

mobile  
monthly  
PRODUCTION

# KID ROCK

*Born Free*

**PYROTEK**  
**Enflames**  
**ACCURATE**  
**STAGING**  
**Sets the**  
**Stage**  
**NOCTURNE**  
**Rocks**

**PLUS** CAVALIA  
*inside* >>Part ONE  
**CROSSOVER**  
>>Part TWO



# Born Free

## ACCURATE STAGING Sets the Stage for the First Touring Saloon

BY HANK BORDOWITZ



*Kid Rock* had been kicking around for a bit, but in 1998 after four albums, he became a phenomenon. The minute Accurate Staging's current owner Joe Gallagher first heard him, he knew he had to work with him. "It was with the fourth record *Devil Without a Cause* that he blew up," Gallagher recalls. "I first heard him on The Howard Stern Show. I went through Gary Dell'Abate and all the people on Howard's Show to get to his management at the time. They got me the phone number."

With that Joe Gallagher built his first stage for Kid Rock in 1998, the first time Kid Rock hit the road with an actual stage set. "For many years it was just the catwalk up the back, 8 x 32, and he would come up on a lift with a girl on each arm. He had a catwalk, a couple of risers and would come down the stairs. There were polls for the strippers. He also always had a thrust. That was the first step, the beginning." Since that beginning, every time Kid Rock has hit the road, Joe Gallagher built the stage. "The best thing about working with Kid Rock is he is just a great down to earth guy," Gallagher says. "He gets involved in the entire design from beginning to end. Eric 'Shakes' Grzybowski has been his production manager since 1999, and we have a great relationship."

Gallagher and Accurate Staging's relationship with Kid Rock is indicative of the way Accurate does business. Their stated goal is "to build a long lasting relationship with our clients and bring our knowledge and experience to the table to add to the production value." This came into play in a large way on Kid Rock's current *Born Free* tour. The staging on this show is very busy, with elements like lasers, large amounts of pyro, video that's actually part of the show, and many lighting effects, some of which could be triggered by the people on stage. All of this took about a month for Accurate to build initially. While elements like the cages for the strippers from the last tour are gone (the poll dancers do their thing more discretely on a riser behind the drummer), this is easily the most elaborate set Kid Rock has ever taken on tour.

All of this was arranged by Gallagher with lighting director Richard "Nook" Schoenfeld and of course Kid Rock. The stage itself is composed of elements from Accurate's huge warehouse. The set is staged to look like a western saloon, with swinging doors, a bar (the DJ and keyboard player double as bartenders) and other miscellaneous set pieces (more on these in a moment).

"He really went to bat this time and went all out on the design," Gallagher says. "Going into this tour, I knew it was going to be 18 months worth of rental. He spared no costs on the custom elements. We used rental decking and clad wood on top and printed digital soft goods to create the western bar. We have whiskey kegs of Red Stag from Jim Beam; they are sponsors of the tour and they supplied the kegs. We had beer taps given to us by some beer company."

Besides the bar and these promotional pieces, Kid Rock envisioned a massive Texas longhorn skull under the drum riser, two 30-foot-long rifles framing the top of the video screen, two American flags framing each side, and an 6-foot tall bald eagle with a 15-foot wingspan above it all, proclaiming "American Bad Ass" across the land. These are not the kind of things that Accurate has on hand, so they too, had to be fabricated. All of them are made from foam. "We start out with a large block of foam add structure into it for support and start carving away then add a hard coat it for strength. In addition to being hard coated, we protect them in a set cart," Gallagher says of the foam artifacts. "The crew is very aware of handling them with kid gloves as not to damage them."

Even the ever-present thrust has gotten far more complex. There's a turntable with a lift which Kid Rock uses for the piano introduction to "Born Free," in addition to many other elements. "He always had a thrust, not as elaborate or long as this one," Gallagher agrees. "This one has pyro on it as well as rope lights." Kid Rock also uses the thrust for one of the lower tech moments of the tour. For "Flyin' High," he goes out to the edge of the thrust with a bottle of Red Stag and a lawn chair. This is not one of the props supplied by Accurate. "He always adds something to the set after rehearsals," Gallagher laughs. "He puts on a great show live." And Accurate Staging is there to help. 🍷

# Born Free



## NOCTURNE Rocks for Kid Rock

BY HANK BORDOWITZ



*For the fifth year* running, Nocturne productions took home the Top Dog award for Video Company of the Year. Their work on Kid Rock's *Born Free* tour illustrates why.

