

FRANÇOIS AUDOUY

PRODUCTION DESIGN / WORLD
BUILDING



FOR AWARDS CONSIDERATION

2021

APPLE MUSIC: HAPPIER THAN EVER

DIRECTOR
MARK ROMANEK



“

A broken mirror can not be made to shine.

JAPANESE PROVERB



TEXT BY ART DIRECTOR A. TODD HOLLAND

“Small white lightbulbs illuminate in a circular sequence around a large round mirror, the centerpiece of a beautiful 1940s vanity dresser, set in a world of pale, elegant, old Hollywood glamour. Shot from directly behind, the lights encircle the silhouette of a figure seated at the vanity. A cut reveals that it’s **Billie Eilish** at the dresser, glowing in the light.” — the treatment by director **Mark Romanek** describing the idea.

Seemed simple enough, but the execution turned out to be something else entirely. The job presented us with various challenges, each one a fresh, “learning moment” which ultimately, makes one a better art director.



GLAMOUR THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS

[View Project](#)

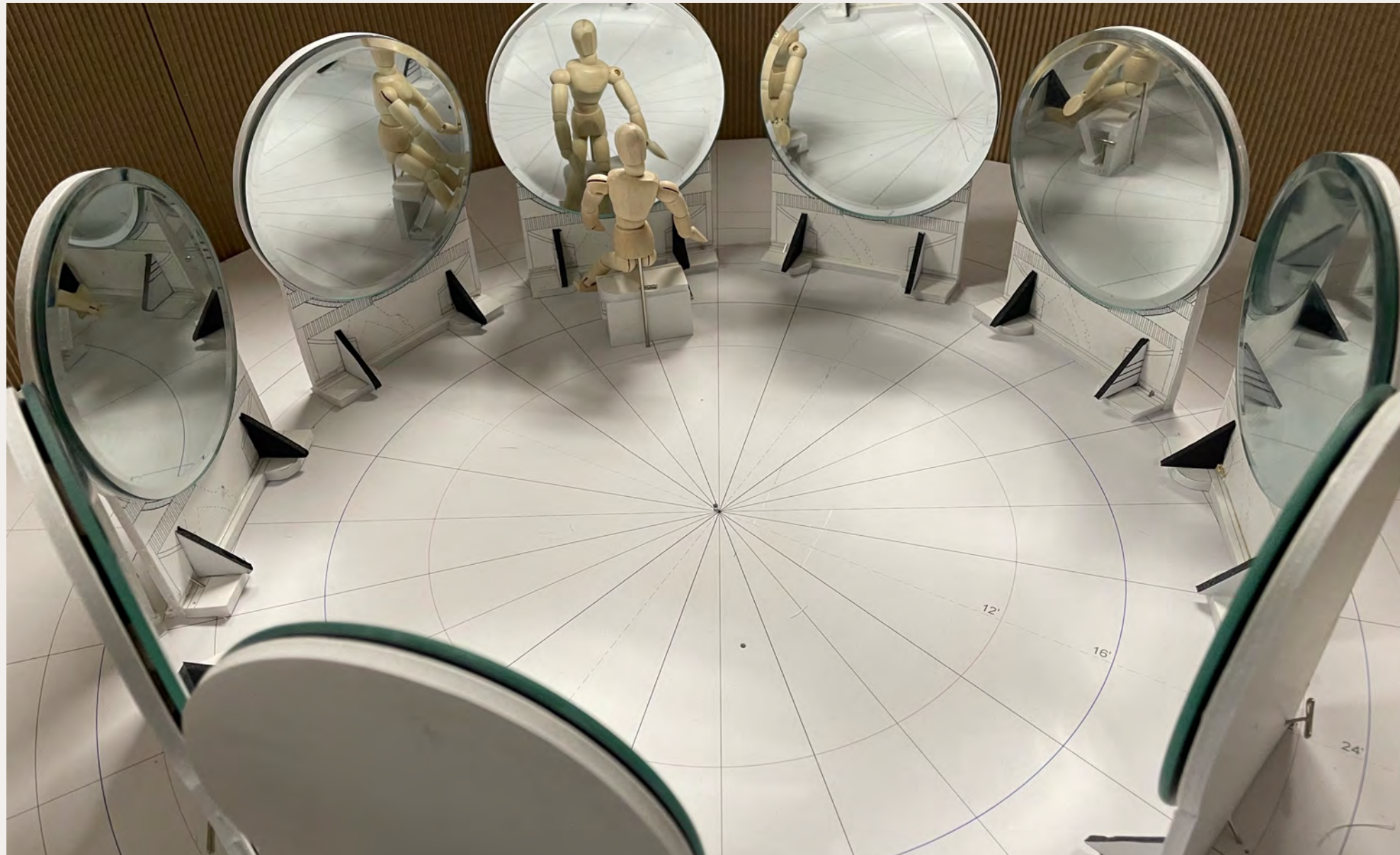


Challenge 1

To create a set with the illusion of infinity, and most importantly, hide the reflection of the camera and crew, to reduce costly VFX removal.



STILLS © APPLE



PHOTOS BY A. TODD HOLLAND

Solutions

A quick physical model, using actually mirrors (computer models do not accurately represent reflections) helped decide the most useful and aesthetic layout. Nine makeup tables were chosen, divided every 36 degrees (ten divisions), with the tenth area open for a glamorous doorway.

The idea of using “half-silvered” (e.g. one way) mirrors, so the camera could shoot through the backs of the mirrors and into the set, thereby hiding reflections of the camera, was the decisive solution.

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COMMERCIAL STILL

APPLE MUSIC—HAPPIER THAN EVER



Challenge 2

The cleanest look would be cutting the vanity bulbs directly into the mirror, with no visible seams, but this created a multitude of potential pitfalls.



CONCEPT ART BY ONE PIXEL BRUSH © APPLE



Solutions

Each mirror was to be encircled by 20 dimmable globe lights cut within the large 72" diameter surface. This many holes, cut this close together created a brittle environment. Most glass fabrication companies shied away from even attempting our request, and only one (Crone Glass) was willing to try. Specialized drill bits were used and even then multiple mirrors were still broken during the manufacturing process before all 20 holed could be drilled.



3D RENDERS BY MUNDO ENRIQUEZ. STILL © APPLE



The large vanity bulbs (both G-40 and G-25) are no longer available in California due to regulations banning inefficient light bulbs starting January of 2020. Thus, hundreds and hundreds of bulbs, needed to be sourced nationally and brought in—and not by the regular shipping methods... Super fun!



CONCEPT ART BY ONE PIXEL BRUSH © APPLE

Finally, Romanek and director of photography **James Laxton** required that each bulb be individually controlled, throughout the entire set. This meant we no longer had the option of daisy-chaining the power to each vanity station, and instead, each of the 20 bulbs required their own power fed directly to a dimmer control box, which would then allow for individual control and programming.

