



Kevin Greenwood, founder/president  
Stage Tops USA  
Manchester, Tenn.  
[www.stagepostsusa.com](http://www.stagepostsusa.com)

A CLOSER LOOK AT ONE OF OUR MEMBERS

## On the world stage

by Jim Tarbox

When rocker Jon Bon Jovi was ready to tour South Africa, his stage designers called Kevin Greenwood. When the NFL Network was ready to set up its Super Bowl game-day studio in New York's Times Square, they called, as did *Vanity Fair* magazine for its annual Academy Awards party.

They all found him in the country outside Manchester, Tenn., a town of some 10,000 people and home of the annual Bonnaroo Music and Arts Festival and its 80,000 visitors. Bonnaroo calls Greenwood, too.

Not that he lacks modesty, but in the course of a conversation, Greenwood also name checks (among others) NBC News, Paul McCartney, Morehouse College and the Country Music Association. And having worked the Tribeca film festival in Doha, Qatar, for several years, he is now in negotiation for the 2022 World Cup in Doha.

### Connected worldwide

It's been a good gig for the former disc jockey who grew up in Portsmouth, England, and now spends half a year in the U.S. and half in Bulgaria with his wife, Bella. Greenwood dropped out of school at age 16 to go into radio in Denmark, worked for the BBC, and then turned it all over to move to the U.S. and work

backstage in the entertainment business. He founded Stage Tops USA (then called World Show International) in Los Angeles in 1996, but California proved to be too expensive, and after working at Bonnaroo and finding a rural community that reminded him of his English home, he moved his operation in 2006. From its rural headquarters, Stage Tops USA puts up its "soft goods" structures all over the world.

"The touring world uses more vinyl than any other industry," Greenwood says. "We had to learn this business by ourselves. I spent five years on the road to learn the structural side of the business; I talked to production managers, designers, local hands and riggers, just bugging them with questions about their jobs.

"It's a very hard job," he says. "You work bad hours, sometimes in bad weather, but the stuff has to go in and show has to go on. This year's Super Bowl was the worst weather I've ever had to work in; the wind chill was 22 below zero ... in Times Square. Outside the stadium, it was awful." He was delighted to note that next year's Super Bowl will be in Arizona.

Greenwood says he pretty much "fell into" the fabric business. And while DJ work proved to be less than fulfilling, it did

offer the opportunity to travel—one of the appeals of the business he's in today. In Los Angeles, he did a lot of movie and television work, but the events of 9/11, in addition to the high costs on the West Coast, had him looking around. Working Bonnaroo one year, he found his current home among the real-estate ads of a local newspaper while doing his laundry.

### Committed 24/7

Stage Tops USA's headquarters sit in a giant barn on a gravel road outside Manchester. There he can roll out the gigantic printed fabric panels that comprise the backdrops of his stages, as well as the banners that hang above them and the sidewalls that control windy conditions. He also provides the lighting for those stages. And the challenge of "custom shapes" is particularly inviting; "If you can imagine it, we can build it," Greenwood says.

Greenwood employs about a dozen people and hires "locals" as needed at various site locations, in addition to providing on-site maintenance and mobile repair.

"This is a full-time commitment—24/7," he says. "We're working when everyone else takes off. We did three shows over Memorial Day weekend." But he's not complaining. "I'm very fortunate to get to do this."

*Jim Tarbox is editor of Marine Fabricator and a regular contributor to the Review.*

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