

Fall Out Boy

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Since the mid 2000's, Fall Out Boy have been one of the most well-known names to have emerged from the American mainstream pop punk explosion. After a brief hiatus – before returning in 2013 with comeback album, *Save Rock and Roll* – the band continues to go from strength to strength and is supporting their latest release *American Beauty / American Psycho* with a tour of the same name. TPi was at Manchester Arena to see how this live show translates on the other side of the Atlantic.

Throughout their career, Fall Out Boy – despite their name – has had a fairly good level of crew retention, many touring with the band for several years. When TPi went backstage at Manchester Arena, one thing that was striking was the level of calm in Production Manager Chad Olech's command centre.

Although this may have been down to the fact that the crew had just had a day off, the positive attitude of Fall Out Boy's crew is possible thanks to Olech's work ethos. "For me, the biggest thing is for people to get along," he explained. "This whole experience should be fun. This is not an office job where life has to suck. Life out here is very good. We get treated well, we get to see the world and get paid for it. Most people that we have out here share that mentality. I find that with a lot of tours misery starts at the top. If the band are miserable then it trickles all the way down, but we are really lucky that our band is very easygoing with everything."

Olech, who hails from Boston in the US, came into the Production Manager role thanks to Fall Out Boy's Show and Lighting Designer, Robb Jibson, as they had already worked together for American metal band Deftones [covered in TPi's March 2013 issue]. Despite Olech working with similar bands throughout his career he has also had a fair amount of experience in the pop world, working with acts including Demi Lovato and Robin Thicke. He stated: "With Fall Out Boy's recent transition into a more pop world, I think that might have helped me get this job."

PRE-PRODUCTION

For this UK run of the *American Beauty / American Psycho* tour, the crew had very little pre-production time. Olech explained: "We usually do somewhere between three days to a couple of weeks but because this was an exact replication of the last US tour that finished four weeks earlier, so we had almost the exact same crew who knew how it all went together. For prep we had two days at Millennium Studios."

Millennium Studios Operations Manager, Nina Mallivoire, commented: "We were able to step in at the last minute and help Fall Out Boy with the technical rehearsal space they needed. They chose to use the A Stage at Millennium, which could fit their arena package in. When bands from outside of the UK visit us, we offer a full package. In this instance we sourced four riggers and 20 Stage Miracles crew as well as a fork lift operator and runner to complete the set up."

To recreate the exact US show, the Fall Out Boy camp had to transport a lot of equipment from overseas. Olech described how they were able to recreate a massive arena show on a different continent. "We sent three shipping containers and air freighted our backline gear over. We tend to air freight backline because we end up having shows too close either side of the trip."

Some of the shipping was also necessary as their UK lighting vendor Neg Earth did not supply all the pieces necessary to recreate the lighting rig the crew had toured with in the US, where the team used Neg's US partner, Upstaging. For this tour, Olech filled five trucks to the brim courtesy of Fly By Nite. "We have had no issues at all, I never even think about changing vendors," he said. "I won't change vendors until they give me a reason to change. Either price or personnel." Long-term tour bus supplier to Fall Out Boy, Beat The Street, provided tour buses for the band and crew and Rock-It

Cargo was entrusted with freight duties, managed by Los Angeles-based Joseph Pacheco. Pacheco spoke of his involvement with the tour: "I've worked with Fall Out Boy in the early-2000's and have known Chad since I first started working with Rock-It about 15 years ago. He's extremely good at providing me with a schedule in advance and then communicating possible tight moves." Pacheco continued, stating: "I am responsible for shipping Fall Out Boy's gear from the US to Europe and back. We also provided the ATA Carnets as well as planning and consulting on the best and most cost-effective way to ship their gear."



DUAL ROLE

Somewhat unusual for an arena-size tour is that Olech has two roles: he is also the FOH Engineer. "Part of the reason this is even possible is that this band make it so easy; I'm not running around trying to do lots of different things that really someone else could be taking care of. I also have a great Production Assistant in Tessa Greiman who takes care of a lot of day-to-day stuff so I have a clear schedule to run the technical side of the show." Greiman found her way into the Fall Out Boy family via Kris Martinez, a former crew member. After a phone call in March from Tour Manager Josh Scott, she hit the road the very next day, spending the rest of 2015 on a bus. "Anything non-technical – that's me. My mornings usually consist of setting up the office space and crew radios, Wi-Fi, as well as the band's dressing rooms." Despite being fairly new to the Fall Out Boy camp, Greiman is very optimistic about her potential longevity in the team for which she handles the daily schedule. She also maintains the band's wardrobe and assists with any special requests. "Coming in to this tour, everyone is so genuine. They're very professional but very laid back in the way they approach things. It's a very comfortable production to be involved with. For years I aspired to be out on tour, I just love it. I can't imagine moving on from this band because the crew, the band

and their label and management are all wonderful to work with," said Greiman.

