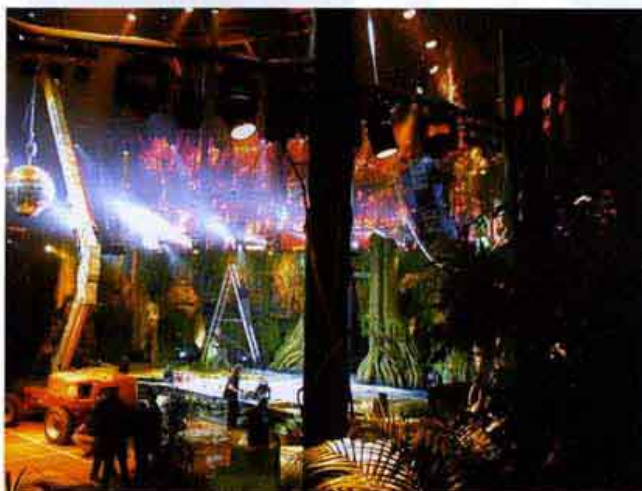


## productionprofile



# one wedding and a rainforest

London's venerable Roundhouse Theatre has seen it all over the years, from Jimi Hendrix to the Sex Pistols; from Godspell to, earlier this year, the Swedish streetdance extravaganza Bounce. But never in their lifetime have those old bricks witnessed anything like this: a lavish wedding reception set in a lush tropical rainforest... complete with live macaws!

It was a wedding reception like no other, and with no expense spared. Topping the entertainment laid on for the 270 guests was Cirque du Soleil, the cast of Disney's *The Lion King*, Kool & The Gang and Sir Elton John. It all makes the average cake-cutting ceremony and a best man's bad jokes seem just a mite stale.

The groom had set his heart on giving his wife-to-be a wedding party second to none. It was, according to the national press, the most expensive private wedding reception ever thrown in the UK.

Enter production company Banana Split and a brace of other top names from the production world. Banana Split's brief was to recreate an impressively realistic rainforest within the Roundhouse, setting the stage for the party of a lifetime. Banana Split's Alan Scoley explained that the couple had recently returned from a rainforest holiday, and wanted the company to elaborate on that theme.

He said: "The entertainment was quite special. We had acts in their first time off a West End stage;

we brought artists from Canada. DJs from Paris and bands from America. There were lots of meetings and we were trying to work within what the artists required, in particular stage sizes, to make sure they were all comfortable with the space they were going to work in, and to accommodate the right number of tables for 270 guests."

On arrival at the Roundhouse, guests ascended a long flight of steps amid lush, backlit undergrowth leading up from Chalk Farm Road to the venue's main entrance. Inside, they found themselves in a reception bar — or rather, a cave, designed and built of sculptured polystyrene by Supotco, separated from the main area of the room by a 10m high waterfall.

When dinner was announced, the waterfall stopped: a bridge was lowered on chain motors and guests were invited into the main area. Here, they found themselves wandering through the rainforest itself, the venue's inner ring of cast iron pillars encased in polystyrene tree trunks, surrounded by more tree trunks and verdant foliage, with the dinner tables in

amongst it all.

On stage, the set again consisted of tree trunks, backed by a huge painted rainforest backdrop which proved perfect for the *Lion King* numbers and a central reveal for Sir Elton's piano at the top of the show. Set design was by Walter Damus at Supotco, with foliage supplied by the Living Pot Company.

#### LIGHTING

With a brief to go for all-out quality, Banana Split brought in Vari-Lite Europe. Attila Keskin had been appointed as LD for the event, and he specified a rig of conventional and automated lighting to cope with theming, jungle and stars alike, the intelligent lighting comprising 48 VL6Cs, 12 VL2402s, six VL2416s, 18 VL5Arcs and 72 VL5 luminaires.

Outside, a pair of PIGI projectors from ETC scrolled rainforest imagery on the Roundhouse wall, while the entrance lighting consisted of Source Four Pars. The reception cave featured a large uplighting system projecting abstract breakup gobos. With three



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circular trusses, rigged by Outback, the lighting design was split into stage and room area washes, with the whole rig brought together for Cirque du Soleil, and with the VL6C luminaires on the central dancefloor during the DJ sets, used to create large looks for the two Lion King numbers.

Twenty-eight 4-cell cyc floods lit the stage backdrop, and each table was individually pinpointed. At the perimeter of the room — and on each tree truck — Source 4 Pars uplit in different tints of green and amber.

Keskin, who ran the show from a Whole Hog II with Expansion Wing, commented: "It was the first time I'd used the VL2402. I was very impressed with their speed and intensity, and I used them to provide extra options of colour washes. I used the VL2416s as specials — we had quite a high trim height at 13m and the 2416s were great for firing long throw colour washes on to the dancefloor and a front wash onto the stage."

VL5Arc luminaires were rigged at balcony level at the base of the backdrop, and used to throw extra colour on to it, as well as the effect of sunlight streaming through from the back of the stage. A pair of 240kW Lightning Strikes and 12 Diversitronics 3KW strobes delivered lightning effects to accompany a rainstorm near the end (yes, a rainstorm), while another 'special' was the flying in of a four foot mirrorball, followed on its descent by a lighting sequence using the VL6C luminaires.

Said Keskin: "The whole set was generally very lush, and it gave us the opportunity to have some lovely, rich colours." What else? "Well, there were the parrots and macaws — which liked to stay up in the rig — and three 'snake girls' who were wrapped around ropes, and pole dancers."

Outback's rigging began on the Monday with everyone else arriving the day after. A minimal amount of rehearsal time was offset for Keskin by three days of pre-programming in Vari-Lite's WYSIWYG suite: "It was invaluable from my perspective and saved a lot of time," said Keskin.

#### SOUND IN THE ROUND

Forefront Audio was contracted to provide the party sound and brought in a Funktion One Resolution Series system, overseen by Jim Mills and John Newsham from a scaffold tower hidden behind the jungle.

There was a main left and right PA comprising three understage F218 subs and four flown Resolution 4s a side, while raised table areas were served by Resolution 2 outfills either side, along with two more Res 2s in the bar, delayed at times, with various effects and matrixes running. MiniDisc-sourced insect noises and jungle sounds. These were also piped into small d&b speakers high in the truss and in the main entrance.

Sir Elton John, after a typically grand entrance, had his classic piano set-up and performed a pair of

songs with Kiki Dee, before the grand finale with the full cast of The Lion King, followed by the DJ with a percussionist.

Newsham said there was plenty to keep the team — and the guests — occupied: "When the waterfall parted and the bridge came down there was thunder through every speaker; at other times we had a live Polynesian band, the DJs, a live flute player on a lavalier radio mic, playback for Cirque du Soleil, and Kool & The Gang, who were fully live and miked up."

Out of sight of the main area, they used a pair of delayed Turbosound TXD530s as nearfield monitors, running an XTA SiDD unit for delay, EQ and compression. GPA Hire's Howard Smart mixed monitors.

Amplification was via QSC PL4s PL2HBs and PL1.8 PowerLights, with two XTA DP224s for the main system and DP226 crossovers for the Res 2s. Since the crossovers and amp racks were dotted around the building, XTA's AudioCore enabled the team to set up the crossovers from a laptop at the mix position. Mixing was done on a Yamaha PM4000 and, said Newsham, "We needed every input, output, matrix and subgroup!"

Alan Scoley concluded: "It was an amazing occasion and the couple and their guests had a wonderful time. The Roundhouse made the perfect setting for the party and it was great to see it transformed into somewhere from another continent."