

BLINK-182: WORLD TOUR 2023/2024

Pop-punk pioneers and their road-tested production team return to the global touring circuit with a raucous live show that sees a giant inflatable ambulance, alien and rabbit share the stage with a leaping Mark Hoppus, floating Travis Barker, and contorting Tom DeLonge. What did you expect from a Blink-182 tour?



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Billed as a 'reunion tour' – following the reintroduction of founding vocalist/guitarist Tom DeLonge as part of the pop punk band's live setup for the first time since 2014 – Blink-182's eagerly-anticipated *World Tour 2023/2024*, affectionately named the *Rock Hard Tour*, hit the road on 4 May at Xcel Energy Center in St. Paul, Minnesota. Serving as a precursor to the imminent release of the band's ninth studio album, *One More Time...* the band, their dedicated support teams and a road-tested production crew descended on London's O2 Arena for back-to-back sold-out shows.

In Europe, the technical suppliers included Backroom (power), Beat The Street (crew travel), Clair Global (audio), Fly By Nite (logistics), SGPS ShowRig (automation and set), Solotech (lighting and video), and Strictly FX (special effects and lasers) and TrasK House (creative).

"It's a fun crew to be around and there's a symbiosis between departments," commented Production Coordinator, Ashleigh Volz – who supported Production Manager, Jimi Storey on the road, often from the confines of the travelling Blink-182 production office. "Understanding each other's workflows with some of us having pre-existing relationships from past touring camps has been beneficial and, as always, meeting new people is part of the allure of touring."

Preparing a canvas for the team to work

from, Lead Rigger, Nicholas Purcifull chalked up at the venue with two fellow rigging professionals in the morning, with 15 trucks worth of equipment arriving shortly afterward, followed by local support and the wider production crew. "Everywhere we go is the first time they've done that load-in, and every venue has their own unique system between chalk and pulling points, so the speed in which we progress is often based on the talent of local crew and the infrastructure of the venue," explained the 37-year-old, who says he grew up listening to Blink-182.

Stage Manager, Philip Riehl, helped coordinate the logistics of the load-in and -out. "This is a well-designed 40ft by 40ft diamond-shaped stage. It was intentionally designed to fit seamlessly into European venues. Although the infrastructure is different in Europe regarding ingress, overall, we carry a pretty efficient truck package, which we pack tightly," he said, highlighting the strength of the team.

"It's a well-staffed and organised unit. I'm sure young Phil would also be very proud, touring with Blink-182. *Man Overboard* was my favourite song of theirs growing up, and it still gives me goosebumps every night."

'THE LIGHTING TEAM IS A1'
The rig included Claypaky Mythos, GLP impression FR10 Bar, JDC1 Strobe, Martin Professional MAC Ultra Performance, Mole

Richardson Type 2921 Molequartz 1K Nooklite, and Robe BMFL lighting solutions. Ultratec Radiance Hazer, MDG theONE touring, DMX fans, and JEM ZR45 smoke machines helped create atmospherics.

"A lot of the visual content relates to previous tours; there are lots of deep takes and hidden easter eggs," commented Lighting Designer, Griffin 'Griff' Dennen.

"Being obsessive over my craft, every day I fine-tune something. We have added FR10s underneath the video wall for this European run. Being able to integrate and pixel map those fixtures to pipe video through is very impactful."

Griff referenced the intentional juxtaposition of setlist, which saw the energetic *Ghost on the Dance Floor* immediately trail the more emotional, narrative-driven *Adam's Song* – and as is standard operating procedure for Blink-182 live shows, the former features the inclusion of a flying Travis Barker moment, with the drummer and his kit elevated, tilted, and rotated on an automated platform amid an impressive drum solo. "There are lots of high-energy songs with a handful of intimate, darker moments within the set," the LD noted.

Solotech Lighting Crew Chief Kevin Chan oversaw a team of six. "It's been an interesting ride; every department has been extremely open to collaboration and we've assembled a team that helps each other on the load-in and -out, which is integral on a production like this



where everything is stacked, with automation taking precedence," he said, referencing the collaborative nature of the stage, which was furnished with band's iconic logo – a smiley face with Xs for eyes and five arrows on the left side of its face – created using RGBW LED pixel tape, courtesy of SGPS ShowRig.

"It's surprisingly solid and fared well throughout the tour. The integration with the video team, who handle it day-to-day, has been straightforward. It's been a pleasure to work with Griff and the wider team."

For control, Griff harnessed an MA Lighting grandMA3 full size console operating MA2 software to timecode.

"There are around 96,000 cues and tens of thousands of sequences. Although they may be a three-piece punk band, each of Travis' drum fills have their own distinct look and treatment," Griff revealed, praising the tour's lighting and video vendor.

"Shout out to Solotech; the lighting team is A1 – some of the best I've worked with. Their support has been incredible, and they make my life very easy."

