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Robe for Roger Waters' Us+Them Tour

Products Involved

BMFL™ Blade BMFL™ Spot BMFL™ WashBeam

Few artist activists on the planet have had more impact than Roger Waters whose live shows present a cerebrally charged mix of music, politics, social commentary and visual intelligence in performances that are as captivating and powerful as they are provocative.

Lighting designer Pryderi Baskerville has one of the most demanding lighting briefs in the industry, as well as the pleasure of working with a highly talented and focused creative team including creative director Sean Evans, production designer Jeremy Lloyd from Wonder Works, video director Richard Turner, production manager Chris Kansy and production director Andrew Zweck ... to deliver this masterpiece of subversive industrial scale art!

Pryderi has worked for Waters since 2013 and as LD / lighting director / lighting programmer since 2016. This Us+Them world touring cycle originally started in May 2017 and runs until December this year. Pryderi specified 97 x Robe BMFL WashBeams for the stadium version of the shows and 57 x BMFL Spots and 8 x BMFL Blades for the arena gigs.

Waters himself is involved with every step of the production for all his touring work.

With video a major part of the show - a media in which Waters has consistently innovated through the years - and particularly with the impressive 65-metre-wide upstage LED screen for the stadium shows and the fly-in Rolio projection surfaces that bisect the arena shows - Pryderi needed some seriously bright and reliable lightsources!

This led to the choice of Robe's BMFLs amongst other lights on the rig.

"They are bright, offer great colours and an excellent throw as well as being lightweight considering their output" he stated.

The BMFL WashBeams with their even higher output were a natural upgrade progression for the outdoor shows.

The stadium shows feature 15 x BMFL WashBeams rigged above the LED Screen and another 10 per side on two special PA mast 'torms'.

These sleek PA towers were custom designed and built by Wlcreations for this latest leg of the tour. Each one is a half metre diameter, matt black coated round steel tube for a fully streamlined and modern aesthetic. The PA rigging cradles holding the slim Clair Brothers arrays are rigged to the towers via an i-beam hoist system, and another 1 tonne hoist is attached to the base of the tower with

its steel travelling up the offstage side of the mast, hoisting up 10 BMFL WashBeams along the integrated PA mast track.

Individual transparent rain shields offer effective weather protection and when in position, these form a perfect perpendicular line of downstage BMFLs each side.

Another 20 x BMFL WashBeams are rigged on two offstage trusses at each end of the LED Screen - 10 units per truss.

Eight BMFL WashBeams are split over two FOH Towers (4 per tower), and at the base of each of the four FOH Towers is a floor mounted BMFL WashBeam.

The 'warm up' stadium shows for this leg were Paris plus Lucca and Rome in Italy, and the entire Latin American tour is outdoors. The rest of the remaining shows - including all the Mexican dates - utilise the indoor / arena system.

The arena show overhead lighting is rigged on three trusses, with 12 x BMFL Spots on the downstage truss.

Two of these are assigned to IR Trackers embedded in Waters' IEMs, connected to the VYV Photon / Albion system for projection tracking, which provides positional information for the designated lights. Pryderi can select any of these lights to connect to the trackers, and during 'Picture That' all fixtures on the upstage truss track Waters. Sax player Ian Ritchie also wears trackers - on his person rather than in his IEMs - and he's followed with lights during his solos in 'Money' and 'Us and Them'.

Another 14 x BMFL Spots are on the mid-stage truss and 15 on the upstage one. Two left and right vertical trusses each feature 6 x BMFL Spots per side, and on top of the stage left and right 'bunkers' are another four BMFLs per side. The bunkers are part of the sub-stage 'technical underworld' construction which protrude slightly above the deck and are convenient for positioning lights! Down below are custom designed areas housing monitor, playback and backline worlds.

The fixtures on the onstage trusses and side trusses are all used for producing epic large scale looks and for selective backlighting / accents on performers. They do the 'heavy lifting' as Pryderi puts it, and as mentioned above, can also be linked to the tracking system, so multiple lights are used at various points in the show to highlight Waters.

The 8 x BMFL Blades in the bunker positions are used for side lighting, their precise shuttering is helpful in this role, and on the arena version show the BMFL count is completed with four BMFL Spots on the FOH lighting / video riser.

When ramped up to stadiums, the 15 x BMFL WashBeams on top of the LED Wall provide both band backlight and massive imposing aerial looks while the BMFL WashBeams on the PA masts and offstage trusses also provide big, bold, raw looks, as well as providing the band specials. They essentially replicate what's happening on the arena show trusses, but are augmented for the outdoor shows.

Twenty-two floor-based BMFL WashBeams provide fabulous, piercing aerial looks, and a backlight wash down onto and across the stage, and on this version of the show, luminaires are again linked to the tracking system and used for following Waters.

The 8 x BMFL WashBeams at FOH in the stadiums are utilised for band key lights and primary follow-spotting, and the four fixtures floor mounted at FOH pick out the giant Pig, that gets walked through

the crowd in 'Pigs (Three Different Ones)'.

The entire show is highly theatrical - as well as the high-impact visuals, automation and scenic props flying in and out. There are some big lighting moments, but essentially, it's there to highlight performers, complement the video content and sit within the entire production as a harmoniously integrated component part of a large and detailed bigger picture ... with Waters, his music and his incisive lyrics at the heart.

The challenges for lighting are many.

Having the 16 x 19ft wide by 36ft high projection 'Rollio' surfaces - a complete system built by TAIT - flying in from the roof in the arena shows for the dramatic Battersea reveal - complete with smoking inflatable chimneys - is one of them.

These stay in for most of the second act, and one trick is not to illuminate any of the associated flying system.

The compelling video content, driven by Waters and Sean Evans, and brought to life logistically by Richard Turner is central to the show narrative, and, obviously, this made follow spotting from any traditional arena positions impossible!

In fact, key-lighting Waters and the band while the Rollios are in also became a real brain teaser! Lighting the iconic Pig without spilling onto the Rollio surfaces is another galvanising task, however as Pryderi explains, "generally, being part of a very collaborative team means that any challenges are discussed thoroughly, and inventive and workable solutions found". There is always a creative answer - sometimes laterally thought through - to the many ambitious production demands of a Roger Waters tour.

Pryderi is using a grandMA2 for control and being the lighting designer, director and programmer for the tour comes close to satisfying his control freak streak he reveals!

Upstaging Inc. from Chicago - with the account handled by John Huddleston - was the lighting supplier for the 2017 North American tour and for Europe / Mexico in 2018 plus the 'universal' FOH / control package for the entire tour.

Neg Earth from the UK supplied the European stadium shows in Paris and Italy and the 2018 Latin America tour where Dave Ridgeway and Lindsay Markham take care of all the co-ordination.

UniPix from the UK came onboard after the 2017 north American leg of the tour and are supplying the LED screen worldwide.

"The kit and support from both Upstaging and Neg Earth has been exemplary" stated Pryderi who is also the first to pay tribute to "the tireless work ethic" of the fantastic lighting crews who put the rig together day-to-day.

From Upstaging these are lighting crew chief Jason 'Attaboy' Stalter, FOH & systems technician David Lancini, moving light technician Paul Mundrick, dimmer tech Randy Garrett and lighting tech Emil Vuorijarvi.

From Neg Earth in Europe this was Tim Spilman, Nic Burlace and David 'Dai' Mitchell and in Latam, Tim and Nic are joined by Haydn Corps and Steph Felstead.

Photo Credit: Kate Izor





