



## Industry Profile: Steve Lemon

— Jane Cohen and Bob Grossweiner

Award-winning veteran concert/event production professional Steve Lemon has done it all, from theatrical presentations to film production to concert tour, stage and production management to special events to general contracting to industrial and trade show management.

Everyone has to start somewhere. For Steve, it was as a lighting designer in 1973 for Miss Joanie's Dance Studio in El Cajon, Calif. His non-touring experience includes master carpenter, property master and rigger from 1976-1982 for clients such as the San Diego Opera, Old Globe Theater, San Diego Symphony, and San Diego Sports Arena. He's come a ways since then, and since 1989, has been specializing in large-scale event planning and execution. Among his large-scale event projects are the New York Times Square New Year's Eve Ball Drop in 1996 (production coordinator / general contractor), the 1996 Summer Olympic Games - AT&T Global Olympic Village and the General Motors World of Motion Pavilion, Centennial Olympic Park (project manager/general contractor).

Steve, who started Guns N' Roses' current tour as their production manager, but handed it off to fellow production vet Patrick Whitley ("too much time on the road for me lately"), is also president and managing director of Live 4 Live, Inc., a full service production company specializing in large scale event planning and management. "Live 4 Live Inc.'s role is to facilitate the needs of the client through any or all of the eight phases of a project," says Steve. They are: Concept Development; Design Development & Budgeting; Fabrication & Construction; Installation; Operation, Maintenance & Touring; Demolition & Disassembly; Warehousing, Storage & Asset Management; Final Settlement & Event Recap.

Prior to GNR, Steve was out with Aerosmith from 2000-2002. In 2000, a very busy year for Steve, he served as tour manager (Oscar De la Joya), project manager (Diamond Jubilee - Perry Farrell), live event production manager (Experience Music Project (EMP) and Funk 2000 - L.A. Forum), staging supervisor (Steven Spielberg's "Artificial Intelligence" - Flesh Fair), staging coordinator (Voice of a Child and Wave Loch - Portable Wave), event manager (Riverside Orange Blossom Festival), project manager (StreamSearch.com - Internet Film & Music Awards - Playboy Mansion West), consultant (StreamSearch.com - MI2 Soundtrack Release Party - House of Blues, New Orleans) and general contractor, design and fabrication, event management (Stanford University Commencement Ceremony).

In 1999, he did production management for the Republican Governors Association and Day In The Garden in Bethel, N.Y.; live event production management for Ricky Martin's "Shake Your Bon Bon" video; project management (Film Aid - Refugee Relief Effort, Bosnia); and live event planning/management (iBASH / Pixelon, Inc. - 1999 Product Launch, Las Vegas). He was also a festival producer (The Millennium Show, Los Angeles) and concert producer (Rock 'n' Roll Marathon, San Diego).

In 1998, Steve worked with KISS as their production manager and also was project manager for the group's "Biggest Halloween Party On Earth at Dodger Stadium. He was also production manager for Day In The Garden (Woodstock '98); produced the Rock 'n' Roll Marathon in San Diego; served as a consultant (Marketing Entertainment Group of America); did concept development (L.A. Millennium Celebration / City Of Los Angeles Cultural Affairs Department); facility design consulting Enchanted Rock Studios in Austin, Texas; and entertainment development (Speed Zone Theme Parks / Malibu Entertainment Worldwide).

In '97, Steve was production and stage manager at the World Culture & Sports Festival in Washington, D.C.; was project manager for KISS' Roswell, N.M. project; did project coordination for AT&T Investment Analysts Presentation; worked on concept and design development and budgeting for the Rolling Stones' Project Babylon - "An Alternative Gathering " and for Landmark Entertainment Group - "Rolling Stones Experience." Steve was also production manager for Jon Bon Jovi's solo Japan tour.

Steve started the new year off in 1995 with Luther Vandross on tour in Europe. Following that he worked for a year and a half (May 1995- November 1996) as project manager / general contractor for the Summer Olympic Games in Atlanta at AT&T Global Olympic Village and the General Motors World of Motion Pavilion in Centennial Olympic Park, before closing out 1996 as production coordinator / general contractor for the New York Times Square New Year's Eve Ball Drop.

