

# ▲ *Mayhem Festival* Scorcher

**Korn LD Jason Bullock Helps Turn Up the Heat in Texas**

ALL PHOTOS BY STEVE JENNINGS

By Morgan Loven

Jim Lenehan's set design for Korn included pump jacks and derricks built by Accurate Staging.

Jason Bullock

It's hot. No, not just hot, it's scalding. It's baking. It's miserably, intensely, enormously, horribly, hot! It's Dallas in August. The mercury has hit 110 and it's still climbing. On the Superpages.com Center's outdoor stage for the Rockstar Mayhem Festival, Jason Bullock, LD for Nine Inch Nails, Slayer, and now Korn (among others) is searching for somewhere that's dark and cool to hang out before the show.

The stage, which Korn's headline act will share with Five Finger Death Punch, Lamb Of God, and Rob Zombie, is out. It's covered with gear, (the lighting portion includes Martin MAC 2000 Wash fixtures, MAC 301 LED Wash fixtures, Atomic Strobes, Barco/High End Systems Showgun 2.5s, Coemar LEDPars, and some Philips/Color Kinetics Colorblaze 72 LED strips) guitars, pyro, and the industrial strength fans that are nonetheless losing the battle against the mid-afternoon heat.

Overhead in the rig (the flying portion of which was designed by one of Bullock's early mentors, Richard "Nook" Schoenfeld) the rising heat is baking fixtures which include MAC 700 Profiles, MAC 2000 Wash fixtures, Coemar Infinity Wash fixtures and some custom designed (for NIN's 2009 tour) retinal assault in the form of big squares of 144 5-watt white narrow beam LEDs called "Headlights."

Bullock finally settles for the relative cool of the tour bus, knocking off another couple degrees with an icy, adult beverage. He knows he needs to save his energy. Korn's show is an aggressive and ambitious display of hard hitting, in-your-face rock, and Bullock matches the band hit for hard-hitting hit.

**Break a Leg**

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As a teen, Bullock was drawn to theatre and music, and attended a high school with, according to him, "a great performing arts department." Recovering from a broken leg his freshmen year gave Bullock the perfect

chance to become the go-to guy for the newly installed lighting system in the school theatre.

"I was the geek sent to the booth to figure out the new toys," he says ruefully. Unsurprisingly, Bullock found in the "toys" a love and passion for the technical side of entertainment. After three semesters of college, Bullock decided the best way to really learn the business was by actually working in the business.

He left school and began looking for a job doing what he loved. "It was months and months of resumes and interviews for an 18-year-old kid," he says. "During this time I was working with Jim Macpherson of SK Light Shows in Syracuse, N.Y. and National Audio run by Mark Gummer in Baldwinsville, N.Y. "I was doing lighting and sound (mixing monitors at the time), getting real experience and, more importantly, making enough money to live on. Finally, I got a call from Dan English at Morpheus lights asking me to come interview." Bullock got the job at Morpheus.

"Three days later, I flew out to California, and seven days after that, I moved from New York to San Jose, and suddenly I was really a lighting guy in training. My days at Morpheus I remember fondly. Working at a place that builds its own gear affords opportunities that you just can't get anymore. So my geekiness really was given a place to flourish. All of the people there took an interest in my enthusiasm for lighting. Like any other shop, though, there are times you just want to walk away and not come back for one more day of this crap. But if you do, the door to the future closes."

Bullock persevered, always keeping his goal to be a designer in mind. "Finally, I went out on tour. I was with some of the best teachers you could ever have. I was mentored by Nook Schoenfeld. He took me from being a tech to working as a programmer. During this time, I met and worked for some of my

still-favorite people; Michael Ledesma, Nick Sholem, and programmers like David Chance. Eventually, I moved from Morpheus to Lighting Technologies in Atlanta. Then, after a few years there, and finally getting my first LD gig (311), I moved on to Upstaging after Lighting Technologies merged with LSD. At Upstaging, I continued to work with Nook, and began to work with John Huddleston, John Bahnick and Chuck Spector. To this day, Upstaging is still the company where I've been made to feel the most welcome, and it has always been like a family to me."

