

LADIES OF

ROCK ENGINEER STAGE MONITOR MIXING PA RIGGING



MONITOR ENGINEER KARRIE KEYES IS BASED IN VENTURA, CALIFORNIA AND IS THE MOTHER OF TWIN 18 YEAR OLD DAUGHTERS. SHE HAS WORKED IN THE AUDIO INDUSTRY FOR 28 YEARS STARTING OUT WORKING FOR RATT SOUND LOADING TRUCKS AND SETTING UP GEAR. EVENTUALLY, SHE LEARNED MONITOR MIXING AND ESTABLISHED A LONG-TERM RELATIONSHIP WITH PEARL JAM LEADER EDDIE VEDDER, WORKING ALMOST EXCLUSIVELY FOR THEM SINCE 2005.

24 YEAR OLD BIANCA MARTIN HAS BEEN WORKING IN THE SOUND INDUSTRY SIX YEARS STARTING OUT DOING SMALL GIGS AND WORKING AT THE LOCAL THEATRE IN WAGGA WAGGA. BIANCA MOVED TO SYDNEY TO START A 3 YEAR TRAINEESHIP AT JPJ AUDIO AND HAS NOW BEEN WORKING FOR JPJ FOR 4 YEARS. THROUGH THAT TIME SHE HAS WORKED ON A WIDE RANGE OF GIGS FROM SMALL LOCAL BANDS TO INTERNATIONAL BANDS AND HAS DONE A LARGE AMOUNT OF PA RIGGING ALONG WITH SOME STAGE, MONITORS AND FOH.

Once upon a time women on a tour worked in either wardrobe or catering and female techs were a rarity. Slowly, the status is changing and the clichéd image of the surly, grunting male roadie is fading away. We talk to four Ladies of Rock who are smart, revered by their peers and climbing the career ladder.

Who is your main client at the moment?

Karrie: Pearl Jam and Eddie Vedder.

Bianca: I work full time for JPJ Audio. I get all my work through them, they keep me busy all year round.

Kait: In the next couple of months I will be touring with Kate Miller-Heidke and Missy Higgins and in between will be looking after the shows in the theatre at the Palms at Crown.

Sooner: KISS and Motley Crue.

What are the three best things about your job?

Karrie: Being surrounded by music, the sense of accomplishment after stressful shows or projects solving challenges and traveling the world.

Bianca: Being part of the excitement, hearing

BY CAT STROM

THEATRE BANDS KAITH HALL LIGHTING DESIGNER TORS GIGS Y FULL SOUND CINDY RODUCTION SOONER ROUTHIER

ROCK'N'ROLL



KAITH HALL HAS BEEN IN THE LIGHTING INDUSTRY SINCE 1993 AND HAS DESIGNED AND TOURED WITH VARIOUS ACTS BOTH IN AUSTRALIA AND INTERNATIONALLY. HER STUDIES AT UNIVERSITY, A BACHELOR OF ARTS (PERFORMANCE STUDIES), LED HER FIRSTLY TO THEATRICAL PROJECTS BUT QUICKLY GREW TO ENCOMPASS ALL FACETS OF THE ENTERTAINMENT LIGHTING INDUSTRY. SHE LIVES IN MELBOURNE WITH HER PARTNER CAM WHO IS ALSO A LIGHTING DESIGNER AT THEIR COMPANY, LET THERE BE LIGHT. TOGETHER THEY JUGGLE THEIR TOURING CAREERS WITH LOOKING AFTER THEIR 3 YEAR OLD SON ARI.

the crowd scream as the band goes on stage. Travelling around to places you normally would not go. The people you meet on tour, I have met so many wonderful people from all over the world. It's always fun working with new people, getting to know them then saying goodbye.

Kait: My work has allowed me to travel all around the world seeing places I would never have thought of visiting otherwise. It's also enabled me to return to some of my favorite cities in the world without buying the airfare. I am constantly meeting new creative and talented people that are really entertaining and inspiring. Sometimes the people that you meet when you are touring become like family members after spending years together on the road. It's a really special relationship you



SOONER ROUTHIER IS A CO-OWNER OF SRAE PRODUCTIONS, A PRODUCTION DESIGN COMPANY THAT SPECIALIZES IN PRODUCTION DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION FOR CONCERTS AND SPECIAL EVENTS. SOONER HAS BEEN WORKING IN THE INDUSTRY AS A LIGHTING DESIGNER/DIRECTOR FOR APPROXIMATELY 13 YEARS AND TOURING FOR ABOUT 10, MOSTLY ROCK ACTS VARYING FROM CLUB TO STADIUM LEVEL. SHE CURRENTLY LIVES IN THE SEACOAST AREA OF NEW HAMPSHIRE JUST NORTH OF BOSTON IN THE US WITH HER HUSBAND, CHRIS – A TOURING SET CARPENTER. SOONER WAS IN AUSTRALIA LAST DECEMBER WITH BON JOVI AS LIGHTING DIRECTOR.

develop when you spend 24 hours a day living and working together. I love that every day is different, whether it's a new venue or a new act, I never have time to get stagnant or bored. I'm very lucky to spend my working life helping to entertain people.

