

Lighting & Sound America

\$10.00



P!NK

The TRUSTFALL Tour

ALSO

Opera:
*The Diving Bell
and the Butterfly*

Architecture:
Chicago's Salt Shed

Audio:
Minnesota Zoo's
Treetop Trail

Richard Pilbrow
Remembered







Opposite: "Aerialist work is specialized and must conform to the artist's needs to ensure the best performance and safety," Richards says. "Our vendors and riggers work together to solve issues and deliver our work at the highest level. It's a great pairing of experience and problem-solving." Above: The upstage video wall consists of 9mm SACO product with imagery driven by disguise gx 3 media servers.

TRUST EXERCISES

An experienced team creates and runs the circus of P!nk's
TRUSTFALL Tour

Photos and Text by Steve Jennings

We caught P!nk's *TRUSTFALL Tour* as it transitioned from stadiums to arenas. The singer-songwriter is flying high, having recently released the lead single "Never Gonna Not Dance Again" from *TRUSTFALL*, her ninth studio album, which debuted

at number one in the UK and Australia and at number two in the US. She flies high onstage then covers the entire arena and dazzles the audience. Each show combines superb singing, musicianship, audio, and production values.



"We never rehash old ideas," Halpin says. "We know there are going to be certain elements that are staples of a P!nk performance. There will be acrobatics and theatrics but also a core rooted in the fact she is an amazing vocalist with a killer band. We want to present her in a way that embraces all of the facets of a P!nk show."

Baz Halpin, show producer, director, and designer

Halpin and P!nk go back 20 years. As the current tour's show producer, director, and designer, Halpin says they certainly share a shorthand but "we never rehash old ideas. We know there are going to be certain elements that are staples of a P!nk performance. There will be acrobatics and theatrics but also a core rooted in the fact she is an amazing vocalist with a killer band. We want to present her in a way that embraces all of the facets of a P!nk show." He usually starts with a wide-ranging conversation, taking inspiration from images, magazines, coffee table books, and shows. "Alecia [the star's first name] likes to keep not only an edge but a sense of humor about her shows so we try to marry the two into the stage presentation," he adds.

Vincent Richards' role as design producer is invaluable, Halpin notes, as each tour's production elements have become more intricate and challenging. "Having a design producer who sits between production management and the vendors helps to ensure that nothing falls through the cracks while the design process goes through its traditional

development and evolution. We want to start establishing the viability of ideas even before they get to the design phase. By integrating the design producer into the process, we increase our chances of success. Most people involved in the creative execution of a project, regardless of the role, have some form of creativity and often you find the best ideas in unlikely places. As such, the design producer oftentimes has the opportunity when it arises to flex those creative muscles in the development of concepts."

Halpin says he's fortunate to have a longstanding team on hand. "[Lighting director] Steve 'Six' Schwind and I have worked together since 2003 on a variety of tours, so we have a shorthand that makes that end of things very smooth and comfortable." Halpin and programmer Dan Norman have worked several times together on other projects but this is the first outing for P!nk. "Dan brought a great perspective, being a designer in his own right, and the end result was a big, high-energy production that the artist was very proud of.

"With huge tours like this and deadlines to meet, diamonds are certainly formed under pressure and there is no substitute for positive pressure. The team you build around

you dictates success or failure. We at Silent House [Halpin's firm] have been successful on the backs of the teams we have built and the long-term relationships we have fostered over the decades. There are few certainties in this industry, but you can be sure that things will break, things will go wrong, and minds will be changed. How you react as a team to those things will dictate your success."

For the arena leg, the truss consists of 88 Robe BMFL WashBeams between the six fingers and two downstage trusses, with four [Robe] RoboSpots on side trusses, Halpin notes. "Then 132 [TMB] Solaris Flare Q+LRs and 23 [Robe] Robin MegaPointes in the upstage arches, which were built by Aaron Ford and his team at DAS DesignWorks; linear strips of RGBW tape are used to illuminate them internally. We have some [Robe] iFortes with the position TBD every day for front fill, [Chroma-Q] Color Force 48s and 72s, some [Robe] Spiiders, and we added 75 ACME Pixel Line 1000s over the arches of the stage." The up-center video wall is a 9mm SACO product, 50' x 28', with a 1,632-by-912-pixel count. The 270° view side screens consist of SACO 9mm product, 13' by 8' with a 432-by-240-pixel count. The media servers are disguise GX 3s. "Along with the live show feed, the show consists of video content and Notch effects created by Gabriel Coutu-Dumont and his team at Silent Partners," Halpin adds.

Halpin notes that Solotech has been the vendor of choice for P!nk for many years and this time around the company has again supplied lighting and video elements. "Mickey Curbishley and his team alongside Lee Moro and John Flynn continuously prove themselves to be great partners and resourceful collaborators," he says. "It's always a pleasure to work with them again."

