

# Janet Jackson and zactrack on Together Again Tour

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Iconic American singer, songwriter, actress, and dancer Janet Jackson has just completed her “Together Again” major North American tour with tour direction, production design and technical direction by Eric Wade from Dallas, Texas-based Crossfade Design.

Eric has worked with the artist for two years, and he developed this show in collaboration with Jackson herself plus her long-term creative director, Gil Duldulao. Eric decided, together with his

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son Brandon who was on the road as lighting programmer & director, to implement a zacktrack SMART real-time tracking system for all the follow spotting requirements.



“We needed anything between 10 and 14 follow spots depending on the venue to ensure that Janet and her four primary dancers, who were integral to the show, were nicely lit and followed smoothly,” explained Eric.

This key requirement led them to make the investment in zacktrack.

Up to 25 Trackers were utilised on the show, with 10 active at any one time as the SMART system allows. Two each were used per person with the wardrobe department sewing special Tracker pockets into the costume shoulders which neatly concealed the devices.

A total of 26 moving lights were being used as zacktrack fixtures by the end of the tour, including 12 x Ayrton Perseo Profiles on the downstage truss, 8 Perseo Beams on the upstage truss, and six Clay Paky B-Eye LED wash fixtures on the mid-stage ladders.

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The flawless zactrack follow spotting was so successful for Janet Jackson's set, that a few shows into the tour her special guest star, rapper Ludacris, requested that the system was also deployed on his set!

Eric comments that "the ease and flexibility of being able to rotate Trackers and add or swap lights as needed is fantastic!"

In addition to the tour dates, they had a few private shows on the itinerary using a locally supplied lighting system. Brandon commented that it took him only about 15 minutes to integrate the tracking into the corresponding lights for these shows.

Before specifying zactrack on the tour, Eric utilized it on another large-scale show, after which he was fully confident it would work as envisioned for Janet Jackson.

He noted the "fantastic support and back up" from zactrack's exclusive North American distributor, ACT Entertainment, during the whole evaluation process and initial shows, mentioning

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that Aaron Hubbard in particular “was ever-present to answer all questions and offer solid advice.”

Eric highlights that a traditional follow spot set up would have needed more than a dozen units, which would have occupied considerable venue real estate and taken time to position and setup, but with zactrack onboard, they needed only two house spots for the shows as backup and for special guest appearances.

“It’s a win-win from all angles, plus Brandon picked up the programming and setup really quickly and integrated zactrack into the lighting system so that was also a creative boost having full control over all the parameters of the fixtures being used as follow spots,” noted Eric.



There were approximately 400 lights in total on the rig, all supplied by PRG and project managed by Jason Winfree. PRG also supplied sound, video and scenic, with Crossfade Design delivering all the lighting control elements.

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Troy Eckerman was the associate lighting designer and Keith Hoagland came in as a special guest LD / programmer, and as they both discovered how the system worked and integrated, everyone was able to get a great grasp on what zacktrack could accomplish.

As lighting director and zacktrack tech on the road, Brandon noted another benefit of zacktrack, in simplifying the task of calling a large number of follow spots. "This part of the workflow is simply a lot smoother than before, you don't have the idiosyncrasies of dealing with a different set of house operators each night and you can really finesse the spotlights more than ever before."

He further commented on the excellent adaptability and functionality of the zacktrack system. When it was integrated for Ludacris's set, the zoning had to be established around several large sections of video wall and scenery, all of which were possible.

Different zones were established for Janet Jackson's dancers to enable the assigned lights to automatically fade in and out as they entered or exited the stage, and Brandon clearly enjoyed drilling down into some of the zacktrack programming features like getting the auto-zoom function activated so the size of the spot remained proportionate to the artists as they moved and grooved around the stage!

"It is a great investment, and we will definitely be using it on future projects," concluded Eric.

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