Sooner: The travelling has always been one of my favorite things about my job. I always wanted to travel the world. Now I do! And I get paid to do it. Who wouldn't want that gig? I also love that I get to be creative on a daily basis. I think that if I didn't have the creative outlet I would go insane. Making colours and patterns with lights is a great way to make a living!

KARRIE KEYS

MONITOR ENGINEER

STAGE

MONITO

And the three worst things?

Karrie: Crappy festivals, catering and missing important days in my daughter's lives.

Bianca: A lack of a sleeping pattern, working three twenty hour days all in different cities and missing out on birthdays and holidays.

Kait: Just because you get to travel a lot, doesn't mean that you always get to see the sights. Often I have ended up literally minutes from major landmarks but have only seen the inside of the gig and the car park where the bus is parked. Touring is never as glamorous as it sounds (even getting access to a clean shower can be a luxury when you are in some countries). The hours can be long and tiring (16-18 hour days are not unusual). Long months away from friends and family, especially when tours overlap with personal events like birthdays and weddings, can take its toll. Even if you are in your home town, gigs are typically on the same days that friends/family are socialising so you end up missing out on a lot. On the whole though I get to spend a lot more time with my child than someone who works a traditional corporate office job so I wouldn't trade it. I'd much rather work a few really long, hard days than a normal 40 hour/5 day a week job.

Sooner: The travelling can be rough. Even though it's my favorite thing to do. I miss out on many life events with family and friends. And I'm often away from my husband for months on end.

What do you never leave home without when working?

Karrie: Lots of books.

Bianca: Ear plugs, if I'm not mixing a band then I like to protect my ears.

Kait: I always have a phone, a USB stick and normally a laptop.

Sooner: My light meter is important for work. I hate when artists look terrible on camera, so I try hard to make sure the spots are at the correct colour temp and work with the video director and engineer

to perfect. I learned a lot working with designer Doug "Spike" Brant for Bon Jovi on this subject. Also, I can never, ever be without my running shoes. Working out is important to my mental and physical health on the road.

Who do look up to in the industry and why?

Karrie: People that look outside the box to solve challenges.

Bianca: Wyn Milson, he is one of the best sound guys in Australia, I have learnt so much from Wyn and hope to be as talented one day, he is a legend.

Kait: There are so many people that helped teach and guide me when I started in this business. It's really like an apprenticeship in some ways because most things you need to know in this industry are not things you learn from a book or a course. My brother, Tim Hall, who owns Resolution X, is someone who I still look to for mentoring especially when it comes to the business side of things. When I was starting out there weren't many other females in the industry but the very first tour I did as a systems person was for Beck. His LD was Susanne Sasic and she was also working with bands like Nirvana and Sonic Youth at the time so I think subconsciously that was motivating to see other women reaching the top of their field. It never really occurred to me that it was unusual to be a woman touring in the rock and roll business. I am also motivated a lot by seeing other mothers in the industry who still tour and juggle family life. Talking and working with people like Donna and Vicky from the Waifs, and Claire Bowditch was really inspirational because they encouraged me to think about ways to incorporate touring with family life.

Sooner: There are a lot of designers that I appreciate in the industry. I couldn't name just a few. I draw most of my inspiration from art galleries and architecture.



What is the most outrageous thing you have ever done on tour?

Karrie: Hmmm.

Bianca: There have been a few end of tour parties that rolled into the early hours of the morning or days. Nothing too outrageous, just a few drunken memories.

Kait: What happens on tour stays on tour. It's a cliché but if you don't remember this rule you won't stay long in the business.

Sooner: Dale Earnhardt Jr drove some roadie friends of mine and I around his go-cart track in his SUV. That was incredible.

What invention would make your job easier?

Karrie: Equipment manufactures spending as much time and resources designing monitors as they do designing Sound Systems.

Bianca: The ability to run unlimited wireless, running out of radio spectrum can be a problem. Hopefully one day all our equipment will run wireless.

Kait: Teleporter!

Sooner: Teletransporting Device.

Do you have a favourite mantra to get you through the day?

Karrie: Take a deep breath and keep smiling.

Bianca: "There will be a show"

Kait: Not really, I try to keep things in perspective. No matter what happens I know the show will go on.