Vincent Richards, design producer

Richards facilitated sourcing, coordinating, budgeting, and designing of various elements. "My job exists at the intersection of production management, designers, and artists," he says. "I have been working with the P!nk camp for years and, as shows have become more extensive and complex, my role evolved from art director to producer as I was able to assist in more aspects of the production." As Halpin's associate, his role is dynamic, subject to changes in scope and pace. "Sometimes my tasks are assigned and other times I create the timelines and deliverables based on the needs of the production to allow Baz to focus on different aspects." He also has creative license to design and work with vendors on specific tour elements.

Richards says the process on this tour began remotely, with sketches and 3D models. "We typically work in 3D to vet processes, process sightlines, and develop what the show feels like from the audience's perspective. Most of the work is online, but mockups are critical in P!nk's shows, especially with aerial props. Aerialist work is specialized and must conform to the artist's needs to ensure

the best performance and safety. Our vendors and riggers work together to solve issues and deliver our work at the highest level. It's a great pairing of experience and problem-solving."

A notable challenge arose when the team needed to pivot a set piece to include more trampoline artists and two (rather than one) trampolines late in the design process. "Being 15' tall and over 30' wide, this large acrobatic set piece is logistically challenging and complicated to take apart every night," Richards says. "It all got more complicated when the trampoline act was to appear on an awards show weeks before the tour. It took a lot of back and forth but, eventually, it came together, the custom metal fabrication shop AMC [located in Las Vegas] created the set unit in time for the American Music Awards, after which it was packed up and put right into the show. I feel lucky to work at an exciting place like Silent House that brings something new and unique daily. With no two shows ever being the same, I'm surrounded by experienced and talented collaborators who help us excel in any situation."

Steve "Six" Schwind, lighting director

"P!nk is definitely a tour we all look forward to going back out with," Schwind says. This is his fourth run with the star. "Other than her set list having some of the same big songs the fans want to hear every tour, that's about the only thing that is the same. The production, of course, has grown over the years. But the final product is always a mind-blowing, sensory overload of a show. Working with her for as long as I have definitely helps. You know what she wants, how she wants it, and, how to get it done most efficiently."

"Working with lighting programmer Dan Norman is always great. He's an amazing programmer and a wonderful human being," Schwind adds. "He has an amazing eye for what should go where and when. We're all going to be seeing lots of amazing things coming from him in the future. Like all productions, we were given 'X' amount of time for previz, but things happen. We went straight to programming on the actual rig itself. We had an amazing place—Production Park in the UK. The staff and venue were amazing at helping us get it to where it is today. Dan and I decided to make the [MA Lighting] grandMA3 console leap on this one. Eric Christian, another programmer from New York, was very helpful in getting our heads around version three. Along with all the support we received from ACT [Entertainment, MA Lighting's North American distributor], we had around 36 hours to turn the stadium rig into the arena rig it is now." Schwind adds that this quick turnaround was possible only because of the support and talent at their disposal. "Malcolm Weldon [production manager], Baz, and Vincent all set out a plan and made it work for this tour. Then we had Joe Bay, who flew in to help with some programming changes. It's all worked out very well."

"The tour began with much of the show time-coded, though arrangements change, so I either re-stamp it or just run it manually," he says, adding, "As arrangements change, set lists change, etc., it really affects things to then update. If you have the time, which most days you don't, you stripe it or just run it if you can! There are whole chunks of songs that aren't on time code. That allows P!nk and the band to do whatever they'd like at the moment." Because P!nk is so spontaneous, Schwind doesn't always know what is coming next; also, the aerial aspect can be challenging. "We had 18 spots on the stadium run, and we're down to eight in the arenas. Spots indoors for her are always a challenge, as most of the action in arenas is at one end. No venue was ever designed to have an artist flying around it but, thankfully, we've been in most of these arenas before, so we kind of know what we're dealing with. Production is already aware of what it's gonna take, like breaking off two spot ops to run to the other end of the arena catwalk and get on two different spots that can hit her while she's flying around the venue!"

Schwind adds, "With so many tours out—I mean, everyone was out!—new or old gear in the quantity we needed was a challenge to find. One fixture we did add to the arena leg was 75 Acme PIXEL LINE 1000s. Everything else was tried and trusted gear: [Robe] BMFL WashBeams, [Robe] MegaPointes, and [TMB Solaris] Flare LR. A wonderful combination if I do say so myself."

Stephen Curtin, front-of-house engineer

Curtin mixes the tour on a DiGiCo Quantum 7. "I've been a fan a very long time and, with the new Quantum features, it just seemed like the right move. Inputs-wise, we are a bit over 100 with everything." Outputs at the front of house are pretty standard: L/R, sub, fill, delays, records L/R, and a house feed, he notes.

