

TAKE THAT'S 'TOTALLY FAB' ARCH

SET CONSTRUCTION SPECIALIST UNDERTAKES MAJOR CUSTOM ENGINEERING PROJECT FOR TAKE THAT STADIUM SHOWS



Take That's arch erupts at Milton Keynes... with help from Le Maitre!



Not even the unavailability of Wembley Stadium could dampen the spirits of reformed boy band Take That as they relocated their two London summer outdoor shows up the traffic-infested M1 motorway to Milton Keynes National Bowl to perform to nearly 130,000 ecstatic fans over the weekend of June 24-25.

The dates, which were sandwiched in between other outdoor concerts at the City Of Manchester Stadium and the final show of their *Ultimate Tour 06* at Dublin's RDS Showground, saw their recent production upscaled to feature an incredible arch structure that was constructed by Total Fabrications, the company who serviced Take That's arena tour — as featured in our June issue.

The arch provided an elegant solution when redesigning the StageCo roof for just three venues proved out of the question for production manager Chris Vaughan. He said: "We added the stadium dates a week after the arena dates sold out, but we didn't want the outdoor show to look as if we'd just put our arena show on a festival stage."

Set designer Bill Laslett, having already wowed arena audiences with his perspex and metal citadel — replete with the cascading water finalé — excelled himself.

Said Vaughan: "Bill came up with this design of an arch with fingers coming off it and a circular catwalk, all of it being very stylised. I leapt at it because the word 'inflatable' was mentioned, suggesting low cost and easy set-up. But then, of course, LD Simon Tutchenor decided to have 55 lights on it, followed by the pyro guys who wanted to cover it in gerbs, so we immediately needed something far more industrial as a structure.

"What we've ended up with is something that weighs eight tons and measures 74m wide and 22m

high, and it's one-third the size of the Wembley Stadium arch. To be truthful, there was no intended pun on at Wembley's expense, but the similarity hasn't passed us by!"

"The concept is simple enough," explained project manager Chris Cronin of Total Fabrications Ltd. (TFL) who built Laslett's original extravagant set. "Essentially it's an absolutely enormous arch of truss that stands in front of the stage."

Cronin is not one to overstate his case, but "absolutely enormous" is a fitting description for a structure that dwarfed the StageCo stage behind it. "Scale is one thing," said Cronin, "but Chris Vaughan was insistent, this had to be fast and easy to rig; the arch couldn't become a millstone that dragged the tour down."

The arch was transported on three flat-bed trucks and required two 80 tonne cranes to lift into place. "It looks superb," said Vaughan. "It's beautifully engineered, and it's put together in eight foot sections and dismantles very easily.

"I brought Christopher 'Carrot' Harris in to look after the arch on behalf of production, because I needed someone with experience of heavy machinery, and also Steve Williams from Nippy Industries to manage the whole crane procedure and make the whole set-up theory a reality. It's totally fallen outside of the scope of rock'n'roll where even my own riggers have raised their eyebrows. It's big boys' toys — very exciting!"

From final design drawing to the first show in



Manchester, TFL had just three weeks to deliver the monumental arch. We calculate that a similar version, three times as large, would have taken Cronin's team just nine weeks to complete — perhaps the Sports Minister will take note!

Vaughan concluded: "The Total Fabs team have done a fantastic job of our arch... I just need a huge warehouse to store it now!"

Pictured above: From The Production Office — Keely Myers, Becky Vaughan, Chris Vaughan & Teresa Armitage at Milton Keynes. Inset: Show producer Kim Gavin.

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