Sooner: No. But I love to do yoga. My favorite thing to do on day offs lately is find a local studio for a class. I meet the locals and get good recommendations on dinner!

Have you ever experienced a shocking case of chauvinism and if so, what was it?

Karrie: Yes, but you take a deep breath and keep smiling. It is not worth the energy to even address it. For the most part if you are good at what you do, people will accept you. Sometimes I am met with shock as the local crews have never seen or met a woman engineer. They get over it shortly.

Bianca: Nothing shocking, you do get a few stage hands making comments in the back of a truck. I choose to just ignore it, it makes me more determined to do the best job possible.

Kait: I turned up at Festival Hall in 1995 to do a Slayer load in and one of the American guys pulled me off the lighting crew telling me that "little girls like you can't do lights - you better go put up the drapes".

Sooner: I'm sure I have. But I quickly ignore and forget about it. If you even think about a gender gap in this industry, it instantly becomes an issue in your life. I feel that thinking positively and



motivating yourself through kindness goes a long way. I try not to let negativity in! It's a cancer on tour and can spread to co-workers when you are working together so closely.

Do you find that being a female on tour means you get mistaken for working in catering or wardrobe?

Karrie: Yes, security usually points me to the dressing rooms when I come to work.

Bianca: Ha ha, yes all the time. I'm always being asked questions about food, water and where the green rooms are, and what the Wi-Fi pass word is, it is never ending.

Kait: No, but sometimes it's hard to convince the security that I'm working and not just a fan. In 1999 I toured through Poland and you could tell the old house guys were highly amused to see a female in charge of an all-male lighting crew from Germany. By the end of the day they were shouting us vodka shots and we were all laughing together.

Sooner: Yes. But I think that those jobs are very respectable positions on a tour. Most of them work MUCH MUCH harder than I do. So I think it's flattering.

What qualities can a female technician bring to a tour that a male cannot?

Karrie: I don't think it is a 'cannot' – but a difference in how each approaches the gig. Women tend to be more patient and almost to their detriment will not take gigs they do not feel they are qualified or capable of doing, while men tend to jump in over their heads and bluff their way through. I think there tends to be a bit less ego with women and often times don't get their feelings hurt as easily.

Bianca: I believe it's all up to the individual person, and what qualities they can bring to a tour. I don't find there to be much difference between males and females.

Kait: I don't think I like to re-enforce these kinds of stereotypes because it perpetuates the myth that people should/shouldn't get jobs BECAUSE of their gender. I think it's really important to judge individuals on their merits and what they can bring to each job. It's really important that the crew and the artist all work well together and it's more about who you are than what gender you are.

Is there anything a male technician can do which you believe a female cannot?

Karrie: Well they have an easier time peeing during a gig - but other than that no! For women it is a matter of learning how to lift and maneuver gig around. There are plenty of men that are on the smaller side that have had to learn the same things.

Bianca: Nothing, I feel more than comfortable doing anything a male is asked to do. With OH&S being so strict and our equipment becoming smaller and lighter it's not about needing to be

strong to lift heavy boxes around. I believe it is all pretty equal.

Kait: Again, I think there is a danger in generalization but it is naïve to pretend women and men are all the same. While men on the whole are generally physically bigger and stronger than women, I've seen plenty of exceptions to this rule - both with strong women and weak men. There is no doubt that the work can be really physical at times but there are always smarter more efficient ways of getting things done and times where being small can be just as advantageous as being tall. I don't think anyone should see this as a barrier to getting into the industry if this is his or her passion.

Do you have children or plan to have some in the future and if so, how will you cope?

Karrie: Yes, my girls are in college now. We survived. I took less work to be home, stuck with Pearl Jam as they provided an easier tour schedule. They had a supportive dad and we juggled everything else – when I was home (which was more often than not) I was home 24/7. In some respects it was easier than working 9-5 and having the kids in daycare.

Bianca: No, but I would love to have a family one day, however I have a few more years before I have to think about that. There is still so much I want to do in the industry before I start a family.

Kait: Yes, and it's not easy but I have great support from family. You have to make different choices and there are always sacrifices but some things are easier these days with things like Skype. It's funny but my partner and I always joke that we used to go on tour and then come home and spend a week recovering from how hard it was. Now with a young child in the house we look at touring as the easy part.

Sooner: This is the current issue running through my brain 24/7. I will definitely have children very soon. I have no idea how to make it work. But I'll figure it out!

How do you earn the respect of your road colleagues?

Karrie: By being a team player and doing your job to the best of your ability.

Bianca: Teamwork is important, working hard and trying my best at every gig. I don't worry about what people think of me, I just do my job the best I can do it.



Kait: It's simple. Work hard, be professional, and treat everyone else with respect.