Curtin and systems engineer Arno Voortman have worked together since 2012-13, first on *The Mrs. Carter Tour* with Beyoncé. "We did several of her tours over the next few years as well as others like Eminem, Jennifer Lopez, and Arcade Fire. Arno and I work really well together. We are both after the same results and usually agree on how to get there as well as what we can do to make it better in the future."

Curtin has worked for Eighth Day Sound for 23 years, shortly after graduating from Full Sail University, and has stuck with the company ever since. He says Eighth Day has always tried to be on the front lines of innovation with the systems it deploys. "They also lead the industry with a diverse workforce both in the shop and on tour," he adds. This is the first year that P!nk started an association with the audio company, having worked in recent years with Britannia Row. "This tour is a bit of a collaboration of the companies that all find themselves under the Clair Global umbrella," he adds.



For the PA system, Curtin is using a mix of d&b audiotechnik SL-Series boxes. "We have more or less always used d&b in the past, mostly the J-Series. This tour is 24-deep KSL in the mains and 24-deep GSL on the side hangs. The 270 changes from V-Series [12] to KSL [8] depending on the venue. The sub package consists of two- to 14-deep J-SUB hangs and, on the ground, we have sixteen B22 subs in arenas and 24 SL-SUBs for the stadiums. Front fills are Y10Ps; there are 14. We additionally have delays for stadiums that are either three or four towers each, consisting of 12 KSLs. We wanted to have packaging familiar to the PA techs on the tour as well as something flexible enough to transition between stadiums and arenas



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without physically rebuilding anything. What makes d&b special is every flown box in our system is amplified by D80 amps using d&b's ArrayProcessing. In my opinion, this gives us the best coverage and consistency day to day."

Curtin, for the most part, likes to keep things fairly simple, uses onboard EQ and dynamics except for a Sonic Farm Creamliner on the stereo buss and two SSL Fusions on a couple of instrument busses. "Effects-wise, I have been using a software called Live Professor 2. It's a live plug-in host that allows me to use pretty much any plug-in I want. At the moment, I am only using it for effects; however, it is

capable of handling any dynamic needs as well. A couple of my favorite plug-ins are the SSL X-Delay, Eventide UltraReverb, SSL FlexVerb, and the Soundtoys Effect Rack."

Curtin says that, overall, the tour has been a great collaboration with Jon Lewis and Horst Hartmann at monitors. "We seem to have found a bit of a groove that is working for everyone. We of course are supported by a great team of techs, including Arno Voortman, Jack Murphy, Guillaume Burguez, Sarah Blakey, Jon Reynolds, Malcolm Secright, Ali Alvarez, and Jess Scott." A show like this does not happen without a seamless relationship

between sound and wardrobe, he notes. “Our wardrobe department is an integral part of integrating IEM packs and headset packs into the wardrobe, so it is fast and functional for us and the artist. We always consider them to be an extension of the audio crew. Laura Spratt, Sophie Beasse, Michael Velasquez, and Holly Day deserve a shout-out.”

Jon Lewis, P!nk monitor engineer

Lewis, who has been mixing P!nk’s monitors for ten years, is currently on the DiGiCo SD7 Quantum. “The flexibility of the layout and the processing allows me to have the confidence to do anything that I ask of it,” he says. The stage mix is a hybrid of wedges and IEMs for P!nk. For most of the show, she uses just a single ear and wedges but, during the acrobatic element, we revert to a double-ear setup. The SD7 allows me to have a layout, making it easy to switch between the two.”

He adds, “Every tour has very different technical acrobatic elements; what is needed is different, depending on the location on the stage and the height of the location whether in a stadium or arena. Since moving to larger stadiums, we have tried to make the RF system more robust as the area to be covered has increased considerably.”

P!nk’s handheld mic is a Sennheiser 6000 with a 9235 capsule. Her headset, used when she flies, is a custom product. “It was developed over the last ten years with Sennheiser,” Lewis says. “It’s integrated into the in-ear, which means it stays in position even when the performer is upside down spinning through the air. It is also removable from the in-ear mold so it can be fitted and unfitted quickly during a costume change. This has evolved over the last ten years.” All RF mics are taken over a Dante network, a new addition for this tour.

P!nk: The Trustfall Tour

Production Crew:

Show Producer, Director, Designer: Baz Halpin

Design Producer: Vincent Richards

Lighting Programmer: Dan Norman

Lighting Director: Steve “Six” Schwind

Lighting Crew Chief: Matt Lavalley

Video Programmer: Manny Conde

FOH Engineer: Stephen Curtin

Systems Engineer: Arno Voortman

Monitor Engineers: Jon Lewis (P!nk), Horst Hartmann (Band)

Audio Crew Chief: Guillaume Burquez

Tour Manager: Bill Buntain

Production Manager: Malcolm Weldon

Video Director: Nicholas Weldon

Video Crew Chief: Paul Tikalsky

Production Companies:

Lighting/Video: Solotech

Sound Company: Eighth Day Sound/Brit Row/Clair Global

Staging/Set: TAIT, AMC, DAS DesignWorks

FX/Pyro: Pyrotek

Lewis uses a Wisycom system for the in-ears with a master-slave setup for antennas. “One set is onstage and another at FOH, allowing full coverage of the venue. For the microphone, we use a zoned receiver system, which allows us to focus/zone antennas depending on where the performance is taking place. The wedges are a mix of Clair CM22s under grills in the stage, L-Acoustic X15s around the stage, and flown side fills of L-Acoustic Kara 2s. We also have a rear stereo Kara system for the trampoline section.”