AUDIO

Despite Fall Out Boy dipping a toe into the pop realm with their recent releases, Olech explained the band still demands a full rock mix. "It's a little on the pop side as the vocals sit just on top but the guys were keen to still have big drums and a lot of air movement. The mix is not as slick or glossy as the albums and that is by design."

For the line array, Olech chose sound supplier Clair's I-3 configured with a main hang of 20 boxes per side, 16 boxes per side for the side hang and eight CP 218 subwoofers per side. "Clair Brothers has been my vendor of choice for over 10 years and it has been Fall Out Boy's vendor since they were a professional touring band," stated Olech. When discussing why chose this particular PA, he explained: "I like the sound of the I-3 a little more over the I-5 box. Last summer we did use the I-5 but the I-3 is smaller and weighs less so it goes up and down quicker and packs into the truck easier." He went on to say that Clair has a new box out called the Cohesion 12 that he is particularly keen to use. Olech will tour that system on the US winter tour.

System Engineer and Crew Chief Jerrell Evans gave his take on the audio package: "We were concerned at the beginning of the tour about whether the I-3 boxes would reach the back of an arena because it is such a wide dispersion, but so far we have had no issues reaching the farthest seat in the highest balcony!"

Olech also pointed out that tech support on the Clair front had been great. "With offices in the UK, Switzerland and three in the US, we are never too far away from any one of their shops." As well as Evans, there are three representatives from Clair Brothers out on the road including; Monitor Engineer Kevin Dennis, PA Tech Brian Slevin, and Monitor Tech Chris Trimby.

The mixing desks for the tour are both DiGiCo. Olech furthered: "I'm using a DiGiCo SD7 for FOH and Kevin Dennis, our Monitor Engineer, is using a DiGiCo SD10. I moved over to DiGiCo about a year ago because it sounds amazing and it's easy to work with. DiGiCo have been very helpful during the time I've used them too. Anytime I have had a question, I can call or email and get an answer really quickly."

Dennis also spoke highly of the brand: "The tech support is so good for DiGiCo products. And of course, it sounds great. I can be anywhere in the world, phone them up and I know I'm going to get somebody who is going to talk me through any questions. They have actually been better than any other console company I have worked with. You need that when working in live environment."

On the mixes he's generating, Dennis said: "There are four people on stage and they all have their own independent mixes, which are duplicated for their techs as well as talk-back radios mixed in." Dennis went on to say how this really cuts down the need to run around the stage and means if he hears something strange he can let one of the techs know. "Both myself and Chad are sharing a rack," Dennis stated. "I have full control of the gains and then Chad has control of the trims to get it where he needs it to be. For in-ears we are using the Shure PSM 1000's, no wedges on stage." Dennis explained how he tried to give the bandmembers each a full mix: "For the lead singer and rhythm guitarist, Patrick, I make his sound full by splitting his guitar channel into two and panning it."

For microphones, Fall Out Boy are endorsed by Shure – the only brand of mics that were used on stage. "For vocals we are using the Shure ULX-D," Olech stated. "I have pretty much used Shure products my entire career. They are one of the few companies that I feel I can take their product and use it across the whole stage. It's all stock stuff which is nice because if something breaks I can find it in any local music store. The fanciest thing we use is the 3:13 ribbon mic on the guitars. It's a really good sounding mic and we are really happy with it."

AN INTEGRATED VISION

Fall Out Boy's Lighting and Show Designer, Robb Jibson, has been working on the tour since 2013. He explained: "We grew it from Academy-sized venues up to where we are now. Every iteration has had a different theme and we are doing lots of big video content now."

A large LED screen at the front of the stage served as a backdrop for the support acts, and later as a focal point for the headline set. While it is being flown, the screen serves as a substitute for the side IMAG screens that would be expected in a venue such as Manchester Arena, which has a 20,000 capacity.

Jibson continued: "The guys really like to make an entrance and, whether it's a kabuki drop or a centre lift, they don't like to be seen coming on stage. With this we do a reveal gag where the screen

goes up, but halfway through the set we will close that back down while the band goes to the B Stage.”