SET PHOTO BY A. TODD HOLLAND

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MUSIC VIDEO STILL

APPLE MUSIC—HAPPIER THAN EVER

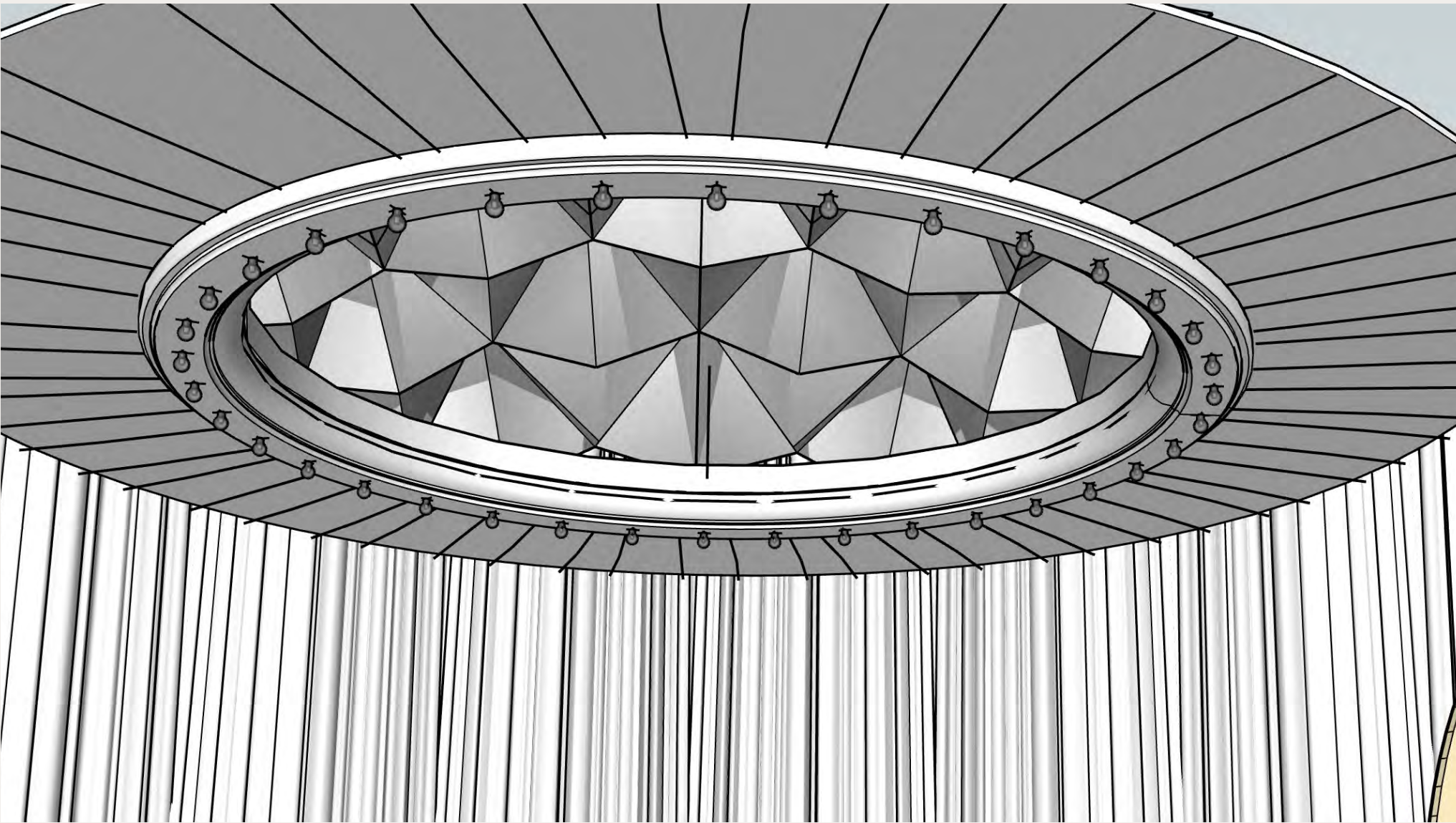


Challenge 3

Romanek’s treaments desribed that “to illustrate the ‘sound from above’ feature of the feature, we to reveal a beautiful ceiling of pleated fabric forming a starburst, and at its center, a circular mirror with lights.”

Adding to the initial idea, the ceiling was to become a faceted mirror, allowing multiple reflections of Eilish as she danced underneath.

[Link to video](#)



3D MODEL BY A. TODD HOLLAND / MUNDO ENRIQUEZ



Solutions

We looked to **Buckminster Fuller** as inspiration for the geometry we'd ultimately use and since the mirror edges needed to be continuous, with no traditional stops, experiments with different types of glue were required. Thus, we learned each type of glass/mirror reacted differently, whether it was laminated, tempered, or half-silvered.

Once again we utilized mirror plexiglass due to the lighter weight and superior adhesion properties (we were not inclined to risk the talent below).

Transportation and installation of the ceiling was a logistical challenge unto itself. Thankfully, each step was successfully completed with only a single pane broken—and due to the nature of plexiglass (and our narrow prep schedule) it was easily glued back into place. Not a single person on set later would notice the hairline crack.

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“

When I'm away from you
I'm happier than ever
Wish I could explain it better
I wish it wasn't true, mm-hmm
Give me a day or two
To think of something clever
To write myself a letter
To tell me what to do, mm-hmm

BILLIE EILISH



Challenge 4

The floor evolved multiple times, as new requests and ideas were added after directorial decisions (which could not be reversed) had been made.

