



Coheed and Cambria performs on tour at Jacobs Pavilion in Cleveland, OH.

A recent rock and roll tour highlights how ETCP is fulfilling its potential

CHOOSING TO HAVE A DEDICATED RIGGER for your tour can be a hard decision to make. Do we have enough bunks on the bus? Is hiring another person in the budget? Can't the LD just keep an eye on the rigging? This seems to be what runs through many managers' minds in the preproduction and planning phases for many tours, save the very biggest of arena tours. However, having an ETCP rigging team is not just a good idea for the safety of the show, it boosts the quality of the show for the audience, the band, and the rest of the team. A recent rock and roll tour of the US demonstrated this in a way that highlights how the ETCP is fulfilling its potential. The tour was a co-headlining bill: Coheed and Cambria played with Taking Back Sunday, with opening band The Story So Far. This is

the story of how their show got put up in the air, and how the ETCP riggers involved helped that happen in a way that was good for all aspects of the tour: the show, the art, and the business.

Michael Hionis, lighting designer and co-production designer for Coheed and Cambria, explained, "The design occurred in three separate phases. The first phase was the dream package, based on an unlimited budget. Of course, that design never saw the light of day, so in phase two, we shrunk it down to a very limited option. But then the band manager, Blaze James, who shared the co-design credit with me for the production as a whole, had a vision for a bigger scale product, something very theatrical. So finally, we tried to recapture some of the grand ideas in our dream package, but that

PHOTO COURTESY OF VICTORIA HIONIS

involved hanging objects over the band's head, and that's something where we knew we would need a tour rigger, someone whose overarching job is to watch over the safety of the artists." That kind of safety awareness and professionalism is synonymous with ETCP Riggers, and that's why they called To the Moon Rigging.

For the opening act, a backdrop was hung overhead and upstage of the band. Using a Kabuki-like technique, it was quickly changed during intermission to another backdrop right behind it on the same truss; the backdrop with the emblem for co-headliner Taking Back Sunday.

The last set of the evening, by the sci-fi progressive rock band Coheed and Cambria, took on an even more complicated scenic look. Their set featured a collection of floating illuminated "orbs" and a 20' x 20' intricate geometric triangle that was both a flown scenic element and a lighting position. This was known as "the Keywork" and was originally the logo of one of their early albums but has become a symbol of the band themselves. It was made from preexisting truss circles and custom fabricated metal work. Then LED luminaires and moving lights were attached to it, and it all formed the shape of the logo its fans would recognize immediately.

Everyone from the band members to the LD loved the idea of making this graphic image come to life. But getting it to work on a realistic budget, in a range of venues large and small, was another



PHOTO COURTESY OF VICTORIA HIONIS

Co-headliner, Taking Back Sunday, performs at the Bayfront Park Amphitheater Miami, FL. Lighting design by Eric Price.

matter. The tour wanted a solution that would load in and out easily, pack efficiently on a truck, hang vertically, and not roll under the weight of the lights. And most importantly, the ultimate solution



PHOTO COURTESY OF VICTORIA HIONIS

Audience member takes a photo of the Keywork during the concert.



Josh Eppard, drummer for Coheed and Cambria, performs in front of the Keywork scenic piece rigged by To the Moon Rigging. Lighting design by Michael Hionis.

had to be safely suspended over the band members' heads.

Making a transition from paper design to a real life-sized scenic element would require outside expertise. The lighting package was provided by Chicago-based lighting supplier JR Lighting Design, Inc. They called in To the Moon Rigging, whose credentials and reputation the company knew from previous partnerships and their continuing relationship. ETCP Certified, Owner/Principal Justin Argenio was asked to consult on the Keywork, and ultimately To the Moon designed the rigging for the entire production and sent out a touring production rigger to execute it.

Argenio worked with the staff at JR Lighting Design and Tyler Truss Systems of Pendleton, IN. Tyler's engineers did the structural calculations to follow up on Argenio's broad recommendations, and soon a set of plans including a custom designed frame for the Keywork was approved and stamped. It took only four weeks to engineer and fabricate the Keywork before it arrived at rehearsals.

Meanwhile, Argenio created the drawings for the rest of the show. As he recalled, "We did the full rigging drawings for the entire tour that included that scenic truss with the custom scenic piece, several floating lanterns, backdrops that we had to come up with custom solutions for facilitating changeover between acts in the show, and we did the load calculations for all the lighting, audio, and scenic."

Argenio prides himself on looking at rigging design as a part of the whole production, so that it's not just a solution that is driven by one department or designer, making everyone else take a backseat. He recalls: "We worked with all the vendors to make sure we could maintain the integrity of the design at every venue—the audio, the lighting, the scenic—while still being able to fit into a wide range of different buildings, theatres, amphitheaters, outdoor temporary structures."

To the Moon Rigging is a young company, though Argenio himself has been a

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Coheed and Cambria performs on tour with the Keywork scenic piece rigged by To the Moon Rigging. Lighting design by Michael Hionis.

professional rigger for 16 years and has many noteworthy credits. He attributes the growth of the company to his early decision to embark on a path that aligned it with the ETCP's ideals in terms of ethics, guidelines, and industry practices. "ETCP Certification has instilled a level of professionalism within the company and it has allowed us to excel and be able to service these really high-end shows like the C&C/TBS tour."

It wasn't just clear to Argenio and his riggers that ETCP was the right choice.

Argenio says, "When I first spoke to the tour, it was expressed to me that they wanted ETCP certified technicians across the board. That's why they called me in the first place."

By having an ETCP certified rigger design and produce drawings, the tour sent a message to each venue that would make the house feel confident that what was coming in was thoughtfully and professionally conceived and would be executed safely and smoothly. When an ETCP certified rigger was the first person to walk off the bus and start the conversation with the local crew, the tour could trust that the load-in was starting off on the right foot.

The artistic team felt that what they achieved was very true to their pure vision in each location too. Having a dedicated rigger on the tour also took pressure off the rest of the crew. LD Michael Hionis was extremely positive about the experience, saying, "For me,

flawless final product. Without this crew, I guarantee you, we would have lost something."

Regrettably, shows this size have not traditionally brought their own dedicated rigging person, but having one on the bus soon was recognized as the right choice. Thus, a good equilibrium was struck—not just in how to hang a tricky piece of scenery without it rotating out of plumb—but also balance between business and art. Fortunately, more artists and managers in the industry today are coming to realize that riggers who make a commitment to ETCP are competent and capable of helping to make the show go on safely. ■



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