

Life On The Road

An interview with Touring Professional JR Sample



CTI: How did you get started in show business?

JR: My summer job during my junior and senior year in High school was at an Amphitheater (Blossom Music Center) located north of Akron, Ohio. This venue was the summer home of the Cleveland Orchestra during the weekends as well as rock shows during the week. My boss (Jack Lynch) was the lead supervisor for the orchestra and overall supervisor for backstage activities. I worked on the pavilion cleaning crew during the day and was a gopher for my boss during the shows at night. I would lock up at night and became acquainted with the house crew (I.A.T.S.E.# 48). The house crew introduced me to the Business Agent (also the supervisor at the Performing Arts Center in Akron) and that introduction led to a student job at the P.A.C. while I attended the University of Akron in the fall of 1977.



CTI: What was the first show you worked on?

JR: Boz Skaggs at Blossom Music Center, the first legit show as a local was "Mornings at Seven" Bus and Truck tour.

CTI: What was your path to a union card?

JR: While working at the University P.A.C., the Business Agent put me on the extra list. I worked as an extra during 1978 and was offered an Apprenticeship with local 48 in June 1979.



CTI: What was your first show on the road?

JR: The Ohio Ballet. The Ohio Ballet was a regional ballet company with the good fortune of having Tom Skelton as the Resident Lighting designer. I toured with them on three touring segments (6-14 weeks between 1979 & 1980) as well as when they were in residence in Akron. It was an amazing experience to have Mr. Skelton and/or Craig Miller out on tour. Mr. Skelton's ability to adapt and improvise at each venue was a valuable lesson for me in my career. My first yellowcard show was as an assistant electrician on the bus and truck tour of "*The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas*" (1982) working for American Theatre Productions (aka A.T.P. or Janco). Starting out on a bus and truck tour gave me an opportunity to be exposed to a wide variety of circumstances. Loading in and out as well as using different lighting instruments and carbon arc followspots: (Brenkert, Hall and Connolly, Metro, Genarco, Strong Touper, and Super Troupers).

CTI: What are the good, the bad, and the ugly about life on the road?

JR: Life on the road is not for everyone and if I didn't enjoy it I would not still be doing this 36 years later.

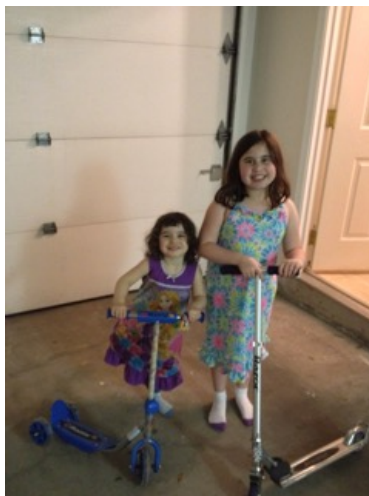


CTI: What is your favorite city to play?

JR: Top Ten – Boston, Cincinnati, Denver, Hartford, Pittsburgh, Portland, Seattle, St.Louis, Toronto, and Washington D.C.

CTI: Is there a show you would have liked to have toured with?

JR: Not Yet!



CTI: What was it like to take your kids on the road with you?

JR: There are quite a few that have done this before we did and we just try to make the best of each city and venue. We have been fortunate enough to be touring with "*The Lion King*" with longer performance schedule in each city. The saying "It takes a village" is so true. My better half Beth Bornstein is one of the Stage Managers with the tour and we navigate around our respective schedules to maintain a sensible home life.

CTI: What is your typical day on the road like for you, and for your family?

JR: We have the kids enrolled in an online school program based out of Ohio. Class runs from 8:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. They see the teachers four times throughout the day and answer questions via either a chat box or directly to the teacher. After class we get ready for work and make sure the everyday basics are taken care of for the kids. Generally on the first week of each city we have Beth's mom, Myrna Bornstein, travel with or meet us to watch the kids during the load-in.



CTI: What new lighting technology have you used recently?

JR: LED Moving lights, the High End Sola Spot, and LED S4 units.

CTI: How have the demands on lighting technicians changed during your career? Where do you see that going in the future? Has it gotten harder or easier on the crew?

JR: As technology has evolved the demands have gotten more complex, but the basic premise of moving a show is basically the same. It's the maintenance and repair area that has become more detailed and involved.

CTI: What advice would you give a young technician today?

JR: There is so much good information available via the internet and most of the manufacturers have increased the opportunity for exposure to the evolving technologies.

CTI: Do you have any other comments?

JR: I have a great appreciation and thanks for the people that helped me along this journey.

Akron: Peter Karas, Ric Stewart, Joe Sabo, Joe Schrieber, Tom Stewart, Lanny Glenn, Pat Donovan, Mike Stone, and Richard Hodges.

On the Road: Ric Stewart, James Janek, James Maloney Sr., James Maloney Jr., and Robert Feribach.

Lighting Shops: Steve Terry, Tom Ferguson, Martee Nuruddin, and Jeff Turner.