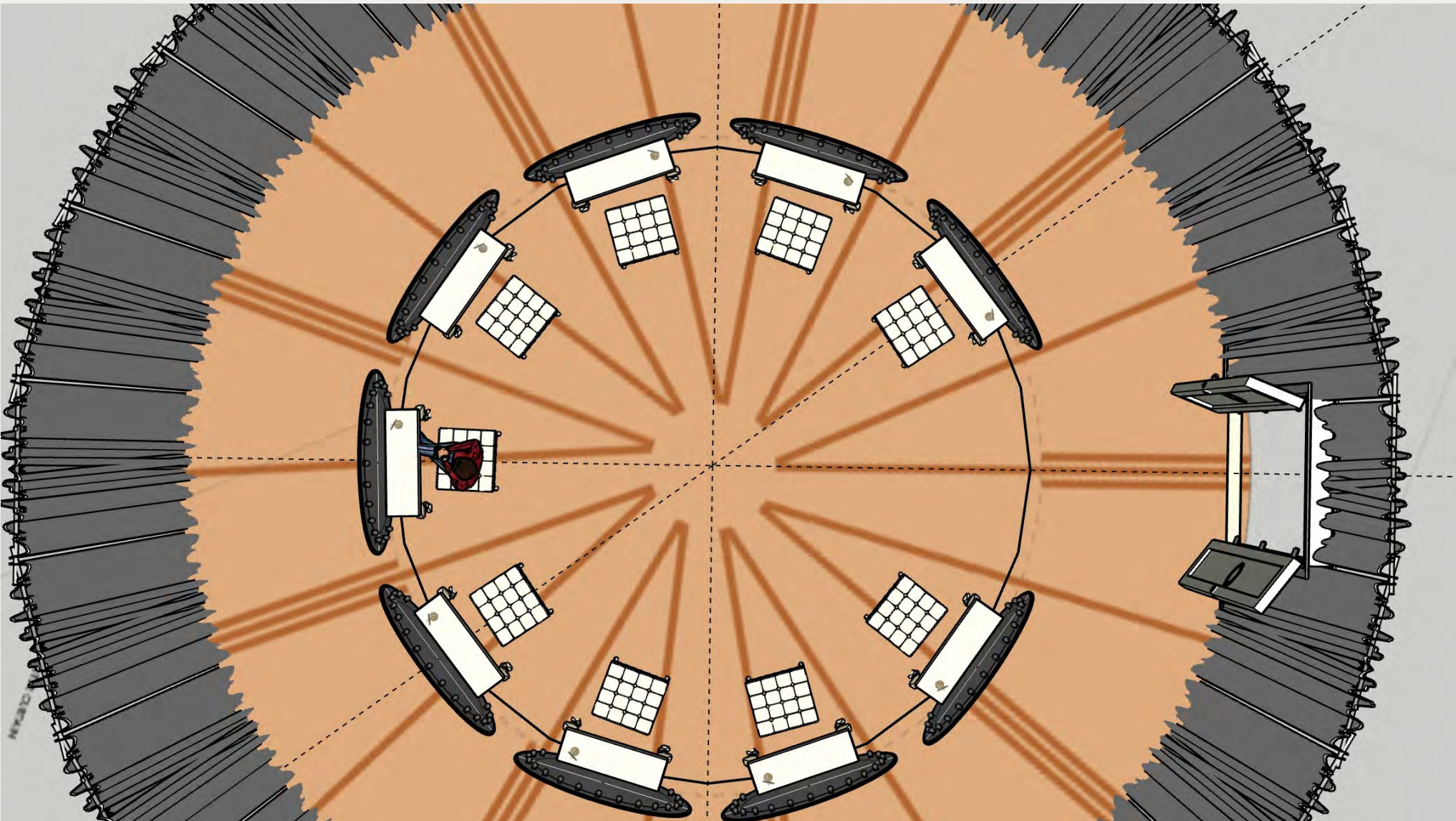
