

# DAILY VARIETY

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Inside



## Curtain goes up at geek gathering

■ “Shameless” is among the wave of non-genre shows seeking the promo platform of the confab.

■ Guillermo del Toro plots new comicbook series with Dark Horse.

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Follow all the action this week at [Variety.com/comiccon](http://Variety.com/comiccon)

Review

## Captain America: The First Avenger

Marvel's latest superhero adventure is a by-the-numbers affair. Page 2



V Plus

## King of the pop extravaganza

Billion-dollar concert director rocks on with Rihanna, Britney.

Begins after page 10



Jamie King



“Mad Men,” “Nip/Tuck” and “Hell’s Kitchen” fetched higher prices from digital buyers than they would have in traditional syndication.

# SECOND LIFE

## Digital \$\$\$ amp syndie biz

By ANDREW WALLENSTEIN

The licensing pact unveiled this week between Hulu and Debmart-Mercury for the Fox reality series “Hell’s Kitchen” underscores a subtle but significant shift reshaping the syndication marketplace. TV series



that might otherwise languish on studio shelves or get unloaded at fire-sale prices to traditional buyers like cable networks or station groups are finding a new set of aggressive buyers on the digital front that are spending significant dollars for rerun rights. See SERIALIZE page 25

# Dueling pix duke it out for B.O. turf

By RACHEL ABRAMS

When Screen Gems found out that a project similar to its “Friends With Benefits” was in development at Paramount, the Sony division could have chosen one of four common responses when similar projects are competing: rush, trump, stall or kill.



“Friends With Benefits,” top, arrives in the wake of similarly themed “No Strings Attached,” but may have enough breathing room to succeed.

Instead, Screen Gems went with a fifth option: It stayed the course.

Paramount’s casual sex-themed romp “No Strings Attached” (at one point also titled “Friends With Benefits”) was first out of the gate in January — and grossed nearly \$150 million worldwide.

If “Benefits” launches successfully, it’ll prove yet again that similar movies, when given the proper

# Fuller’s ‘X’ lawsuit factors in at Fox

By JON WEISMAN

Adding a new chapter to the litigation history of “The X Factor,” Simon Fuller has filed suit in Los Angeles Superior Court against Fox and FremantleMedia North America, seeking exec producer pay and credit for the network’s heavily promoted reality skein.

The complaint cites breach of contract and good faith with regard to a 2005 promise that Fox and Fremantle would give Fuller exec producer status on “X Factor,” created by “Idol” judge Simon Cowell. (Fuller created the “Idol” format and helped launch Fox smash “American Idol” in the U.S. a decade ago.)

This promise is said to have warded off a 2004 lawsuit from Fuller against Cowell in the U.K. over similarities between “Idol” and “X Factor.” “X Factor” launched in Blighty in 2004 and premieres on Fox in the U.S. on Sept. 21.

“As often happens in Hollywood,” the suit reads, “binding promises made one day for expediency turn out to be cast aside when it comes time to perform. This is just such a case.”

“Defendants’ refusal to honor their promises made to Fuller is particularly malicious given that but for Fuller’s agreement, the ‘X Factor’ show would not be able to broadcast in the United States at all.”

Fuller is seeking an exec producer’s fee but not additional equity in the show. The lawsuit notes that Fuller “was given a minority interest in the ‘X Factor’ show as part of the (2005) settlement.”

“Mr. Fuller has not been hired, nor performed any duties, on the

See X FACTOR page 26



Fuller

# TRACTION FOR ACTION PACT

By JEFF SNEIDER

In a comicbook casting coup, Radical Pictures has attached Hilary Swank to star in and produce its transmedia property “Shrapnel,” based on the futuristic Radical comic about a former military officer who organizes a revolt on Venus.



Swank

Comicbook is written by Nick Sagan and M. Zachary Sherman, from an original creation by Sagan and Mark Long.

Toby Wagstaff (“Arena”) has been tapped to write the sci-fi epic, which is also described as having elements of a Western. Set in the year 2250, the story follows a former Solar Alliance Marine, to be

See SWANK page 24

space and marketing, can profitably coexist. Yet more often than not, comparable projects create anxiety among studio execs.

In the world of competing similar films, conventional wisdom says you need to be first out of the box.

