

SEAMLESS FUSION, TRANSPARENT INNOVATION

Lighting and Video Meld for Nine Inch Nail's *Tension* Tour



By Michael S. Eddy

Nine Inch Nails' 2013 *Tension* tour, in support of NIN's *Hesitation Marks* album, fuses artistry with technology and lighting with video. Frontman Trent Reznor teamed once again with art director Rob Sheridan and production designer/LD LeRoy Bennett for another *tour de force* production.

Bennett, who has been working with Reznor for more than 15 years, likens the imagery to something you might see in an art installation. His goal, as always, is to "make it all work as one piece" with the flow of the music. "Trent's music is so diverse — it'll go from full-on rock music to these beautiful landscapes; very dark landscapes at times; very emotional, deep music. You have to be able to create very intimate moments and then huge moments; expand and contract."

Compression and Release

As with previous tours, the visuals start off with "this intense, compressed feeling," then

expand and explode out. That's basically the way the show is developed musically, too. For the most part, it stays compressed, then expands, and then it does come down a bit. But it's not as claustrophobic."

Bennett has 19 different objects, including light pods, video walls and moving light trusses that move at varying rates of speed. Upstaging and PRG Nocturne provided lighting and video gear for the tour. The rig's cutting-edge gear including Ayrton MagicPanel 602 fixtures (distributed in the U.S. by Morphous Lighting) and PRG Nocturne's V-Thru transparent LED panels. All Access Staging & Production built the pods and staging for the show. Ampco Flashlight Rental supplied the CyberMotion automation system along with support from CyberMotion North America.

The automation lets Bennett synch and morph the lighting and video gear with the

A "Ceiling of Squares"

video programmer Loren Barton could also feed video to the units. "There is definitely a lot of integration where lighting and video work together especially since we are pixel-mapping the MagicPanels," says Barton. "It meant that we had to stay coordinated, since one change on either side had a ripple effect on everything."

As for his role on the creative team, Barton notes that "Rob Sheridan and Trent focus on the video while Roy focused more on the lighting side. I worked with Rob, and then we would work with lighting to balance prominence between the lighting and the video." Both Montreal-based Moment Factory and art director Sheridan created content for the production.

On the technical side, Barton and Baeri created an Art-Net merge to handle the flow of data. "We did everything ultimately 5-pin

hats." He also credited the MagicPanels for their light quality and color mixing. "It's a really cool unit."

The lighting is controlled via two MA Lighting grandMA2s with 62 universes of control, also provided by Upstaging. "We have eight NPUs and then 14 of the four-port nodes upstage," says Baeri. "We can get three MagicPanels per one universe, so that is a total of 42 universes of MagicPanels in the air." Brian Jenkins is the lighting director out on the tour.

Lighting/Video Fusion

The *Tension* tour visuals have no clear demarcation of what's lighting and what's video; the two elements blend for a cohesive visual whole. "There's too much of a large visual statement on every single song to not have them be directly related," says Baeri, noting the use of the MagicPanels as a case in point.

Although Baeri controlled the MagicPanels as moving lights for much of the show,

out of the MA2 nodes and added video input from the Hippo straight into the console," states Barton. "The console is what actually does the Art-Net merge between pan and tilt and the other controls that Jason adds. Then it's a mix between lighting sending RGB values or the Hippo sending values for the video elements."

"Figuring out the Art-Net merge was definitely an interesting challenge for Jason and myself," Barton adds. "Figuring out how many universes it could handle, and breaking up the Hippo pixel-mapper into three discrete engines so that it would actually output full frames of Art-Net."

"From the gear-head side, for me, the Art-Net merge is the cool thing on this," says Baeri. "The amount of data going in to deal with the MagicPanels is amazing; that's 4,500-odd fixtures when you get down to the pixels. 4,500 pixels that we're using as fixtures. Roy would give me a shape, and the panels were like a Lite-Brite hanging there; we could pick out individual cells to use for the shape. The MA2 console caps at 10,000 groups, and we had like 7,500 to deal with it all."

Video Transparency

Along with a seamless integration of lighting and video effects, Bennett, Reznor and Sheridan sought video screens with enough transparency so that they could be in front of the band and the audience wouldn't be sure there is anything there until suddenly video moves in front of the musicians.

"There have been a whole slew of low-res, what we call transparent screens — that aren't really transparent; there's a lot of physical structure to them," says Bennett. "I was finding it very difficult to find the actual medium to do this properly. So the kind folks at [PRG] Nocturne made a new screen for me; and in less than two months. The V-Thru screen that's out on NIN right now is the only one in the world, and is a pretty amazing screen. It's extremely transparent."