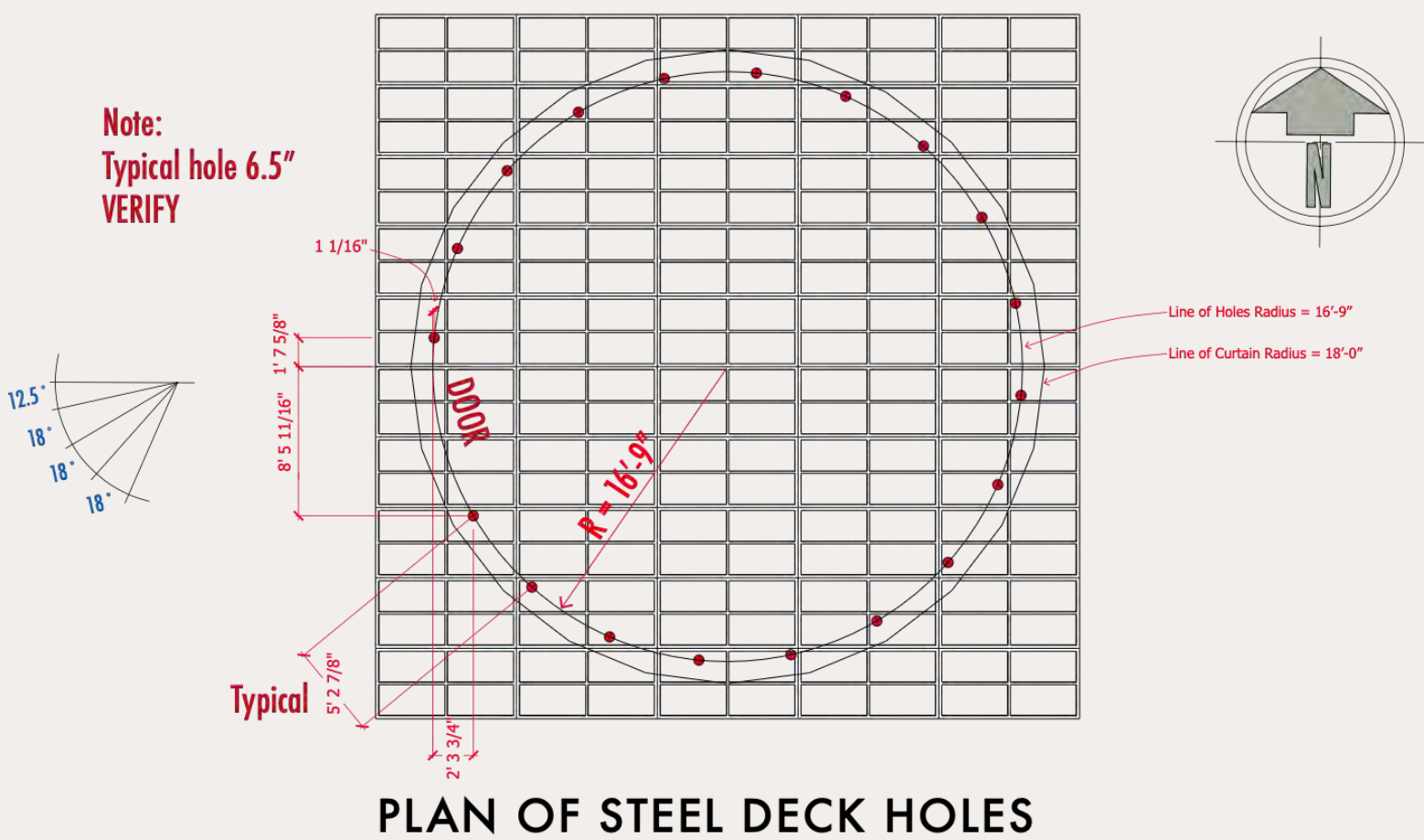