The tour is an extravaganza of music, staging, effects, lights and video. From the eight musicians, to the working bar, the swinging saloon doors to the lawn chair he sits in when he sings "Flyin' High," from the persistent use of pyro, to the 24' x 15' wall of video, from the giant steer horns to the neon-lit catwalk that juts into the first rows, there's an awful lot going on onstage. And while it might look like chaos, that is by design. It takes a lot of planning, collaboration and careful attention to what Rock and the band do every night to make everything work together.

Take the sheer amount of lighting, pyro and video. There are flash pots, lasers and specific cues for much of the video, all of which play nearly as important a role in the spectacle as the music. Coordinating much of that falls to Nocturne System Engineer and Media Control expert John McLeish, and Lighting Designer Richard "Nook" Schoenfeld.

"Timing is everything in this show," McLeish says. "The show can change nightly, and we have to stay alert to keep the integrity of it together."

For example, you might think that the sheer volume of visual effects have the potential to clash with each other, and with the video screens in the back of the stage, the lights and

pyro might interfere with the images. It turns out Nocturne's proprietary V-Lite panels, manufactured exclusively by the company in conjunction with LSI Saco, actually are so bright they interfere with the other effects. "We actually turn the wall off for some parts of the show to aid the visibility of the lasers and lighting effects," says McLeish. "Nook Schoenfeld and I have definitely collaborated on the placement of specific blackouts and various other effects for the show. There's also a lot of pyrotechnics. I feel it definitely enhances the overall visual effect."

The Nocturne video wall plays an integral part in the show. In the opening moments, before Rock even hits the stage, there is a video montage called "The History of Rock." It shows young Robert James Ritchie (Kid Rock's given name) as a kid and adolescent, capturing moments from grade school and high school. After these, the audience gets treated to images of the early days of his career. Then there are the pictures of Rock with such pop culture icons as Hank Williams, Jr., Sheryl Crow, the late, great Waylon Jennings, Willie Nelson and President Obama. During the show Rock takes license to lace into LeBron James (and make a costume change), by saying it in a video clip. At one important moment where the video helps propel the concert, TI performs his part in the song "Care" via the wall. That same wall enables critical juncture in the show, with an appearance by MTV megastars Beavis and Butthead, who through snark and derision literally get Rock to change his tune midway through a song. "Kid Rock?" they say just as he finishes the first verse of the ballad "Picture" (just about when fans who know the song wonder who's going to do Sheryl Crow's part on the next verse). "More like Kid Soft Rock." This launches the band into the raucous "Bawit'ba," and finesses the Sheryl Crow problem.

McLeish operates a Panasonic switcher, allowing him to toggle between images from the hand-held Ikegami cameras operated by Josh Marrano and Mike Hossack, the four mounted cameras – three of them lipstick cameras actually attached to members of the band – and one Ikegami 55 mm long lens operated by Bobby Carrell, and the prerecorded video images created by John Featherstone at Lightswitch. The video plays through Maxedia media servers.

"One of the special things about the way we hooked the video up for the show is how we set up the control for the Maxedias," McLeish says. "We have the ability to control them from the front of the house position and the DJ position on the stage using a touch screen and a Raritan control system."

While some of the excesses of previous Kid Rock shows, like strippers in cages and bawdy dialog were missing – the tour celebrates the Kid's 40th birthday, and even he admits to settling down a bit (c.f. "Slow My Roll" from his latest album) – he has adopted higher tech befitting the larger houses he now plays. One of the necessities of such growth is a high class video component. And video components, and the people who operate them don't come higher class than the equipment and technicians provided by Nocturne. 🎸

See *mPm* Issue 6 for an update on Nocturne's plans for the rest of 2011...