

18th Annual Parnelli Awards

On Jan. 25, 2019, the 18th annual Parnelli Awards ceremony took place, returning to the Anaheim Hilton during the NAMM exhibition. Along with the three awards for career achievement honoring production manager Chris Adamson (Lifetime Achievement Award), staging innovator Yvan Miron (Visionary Award) and audio genius Brock Adamson (Audio Innovator Award), more than two dozen other awards were bestowed to the people, companies and products voted by *PLSN* and *FOH* magazine subscribers to be tops in their fields. It was a star-studded evening with video congrats for Chris Adamson coming in from Mick Fleetwood and Lenny Kravitz, and Alan Parsons stepping up to present some awards along with host Kenny Aronoff.

"This was probably the best Parnelli Awards ever," was a common refrain as the show wrapped up in the Hilton Pacific Ballroom. NAMM president/CEO Joe Lamond ran on stage before the show officially started and joked that he was "sneaking on stage before Terry Lowe knows I'm here." He went on to give a short, heartfelt talk about how the music industry is at the crossroads, and how important it is that the live production world is part of NAMM. Then, being one of at least four drummers that would take the stage this night, he made a drummer joke.



Lifetime Achievement Award winner Chris Adamson

PHOTOS BY R. P. GETZ

By Kevin M. Mitchell



Parnelli Visionary Award Honoree Yvan Miron



Parnelli Audio Innovator Brock Adamson, in an accident but on the mend, accepted via video.

» Backbeats and Rim Shots

Host Kenny Aronoff, one of the world's greatest drummers (John Mellencamp, Bodeans, scores of others) set the show's tone with a high-energy opening where he shared a deep love of the live event industry people who make people like him look and sound good and shared some mostly NSFW stories from his rock star past. Mellencamp, notoriously difficult, once chided him for being friendly with the crew. "Don't talk to them — you're the rock star, they work for you." Aronoff said he told Mellencamp to "F*** off, because," pointing to audience, "you guys always have our backs and make us look and sound good." Aronoff went to say how he makes sure he talks to the stage managers, the sound engineers, and especially the camera people at every gig, because he's that meticulous — though joking about the latter, "if I'm friendly with the camera people, I find I get more screen time." Aronoff then gave out some awards including FOH engineer of the year to Kyle Hamilton, who works for Janet Jackson. Hamilton set the tone of acceptance speeches of the evening with a short, heartfelt acceptance speech.

» Emotional Moments as Well

Lighting Designer Anne Militello then handed out some awards in what turned out to be one of the two big emotional moments of the evening. "I have to inform you that this year they changed the name of this category from just 'pyro' or whatever to 'Pyro/Special Effects.' I'm sure you know that fireworks were invented in China. In a new Trump administration trade agreement, we were able to get their pyrotechnics technology in exchange for [designer] Roy Bennett." But the winner was Strictly FX, who just a few days prior to the show experienced the sudden passing of cofounder Mark Grega. Strictly FX's David Kennedy was joined on stage by LD Marc Brickman to give an emotional acceptance speech, making it clear that the industry had lost a talented, beloved contributor.

Kiki Ebsen, who returned to the Parnellis as the featured pianist and vocalist, provided music during the dinner hour along with soulful accompaniment to the memorial reel honoring members of the road touring families who we've lost in the past year.

» Distinguished Presenters

FOH editor/guitarist/drummer George Petersen showed up with his friend Alan Parsons, handing out some awards and cracking wise. *PLSN* editor/LD Nook Schoenfeld handed out some awards with fellow lighting maven Michelle Sarra (who would win a Parnelli for Lighting Director of the Year).

Other presenters included Kevin Lyman of Vans Warped tour fame (and a former host himself) and past Parnelli winners Kevin "Tater" McCarthy, Sara Full, Butch Allen, Stefaan "Smasher" Desmedt, and Marty Hom. (Hom, a protégé of Parnelli cofounder Patrick Stansfield, would take home another Patrick Stansfield's Tour Manager of the Year as well.)

» A Continuing Tradition

Since early 2002, the Parnelli Awards have honored backstage professionals, turning the spotlight from the live stage to the backstage creators, technicians and management professionals who work as a team to draw gasps of astonishment from audiences with their stagecraft and artistry, then pack everything up and safely recreate the spectacle at the next tour stop on the itinerary.

The awards show is the brainchild of the late production and tour manager Patrick Stansfield, along with Terry Lowe, publisher of *FRONT of HOUSE*, *PLSN* and *Stage Directions* magazines. And in addition to talent and innovation, the awards honor the "four H's" — Humanity, Humility, Honesty and Humor — embodied by the late production manager Rick "Parnelli" O'Brien, the namesake for the awards. There are also four Indispensable Technology (IT) Awards honoring product innovation in lighting, audio, video and staging.

Now in its 18th year, the awards gala is once again entirely dependent on the generosity of the Parnelli Awards sponsors. This year, for a third year in a row, Group One Ltd., which distributes Avolites, DTS and Elektralite, along with a variety of pro audio brands including DiGiCo in North America, returns in the top-tier Platinum spot.