Universal bumped up its release of “Snow White and the Huntsman” to June 1, 2012, leapfrogging

See COMPETE page 24

\$3.50 NEWSPAPER



CONGRATULATIONS

# JAMIE KING



**VARIETY'S**  
**BILLION**  
**DOLLAR**  
**TOUR**  
**DIRECTOR**

**CIRQUE DU SOLEIL**  
MICHAEL JACKSON: THE IMMORTAL TOUR / 2011

**BRITNEY SPEARS**  
FEMME FATALE TOUR / 2011  
THE CIRCUS TOUR / 2009  
OOPS... I DID IT AGAIN TOUR / 2000

**RIHANNA**  
LOUD TOUR / 2011  
LAST GIRL ON EARTH TOUR / 2010

**MADONNA**  
STICKY & SWEET TOUR / 2008  
CONFESSIONS TOUR / 2006  
RE-INVENTION TOUR / 2004  
DROWNED WORLD TOUR / 2001

**SPICE GIRLS**  
RETURN OF THE SPICE GIRLS TOUR / 2008

**CELINE DION**  
TAKING CHANCES TOUR / 2008

**AVRIL LAVIGNE**  
BEST DAMN TOUR / 2007

**RICKY MARTIN**  
BLACK & WHITE TOUR / 2007  
LIVIN' LA VIDA LOCA TOUR / 1999

**CHRISTINA AGUILERA**  
BACK TO BASICS TOUR / 2006  
STRIPPED TOUR / 2003

**RAIN**  
RAIN'S COMING TOUR / 2006

**PINK**  
TRY THIS TOUR / 2004

**McDONALD / SELZNICK**  
**ASSOCIATES**

and  
**DANIEL SLADEK**  
**ENTERTAINMENT**

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[www.msaagency.com](http://www.msaagency.com)

[www.danielsladek.com](http://www.danielsladek.com)



# PLUS BILLION-DOLLAR TOUR DIRECTOR: JAMIE KING

# KING OF THE THRILL

*Tour helmer's rise to the top was paved by Jackson, Prince and Madonna, who views him as a dance guru*



By CAROLINE RYDER

It's not every day a white grand piano drops from the sky, only to rise up again carrying a crooning Rihanna. It's not every day Britney Spears straddles a giant electric guitar, or steers a massive Egyptian barge onto the stage. But then, there's nothing "every day" about the work of Jamie King, who conceived both Rihanna and Spears' current tours.

From the opening images that flicker on the jumbo screens to the last shred of ticker tape for the finale, King has re-defined what both fans and stars have come to expect from a live performance, not to mention ticket sales — King's 20 or so major concert tours, for major pop acts including Madonna, Christina Aguilera, Ricky Martin, Avril Lavigne, Rain, Celine Dion, and the Spice Girls, have cumulatively grossed an estimated \$2 billion at the box office. No wonder he's known as the master of the traveling pop extravaganza.

In King's hands, a concert is much more than a sequence of songs with corresponding dances; it's a three-act narrative guiding an audience into the heart and soul of the performer. "He's a complete visionary," say Adam Leber, Spears' longtime manager. "He tells a story with the artist as the main character. And he works with us on every single detail — every single piece of clothing is looked at; every remix of every song is painstakingly tweaked until it is perfect."

After King put together Britney's sell-out "Circus" tour, Leber wasn't sure it was possible to create anything bigger — until he saw this summer's "Femme Fatale." "I had that 'holy shit' moment. I thought, 'I can't believe it — this show is actually better.' I was shocked!"

Daniel Sladek, King's manager, says King has more in common with a Broadway show producer or Hollywood block-

See KING page A10



Among those who have benefitted from King's grand designs are, from left, Pink, Ricky Martin and Rihanna, performing during her current "Loud" tour, which King is directing.



Marc Anthony, Jennifer Lopez and King are engaging in a grassroots search throughout North, South and Central America for Latino artistry.

# FOUR PLAYERS IN SEARCH OF AN IDOL

*Despite reports of an Anthony/Lopez split, the 'Q'Viva!' show will go on*

By SUSAN YOUNG

**J**amie King may be the only person in the world eager to call his new talent competition series “the anti-‘American Idol.’”

“With ‘American Idol,’ those contestants got to those auditions on their own in order to be discovered,” King says. “We’ll be our own talent scouts for people who don’t have the means to buy a plane ticket or have a computer. We are going to find you.”

The charismatic pop music director-choreographer has teamed with “AI” creator Simon Fuller, judge Jennifer Lopez and her soon-to-be ex, Marc Anthony, in a grassroots search in North, South and Central America for the best in Latino artistry. Those chosen artists who make it past the rehearsal phase will be showcased in a concert package written and directed by King. The Blackberry-sponsored “Q’Viva! The Chosen,” set to air in 2012, tapes in Spanish, English and Portuguese.

The networks carrying the series have not yet been disclosed. Fuller’s XIX Entertainment will negotiate the U.S. broadcast rights, while Endemol will distribute the program across all platforms outside the U.S. and will locally produce the format in other territories. Deals are being worked out for the series to launch simultaneously on networks across North, Central and South America.

Despite Lopez and Anthony’s impending split, this fall they will accompany King in traveling to remote villages as well as cities in 21 countries from Argentina to Venezuela, seeking out fresh voices gleaned from YouTube and Facebook nominations and beating the local bushes.

“The premise is not only finding the greatest talents, but discovering the region itself: The beauty,

the sense of community, and that Latin fire, that soulfulness, and showing it to the world,” King says.