**From NIN to Korn**

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The Korn tour came about through a connection he made while Bullock was working with NIN. "Korn is managed by the same people who manage Jane's Addiction," he explains. "I've been working with them since they toured with NIN in the summer of 2009. NIN first began back in 2000 on the *Fragility 2.0* tour. Roy Bennett, programmer Rob Smith, and myself redesigned and programmed a system in four days in Cleveland. After the first show, I was left to direct the U.S. and following European festival leg. Fast forward to 2007, I was going to direct a tour for then-designer Paul Normandale. Due to scheduling conflicts, I was asked to take over the performance 2007 tour for NIN. I continued to run Roy's designs and later some of my own for Trent [Reznor of NIN]. This became one of the most influential times in my career, since I was working with some of the best music and best designers in the industry."

The preproduction for Korn's performances on the Mayhem Festival tour was short. "I went to Upstaging and spent about two days putting in a framework for the festival. We then flew out for one night of rehearsal in California before the first show. It wasn't anywhere near enough, but the reality is you must make do with what you're given — whether it be five minutes or a month — you must figure out a way to allot your time to get

the programming setup that allows you to create a show."

Fortunately the band was already familiar with Bullock's work, and he with theirs, as Bullock had just finished work on a 70 minute HDnet shoot with the band playing in the middle of a giant crop circle. Bullock makes efficient use of his prep time and turns out an intricate show that looks as if someone spent weeks on it rather than a matter of hours. Every hit is taken, every hit is motivated, turning the Jim Lenehan-designed set by turns from an in-your-face blast of power and light to a deep and moody nighttime scene, as if painted by a Renaissance master. Huge set pieces in the shape of oil rigs loom ominously in a sea of tiny lights.

**Showtime**

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At showtime, Bullock pours every bit of his own energy into his lights. "I've literally seen Jason stage dive off the desk," says ChamSys product specialists Esteban Caracciolo. Watching Bullock run the show in Dallas, that claim is easy to believe. He is now known for his high energy presence at FOH, working his favorite cherry-red board.

"I've worked on a lot of consoles," says Bullock. "I can sit down at just about anything and create a show I can use. For me personally the ChamSys works for my style — a lot of key short cuts, a straight, streamlined OS that is fast, reliable, and powerful. It's got great people writing the software, Chris Kennedy in particular. And it has a combination of features that aren't available anywhere else."

In terms of programming, Bullock stresses the importance of accuracy as well as speed. "You need to be sure that the buttons you press are achieving what you are seeking. Going along with that, you need to know what you want to program before you start, otherwise there is a lot of wasted time trying to get your brain up to speed with what is going on around you."

## Adding to the Mayhem: Other Festival Perspectives

Here are some excerpts from others who helped orchestrate the Mayhem Festival tour featuring Korn and Rob Zombie. They were interviewed by writer/photographer Steve Jennings. For an expanded view of these perspectives, please visit [www.plsn.com/mayhem](http://www.plsn.com/mayhem).

### Nook Shoenfeld, Mayhem Production Designer

"The sheer size of the set designs took a lot of advance work. Jim Lenahan designed a beautiful replication of an oil field on fire. Getting 25-foot tall oil derricks with matching pumps onto any stage is a struggle, especially if it's a co-headline bill. Obviously, Zombie did not wish to play in front of someone else's set, so it was my job, along with [stage manager John] Firpo, to figure out a way to get all the stuff on stage in a 25-minute set change. The same goes for the giant video wall Zombie wanted to use. I couldn't just leave it hanging in front of Korn's custom designed LED strewn back-

drop. So I end up playing with a giant jigsaw puzzle on numerous CAD programs until I find a way for it all to fit and make everyone happy."

### Jim Lenahan, Korn Set Designer

"The requirement from the band was that the set be a burning oil field. Now that's something I can take and run with. The textures of old, dirty, industrial equipment were the first thing that came to my mind. I love textural scenery. The three pieces I wanted to include, which to me are emblematic of the oil industry in a visual sense, are oil derricks — the old fashioned kind in particular — pump jacks with a rising and falling motion.

"Accurate Staging built the set on a very tight schedule and this way they only had to create the cross braces and platform at the top. The derricks had to be on fire for much of the show, so Show FX installed copper tubing up the center of the two derricks and propane tanks at the bottom to create a 25-foot-tall flame.