1994 marked the 25th anniversary of Woodstock, and Steve was employed as project manager / production coordinator. That same year, he also provided design and production consulting for The Meadows Amphitheater in Connecticut and as production manager for The Artist Formerly Known As Prince.

In 1993, he combined the world of pop music and sports, touring as production manager for Janet Jackson and as production coordinator for the Legends of Soccer Tour. In 1992, Steve found himself on U2'S Zoo TV tour as utility production manager and as tour manager for John Mellencamp, a holdover from the previous year. That same year, Steve was Skid Row's production consultant and Scorpions production manager.

In 1990, Steve rang the new year in as event coordinator in Tokyo at a New Year's Eve Festival, site coordinated for Bon Jovi and production managed Cher. In 1989, he was project manager / production coordinator at the Moscow Music Peace Festival that featured artists like Bon Jovi, Scorpions, Ozzy Osbourne and Motley Crue, and also provided site coordination, special effects, production/set design and rigging for Bon Jovi as he did in 1998. In '87, he started working with Bon Jovi in special effects and as a rigger.

In 1986, Steve provided project coordination for probably his biggest at the time - Diana Ross' wedding in Romanmotier, Switzerland. He also went out with Ozzy Osbourne as a production manager and set designer. In '85 Steve was production manager Tears For Fears and Diana Ross as well as providing stage management for Ross. Shifting to corporate work, he was producer / production coordinator for IBM National Marketing Division - Recognition programs: Miami, New Orleans, Kaaanapali Maui, Westerfield Quitt Productions Limited. Steve was also a rigger for Don Henley.

From 1981-82 and again in '84, Steve went out with Van Halen as advance production manager and rigger. He worked on Diana Ross' 1983-84 tour as a rigger and in '84, Steve worked with Hall & Oates as advance production manager and rigger and a rigger on Air Supply. He also rigged on Eric Clapton's 1981 tour.

Steve has been well recognized for his work. Among his industry accolades is being named an AT&T 100, AT&T's highest honor acknowledging the top one 100 individuals involved in The 1996 Atlanta Centennial Olympic Games for their performance, dedication and commitment to excellence, as recognized by Robert Allen (CEO, AT&T) and William Porter Payne (CEO, Atlanta Committee for the Olympic Games). Steve was also recognized by his peers twice in 1989 as a Performance Magazine industry award winner -- Site Coordinator of the Year for his work on the Moscow Music & Peace Festival and Innovation of the Year for designing Bon Jovi's arena catwalk. He was also a Performance nominee for Set Designer of the Year in 1989 and for Production Manager of the Year in 1994. He was also nominated for Pollstar Production Manager of the Year 2001, and in 2002, as Tour Manager of the Year by PLSN.

Steve is also an active participant in industry organizations. He served on the board of directors of ESTA (Entertainment Services and Technology Association), an ANSI accredited organization regulating procedures, standards and practices in the entertainment industry, from Jan. 1, 1997 to Dec. 31, 1999.

Using his entrepreneurial skills, Steve has started several businesses: Da Voiba Imaging, Inc., a design and image consulting firm; Innovents, LLC, an event production and consulting group; LEMCO Entertainment Services, supplier of crowd barriers to facilities and companies in the entertainment industry; and Atlas Production Services, Inc., a theatrical and arena rigging service and supply company.

### **In recent years, what have been some of the production industry trends?**

The continued corporatization of the industry, now more than ever, businessmen are requiring production and tour management to legitimize the way we do business. While difficult at times to apply, this is a good thing in the big picture because it is forcing all to achieve and adhere to certain standards. Now, we production managers are compared to one another openly and regularly by promoters, buildings and managers. This isn't a one-way street though. It also forces the buildings and promoters to be compared openly and thus creates a standard there too.

In addition, I'm growing concerned over promoters in some secondary and tertiary markets who are responsible to a larger entity for being their own profit center, but they are (apparently) being forced to "take a hit for the team" on losses and not allowed to share in the profits of the "home run" markets. I'm sure there is a grand scheme that explains it all, but this bothers me.