(XIX issued a statement over the weekend announcing that “both Jennifer and Mark are committed to the Q’Viva! project and will work on it as planned.”)

After chronicling the intensive talent search, the harvested artists will be flown to L.A. where cameras will follow the creation of a concert show utilizing their eclectic specialties from street art to dance. The series culminates in a live presentation of King’s 90-minute concert vision, which will then go on tour.

“We know we are looking for singers, drummers, street artists, but as we start finding the talent, we have to shape-shift and grow the concept of what this concert will be,” King says. “The hardest part will be deciding what to pick.”

Although his specials have been Emmy nominees, this is King’s first foray into series TV.

“Jamie has an incredible way with artists and performers; he has the knack for delivering exactly what is in their heads even if they have a problem expressing it,” Fuller says of teaming with King.

David Campanelli, senior VP, director of national TV — Horizon Media, says the series should snag big international numbers. And while there’s never a perfect formula for what is going to be successful, he says having the right people and proven track records make buyers like him feel better about the viability of yet another talent competition series.

“The odds look pretty good with this one,” says Campanelli. “A young audience is going to drive the success of this show and make it hip and cool — or not. Jennifer Lopez cuts across all demos. And it will play well in the countries where these contestants come from. These days ratings are hard to come by, so the international is the vital part.”



Fuller

## Resurrecting Michael via Cirque du Soleil

By BRUCE PILATO

**I**t is exactly two years to the day that Michael Jackson died from an overdose of propofol in Los Angeles, and Jamie King is sitting in his Montreal apartment taking a break from the challenging rehearsals for Cirque du Soleil’s Michael Jackson — The Immortal World Tour.

“I remember the exact moment I heard the news when Michael had passed away,” says King, softly. “I was in London with Madonna and we were in the O2 Arena doing her ‘Sticky & Sweet’ tour. That is where Michael was supposed to come and launch his ‘This Is It!’ tour. That was the last memory I have of him. Michael passed; we were there, and he was supposed to be coming there, but ...”

It was the only rueful moment in an otherwise upbeat conversation centered around the multi-media live extravaganza King has written, designed and directed, in association with the Canadian theatrical company and the Michael Jackson estate. “So,” he adds, “to now be asked to immortalize Michael in this way, was just overwhelming.”

Organizers expect the traveling road show, which bows in Montreal on Oct. 2 before hitting 80 markets through September 2012, to play for a combined audience of 1.5 million stretched out over 180 performances, with revenues projected to exceed \$1 billion.

With a development budget north of \$50 million, the production touts 65 Jackson songs, including standard arrangements, remixes and mash-ups; Jackson’s choreography; and Cirque’s trademark acrobatics.

Jackson’s multi-track vocals will be placed over a live band, which includes several key players who had toured with the pop star, such

See RESURRECTING MICHAEL page A8



TO JAMIE,

THE HARDEST WORKING MAN IN  
SHOW BUSINESS.

IT'S AN HONOR TO WORK WITH YOU  
AND I'M HAPPY TO SEE YOUR  
EFFORTS REWARDED.

HERE'S TO OUR NEXT TOUR!

LOVE,  
MADONNA





Britney Spears *Femme Fatale* World Tour

# KILLER

Jamie,

When you take aim, you aim to kill  
and you've been killin' it for over a decade now.  
That's why this honor is so richly deserved.  
Here's to the next ten years of knocking 'em dead.

From Dago and your friends at Veneno.

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# Early connections formed career arc

By **BRUCE PILATO**

**F**ans of concerts as not just live music performances but extravagant spectacles of choreography, multiple costume changes and the kind of titanic theatrical sets associated with Andrew Lloyd Webber have likely witnessed the work of Jamie King.

The 39-year-old choreographer-turned-concert director has been behind many of the big-budget, high-profile music tours that have crisscrossed the globe since the mid-1990s. The early connections with Michael Jackson, Madonna and Prince represented the fulfillment of a childhood dream, while Shakira, Pink and Mariah Carey later benefitted from King's burgeoning talent.

Starting as a background dancer while still in his teens, King, by the mid-1990s, had made a quick ascent to being the choreographer du jour for every pop star with grand designs. Within a few years, King had added writer, director, designer and overall visual conceptualist to his resume.

"If you know anything about my pop shows they are always big spectacles," says King, who, nearly single-handedly took dance-based pop shows into the same realm as the gigantic concert experiences associated with the Rolling Stones, U2 and Peter Dinklage.

"It's about really sustaining that artist's career, and showing the theatricality and the size of the artist. You want the fans to leave feeling they have really seen something special. It's the way the screens move; the way the stage is

designed; the way the lighting works; the way the choreography moves. It has to all move in a way that is reflective of the artist."

Born just outside Madison, Wis., he grew up, as he says, "the only dancer in town."

"School was hard in the sense that people didn't always understand my ethnicity," he says. "My cards were dealt for me; I was already an outcast. I have always felt different, but I have also always felt that anything is possible."