Sooner: I like to think that I am a hard worker. I try to be respectful of other departments at all times. And I try to lend a hand when I can. Touring is like a team sport. The game is the show. Everyone is working towards making the show happen and score a win for the artist and audience. It's important for everyone to work together. I try to be a team player at all times

Which recent piece of production gear do you view as a game-changer?

Karrie: IEMS were the first game changer and now digital consoles.

Bianca: Digital amps, they are not really new but they are developing rapidly and becoming a lot more flexible. They are so much smaller and lighter now, you can now do a lot of processing within the amp, as well as being networked and control remotely.

Sooner: Lighting and video have been merging for a long time now. I think that was the biggest change in the entertainment production world in the last 10 years or so as well as the influx of LED product. Now, I think the next step is incorporating the audience into the show. It's been seen in the London Olympic games and the recent Superbowl Halftime show already with pointing the audience in light. I think that is going to be expanded upon greatly in the upcoming years.



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What's your most memorable moment on a tour?

Karrie: There are so many. Probably trying to pull cables underneath the stage while the Rolling Stones were playing. Playing a show the day we found out that Kurt Cobain had killed himself – we were all so lost and in shock. For those two hours that Pearl Jam played – it felt like we would all be alright.

Bianca: During the One Direction tour Harry Styles wished me happy birthday on stage at a show, after a very long day it made me smile. I had every 13 year old girl wishing they were me for about 10 seconds.

Kait: Live Earth in 2007 was amazing because it was a worldwide event and I think it felt really unifying being a small part of something that big. It was also a chance to catch up with so many of the friends I've made over the years who were all there working for different acts or performing. The free concert in the Sydney Domain on the eve of the 2000 Olympics was also pretty special. When you are working in the middle of an endless sea of 100,000 people it's a pretty humbling moment. One of the tours I did with Killing Heidi was in East Timor for the Australian Army in 2001. It was pretty life changing spending time travelling through the country under armed guard. I would never have had a chance to see first-hand what our peace-keeping troops go through to protect other people's freedoms and that was a really touching experience.

Sooner: I was working for Rage Against The Machine during the Democratic and Republican National Conventions in 2008. The band wanted to play a secret show in front of the Minnesota State House on a temporary stage. They were stopped by the police before getting on stage to perform. Word had leaked that the show was going to happen and there were about 5,000 fans on the lawn. The band walked around the stage to the pit area at the front and motioned for the crowd to sit. The ENTIRE audience sat on the ground and watched the band perform some of their songs accapella using a bullhorn and their voices. It was incredible to see a band command an audience that way.

Do you have a career goal that you want to reach and if so, what?

Karrie: At this point I am working on a degree in Social Justice and hope to work with non-profits in the future as well as working with young women wanting to enter the field through SoundGirls. Org which I co-founded with Michelle Sabolchick Pettinato.

Bianca: My goal is just to become an amazing system tech. Try my hardest every day and have a lot of fun along the way.

Kait: I believe I measure success differently these days. As long as I go home happy at the end of the gig then I have met my goal.

Sooner: My main goal is to continue my design work. I'd like to explore other genres of music and theatre however. I love rock and roll but my passion has always been modern dance. I love lighting in intimate theatrical settings.

Do you think you get equal pay to men?

Karrie: I don't know how much of an issue that is as I negotiate my salary. As far as other sectors and other industry related gigs. I certainly hope so, I can't even believe we are still fighting for that.

Bianca: Yes, the company I work for pay the same regardless of gender. We have a few females working at JPJ and I have never heard of any of them being paid less.

Kait: I don't feel this has ever been an issue, if you get the gig then they want YOU because of what YOU can offer.

Sooner: Yes.

What words of advice would you give any young ladies wishing to pursue a career such as yours?

Karrie: Don't give up – keep going – find support and mentors. Jump at any chance that is offered to you.

Bianca: Just go for it. Don't listen to any negatives. It's all about your work ethic and not about your gender.

Kait: I think you have to be aware that this is more of a lifestyle than a job. It's not something you do 9-5 and then clock off and live a "normal" life. Your colleagues become your friends and pseudo family on the road so it can be tough if you don't get along with each other but so rewarding when you do. People skills are just as important as being a good technician/designer. I think it's probably naïve to think that you will always get treated equally to guys, there are still some chauvinistic people around. Thankfully this is really rare these days though. So if you love it, do it. And if you don't love it, there are easier ways to make a living!

Sooner: GO FOR IT. Push through the nerves and any doubts you might fear. Make mistakes and learn from them. Don't become complacent. If you see your goals clearly and can picture yourself reaching them, you will succeed. And don't even think about gender being an issue. You are equal and as long as you respect yourself, men will respect you.