The list of Gold Sponsors includes 4Wall Entertainment, Adamson Systems Engineering, Bandit Lites, Blizzard, Bose, dBTechnologies, G2 Structures, Gallagher Staging, Global Trend Productions, Harman Professional, Maryland Sound, Meyer Sound, Moo TV, NAMM Live!, NovaStar, Pyrotek Special

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And the Winners Are...

Top Honors

Lifetime Achievement Award: Chris Adamson
Visionary Award: Yvan Miron
Audio Innovator Award: Brock Adamson

Sound

Sound Company of the Year: Clair Global
FOH Mixer of the Year: Kyle Hamilton
Monitor Mixer of the Year: Tony Luna
Audio System Tech of the Year: Taylor Nyquist
Hometown Hero Sound Co of the Year: Brown Note Productions
Indispensable Technology/Audio: L-Acoustics/L-ISA Immersive Audio System

Lighting

Lighting Company of the Year: Bandit Lites
Lighting Designer of the Year: Bryan Hartley
Lighting Director of the Year: Michelle Sarra
Hometown Hero Lighting Company: RZI Lighting
Indispensable Technology/Lighting: Chauvet Professional/Maverick MK Pyxis

Video

Video Production Company: Solotech
Video Director of the Year: Josh Adams
Indispensable Technology/Video: ROE Visual/Black Marble LED Floor Panels

Sets, Staging, Rigging, FX

Set/Scenic Designer of the Year: Tamlyn Wright
Staging Company of the Year: All Access Staging
Rigging Company of the Year: Atlanta Rigging Systems
Set Construction Company of the Year: TAIT
Pyro/Special Effects Company of the Year: Strictly FX
Indispensable Technology/Staging: Tyler Truss Systems/Centerline Truss

Touring/Production

Patrick Stansfield Tour Manager of the Year: Marty Hom
Patrick Stansfield Production Manager of the Year: Mikie Weiss
Coach Company of the Year: Hemphill Brothers
Trucking Company of the Year: Upstaging
Freight Forwarding Company of the Year: Rock-It Cargo



FOH Mixer of the Year Kyle Hamilton | Monitor Mixer Tony Luna, via video | George with Ryan and Sara Knutson
 Taylor Nyquist and Alan Parsons | L-Acoustics' Sherif El Barbari | George Petersen and Alan Parsons
 Terry Lowe and Kenny Aronoff | Kenny kept the rimshots coming | Solotech's Richard Lachance
 Presenter Kevin "Tater" McCarthy | PLSN's Nook with Michelle Sarra | Scenic designer Tamlyn Wright

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All Access Staging's Graham and Clive Forrester with Bob Hughes

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Effects, Rock-It Cargo, Screenworks/NEP, Solotech, Sound Image, Stageline, Strictly FX, Ultratec Special Effects and VUE Audiotechnik. The list of Silver Sponsors includes ACT Lighting, CryoFX, Elation, Hemphill Brothers, On Tour Logistics and See Factor.

» A Memorable Evening

While keeping to schedule, the evening packed in so many memorable moments, packing in rapid-fire jokes and tributes to the career honorees with touching and funny videos. Chris Adamson closed out the evening on another emotional note, bringing his wife and son to the stage. And when it was all over, there was one more tribute, to the awards program itself.

"We are so incredibly proud to have the Parnelli Awards at NAMM," said Lamond, who many years ago was a touring pro himself, supporting Todd Rundgren on the road. "I know firsthand that the demands and pressures of being on the road can be immense, sometimes requiring cyborg like efficiency, making for some tough exteriors. But when honored for their contributions, reflecting on friends and mentors, the emotions flow, and the real humanity emerges. These are the truly priceless Parnelli moments."

"The show could not have gone better, and I thank my team, especially the TPI people who pulled off a flawless, fast-paced event," Lowe said, also crediting Access Event Solutions, Atomic and Green Hippo for their support as production partners. Along with the cocktail hour and hors d'oeuvres, provided with support from Chauvet Professional and TLS Productions, "the PyroTek-sponsored after party was a huge success, with many old and new friends sticking around for hours, networking, and have a great time. And somehow," he added, "next year will be better."



Tyler Truss' Jason Tello



Jason Adams from Atlanta Rigging



Guest artist Kiki Ebsen performed



Tait's Ted Moore



NAMM president/CEO Joe Lamond



David Kennedy and Marc Brickman



Tour manager Marty Hom



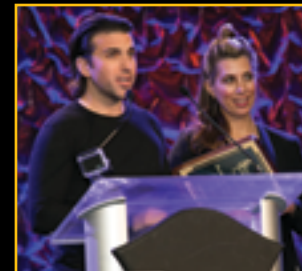
PM Mikie Weiss, via video



Presenter Kevin Lyman



Joey from Hemphill Brothers



Upstaging's Evan and Chanon



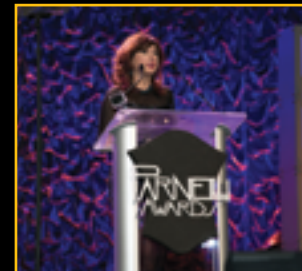
Rock-it Cargo's Annabel and Jay



Presenter Sara Full



ROE Visual's Frank Montero



Presenter Anne Millitello



Terry Lowe thanks the sponsors

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