His obsession with the music videos he saw on MTV in the early 1980s fueled his career aspirations.

"In my bedroom, growing up, I had pictures of Michael Jackson, Prince, and Madonna," he recalls. "My friends thought I was kind of crazy. I would copy everything I saw on MTV. Then, I would change all the choreography. I would take what I had learned and make it my own."

At 16, he enrolled himself in professional dance classes, and soon after, won a scholarship to a prestigious dance studio in Los Angeles. From there, it was a steady stream of cattle calls and rejections, trying to dance his way into the competitive musicvideo industry.

Eventually, he landed a gig with Carmen Elektra, who, at the time was signed to Prince's Paisley Park Records. Prince noticed the innovative young dancer. But before he could snatch him for his own tours, King landed a spot as a dancer on Michael Jackson's 1992 Dangerous World Tour.

"I would say that Michael was one of my greatest influences in terms of



King shares the stage with Michael Jackson during the late singer's Dangerous tour in 1992-93.

what I do now," says King. "The shows I direct and the spectacles that I create, they are influenced by Michael 100 percent. He was one of my greatest teachers because I spent every day with him in rehearsals. I would stand right next to him and feel that energy and that output of love. And the energy he would

give his fans was everything. I learned from him that you give all of yourself; you leave it on the stage. That is how the audience falls in love with you."

His two-year stint dancing with Jackson quickly landed King a long residency with Prince, initially as choreo-  
See **CONNECTIONS** page A8



1.



2.

## JAMIE'S TOP 10 AS TOUR DIRECTOR

Rank/Artist	Tour/Year	Domestic gross*	Worldwide gross*
1. <b>Madonna</b>	Sticky & Sweet (2008)	105	408
2. <b>Celine Dion</b>	Taking Chances (2008)	94	236
3. <b>Madonna</b>	Confessions (2006)	86	194
4. <b>Britney Spears</b>	Circus (2009)	83	132
5. <b>Madonna</b>	Reinvention (2004)	80	125
6. <b>Madonna</b>	Drowned World (2001)	55	75
7. <b>Christina Aguilera</b>	Stripped (2003) <sup>†</sup>	31	75
8. <b>Christina Aguilera</b>	Back to Basics (2006)	31	90
9. <b>Spice Girls</b>	Return of the Spice Girls (2008)	23	70
10. <b>Britney Spears</b>	Oops I Did It Again (2000)	41	51

All domestic figures were provided by Pollstar.com; worldwide figures were compiled from either Pollstar, Billboard or JamieKing.com

<sup>†</sup> Aguilera co-billed with Justin Timberlake

\* in millions of dollars



4.



8.

# Rocking the brand rock with an assist from Nike

By SHELBY HILL

**J**amie King's vision is embodied by some of pop music's top-selling performers like Britney Spears and Madonna. As their tour director, he "pulls the levers (and) makes them look incredible," King's manager Daniel Sladek says.

But establishing the Jamie King brand apart from the stars he props up on tours posed a bigger challenge, even with a company as ubiquitous as Nike as his partner.

The King-Nike Rockstar Workout partnership began in 2004. When Nike approached King, he was working with Christina Aguilera, who was in the midst of a worldwide trek with Justin Timberlake.

The Nike Rockstar project grew to encompass clothing, accessories and workouts, as the company put King's face and dance fitness on a global scale. "You couldn't walk into a Nike store without seeing Jamie King," says Sladek.

And yet despite his stature in the realm of traveling road-show extravaganzas, King does not have the same name identification as such exercise gurus as Jane Fonda, Jillian Michaels,



King performs during press conference for "Nike Rockstar Workout" back in 2005.

Denise Austin, Cindy Crawford or Richard Simmons.

King's "Rock Your Body" fitness DVD, released in 2007, has sold in excess of 100,000 units, according to its distributor Rodale Press, which also published the accompanying book. (Fonda's fitness video debut eventually sold 17 million copies, which is a record.) The trade paperback version of

the King workout sold only a fraction of that number, at 1,000 copies, according to Nielsen BookScan.

Nevertheless, as Nike's global spokesman, King traveled from Prague to Taipei teaching dance workshops and filming online dance videos with step-by-step instructions. Five one-hour dance workouts choreographed by King were available at Crunch Fitness gyms across the U.S.

He even enlisted then-newcomer Rihanna to star in his hip-hop themed video set to her second single, "S.O.S."

"I just loved the way she carried herself and I thought 'what a great representation of woman, and a woman who just loves to dance and smile and be happy,'" says King of Rihanna in her "Pon de Replay" video.

"I wanted to create the coolest workout that I could imagine that was based around dance, and that's really what started Rock Your Body," he says.

King says developing the Rock Your Body workouts entailed a kind of tight-rope balance.

"To make it hard enough for the dancers and to make it accessible enough for the non-dancers, that was a challenge," he says.