"Each pump jack has a variable speed electric motor and a well head into which a pipe fits. A larger diameter pipe section sleeves over this pipe and slides up and down giving the illusion that the pipe is actually dropping into the well. Both the derricks and the pump jacks were scenically painted by Heidi Luest for Accurate Staging. The rust textures and dripping shades of red and brown were my favorite part of the pieces.

"Finally, the backdrop was custom made by Sew What? Inc. It's a piece of art I created out of many different photographic sources, primarily of chemical plants. I manipulated all this in Photoshop, then made a huge digitally printed version which was cut out, then sewn to scrim by Sew What?.

"In addition they sewed a couple hundred LED lights into the drop where lights might be on a refinery — catwalks, etc. Tubes were run up the back of the digital pieces and connected to two manifolds at the bottom. Two smoke machines were fed into the manifolds so that smoke rose

from the tops of the towers. Behind this a white cyc, hung so that lighting designer Jason Bullock could silhouette the spires of the refinery for yet another effect. It made for a very 3-D image.

### Damian Rogers, LD & Lighting Director for Rob Zombie

"Rob and I have been collaborating for almost six years, so I know what he wants, and that makes my job easier. I can appreciate his artistic tendencies. Each year we create an even better look than the previous year. The first time I met Rob, he asked me if I liked spots. I told him 'No,' and his response was, 'Good, me neither.' I'm not a big fan of front spots, as I want complete responsibility and control over how the stage looks. I prefer to have the ability to use multiple fixtures, as Rob is very active on stage, playing in and out of light. He knows when he is lit, and I think spots would ruin the show and make him uncomfortable."



The crew juggled the big video wall for Rob Zombie with the oil derricks for Korn.



Propane tanks in the derricks fueled flames that rose 25 feet for Korn.

### A "Symbiosis Thing"

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As far as running the board, Bullock notes, "It's hard to watch myself objectively while running a show." (Search Youtube.com for "NIN lighting guy," however, and you'll notice that others have been doing that for him — and filming him in the process.) "I have my own way of expressing myself through my work I guess. Some people act and feel the way I do. But for that hour and a half I pour out my emotion and

my anger and my vision into a visceral format. People in the crowd feed off of that, the band feeds off that and I feed off the energy of the crowd and the band. It's a big symbiosis thing.

"Lighting without good music to work with doesn't really exist," Bullock continues. "You need to have clients like NIN and like Korn who are looking mainly for something they haven't already seen. They want to be doing what hasn't been done. When the artist sees the work you do for them and considers you a part of their

performance and onstage presentation, it's really satisfying. That, and those moments of connection between you, the artist, and the crowd sharing a feeling for one second. Searching for that infinity point is what drives me."

In Dallas it's nighttime now, and the afternoon heat has finally wandered off to bother someone else. The crowd has been here throughout the hottest parts of the day and, in spite of that, they are still going crazy. The energy coming from the stage is intense. The

combination of the music of Korn, nearly constant big pyro hits, and the relentless, insistent, dizzying display of lights has given the crowd exactly the outlet it needs to express everything it's been holding back for far too long. People are screaming themselves hoarse, drinking like fish, and raising their middle fingers to the world in general. The release is a relief, something important that can't be defined except to say that it's rock 'n' roll mayhem. **PLSN**



LD Jason Bullock changed the mood for Korn's fiery red looks with a cooler nighttime palette.

## 2010 Mayhem Festival Crew

**Lighting Co:** Upstaging Inc.

**Production Designer:**

Nook Shoenfeld

**Video Director:** Phil Keller  
(Delicate Productions)

**Video LED Technician:** Curtis Miller  
(Delicate Productions)

**Pyro Company:** Strictly FX

**For Korn**

**Lighting Designer & Director:** Jason Bullock

**Lighting Crew Chief:** T-Roy Smith

**Lighting Techs:** Blake "the Flake" Elkin, Jason Blaylock, James R. Harris, John Bailey

**Production Manager:**

Ray Picard

**Tour Manager:** John Reese

**Set Design:** Jim Lenahan (Jim Lenahan Production Design), Chris Kantowitz (Frank The Plumber)

**Rigger:** Kurtis Grossen

**For Rob Zombie**

**Lighting Designer & Director:** Damian Rogers (Gemini Stage Lighting)

**Lighting Tech:** John Bailey

**Set Designer:** Rob Zombie

**Production Manager:**

Mark Woodcock

**Tour Manager:** Sully "the Bull"