The two scrim-like screens — one that can fly in downstage and another one at midstage, in front of the drum riser — are the brand new PRG Nocturne V-Thru walls. Both of the 28mm V-Thru screens, which are slightly curved, measure 54 by 13.25 feet (WxH). Upstage just in front of the massive back wall of lights is a flat high-resolution PRG Nocturne V-9 LED wall that measures 70 by 16.25 feet (WxH).

PHOTOS BY TODD KAPLAN, COURTESY PRG NOCTURNE & UPSTAGING INC.



NIN Tension Tour

Crew
Production Designer/LD: Roy Bennett
Art Director: Rob Sheridan
Lighting Programmer: Jason Baeri
Video Programmer: Loren Barton
Lighting Director: Brian Jenkins
Video Director: Morgan Brown
Lighting Co: Upstaging
Lighting Crew: Ryan Tilke (Crew Chief), J.R. Harris, Thomas Walls, Wade Cotten, Brendan Murphy
Set/Staging: All Access Staging
Video Co: PRG Nocturne
Video Crew: Omar Montes, Will Stinson, Scott Grund, Adam Cline
Automation Co: Ampco Flashlight Rental, CyberMotion North America
Automation Crew: PJ Visser (Crew Chief/Senior Operator), Ryan Lewis, Mike Rock

Gear

Lighting (from Upstaging)

- 1 MA Lighting grandMA2 console
- 1 Green Hippo i7 Hippotizer HD media server
- 1 Green Hippo HippoCritic
- 126 Ayrton MagicPanel 602s
- 56 Clay Paky Sharpys
- 24 Clay Paky Sharpy Washes
- 7 Phillips Vari-Lite VL3500 Spots
- 28 Phillips Vari-Lite VL3500 Wash FXs
- 2 Phillips Vari-Lite VL3015 LTs
- 84 Martin MAC Auras
- 16 Martin MAC 2000 Wash XBs
- 10 Martin MAC III AirFX
- 9 Chauvet Professional COLORado Deco Quad-1 Tours
- 126 SGM X-5 LED strobes
- 4 10' HUD Truss, black
- 10 5' HUD Truss, black
- 4 5' 12" box truss, black
- 20 8' 12" box truss, black
- 11 10' 12" box truss, black
- 2 12" corner block
- 9 8' 20.5" box truss, black
- 2 10' 20.5" box truss, black
- 25 CM 2-Ton chain hoists
- 30 CM 1-Ton chain hoists
- 10 CM half-ton chain hoists

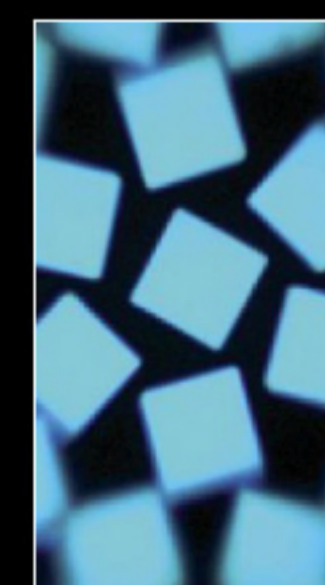
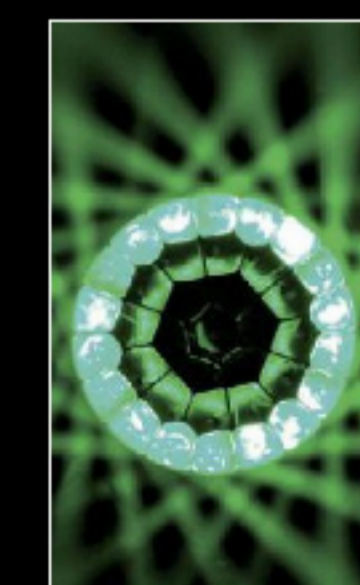
Video (from PRG Nocturne)

- 2 Green Hippo i7 Hippotizer HD media servers
- 1 Green Hippo HippoCritic
- 1 V-Thru 28mm LED wall, curved, downstage (54'x13.25'; WxH)
- 1 V-Thru 28mm LED wall, curved, midstage (54'x13.25'; WxH)
- 1 V-9 9mm LED wall, flat, upstage (70'x16.25'; WxH)

Automation (from Ampco Flashlight Rental)

- 68 XLNT Advanced Technologies CyberHoists (+5 Spares)
- 56 500 kg CH 500 20 meter/min variable speed
- 12 1,000 kg CH 1000 10 meter/min variable speed
- 2 XLNT InMotion3D Control Systems (1 Main/1 Spare)

FX:
light can
take your
breath away



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