After a few years, Nike began to taper off its involvement with dance fitness. Plans for continuing his Rock Your Body brand are on hold, given that his dance card is full with Rihanna and Britney Spears tours, not to mention a Michael Jackson-themed Cirque du Soleil road show.

"Right now there aren't direct plans," says King, "but I plan to come back around to that. Once a dancer always a dancer, I say."

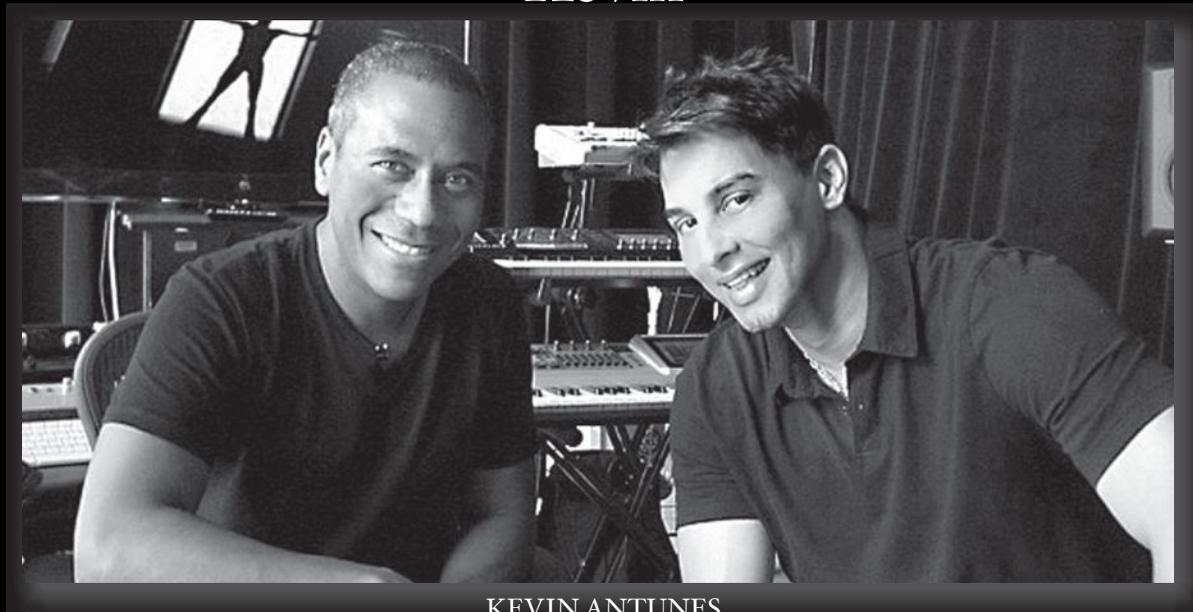
## Congratulations Jamie!

Show Director...Choreographer...Dancer.....Creative Visionary!!!

You constantly re-define the art of live concert production with your tireless energy, attention to detail, and genuine commitment to excellence.

It's been a blessing working with you and it's an honor to call you my friend.

Kevin



KEVIN ANTUNES

AntunesEntertainment@yahoo.com

Musical Designer - Michael Jackson-The Immortal World Tour by Cirque Du Soleil  
Musical Director - Madonna, Rihanna, Justin Timberlake

