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Feature Story

**TPN Corrals Eight-Ton Ballerinas or The Dancing Diggers**

By Leila McConnell, Account Manager  
and  
Allison DeLeone, Lead Project Manager  
The Production Network  
Seattle, WA

**UK-based J.C. Bamford Excavators, Ltd. (JCB) puts on quite a show.**

Eight-ton ballerinas are what Las Vegas' KLAS Channel 8 News called JCB's amazing "Dancing Diggers." During the 2005 ConExpo show, every hour on the hour, thousands of attendees gathered around a fenced corral to see the choreographed ballet and pyrotechnic show performed by eight-ton JCB backhoe loaders. However, the real attention grabber at the JCB booth was outside the corral-- it was the one of the largest outdoor temporary exhibit structures ever seen in North America.



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Seven years ago, TPN (The Production Network) was installing a custom booth the company had built for Genie Industries at the World of Concrete show. The JCB exhibit was across the aisle from the Genie booth. John Ellis, senior manager of JCB, was so impressed by the exhibit TPN had produced for Genie, he walked across the aisle and asked for the name of the company who built it. This was the beginning of a great relationship. TPN (a full service exhibit design, fabrication, and management firm based in Seattle) has now produced its third consecutive exhibit for JCB at ConExpo 2005.

The first step in planning for ConExpo was to create a winning design. Skylar Curl, TPN's account executive, engaged Michael Silva, designer, owner and principal designer of msilvadesign, Seattle, WA. Silva was thrilled to participate in the largest exhibit of his 15 years in the industry. Part of the excitement resided in the request from Curl to create something different and spectacular, something that would knock their socks off.

"That request was music to my ears," said Silva. "It's great to work with clients and partners like TPN that are so willing to think outside the box. It was a seamless and effective relationship which is rare, and an extremely positive and memorable experience working with TPN." Overcoming many design hurdles during the year-long project resulted in an impressive exhibit and a very pleased client.

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JCB's enormous building, configured by Silva and managed by TPN, was engineered and manufactured by the UK's Specialist Structures, and purchased by JCB primarily for shows in Europe. For ConExpo, the main floor of the structure housed a 2-story atrium reception lobby, and two custom-built curved staircases. A 32'-wide tunnel linked the front and back of the building a first for a structure of this kind. It was designed to draw the attendee from the reception area to the custom-finished retail store selling JCB toy equipment and memorabilia.

The expansive second floor was home to JCB's hospitality area, which included a full kitchen serving three-course meals three to four times per day with seating for 105 invited attendees. It also included a lounge area and an open air viewing deck complete with a canvas canopy (from Warp Corp., Seattle, WA) to block the sun and ceiling fans to keep the breeze going. Audio/visual central command, managed by Staging Techniques Inc.'s Seattle office, was also housed on the second floor where they oversaw production for the live Dancing Digger shows, the international press conference, multiple plasma screens, and the incredible LED screen provided by Los Angeles-based InnoVision.



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The third floor contained conference rooms, a VIP lounge with custom red Herman Miller furnishings and a private exterior viewing deck. Every surface was attended to and finished, and the final exhibit looked like it had been built to last much longer than the five-day show.

Outside of the structure, the booth also boasted a custom-built 4,450 square foot hand-made wooden deck permanently placed on a substructure. The crosshatch pattern deck wove between two of JCB's mini-machines, pre-placed before construction began, and surrounded fully half of the building. It was built by a ten man crew over two and a half nights and was meticulously sanded and stained prior to show opening.

TPN integrated services into the building that included a permanent-style HVAC system with the capacity to circulate 175 tons of air, 1200 amps of electrical power, track lighting throughout, high-speed internet access on all floors, a multi-line telephone system, and two fully functioning business offices with fax machines, copiers, computers and switchboards.

***"It's great to work with clients and partners like TPN that are so willing to think outside the box. ..."***

Over the course of 14 months, Allison DeLeone, TPN's lead project manager, and Kevin Carter and Robert Entenman, project managers, managed an amazing amount of detail surrounding a project of this size. Construction and engineering plans were created by TPN to submit for approval both in the UK and in Las Vegas. TPN worked closely with the Las Vegas Convention Center to supply the underground utility drawings for the parking lot. Overlaying the exact placement of the properties to ensure major utility lines would be avoided during anchoring, the LVCC approved the plans for drilling over 30 holes in their asphalt parking lot.

Steve Myers, from One Source Logistics, Minneapolis, MN, was contracted to oversee the shipping logistics of the building. Before shipping, each piece of the Specialist Structure was inventoried, cleaned, wrapped and packed into metal stillages according to installation order. The stillages were loaded into eight 40' overseas containers and shipped from England to Houston, TX. From Houston, the containers were trucked the final leg of their journey arriving at the Las Vegas Convention Center days before the installation began. Time was factored in to ensure that any delays while on the water or with customs could be absorbed without impacting the installation schedule.

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The learning curve for a crew setting up this structure for the first time is hours, not days. Unlike other systems, there are fewer parts and the elements come in standard shapes and sizes. The building can be a single story or multiple floors, with roof domes or a custom-designed roof. Replace the roof with a mesh ceiling and you can usually eliminate the need for sprinklers in most facilities. The structure is manufactured in aluminum and the walls are either glass or Sintra®, and can be easily replaced with alternate materials like Plexiglas® or wood.