'MAXIMISING THE BAND ON SCREEN'
Solotech Video Crew Chief, Marshall Blair supervised the build of 144 ROE Visual CB5 LED panels within the set, spanning two automated video walls and a pair of 30ft IMAG screens, powered by two Brompton Technology SX40 processors with content and the LED pixel tape driven by four Resolume

media servers, including a main and back up. "We work hand in hand with the automation department to ensure everything is loaded-in correctly. For us, the biggest transition from the US to Europe was a power switch over and changing distros. We have almost brought our entire system from the US, save projection and touring frames for the LED, which came from our UK offices."

Video Engineer, Mark Gonzaba, who was involved in 2019s *Blink-182 and Lil Wayne Tour*, handled the camera side of the video package, which included the deployment of two Sony cameras at FOH, two cameras in the pit, three POV cameras on Travis Barker's drum kit and a further camera situated on the downstage front of the lighting truss with another on the drum riser. He and Blair both chose the track, *Aliens Exist*, which saw the introduction of a giant, inflatable UFO, pop up and sneak back into the video wall as a testament to the cross-department collaboration and their favourite moment of the set.

Video Director, Pedro Pineda, cut the show using a Sony 2ME switcher, with an MSV300A processor and ICP3000 console. "My job is to maximise the band on screen. Shooting the show for portrait IMAG screens can be a challenge, as you lose two thirds of the viewfinder, while having to keep the subject the focus. However, it's beneficial when shooting each band member from head to toe, making them 30ft tall on screen. There is a lot of contrast and play with the flickering and

strobing of light. This show is cut like a music video, playing on the movement and flow of the band – it is fast-paced and evolves as the show progresses," he explained, citing the band's energy on stage.

"Travis Barker has motion – he's always moving; Tom DeLonge has brilliant, contorting dance moves and footwork, while Mark has an exuberant stage presence, all of which engage the audience. Some of my favourite shots are from the overhead truss camera, which looks down over the stage with the band's logo illuminated by LED pixel tape. We create layers to play with when dissolving and blending shots."

While the bulk of the IMAG played 'clean', for some of the newer material, monochromatic filters and content further enhanced the audience experience. "Ghost on the Dance Floor is a cool look, but the crowd really goes nuts towards the latter stages of the show, when we bring them into focus on the main wall – uniting the band and crowd," he recalled, commanding the wider team.

"This is my first tour collaborating with Solotech, which has been supportive in providing the gear, expertise, and personnel we need. This is one of those tours that you feel lucky to be on."

'WE FIND OURSELVES AIR DRUMMING'
"Our goal is to make Blink-182 sound better than they ever have, and I think we have achieved that based on the feedback we have

received," proudly stated FOH Engineer, Charlie Izzo, who was tasked with mixing what the crowd heard.

"[Monitor Engineer] Ray Jeffrey and I first got the call to join this camp when Tom DeLonge decided to rejoin Blink-182 and they began working on the new record, having mixed his other band, Angels & Airwaves. Production asked us who we preferred as vendors and fortunately Clair Global, who were our number one choice, landed the gig. Their global network is unrivalled, and it allows us to source gear from anywhere we visit on the road."

Izzo mixed on a Yamaha PM10 RIVAGE console. "This is the first tour I've taken it out on the road and I'm extremely happy with it," he enthused, showcasing his rack of studio-worthy analogue outboard gear and LiveProfessor software, which was fed via Audinate Dante using Focusrite RedNet for audio-over-IP. On stage, a rack of Rupert Neve Designs 5044 primary source enhancers handled the drums and playback – for synth, piano, shaker and tambourine, among other noises and effects – which arrived digitally to Izzo via MADI. "I do snapshots for every song,





little changes in EQ, and a couple of fader moves, working and accenting the vocals and guitars when required. Other than that, the mix is mostly static," he explained, paying homage to the wider crew. "Fundamentally, the band play well, they're great guys off stage, and the crew are equally as brilliant."

Audio Crew Chief and System Engineer, Christian Pearson, oversaw the Clair Global team and package for the band, as well as handling system design and optimisation of the PA. "This system is an L-Acoustics rig, throughout the various design iterations it has altered a couple of times, based on the size of the room," he noted.

The arena package saw the inclusion of K2 loudspeakers for the main side rear hangs, flown and ground stacked KS28 subwoofers, supplemented by d&b audioteknik A10 and A15 loudspeakers as 'utility' fills.

"This setup has worked great for us. We've had a few stadium dates with more traditional K1 hangs with delay towers of K2, which has also sounded impressive," he remarked, harnessing L-Acoustics Soundvision software for the system optimisation, tuning and measurement process.

"Every room sounds different, which is something Charlie [Izzo] and I must overcome; we spend a great deal of time ensuring there is not an unhappy seat in the house. The O2 can be a challenging venue; there are some spots

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Brian Diaz, Backline/Bass Technician for Mark Hoppus of Blink-182

where the sound wants to bounce around the floor, but we've managed to solve that problem."