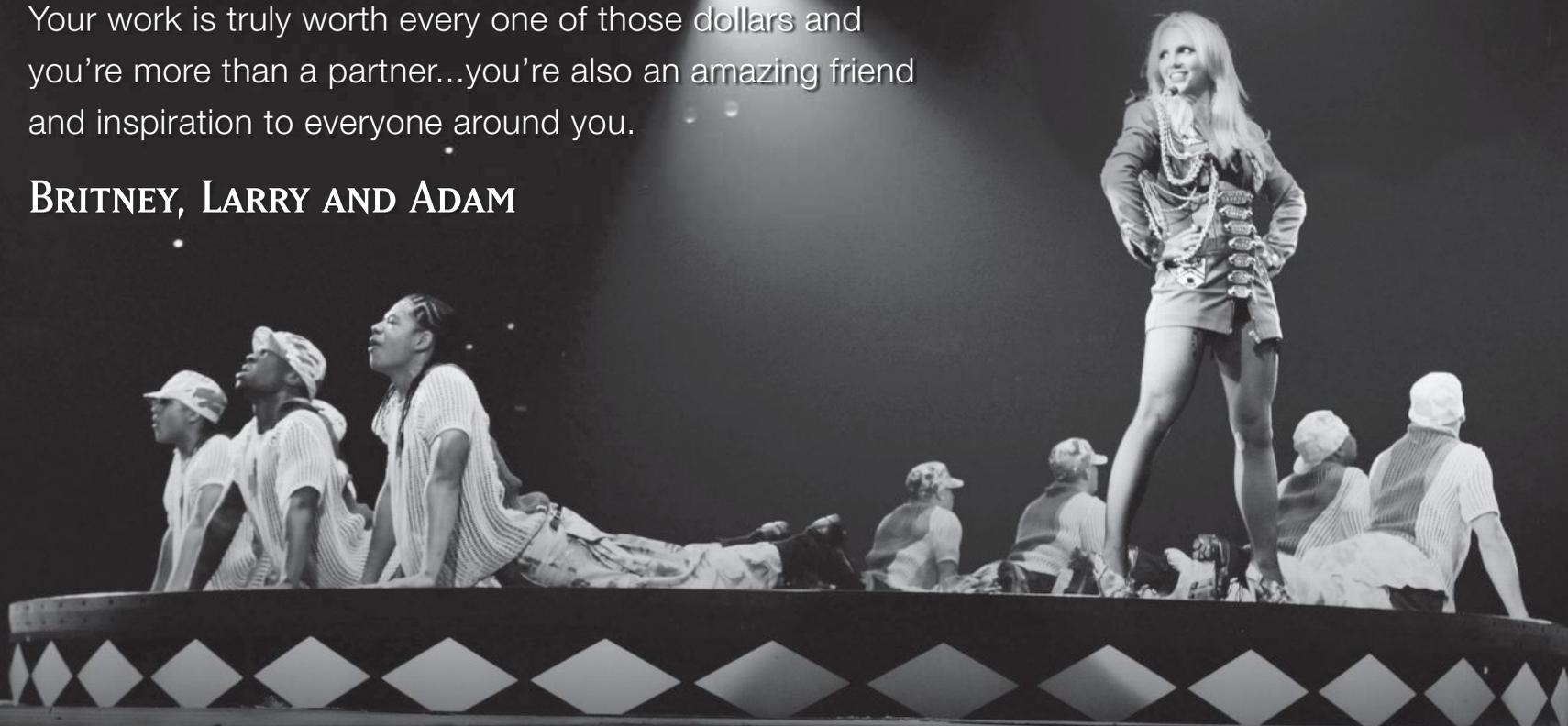
FEMME FATALE TOUR, 2011



*Congratulations to Jamie King*  
**THE BILLION DOLLAR TOUR DIRECTOR!**

Your work is truly worth every one of those dollars and you're more than a partner...you're also an amazing friend and inspiration to everyone around you.

**BRITNEY, LARRY AND ADAM**



THE CIRCUS TOUR STARRING BRITNEY SPEARS, 2009



Storyboard image for Michael Jackson: The Immortal World Tour, which will visit 80 cities beginning Oct. 2.

## RESURRECTING MICHAEL

*Continued from page A2*

as keyboardist and music director Greg Phillinganes and drummer Jonathan “Sugarfoot” Moffett.

“It will be unlike any other rock show that you may have seen before,” boasts King, who began the project in March 2010. “It is a hybrid where we are taking the idea of a rock show and a Cirque show and taking it on the road.”

Patrons who expect a show similar to most Cirque du Soleil shows will likely be surprised.

“It’s different,” says Stephane Mongeau, executive producer for Cirque. “It’s a live concert with musicians, dancers and acrobats.”

“We wanted to pay tribute to Michael, his music and his dancing, so we anchored the show in his home of Neverland.”

It was on a trip to Jackson’s former home nine months after his death that attorney John Branca and Interscope Records founder John McClain, co-executors of the late singer’s estate, laid the plans out to produce a show with Cirque founder/ CEO Guy Laliberte and Mongeau.

“We had been in touch with Jamie for five or six years just seeing what might be possible for us to create with him,” says Mongeau. “We were already dialed into him and had already started the conversation with Jamie about doing future

shows involving him and Cirque. The Estate was well aware of Jamie, too. So, when that opportunity came to do this, his name was the first one we all thought of.”

The Immortal World Tour is Cirque’s third venture into merging pop icons with their otherworldly acrobatics. The Beatles Love and Viva Elvis remain nightly sell outs at their anchored Las Vegas theaters; but this is the first attempt to take a pop music-oriented show on tour.

“Michael will always be present during the show through video and new technology, especially holographic technology,” says King. “Most importantly, because it is a music-driven show, we’re working with Michael’s catalog. Michael is really the narrator, his voice will always be there.”

The set will be carried by 30 tractor-trailers, and was designed by Mark Fisher, whose clients have included Pink Floyd and David Bowie.

As in Jackson’s live performances, the energy will come from the dancing. “The iconic choreography of Michael Jackson is always referenced,” says King, who worked with Jackson for nearly two years as a dancer and choreographer. “What is great about the magic of Cirque, as you know, is that his dancing can now be imagined in a more magical way, that not even Michael could have envisioned. We can take the moonwalk and now imagine it, upside down, on the ceiling in the arena!”

## CONNECTIONS

*Continued from page A5*

grapher and lead dancer, and eventually, as overall show director, but it wasn’t easy.

