my lighting programmer mindset, treating the box like a live effects engine and programming with musicality, similar to how we would approach using every tool that's inside of a light."

Conde says he really loves working with this team. "Gab [Coutu-Dumont] is one of the most creative individuals I've ever met, and he's constantly pushing me to find new ways to use the tools we have to help make the art come to life. Baz and the entire Silent House team embody that same passion, and it's great to be able to work with these folks."

Vince Casamatta, front-of-house engineer

Casamatta, who has been with Maroon 5 since 2018, is mixing the show on the DiGiCo Quantum SD5. "We have Clair Global as our audio provider and the PA system is an L-Acoustics package of K1/K2/K3, which we've had since I've been with the band. We're supported by Matt McQuaid who is our systems engineer, Ricky Garcia as our wireless coordinator and stage audio tech as well as our two fantastic PA techs Katherine Ruggiero and Colin Dodds."

According to systems engineer Matt McQuaid, the PA system consists of ten K1s plus eight K2s (per side) for the main hangs, six K1s plus twelve K2s (per side) for the side hangs, sixteen K3s (per side) for rear hangs, eight KS28 (per side) flown subs, six KS28 ground subs, and two A10 plus three A15 front fills.

Casamatta works straightforwardly, using some



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Universal Audio UAD plug-ins on groups, but mostly relying on onboard dynamics. The only outboard rack gear we have is a pair of [Bricasti Designs] M7s and a pair of [Rupert Neve Designs] 5045s. "If you're lucky enough to mix bands with hit songs, great musicianship, with great sounds, the best you can do is try and get out of the way and let it all happen."

He adds, "We consistently have one of the best groups of people in this industry out on the road in all roles of production to make this show happen. I'm grateful for the opportunity to be a part of a team that is so competent and supportive. We pull off a top-quality show together with a smaller crew than just about anyone I know. Everyone understands the objective and works together to get there every night without breaking a sweat."

Dave Rupsch, monitor engineer for Adam Levine

Rupsch has been with the band for the last four-and-a-half years. Currently, he is using the DiGiCo Q326, noting that since there are two monitor engineers, it's nice to have a smaller surface with all the horsepower of its larger [Q338] counterpart. "The only outboard equipment I use is a Neve 5045 to reduce background snapback when Adam is

singing on the thrust. There were a few technical aspects to sort out in rehearsals regarding the length of the thrust and Adam singing in front of the PA. The Neve 5045 does a good job of reducing background sound, but you have to be gentle in its use in Adam's IEM mix. His voice has a lot of delicate nuances throughout the show, and if not used properly, the 5045 can stifle those subtleties."

Rupsch has never used much outboard gear, preferring to keep as many things in the box as possible. "The primary reason is my own peace of mind, of having fewer things in line as points of failure. Previously, I had equipment damaged or lost in our extensive travel schedule. When this happens, I can pretty much get any version of a DiGiCo, convert a file, and be ready to deliver the same show, more or less. The Quantum updates to the DiGiCo over the last few years have been really great by adding additional compression modes, nodal aux-sends, and parallel Mustard channel processing. For instance, one utility I have found useful in monitors is the tube/distortion modes on the channel strips. Specifically, using this feature on hi-hats. This input can be very dynamic, and by adding saturation/distortion, you can reduce its dynamic range and therefore park it in a very consistent auditory space in the ear mix. It's very helpful for your band to have a happy

place to meter its tempo, especially for those who don't want to hear a click track!"

When Rupsch started with the band, its members were using a Shure SM58 wireless vocal mic. About two years ago, they switched to Shure KSM11s. "I feel it's been a better fit for Adam's voice. In the in-ears, it is very clear and present, and considering the top-end clarity, its pattern does a good job of off-axis rejection bleed."

The most exciting technology for Rupsch on this tour has been their use of the new Sennheiser Specter wireless in-ear system. "We have been using it for two weeks now, and I am really blown away by this advancement in wireless in-ear technology. The packs are also transmitters for instruments/mics as well. The sound quality is spectacular, with zero noise floor, and we have a completely digital signal flow. I output from my console to the Spectera via local MADI lines. The Spectera is a single unit, and we are running eight stereo mixes. Our antenna system has four antennas, and the coverage is unbelievable. The placement is stage left, stage right, upstage/backstage pre-show area, and thrust. It's absolute clarity everywhere you would need to hear the pack and beyond. It broadcasts via WMAS, and setup couldn't be easier. We plug in



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TOUR TALK

antennas, scan, select a DTV channel to park on, and turn on the packs. That's it."

Raymond Jeffrey, band monitor engineer

"I started with the band on their Las Vegas residency in March of this year," Jeffrey says. He is currently mixing on the DiGiCo Q5. "The Q5 has been my go-to desk for the last five or so years. I love the surface and DiGiCo infrastructure, but I have never been the biggest fan of their effects. I use Waves SuperRack for all my reverbs and delays. It might just be my familiarity with Waves plug-ins, but I prefer them over the console's effects. I'm using the [Rupert Neve] 5045 for Adam's vocal. I also then use a 5045 to take care of any bleed from the PA when Adam is on the thrust. We are currently using Sennheiser Spectera for IEM on this run. I'm very impressed with the tech, but most importantly, love the sound!"

The *Love is Like Tour* ends on November 26 in Detroit. 📶

Maroon Five: *Love is Like Tour*

Production Crew:

Tour Producer/Director: Baz Halpin (Silent House)

Associate Director: Lihi Catriel (Silent House)

Associate Lighting Designer/Director: Brian Jenkins (Flicker Designs)

Video Content Producer: Gabriel Coutu-Dumont (Silent Partner Studios)

Video Programmer: Manny Conde

Video Director: Steve Fatone

FOH Engineer: Vince Casamatta

Monitor Engineer (Adam Levine): Dave Rupsch

Monitor Engineer (Band): Raymond Jeffrey

Production Manager: Alan Hornall

Tour Manager: Fred Kharrazi

Production Companies:

Lighting/Production Design: Silent House Group

Lighting: Upstaging

Video: Fuse TG

Staging: TAIT

Audio: Clair Bros