This break allows the crew to change the set behind the screen while the audience’s attention is diverted to the second stage, situated at FOH, where the band perform a mini acoustic set. As well as getting closer to the fans en route to the B Stage, the band like to keep the masses well-lit throughout the set. This includes a huge lighting package, even going as far as rigging fixtures on top of the flown PA stacks. Jibson explained: “We like to light the crowd evenly so the band can see them, and the perch of the PA stack is a great way to do that. People thought it was crazy and we had to spend some money on a custom bracket but it works really well. I try not to inhibit myself. In the UK and Europe, touring spotlights are quite common but that’s not the case in the US because most venues have them. Part of the intensity I like to deliver needed moving lights from FOH, and that also lets me light the back of the bowl from the delay position.” The lighting rig consisted of 33 Clay Paky Mythos in total (though three were modified with spotlight handles), 33 SGM Q7 strobes, 36 Ayrton Magic Panels, seven Ayrton Magic Ring R9s, and 12 Clay Paky A.leda B-EYE K20’s. Jibson provided his own Jands control package.

To ensure the show runs smoothly from start to finish, the lighting system is subjected to what Jibson called a “pretty hardcore” networking setup as the support acts each required different control systems. “Professor Green’s LD used Chamsys control, while Matt and Kim are controlled using an MA Lighting grandMA console, meaning three consoles had to be quickly switched throughout the night,” he said.

Jibson explained that he had experienced Neg Earth’s revolutionary method of networking consoles on festivals in the past and requested they employ the same tactic for the triple desk challenge of the Fall Out Boy tour. He added: “Neg Earth owns most of the kit we have but we had a bit of an availability issue. All the Magic Panel screens are from Upstaging but the rest of the fixtures, apart from the modified Mythos’, are Neg Earth’s.” Although Jibson had a prior relationship with Screenworks from a 2011 Incubus tour, it was the company’s innovative technology that brought it into the fold for Fall Out Boy in the UK. He commented: “We wanted to face the set with LED surface and the set company recommended Screenworks’ proprietary product. As soon as we saw it, we knew it would fit the purpose perfectly. The 7mm we have here looks amazing and it’s super-reliable.”

While still retaining the complete structural integrity of Jibson’s original design, All Access Staging & Productions was able to incorporate NEP-Screenworks’ Magnetic tile for the finished product, enabling a customised look for the live shows. This bespoke set was comprised of 10 individual pieces with the capability of being quickly locked and rolled into position, ideal for busy load in and load out schedules. Additionally, these video tiles travelled within the set pieces in order to ensure a swift and seamless set up could occur. This concept also saved valuable space when being transported from venue to venue.

BRIDGING THE GAP

One-time Fall Out Boy photographer Jack Edinger, who serves as Video Director on behalf of Screenworks, was keen to bring the crowd into the production as much as possible. He was given a great deal of creative freedom by the band and was trusted to keep the visual intensity of the set as high as possible.

He explained: “I hate it when everyone is stood watching the IMAG screens at the side so we decided to put the main video screen on the brow of the stage. This meant the people far away could still see but everyone else has to stand facing the band. During my photography background I used to live in the pit, so I felt that give and take between the fans and artists. A lot of directors just service the nosebleed seats but we wanted to present something more watchable beyond just close up shots of each band member.”

As well as more traditional manned cameras at FOH and at the side of the stage, Edinger made use of three GoPro cameras facing out into the crowd. These were positioned inside the kick drum and at the front of the stage to further incorporate audience shots and give dynamic angles. He also used small security cameras behind the drumkit and at FOH that lead into a Blackmagic ATEM2 switcher. Edinger added: “The whole show is almost like an EDM performance where the artists are part of a bigger interactive experience. The content is all integrated, and when we have chance to take over the whole screen it looks great. With a song like *The Kids Aren’t Alright*, which is nothing but live crowd shots, I think it really helps to bring back that dialogue between the band and their fans.”

SHOCK AND AWE

To accentuate the intensity of Fall Out Boy’s video and lighting show, Jibson also wanted to go full tilt with special effects. As a result, Chicago-based Strictly FX shipped the same arsenal that backed the band’s US tour over to Europe.

Edward Romack, Pyrotechnic Operator and Shooter headed up the special effects department on the road having been introduced to the band in the US, and was supported in the UK by Le Maitre’s Asher Heigham. Romack said: “The effects here in the UK are a translation from the last US run. This is mainly because the band are very comfortable with the effects in the show now, and they really like the looks we’ve created – especially for the opening and closing of the set. Special effects are like the cherry on top of the show design. Robb Jibson has designed a beautiful looking show, where everything just works seamlessly, so whatever we can do to accent the show for him is a pleasure; I love being a part of the shock and awe moments!”

The stage was set alight with 120 of Le Maitre’s 30ft Virtually Smokeless Red Comets. Other Le Maitre effects incorporated into the design included six Salamander Quad Pros, a flame unit that sees single flames reaching up to eight and a half metres high, and four Flash Reports. These are used to produce an audible bang, a white flash and a puff of smoke.

In addition to the pyrotechnics, the crew created a balloon gag with a difference. Shortly after the B Stage performance, a total of 30 three ft white balloons (with 17 inch-black balloons placed inside), each with a penny inserted for weight distribution, were thrown out from the FOH position on the arena floor. “That’s a really cool look in the show, the crowds really enjoy the interaction during that part,” explained Romack.