Prince initially invited King to watch him perform in Minneapolis, and asked him afterward what he thought. “I was a young scrappy dancer with a lot of ego and opinions,” he recalls. “But when I told Prince my thoughts, he hung up the phone.”

King flew back to L.A., crestfallen. Then he got another phone call — Prince liked his ideas, and wanted him redesign his musical show. “I said absolutely, yes — I don’t really know what that means, but yes.”

Prince had created a musical called “Ulysses” using music that he was unable to release because of his ongoing battle with Warner Music. He asked King to choreograph a weekly performance at his downtown L.A. nightclub Glam Slam West. Every Monday, Prince would send him unreleased songs and King would have to choreograph an entire routine, including props and dancers, by Friday, when Prince would fly in to watch from his private VIP box.

“He took a chance on me,” King says of Prince. “He saw something in me that I really didn’t see myself. The second I started choreographing for Prince and designing performances for Prince, I felt like I was in the right place. I was really understanding what my journey was supposed to be about in terms of activity and staging and so on.”

“Prince showed me more of the details of how music is created and how lyrics can match choreography. When lyrics match choreography with moves, you can create magic and energy that the fans relate to.”



Oseary

King directed and choreographed Prince’s award performance at the American Music Awards in 1993, a 17-minute mash up of all of Prince’s hits. Madonna happened to be sitting in the front row. A few days later, she called him and invited him in for a meeting, the beginning of a 14-year creative partnership between the two.

Their relationship began with King working on her “Human Nature” video; he has remained her creative director, overseeing most of her videos and all of her world tours with a large team of production and dance professionals.

Guy Oseary, Madonna’s manager, credits King with creating a balanced atmosphere for his client. “Jamie has an incredible ability to get Madonna in creative space; working and having fun at the same time,” he says. “She is at ease when she knows he is there. It is much more than choreography. He and Madonna plan everything out A to Z when it comes to her live show.”

Madonna concurs: “No one knows more about music and movement than Jamie King.”

## Congratulations Jamie!

It has been an honor to create with you, to express with you,  
and be a part of manifesting your vision.

*We love you,*

**Carla Kama, Stefanie Roos, Tiffany Olson**



Photo Credit: Djeneba Aduayom

# To The King-

Thank you for always being able to  
take a vision and make it a reality.

LAST GIRL ON EARTH to LOUD,

I love growing with you!

Love, Rihanna

## KING

Continued from page A1

buster director than a typical choreographer. "Sometimes people ask if Jamie is a choreographer, because that's his background, and I just laugh — that's like saying Brett Ratner is an editor."

King's typical crew for a touring show includes set designers, wardrobe, assistant directors, stunt people, cinematographers for the jumbo screens, music directors for the band, and a team of choreographers — 10 of them, to be precise, for Spears' "Femme Fatale" tour.

Budgets range from \$20 million-\$50 million, and King is responsible for every dollar that's spent. So well-oiled is the King production machine that he put together the current Spears "Femme Fatale" and Rihanna "Loud" shows simultaneously, booking two adjacent soundstages at the Sony lot — one for Spears and the other for Rihanna — alternating back and forth during rehearsals.

There's nobody out there doing what he does, on quite the same scale, according to his agents Julie McDonald and Tony Selznick at premiere dance-choreography agency MSA. They also represent show directors Kenny Ortega ("High School Musical," Michael Jackson's "This Is It") and Vincent Paterson (Madonna's "Blonde Ambition" tour),

but say King has carved an entire niche for himself.

"In this business everyone understands what a director does, but it's hard to truly understand what Jamie does," says McDonald. "Sometimes I think of him as a conceptual visual artist — truly, he is the master of creating stunning visual imagery. Every song becomes a picture."

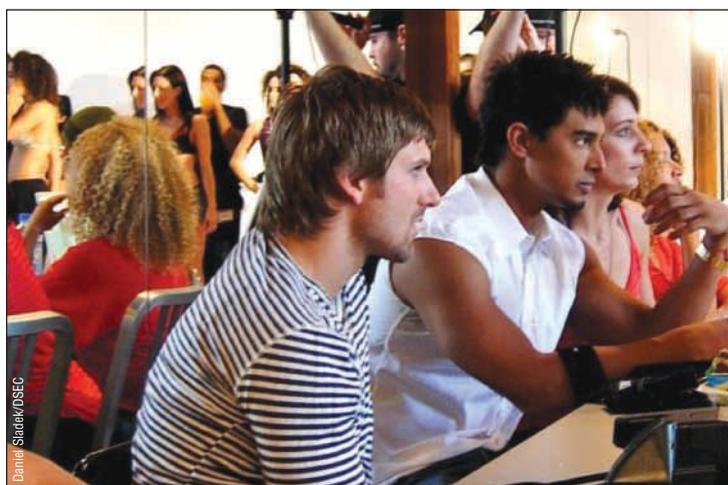
Adds Selznick: "Jamie is the first dancer we ever had that became a superstar director."