Lewis generally relies on onboard effects for instrumentation. “Externally, I use a Bricasti M7 for vocal reverbs and a Neve 5045 PSE for some of the headset setups, which helps with the background noise from the PA during some of the flying and acrobatic sections of the show. I also use a Drawmer 1973 across the ear mixes. I’m a massive fan of this unit as it smooths out the mix but also allows you to be creative when needed. With such a complex, fast-paced show, it’s important to have a well-drilled and technically proficient team, which we do. Jack Murphy [audio valet] takes care of all of the artist’s quick changes and needs throughout the show, as well as Sarah Blakey [RF co-ordination] and Ali Alvarez, our great stage tech.”

Horst Hartmann, band monitor engineer

Hartmann mixes monitors for all backing band members using a Yamaha RIVAGE PM10. This time around, he took a DSP-RX-ES unit with 288 inputs because the 144-input version was not enough, he says. “Because I now use external plug-ins as well as the effects units, I needed 20 more inputs. We also have more channels on drums, more tracks, spare channels, and talkback mics. Overall, it might be around 160 channels. Output-wise, I have around 70 analog and digital. That includes IEMs for band, guests, and crew; butt kickers for the bass player and both keyboard players; subs for the drummer; and my local speakers and IEMs.”

All eight band and five crew members are on Sennheiser 2000 Series IEMs. There are two guest mixes and two spare IEMs as well. “That makes ten stereo mixes and seven stereo matrixes in total. Brian, the drummer, mainly uses a stereo hard-wired connection to his little mixer plus a mono feed for the click, so he can easily change the level he listens to on a Sennheiser HD 25 headphone. All band and crew members are listening to JH Audio Roxanne custom in-ears. All backline techs are on matrixes; they get the mix of their musicians plus a comm-mix with all the talkback mics. There are three stereo mixes ready for any substitute musicians we might need—we have a second drummer, keyboard player, and guitar player in case that the main musicians get COVID. They all rehearsed the songs, have their own in-ear mixes, and can fill in at any time if needed. Then we have another four mono mixes for the low end. Eva, the bass player, has four butt kickers underneath the stage; the keyboard players, Jason and Adriana, have two each under their riser;



Speaking of the d&b audiotechnik speaker rig, Curtin says, "We wanted to have packaging familiar to the PA techs on the tour as well as something flexible enough to transition between stadiums and arenas without physically rebuilding anything. What makes d&b special is every flown box in our system is amplified by D80 amps using d&b's ArrayProcessing. In my opinion, this gives us the best coverage and consistency day to day."

and Brian has two Clair CP-118 subs behind him."

In the past, Hartmann used onboard plug-ins and effects only because it wasn't easy to add external plug-ins to a Yamaha console with low latency but, on this tour, he's using a system similar to Curtin's at the front of house: an Intel NUK PC (he has a Mac mini) with a UAD Satellite-2 and a RME Digiface Dante, which is connected to a HY144-D Dante card in his DSP unit. He also uses Live Professor II as host software.

"For every vocal mic channel, I have an onboard U76 plug-in, which is the Yamaha version of a Urei 1176LN compressor, then a 5045 Primary Source Enhancer on insert A and an external Aphex Aural Exciter plug-in from Waves on insert B just in case. Every vocalist gets their own onboard reverb, either a REV-X hall type or a Bricasti M7 Vocal Plate. On all drum toms, I have an external UAD

SPL Transient Designer plug-in. To reduce noise on overheads, I insert the DaNSe onboard plug-in. The drum kit has three snares and, for it, I'm using the external UAD effects AMS RMX 16 and EMT 250 and Lexicon 480 in different configurations, depending on the song. Every musician's stereo in-ear mix has an onboard Portico II Master Buss Processor inserted."

For virtual soundchecks, Hartmann has another PC with a Yamaha 128-channel Accelerator PCIe Dante card for recording. With Nuendo Live 3 installed, he can control it very easily from the console. "This is the first time my console is on time code, and I love it. I found a way to control the console via TeamViewer from the hotel room. The future is wide open!"

The *TRUSTFALL Tour*, which began in October, is currently set to run through November 2, 2024. 🎵