Though this gag did not necessarily reinvent the wheel, it did warrant a fair amount of trial and error when it came to deciding how to weigh the balloons down. Jibson explained: “My first thought was rubber bouncy balls, but then when the balloons pop they becomes a slip hazard. Jello or water was an idea but with everyone having expensive phones now, we thought a water gag was out. We came up with pennies – its just enough weight and when it breaks, you get a little memento!”

HEAVY LIFTING

With a production this size, some serious rigging was unsurprisingly on the cards. Steve Belfield, Head Rigger and Automation Operator, explained how the process had taken two hours at Manchester Arena using the house crew. He said: "I come out in the morning, mark out the stage and liaise with the house riggers. Once we've put all the points up and done the safety checks, then we can float the video trusses for the video crew. I then plug in and test the automation and load cell systems, as we are monitoring all the loads on the automation points."

Belfield chose a Kinesys automation system, building on the 11-year relationship he has already established with the company. Kinesys also manufactured the load cells that he used in Manchester, which were a sub-hire from Rigorous Technology, as all of Neg Earth's cells were busy on other projects.

He continued: "Once all that is good, I can hand the trusses back to the video guys and they fly them. I can then reference it all, check my top heights, set all my limits and run it up and down for the show. I supervise load-out and make sure everything is in the right place and everyone is safe."

Belfield used various CM-ET Lodestar products including seven 0.5 tonne, four one-tonne and four two-tonne chain hoists as well as nine 0.5 and six one-tonne Kinesys-adapted Liftket addling with 15 Elevation 1+ for control. He also used 30 Litec EXE chain hoists.

Belfield deployed house riggers; six up and three down for the load-in and eight up and four down on the load-out. Prior to starting the process, Belfield submitted the rigging plans, including the drawings and load calculations, which the venue then signed off. In addition to his rigging duties, Belfield is also in charge of automation for the show, the majority of which involved moving the huge downstage screen up and down at various points during the evening.

He explained: "At the start of the show the downstage screen is in, just off the deck, and there is a video that starts up. At a given cue point during that video, we fly it out to the roof nice and fast to reveal the band. The screen comes back down when the band goes to the B Stage, then we lift up the rear screen so the stage manager can do a set change. We land it back down when that is set up, and when the band make their way back to the stage for the drum solo, we fly the downstage screen again." Although the smooth running of these set pieces is largely down to Belfield's experience, he claimed that the system and associated support network make his life a lot easier. He said: "Kinesys is the best system out there as far as I'm concerned. It has its 'isms' but it's a precise system that is being used in a robust touring industry. If you don't look after it, it won't work. If you do, you can do almost anything. The support I get from Neg Earth and Kinesys is invaluable in helping me to do that."

FEELING THE LOVE

Snakatak's Stephen 'Knuddy' Knudsen heads up the catering needs of the *American Beauty / American Psycho* tour, which involves feeding 65 mouths at the height of dinner servings. He told TPi: "I've worked with this band and crew before, and I have to say they are genuinely lovely people to cook for. We're doing our usual menu design by trying to go across the whole world and back! From Asian, to health foods, Italian and Southern style American favourites, such as the specially-requested buffalo chicken wings; they get to try it all! The Buffalo chicken went down a treat as it's quite hot with some nice spices thrown in, I can't give you my recipe in print though!"

"We also have the contrast of sourcing really good quality health food and vegan items, which can be slightly trickier because supermarkets only cater to a certain degree. Andy Hurley, Fall Out Boy's drummer, is a vegan, so we make sure he's well looked-after, especially at dessert time; there's always a fruit salad on offer but we always go that extra mile for Andy and make sure he's well fed for the show."

Keeping the family theme in tow, Knuddy is keen on bringing the crew together as to celebrate birthdays too. "It's my birthday on this tour and although I won't be baking myself a cake, when it's someone else's birthday I'll try to find out what their favourite dish is and make sure they still get to eat their favourite meal when they're on the road. I can't stress how much of a great vibe there is on the entire tour," he concluded.

THIS AIN'T A SCENE... IT'S A FAMILY

Throughout TPi's tour of Fall Out Boy's latest live venture, the camaraderie of the crewmembers was jovial, with all aspects of the production slotting together like a well-cut jigsaw. Production Manager Olech had the final word: "The band are such nice guys, they're easy to work with and they treat their crew properly so it would be quite difficult for us to complain."

TPi

Photos: Shirlaine Forrest

www.falloutboy.com

www.rockitcargo.com

www.lemaitreltd.com

www.kinesys.co.uk

www.upstaging.com

www.negearth.com

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