

INDUSTRIAL-STRENGTH SPRINGSTEEN

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Jeff Ravitz Discusses His Design for the *Rising* Tour

Jeff Ravitz, longtime lighting designer for Bruce Springsteen, gives concert editor Sharon Stancavage the details on the current tour.

Sharon Stancavage: When did you get involved in the show?

Jeff Ravitz: We were informed about the show fairly last-minute, about a month before production rehearsals. There were many things to consider, but the last tour really moved Bruce into some different territory, which naturally moved me into that same territory. He became very sensitive to the appearance of overt theatricality in the show and especially lighting that called attention to itself.

SS: So the last tour had more understated lighting?

JR: The lighting was intended not to call attention to itself. Obviously, we still tried to do a lot of dramatic lighting, lighting that reflected the tone and the emotion of the music. But it was very much in the most hidden way possible.

SS: Did you continue in that direction this year?

JR: In the past two years, since the last tour, I've been thinking about what I would do the next time, also wondering if that would again be Bruce's sentiment the next time we went out. When the news of the tour came up so last-minute, I knew that I needed to rely a little bit on some of the ideas I had the last time, add to it, and give it as much of a different spin as I could. On the last tour, there wasn't really a lot of new material; now we have a brand-new CD and the need to have a new way to express those songs visually was great. But after a week or so of thinking about this, I finally got what I needed, which was a conversation with Bruce.

SS: He has a lot of input in the show?

JR: The last few years, he really has. The last tour, he was much, much more involved in the conceptual look of the show and that look was the absence of performance-style production. It was really simple. This time, he thought maybe we could venture into something he called an industrial look. I think he was saying that we could reveal a bit more of our technology.

SS: How did you achieve the industrial look?

JR: There were a few obvious ways to do this — simply by not masking the lighting system as much as we had in the past. But what I threw out at him for his approval was the idea of angles. Last time, I gave myself all kinds of interesting angles and he felt that it called attention to itself and was all too reminiscent of the concert tours that were out on the road at the time. This time, the word "angles" seemed to strike a nerve with him and he liked the idea. I told him one of the most successful things that we'd always done was floor lighting and uplighting — it's extremely dramatic and different and he really liked that. In addition, he agreed when I suggested that we re-introduce some very mild texturing in the form of gobos into the show.

SS: So for this tour you got back floor lights and gobos?

JR: We had some floor lights last time, but now I have about three times as many. Interestingly enough, we worked so hard on the last tour to achieve angles and a look Bruce felt was compatible with what he wanted to say that I wondered if I should erase all of that, simply because this was a new tour. Usually on two subsequent tours with the same act you try to shake it up and do something noticeably different. But I felt that, in this case, when you work so hard to achieve perfection, do you then change things just for the sake of change? I felt that I needed to keep the skeleton and the backbone of what we had accomplished last time and build around that. If I did that successfully, then I couldn't possibly upset his aesthetic view of the way the show was presented.

SS: What's in the skeleton?

JR: It's fairly straightforward. Basically, it's an upstage, midstage, downstage, and front-of-house truss. The front-of-house truss is about 25' downstage of the stage and has six followspots on it, as well as lights.

SS: Do you have any sidelighting positions?

JR: Yes, we have a 20' truss on either side of the stage that has some Morpheus FaderBeams™ for side toning. I also have two PC Spots™ there that I use to great dramatic advantage to sidelight Bruce. They're really hard-edged, direct lights.

SS: Your primary vendors are Morpheus and Martin. Why?

JR: Morpheus has been with Bruce since the *Tunnel of Love* tour in 1988 and they did a great job on the tour. Bruce is extremely loyal to vendors who have done well by him. As for Martin, I've recognized that there are a lot of different lights out there to create many different textures, color temperatures, intensities, and so on, and the Martin MAC 2000 is a great light. It really has answered a lot of needs with both intensity and the features it has. I love its optics, and they're quite reliable, so I wanted to add those into the system.

SS: Are those your only vendors?

JR: No. We also have four Syncrolites on two trusses that hang completely far front-of-house. This time out, we wanted to backlight the audience, and the Syncros are perfect for that. You can get a really broad wash out of them, and we put a little diffusion in them to make them even smoother. They've got a color scroller on them, so we have eight colors we can play around with. After the first leg of the tour, the Syncrolites were replaced with four 9-lights that are essentially a normal 9-light but made by Morpheus to accommodate its XL Fader™ color changer.

SS: What instrument is your workhorse?

JR: Absolutely the Morpheus FaderBeam. We have the highest quantity of them and that's what creates our wash configuration on stage. These lights have an incandescent source, they can zoom from spot to flood, and they can crossfade through the widest range of colors. I've also got about 20 Morpheus BriteBursts™ and those lights are probably the biggest new texture I've got on this show. As I thought about what Bruce wanted and the kinds of broad strokes that he was looking for last time, I was really dreaming of a system that used a lot of these BriteBursts. It's a big, fat whoosh of light onstage, almost the size of a 10kW fresnel. I have eight across the back truss, hanging on trombones, so they're about 4' below the rest of the lighting system.

SS: How do the MAC 2000s fit in?

JR: There are a lot of songs that focus on storytelling in this new CD, and Bruce is performing those with the maximum drama. A lot of those songs feel like hard-edged songs to me, so I've lit a number of them with nothing but the bare minimum of hard-edge. The MACs, being brighter than the PC Spots, let you use darker, more saturated colors and still get the intensity needed. I'll start with a layer of MAC 2000s, then I'll complete it with some interesting, obtuse angles from the PC Spots.

SS: Tell me about your color palette.

JR: The color palette is pretty broad. The instruments I'm using claim to have around 90 usable colors, and I probably use about half that. I use an awful lot of steel blue, blue-green, and even green in this show. I find it really helps accentuate some of the irony in Bruce's songs. I also use a lot of pure reds in the show because there's just so much heat that's reflected in his lyrics and performance. Then he'll go into something big and happy and I'll use a pink, a yellow, an amber palette, or all three. I really mix colors a lot, mostly for depth and dimension.

SS: What consoles are you using?

JR: It's a two-console show. The [Flying Pig Systems] Wholehog® II, which was programmed by Jason Badger, controls all of the focus information, the pan, tilt, color, and gobos for the whole system, as well as the intensity level for all the arc source lamps. But because so many of the moving lights are incandescent, I control the intensity of those on an Avolites Diamond II. It gives the show a slightly more immediate look in terms of cues being timed to the music. Between the two boards, they can do just about anything, although the guy on the conventional console really can improvise, when necessary, a lot more elegantly on that board.

SS: How long is the tour?

JR: The tour is going all over the world; he's doing these one-nighters now, which is totally unusual for him, but he's trying to get around the world as quickly as possible.

Bruce Springsteen's *Rising* tour is coming soon to a continent near you.

Contact the author at sstancavage@primediabusiness.com.

BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN AND THE E STREET BAND *RISING* TOUR 2002

Lighting Designer

Jeff Ravitz

Wholehog Programmer

Jason Badger

Design Assistants

David Mann, Erin Powell

Lighting Director



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