N's Curl states, "I've been doing trade shows for almost 13 years. This is the most unique and versatile system I've ever seen. From the look you can get with this, to the set-up of it — hands down it is the best I've ever seen in this industry.... And the cost — I'll match it up against anything anyone would try to build. Dollar for dollar this wins every time!"

Nth Degree, Redmond,



WA, the labor manager and provider, met the trucks when they arrived in Las Vegas to begin the long process of erecting the exhibit. The TPN/Nth Degree relationship began many months

earlier, however. They worked together in the pre-planning process to ensure Nth Degree understood the intricate details of the structure and had the skill sets needed to build the entire exhibit efficiently and properly. The Nth Degree operations team, led by Steve Bigelow, put tremendous effort into planning the crew that would work more than 7,300 hours over a 32-day production period.

This project presented challenges because of its massive scope and outdoor location. Nth Degree pulled together an extensive group of specialists for work that is not usually required on the trade show floor, from drilling holes and pouring concrete into the ground, to industrial welding on the booth's graphic towers. The JCB project should be thought of more as a major construction project than an exhibit installation because of the magnitude of skills and people required to ensure its on-time completion. The close collaboration between Nth Degree and TPN allowed for seamless communication both as the project progressed minute-by-minute and through daily planning/update meetings. With such a strong working relationship and cooperation with TPN, Nth Degree was able to accelerate the timeline to finish the initial scope of the installation ahead of schedule.

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In addition to the building structure, multiple massive graphic towers were scattered throughout the booth space. Towering 30' in the air, they could be seen throughout the trade show area and from surrounding streets. TPN contacted Luis Ocampo, of Los Angeles-based Display Fabrication Group, to create the metal composite structures to house the graphics. "A big pile of rusted metal is what it looked like at the beginning as it lay on the production floor," stated Ocampo. "Knowing the size, scope, and expectations of the JCB project, the pressure was on. Before we knew it, we were now a metal shop and challenged to create a product that would be in compliance with the engineering requirements for the huge towers."

It took three full days to install the towers, which went in simultaneously with the building structure. Each tower leg was buried in a 3' x 5' hole bored into the asphalt, then encased in quick-dry concrete with no less than 4,500 psi. The towers were rated to withstand the 90 mph gust rates as mandated by the Las Vegas engineers. Each 30' tower weighed no less than three tons, with the largest weighing in at almost five tons. They were constructed of 12" steel I-beam uprights with steel horizontals and cross bracing, requiring a 20 ton crane to lift and hold them in place until the concrete dried. Because of the quick concrete drying time, teams were able to install two to three towers each day by assembling the individual steel pieces on the ground.



Each tower carried huge, seamless, vinyl graphic banners attached with individual bungees which would permit the graphics to fail should a 90 mph gust hit, preserving the integrity of the towers. All of the 100-plus stunning booth graphics used in the display were provided by Pictographics of Las Vegas.

JCB wanted their exhibit to convey the solidity of their company and be as meticulously detailed and well crafted as their machines. TPN created an extraordinary display that provided a venue for JCB to work in as if they were in their own dealer showrooms and offices. "The feedback from JCB made it all worthwhile," states Nth Degree's Steve Clark. "When JCB Chairman Sir Anthony Bamford walked through for an onsite inspection, he remarked, 'Brilliant.' That was music to the ears of the entire team who worked so hard to make the project a success." **eb**

**Additional People/Companies**

**Design**  
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**Pictographics**

**Specialist Structures LTD**

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<p><b>Drilling for towers (31)</b>  <b>Lamb Asphalt</b>                  2516 Losee Road                  North Las Vegas, NV 89030                  (702) 647-1600</p>	<p><b>AV Staging Techniques</b>  <b>Bryce Will</b>                  1120 W. Ewing St.                  Seattle, WA. 98119                  (206) 352-0300</p>
<p><b>Drayage etc.</b>  <b>GES Kevin Gibbs,</b>  <b>Operations Manager</b>                  7050 Lindell Road                  Las Vegas, NV 89118                  (800) 475-2098</p>	<p><b>LED Wall</b>  <b>Darren Moffett</b>  <b>InnoVision</b>                  3301 E. Hill St. #401                  Signal Hill, CA 90755                  (714) 745-4644</p>
<p><b>I-beam towers</b>  <b>Luis Campo,</b>  <b>Display Fabrication Group, Inc.</b>                  11200 Dana Circle                  Cypress, CA 90630                  (714) 373-2100</p>	<p><b>One Source Logistics</b>  <b>Steve Myers</b>                  109 27th Ave. N.E.                  Minneapolis, MN 55418                  (800) 591-4666</p>
<p><b>Viewing platforms</b>  <b>Jay Ritz,</b>  <b>Just for Show, Inc.</b>                  2548 W. Desert Inn Road                  Las Vegas, NV 89109                  (866) 587-8749</p>	<p><b>Martin &amp; Peltyn, Inc.</b>  <b>US Engineers for structure</b>                  1909 S. Jones Blvd.                  Las Vegas, NV 89146                  (702) 248-7000</p>

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