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Apocalypse WOW!

Products Involved

BMFL™ WashBeam LEDBeam 150™ MegaPointe® ParFect 100™ Pointe® Spiider®

Spanish performance phenomenon Circo de los Horrores (Circus of Horrors) present "Apocalipsis - A Day After", their fourth epic circus rock opera production combining the drama of theatre, the pumping rhythm of rock 'n' roll and the adrenaline buzz of circus, which is currently touring key Spanish cities after launching in Madrid. It will also tour internationally.

Lighting designer Juanjo Llorens needed a flexible and powerful lighting rig to ensure he could create the requisite mood and spectacle, and that includes 126 Robe moving lights, with 24x MegaPointes, 24x Pointes, 24x Spiiders, 24x LEDBeam 150s, 24x ParFect 100s ... and six BMFL WashBeams, which together with other lights are being supplied and co-ordinated by technical production specialist, Smart Fussion. This rental company has invested steadily in Robe in recent years, supplied via Spanish distributor EES.

It's the largest Circo de los Horrores show to date and the third that Juanjo has lit. With the addition of a live band and a larger troupe of dancers as well as the breath-taking circus stunts and aerial work, powerful all-encompassing lighting was needed. The scale of the concept - the last day on earth - also demanded a bigger and broader technical and creative approach than before, explained Juanjo when quizzed on the starting point for his design.

Another major change was that Circo de los Horrores swapped from a conventional circus big top tent to a massive Italian tented structure providing the complete venue - stage, backstage and technical facilities, auditorium, etc.

Central to this production is a prominent 28-metre-wide 8-metre-high LED screen acting as a cyc and providing digital scenery and a variety of ambient backgrounds.

Juanjo worked closely with show director Suso Silva to establish the style and aesthetic of the piece which seamlessly blends ideas and visual moments from theatre, rock, dance and acrobatic performance.

The Robe fixtures were all selected for their intensity and versatility.

Juanjo needed moving lights able to hold their own against the video screen and offer multiple options. "With all of these multifunctional fixtures it's like have more lights physically present in the rig!" he observed.

Once the basic imaginative parameters of the performance were established, he addressed fixture placement.

A square rigging grid was designed to facilitate all the circus acts and a separate mother grid was installed below this to create the overhead lighting positions, trimmed at 14 metres. Pointes, MegaPointes and Spiiders were rigged on this.

He needed additional room for essential side lighting positions, so after a bit of consideration, the rigging structure built for the video screen was utilized. This effectively meant the lights surrounded the stage in a U-shape above. Using under-hang brackets and drop bars, lights are fitted all the way down these side positions.

This is particularly effective for lighting the choral and dance numbers and is where the remaining LEDBeam 150s and ParFects came to be positioned. Their small size was also ideal for the location. Juanjo needed this lower level of lighting both to fill the stage and to high and low light specifically for some of the circus elements.

To contrast with the loftiness of the overhead lighting, he also positioned Pointes and MegaPointes on the floor which are used for movement and aerial effects.

At certain points in the show, they are used to draw attention to the lower stage areas and can illuminate the aerial performers really well. "These floor-based pictures contribute many magical moments with their rotating gobos, prism effects and colours - all without any of this detracting from their intensity," he commented.

Juanjo also likes the way Pointes and MegaPointes combine so beautifully in a look or scene. The six BMFLs are used for front light. "They do this amazingly well, even from the long throw distances," he says.

The Spiiders are primarily used as wash lights ... the zoom enables vibrant colours to be spread over the whole stage area. Adding in the central 'Spikie effect' as he calls it transforms them into a simultaneous wash / effects unit, and he also uses the centre LED to make piercingly bright pencil-beams.

The MegaPointes create the overall environmental ambience for each section of the performance - he likes the brightness, zoom, gobos, effects and the colour mixing - in fact ALL features of this funky, flexible fixture!

With so many features mirrored or shared with the MegaPointe, the slightly physically smaller Pointes can be deployed more strategically.

Possibly his greatest 'discovery' in designing lighting for this show has been in the little LEDBeam 150, which he's used on a previous project, but on Apocalipsis they provide him with another smaller and super-fast fixture that serves as a wash or a beam thanks to the "excellent zoom!"

Being able to adjust the zoom of the ParFect 100s at the lowest hanging positions on the side structures has been exceptionally useful in terms of creating a "perfect volume of light" around the dancers during their thrilling hi-energy routines.

Juanjo has been using Robe products regularly in his most recent designs. What strikes him most about the brand right now is "taking into account all the things that LDs want with each fixture, and

also how they are making great advances in the world of LED lighting ... which benefits all of us!"

The biggest challenge for Juanjo in lighting the show was combining all the demands of three very different styles of lighting - dance, rock 'n' roll and circus, whilst maintaining the distinctive individual character of all.

Lighting circus acts is an art in itself, and with each performer there are intensive discussions about their act and the parameters for lighting it. They must establish what is distracting - or sometimes dangerous - and what is needed for the artist to see and perform in addition to what highlights their act dramatically for maximum audience engagement!

Lighting and video have been developed to work closely together. The video content is vital to some of the narrative and sometimes more decorative. It's often the star of a particular number with lighting cues supporting via matched colours or extending the screen to connect with other parts of the stage. Other times the screen intensity is dialled back to allow lighting to take the stage in all its glory!

Juanjo programmed the show with his colleague and friend Pablo Zamora, and he is the first to shout out his "fantastic" technical team comprising head of lighting Raúl Sáez, lighting assistants Víctor Navarro and Jasón Rossi plus technical co-ordinator and head of sound for the tour Pablo Alcázar and audio assistant Ricardo Máquez.

They - together with Rafael González who takes care of all the tent and structures technical direction - all share his own passion, enthusiasm and dedication for being part of creating a truly memorable performance spectacle.

Juanjo's diverse client base sees him work on so many incredible productions, but Circo de los Horrores is especially "enjoyable and special."

He loves the show's "crazy" (in a good way) producers, the González family of Manuel, Rafa and María, who together with Circo de los Horrores company founder and director Suso Silva push the technical, imaginative and logistical boundaries with every show in the quest for an immersive, seat-edgily exciting experience for the all who flock to see their unique brand of entertainment.

Photo Credit: Pepe Castro







