

Far

too often we think about concerts in terms of the big arena rock show experience and seldom focus on the intimate magic of a concert in a theatre. Granted a theatre production lacks the shock and awe effect of a 20 truck tour. But in many cases the trade of bigger bang for personal proximity can be a well balanced exchange of value.

mPm caught up with John Legend in Atlanta and got a look at one of the most soulful shows on the road in the fantastic surroundings of the Fox Theatre. Of course this setting comes with a logistical cost that is incumbent to older theatres. By its very nature (with extremely rare exceptions) a theatre is going to be in a busy part of a city. This means badly limited parking for trucks and busses and severely cramped quarters for load access.

Once in the building, the rule that says nature abhors a void, comes into play as every square and even cubic inch of available space is filled with gear and cases. The slightest bit of friction can turn this experience into something much akin to a knife fight in a phone booth.

Given that John Legend's career has just left the launch pad on the way to great things, the biggest challenge is budget - crowded busses, minimal truck space and minimal crew allocation. All of these issues boldly punctuate the phrase, "attitude is everything."

Sound Image crew chief, Gary Sanguinet explained, "Touring with this show is a little more difficult because it's not like this production has a huge budget yet. So the busses are a little more crowded than on most tours, and we have long drives and frequent 'three-in-a-rows.'" But he added, "Everyone on this tour is professional enough to understand that, and they bend over backward to make it work because we see that this thing is going somewhere and we want to be there when it arrives."

Another challenge of a theatre show is sound quality. Theatres, especially old theatres, have very specific acoustic properties built into them and no two are the same. Production Manager and FOH Engineer, Gordon Mack clarified the inherent acoustical challenges of mixing this in this setting, **"You never know where you're going to be setting up on a tour like this. There are overhangs - sometimes you're up against a wall and under an overhang. There are all kinds of deciding factors."**

The challenge was well mounted with sensational results the night we caught the show. It simply sounded great no matter where one stood in the room. That was good news for Adamson Pro Audio as well as Sound Image given that this was Sound Image's maiden voyage with its new Adamson gear.



Performers:

Music Director / Keyboards: Eugene 'Manman' Roberts
Guitar: Sharief Hobley
Bass Guitar: Kenneth Wright
Drums: Rashid Williams
Saxophone: Allen 'Bizkit' Arthur
Trumpet: Clayton Reilly
Trombone: Stephen Tirpak
Backing Vocals: Vaughn Stephens, Jessica Wilson, Ashley Simpson

JOHN LEGEND



Beautifully Done

VENDORS



System Tech Jonathan Ostrin explained, "There are a lot of reasons that this is a very important tour for us. John [Legend] is on the cusp of really breaking through, and we want to be a part of it. So no matter what you're doing out here it's all about the first impression. There is also the matter of our new association with Adamson. We really want all of this to work out."

Ostrin went on to say, "Neither John or management have been half as critical of us as we are."

Video played a huge part of this show. The system was a completely new LED display called WinVision, which was put forth by VER (Video Equipment Rental).

WinVision is a 1.4 mil product that looks like something with a much tighter resolution. And while we call it new, we must qualify that statement by saying that it is new to the road with the John Legend tour being its first foray into the world of concert touring. However, it has shown up in other production formats.

In addition to its vivid display, it is incredibly light weight at ten pounds per panel, which makes it perfect for theatres where load bearing capacity from one room to the next can be separated by gaping disparity. Additionally, the light weight of the rig makes for remarkably quick and easy set up and strike. "More often than not we get the

wall up before everyone else and we only need a couple hands to make it happen," said Video Led Tech, Karl Hansen.

Through a combination of structural design and sleek cable management, this system is highly durable. On one occasion the sprinkler system went off early in the day drenching the wall (along with everything else on stage), and the system worked fine for the show that night.

The frame work of the system is so clean that it is secondarily useful as a set element. The video portion of the show was run through the lighting console via media server. Lighting Director, Nick Van Nostrand was careful not to use it strictly as a source of video content, but opting at various times throughout the show to use it as texture upon which to throw light from several different angles. This worked beautifully in contrast to what he was doing on the upstage cyc. The show was lit with a beautiful color pallet.

John Legend put on a great show. But as we all know, without production he's just a guy playing quietly in the dark. Given the constraints that can bedevil a fledgling act, this production team showed up to play. The show had the sound and look of something much bigger than it was.

Gordon Mack put it in a nut shell, "It's impossible to adequately explain how proud I am of this crew. I give them the info they need and no matter what the challenges are, I don't have to worry about it."

Just think of what they'll do in arenas.



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