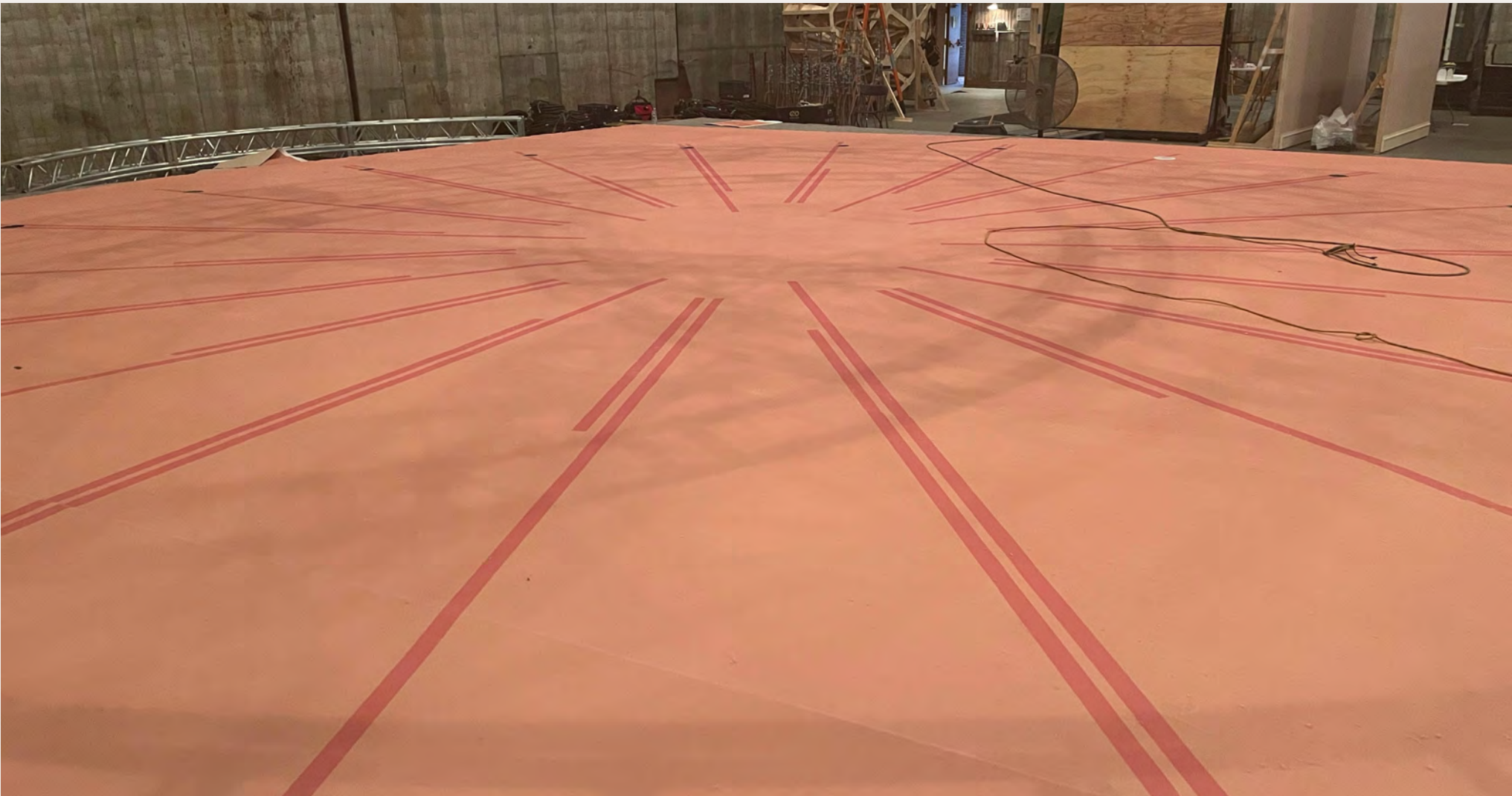




