

zactrack helps deliver the magic of Souk Wonder show

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Posted on August 18, 2025



A substantial zactrack PRO automated tracking system – with 32 x active trackers in use, and arguably the largest to date – was used by lighting designer Ben M Rogers from A Loud Minority (ALM) to deliver an automated follow spotting solution for the spectacular immersive “Souk Wonders” performance show staged at the Mayadeen Venue in Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

The zactrack system – server, trackers, and anchors – was supplied by German based specialist TrackingPro to ‘Souk Wonders’ lighting rental vendors PRG.

The 36 – total – zactrack anchors were deployed to provide tracking of lighting across the full

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volume of the performing area, an 80-metre square / approximately 90,000 cubic metre space.



This configuration of 36 anchors - with some performers wearing two tags - in one system was possible due to not all the anchors being able to 'see' one another simultaneously as they were activated / deactivated to maintain a high refresh rate.

"Souk Wonders" was devised by creative producers Dragone with Filippo Ferraresi as the principle artistic and creative director; Patrick Larsen designed the set and scenic elements.

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The overall technical production was delivered and supported by A Loud Minority (ALM) undertaking the project management, acrobatic rigging design, lighting design by Ben and audio design by Calum Robinson. Leading the ALM team was Karl Jenkins - also founder of the company - as Dragone's technical director for the project.

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It was the first time the team had used a zactrack system of this size, but Ben had every confidence that it was the right tech to achieve all the technical and creative goals. TrackingPro did the complex advance planning of the system, whilst Jaro Brinkmann and Raphael Doelle from TrackingPro were on-site for tech support.

Souk Wonders played an initial three-week season with two shows a day. Visitors entered the 6,400 square metre event space inspired by traditional Diriyah buildings, offering multiple food, beverage, and retail outlets together with art installations. It blended the vibrance of the souk with high level live performances, culinary experiences, art, and interactive entertainment.

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Four distinct performance stages were involved in the live show action which also happened around the entire venue, including aerial acts and a 30 metre high wire, so the zactrack anchors were needed to offer full 3D coverage around the 14 metre high steel structures that were part of Patrick Larsen's immersive scenic concept.

The zactrack trackers were primarily attached to artists, two on each, integrated using a range of sewn on pouches, 3D printed clips and pockets depending on their costume and movement during specific segments. A larger prop piece was also tagged to allow for precise tracking when moved around the space by the performers.

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Eight performers each wore 2 trackers, there was a complete second set of trackers, plus 16 spare trackers to deal with up to three shows per day, often with only a 1-hour break in between, so 32 trackers were actively used, with half deactivated per show.

A total of 24 moving light fixtures - 14 x Ayrton Huracán and 10 x Ayrton Eurus - were used as follow spots and tracked with zactrack, which had the capacity to integrate further elements of the lighting rig if needed.

TrackingPro meticulously created approximately 300 auto-function points, so each performer could enter the stage area, disappear into one of the buildings/towers, and move freely across the entire area, being automatically faded in and out.

Many reasons made zactrack the most viable option for this event explained Ben.

Using traditional follow spots was out, and a camera-based remote spotting system would have struggled with blind spots due to the scenic design. "Zactrack fitted the bill perfectly" Rogers stated.

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“There was no other practical way we could achieve 360 degrees follow spot coverage for the area” explained Ben, noting that zactrack is the only system available right now to bring so much autonomy and flexibility to the performance.

He also needed to accurately track performers moving at speed throughout the space - on rollerblades and bicycles, “Due to the organic flow of the show, I also needed to have lights available to pick them up from multiple entrance points as the blocking of the show would evolve in response to the audience flow” he added.

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Meantime, the zacktrack system's 2D view of the performance area acted like a magical 'Marauders Map' allowing the technical team to know the exact position of artists, even when they were out of sight.

The show lighting ran on a grandMA3 console - running in MA2 mode - and Ben's associate Charlie Hickey co-ordinated the MA and zacktrack integration, creating some smart macros and layout views for super-quick visual identification of which fixtures were allocated to which tracking pairs. Charlie and Ben both worked on programming the show lighting.

The complete technical - lighting, audio, and video package - was supplied by PRG with Pitch Black covering the specialist acrobatic rigging.

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Souk Wonders has been acclaimed as a complete reinvention of how audiences experience a show. This spectacle doesn't just amaze it rewrites the rules. It dissolves the boundaries between stage and audience, between space and emotion, between tradition and innovation. It's not simply watched, it is a world that is walked through, tasted, and felt, and such an approach not previously been attempted on this scale. It is a bold statement that live performance can become a total language, where every detail contributes to the story.

Photo: Courtesy Dragone