Monitor Engineer, Ray Jeffrey, mixed the band on a DiGiCo SD5 console with Wisycom, the in-ear monitoring system of choice. "This setup is great because we can take it around the world, get the support we need from Clair Global, and it has performed exceedingly well. I use a Rupert Neve Designs 5045 primary source enhancer to help take some of the room

out of the equation," he added, detailing the approach to mixing. "Each guy's in-ear mix is different. Mark requires a full mix; Tom requires guitar on top and Travis likes a click track with everything else layered underneath. Both Mark's and Travis' are at fixed volume."

DPA Microphones, a favourite of the engineers, made up the bulk of the microphone package. "We have DPA Microphones everywhere which is a preference of Charlie and I. Around 95% of the microphones on



stage are DPA – they're small, sound great, are reliable and they look stylish," he stated, highlighting some of his favourite moments of the set.

"*Stay Together for the Kids* is my favourite song on the setlist – the chorus rips and production values are incredible. The room always erupts during that part of the show. I often find myself waking up with some of the new tracks in my head each day."

Pearson chimed in: "We find ourselves air drumming a lot!"

'THIS IS THE BEST ITERATION OF BLINK-182 YET'

"Although my history with Mark [Hoppus] goes back about 20 years, I'd never toured with Blink-182," Backline Technician, Brian Diaz said, assuming the role of Bass Technician for Mark Hoppus, following the passing of Robert Ortiz, who he paid tribute to. "Having seen them live multiple times over the years, I and many others believe this is the best sounding iteration of Blink-182 yet."

Diaz maintained seven bespoke Fender Jaguar bass guitars and one particularly iconic Precision bass guitar. "All the necks of his bass guitars have jazz necks, and they are extremely comfortable. I'd never really played Fender

Jaguar bass guitars before and now I'm so used to them, I want to change all the necks on my bass guitars at home," he said, detailing the custom artwork of each bass.

"All of them have 'one of a kind' custom artwork. The 'P' bass is pink with skulls and is affectionately referred to as 'Skully' – he has used that guitar since the '90s. I believe it's been in almost every music video and is more famous than me!" he exclaimed, jokingly.

"I enjoy the whole set but *Up All Night* and the newer track, *Dance with Me* are highlights of mine. Hearing European crowds chant 'olé' during the chorus of *Dance with Me* is spine tingling," he recalled, giving props to the band.

"Blink-182 are very crew forward and make sure everyone is taken care of; they know everybody's names in the crew, and they'll regularly call them out on stage for doing a great job. Mark often comes into catering to hang out with us, which is cool, and it looks like they are having the time of their lives on stage and the crowd are loving every minute."

'A FIERY FINALE'

"We have airbursts, confetti, flames, lasers, pyrotechnics, and streamers... There's a lot going on," SFX Operator, Tiffany Watson explained. "The special effects and lasers on

Monitor Engineer, Ray Jeffrey alongside FOH Engineer, Charlie Izzo with Audio Crew Chief and System Engineer, Christian Pearson; Stage Manager, Philip Riehl; Lead Rigger, Nicholas Purcifull; Backline/Bass Technician, Brian Diaz.



this show are split evenly across the setlist. Towards the end of the set, the intensity is ramped up, building to a fiery finale with lots of flames and pyrotechnics."

Of the 26-strong setlist at London's O2 Arena, 15 songs featured an array of special effects – namely, *Anthem PT2* (pyrotechnics and flames), *Family Reunion* (pyrotechnics and streamers), *Up All Night* (CO₂), *More Than You Know* (flames), *Aliens Exist* (CO₂ and lasers), *Happy Holidays* (flames), *Stay Together* (pyrotechnics), *Always* (lasers), *Down* (pyrotechnics), *I Miss You* (lasers), *Ghost on the Dance Floor* (lasers), *What's My Age Again?* (airbursts), *First Date* (pyrotechnics and flames), *All the Small Things* (lasers), and *Dammit* (pyrotechnics, confetti, and airbursts).

"My favourite moment of the set is *Happy Holidays*, because it's a flame solo – meaning it's our time to shine," declared Watson, who gleefully triggered pyrotechnics using a Fire 1 cue firing system, with lasers triggered

by Crew Chief and Laser Operator, Joey Atkinson using Pangolin BEYOND software and everything else via Watson's MA Lighting grandMA3 console. "I really like working with the band because I can see they are always looking and checking they know where to be," Watson noted.

The wider SFX crew featured Technicians and Spotters, Steve Lewis, and Laura Martin. "It's a very good tour to be on," Watson concluded. "I'm surrounded by a great crew and the band is awesome. During the show, the band acknowledges the hard work of the crew and that really goes a long way..." ●

www.blink182.com
www.backroom.co.uk
www.beatthestreet.net
www.clairglobal.com
www.flybynite.co.uk
www.sgpsshowrig.com
www.solotech.com
www.strictlyfx.com
www.traskhouse.com

SFX Operator, Tiffany Watson; Solotech Lighting Crew Chief, Kevin Chan with Lighting Designer, Griffin 'Griff' Dennen; Automation Operator, Daniel Sturman; Video Engineer, Mark Gonzaba with Solotech Video Crew Chief, Marshall Blair.