As the years are passing us by, we are seeing more and more of the people who during the "golden age of rock n roll" helped make this business what it is, pass away. Those of us who are now referred to as "old school" remember and grieve those losses and must look into the mirror and consider our own mortality. As we are all growing old here in the business, we will see an increasing amount of our friends, associates and colleagues pass on in the years ahead.

**How do you deal with stress on the road?**

I work out, and if that isn't enough I try to remember I can only be responsible for the things under my control.

**You have worked both in the corporate and concert worlds. How are they similar?**

For starters, the people working in each of the two worlds think the other one is the place they want to be. The concert world is developing in a corporate direction right now, especially since the arrival of publicly held corporations- CCE, Sanctuary and so on. There are some good things coming out of it like policies and processes. At times I really enjoy learning more about the business of business, it's fascinating to me. At other times I cannot imagine how anything gets done. I enjoy corporate work. I give good boardroom. I enjoy concert work because it is "the fire that modern people dance around" as Joe Perry said. Similarities? It's now more about the money and less about the craft.

**You've been both a tour manager and production manager. Which do you enjoy more?**

I want the control of the tour manager and the role of the production manager. I love tour management because you're in control, you live in a world where there is no black and white- just different shades of gray and this makes it fun and sporting day in day out provided you are given the latitude to run the tour as you see fit. In production there is black and white, something fits or it doesn't, something comes in budget or it doesn't, the people who work for you (or rather you work for) are self-starters with their eye on the ball. I think I would have to take production management over tour management if forced to make a choice. Who wants to be Ike when they can be Patton?

**Your industry prediction for the next five years**

Kids today are growing up in a "cut and paste" world. Everyone who can afford it has a set of protocols and is mixing music in their bedroom or their garage. They know that all they have to do is get the guitar riff or vocal track just once, then copy and paste the rest of the song- or worse they rip it off another successful song. Great, but live they cannot play the music they just recorded and sold to their fans! No problem, they're in the record company "mill" now so all is great right? Since they can't play their own music, they sample it into their live performance. Once the fans figure out that the band whose music they love cannot even play it, they lose interest and presto -- one hit wonder, career over. I predict there will be a movement back to original, authentic music that fans will respect and appreciate for all the right reasons. Artists need to practice the craft of their chosen career because fans are smart and "everyone who can afford it has a set of protocols".

**First industry job**

Lighting designer for Miss Joanie's Dance Studio in El Cajon, Calif., 1973.

**Career highlights**

Rigging a 150 ft wide and 250 ft long Bon Jovi catwalk in Giants Stadium; producing the Moscow Music Peace Festival; Woodstocks '94 and '99; 1996 AT&T Global Olympic Village in Atlanta; meeting Johnny Cash.

**Career disappointment(s)**

I missed out on some rites of passage like club tours with baby bands on mini budgets. I did the low-budget thing in the theater while growing up but not on tour as an adult.

**Greatest challenge**

The AT&T Global Olympic Village in Centennial Olympic Park in Atlanta for the 1996 summer Olympic games. That project demanded a massive integration of paradigms rarely required of us today, like playing 12 games of 3D chess simultaneously.

**Best business decision**

To try a lot of different jobs in the business. It's easier to stay working and you gain an appreciation for what others go through.

**Best advice you received**

"Hey kid, an actor has to eat too you know. I suggest you try working in the shop and learning something new this next show"

**Best advice to offer**

Find a job you like and you'll never work a day in your life

**Most memorable industry/tour experience**

When I was on tour with Ozzie, I had cold chills in 1986 while standing in the box where Hitler gave speeches in Nuremberg and realizing that the immense granite monument-like parade grounds had been built a mere 50 years ago.

**What friends would be surprised to learn about you**

I'm a stress addict

**Industry pet peeve**

It's getting harder to find people of honor and dignity in this business.

**Office paraphernalia**

Fork, back-scratcher, Far Side calendar, magic 8 ball, antenna ball collection, Yoda puppet, voodoo doll, 10 lb. Shackle, 15 lb. nut & bolt, monster size tie wrap.

**If I wasn't doing this, I would be...**

At worst, following the elephants with a shovel, but I'd still be in show business!

**Industry mentor(s)**

No names but one is a teacher, one a promoter, one a manager one a golfer.

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