From dancer, to choreographer, MSA started referring to King as an "artistic director" after he put together Ricky Martin's career-defining Grammy Awards performance in 1998. Overnight, King started building tours and awards show performances for the biggest names in pop.

"Jamie has repeat business like I have never seen," says Selznick. "People love the way he makes the impossible happen." When a road manager on one tour complained that King's set was too big to fit on the stage, Selznick recalls, "Jamie said, 'let's make a bigger stage.'"

After seeing the scale and ambition of his productions, McDonald and Selznick helped transition King from being known as artistic director to director.

King learned his craft from the best: Michael Jackson, Prince and Madonna, the holy trinity of pop, each of whom



personally showed King the secrets of great performance. As a backup dancer on Jackson's "Dangerous" tour, for instance, King learned the importance of detail. "The audience needs to feel that their artist is giving the most that they can in terms of production, costumes, staging and choreography," says King. "They need to feel like that artist went as far as they possibly could for them, that night."

That's something King pushes for from the first meeting with a client. "I always want to create the most elaborate show possible — if it's a pop artist, it has to be a pop spectacle.

Prince taught him two things: make the movement match the lyric, and push for the impossible. "The greatest thing about Prince is that he has no sense of limitation, and he forces you to think that way too."

King has worked with Madonna for 14 years, and has been her creative director for the past decade, directing her record-breaking "Drowned World," "Re-Invention," "Confessions" and "Sticky & Sweet" tours, the latter standing as highest grossing tour ever by a solo artist, at \$408 million.

From Madonna, says King, he learned the power of honesty in performance. "The artist's essence needs to weave through the show, the good, the bad and the controversial. That's what I design the show from — and then I make it extra sparkly, extra large. And that's how a fan can walk away from the hugest show they've ever seen, feeling like they just shared an intimate experience with their favorite artist."

Oh, and remember when Madonna kissed Britney Spears and Christina Aguilera? That was King's idea.

Other past tours King has put together include Spears' "Oops! ... I Did It Again" and "The Circus Starring Britney Spears" tours; Rihanna's "Last Girl on Earth" tour; Aguilera's "Back to Basics," Celine Dion's Taking Chances tour (second-highest grossing tour of all

Choreographers RJ Durell and Tabitha D'umo flank Jamie King, left, at auditions for Celine Dion's Taking Chances tour; below, the King braintrust includes agent Julie McDonald, manager Daniel Sladek and agent Tony Selznick.

time by a solo artist), the "Return of the Spice Girls" tour, Rain's "The Legend of Rainism Tour," plus three world tours for Martin.

While his approach to each artist is different, King's process is always the same. In his initial meeting with a performer, "I ask a lot of questions, as I was taught to do by Prince. I found out what their latest songs really mean to them, and where they are coming from. And then I let the images form in my head." King's goal is always, he says, to create a show he would love to watch as a fan.

Then he sits down with his associate director and his team, and they get to work putting together a crew: set designer, lighting designer, costume designers and a musical director.

"I plant the seeds of ideas, but once I have my crew it's all about collaboration."

The next step is putting together a creative script, breaking the typically 90-minute show down into sections.

For Spears' Femme Fatale show, for example, King thought "let's do femme fatales through the ages," resulting in the amazing sight of Britney Spears on stage in a giant longboat as Cleopatra in a gold bikini, being fanned by taut-bodied slaves.

With Rihanna, on the other hand, "I based her show on the layers of a woman's personality, I did 'fun,' 'sex,' 'loud'; the layers that make up a woman, because Rihanna can be funny and sexy and loud and loving also, and I really wanted the audience to see the different sides of her."

King often will insert inside jokes into a show, the kinds of details sure to delight the hardcore fans. Madonna's "Confession" tour, for example, took place shortly after the singer's horseback riding accident — so King created an equestrian theme at one point. While she was singing "Like a Virgin" sitting in a saddle, x-rays of fractured bones and images of people falling off of horses were beamed from the video screens behind her. Naturally, King handpicked the x-rays himself, making sure the injuries were almost identical to Madonna's.

"My goal always — and I learned this from Prince and Michael Jackson — is that giving the fan a personal experience is everything," says King. "That's what will create longevity with an artist's career."

CONGRATULATIONS!

JAMIE KING

VARIETY'S BILLION DOLLAR TOUR DIRECTOR

FROM LEROY BENNETT &amp; DAKANA



A vintage-style microphone is positioned in the lower right corner, illuminated from below, creating a warm, golden glow. In the upper left, a bright, glowing star is set against a dark, textured background. The overall lighting is dramatic and focused on these two elements.

JAMIE,

Congratulations!

Inspired, innovative, in fact...  
simply the best!  
Here's to our future endeavors.

You are truly one of the chosen.  
¡Q'Viva! Los Elegidos.

SIMON FULLER