PHOTO BY A. TODD HOLLAND.

Solutions

Initially, a shallow platform was decided upon, specifically for hiding of all the electrical cables from each vanity station. And, due to the short prep available on stage, steel deck, as opposed to a custom wood deck, was chosen as the best solution.

After a custom, two-color patterned carpet designed to accent the layout of the vanities was laid, the director requested hidden uplighting of the surrounding curtain, the diameter of which already established with available circular truss, already hung the day before.

This meant cutting holes into the steel deck, in a radial pattern just inside the curtain. This caused a minor heart attack as the lights needed to both accent the layout of the vanities and not interfere with the substructure of the steel decking below. (Note: Here is where a wood deck would have given us more freedom and/or allowed for customization after the fact.) Instead, this was a geometric puzzle of the best—and most frustrating—kind. Math is your friend.

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Production Designed by François Audouy

ART DIRECTOR

A. Todd Holland

SET DECORATOR

Jill Crawford

ILLUSTRATORS

Shaddy Safadi

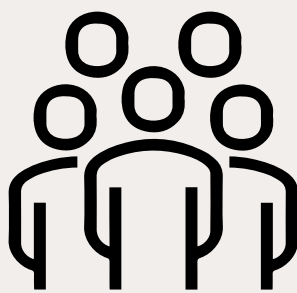
One Pixel Brush



Made under IATSE jurisdiction.



Shot on location at The Lot Studios,
West Hollywood, CA.



Many thanks to the entire cast & crew!

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