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A Heads Up with Francisco Olivares - AKA Pacolop

With Covid-19 lockdowns worldwide and health authorities urging people to self-isolate and practice social distancing on a massive scale as part of an enormous effort to #FlattenTheCurve of this global pandemic ... we are reaching out to industry friends, colleagues, associates, partners, etc., and asking them to share their #StayAtHome and #QuarantineAndChill activities with us during this extraordinary time.

Pacolop is a Spanish lighting designer, programmer and operator and until now, has been busy working on theatre, rock & roll and orchestral shows as well as corporate presentations where he has shared his love of light with his other passion ... marketing.

Robe: Where are you right now?

Pacolop: In Alicante, where I was born, on the shores of the Mediterranean, a source of inspiration for its incredible shades and textures of light.

Robe: How are things emerging from the lockdown in your region / country?

Pacolop: As in the rest of Spain, in March everything happened very quickly, the industry stopped and we were locked down at home ... until now, where we are entering 'the new normal'.

The only thing that seems normal here is that all the labour sectors are starting up again except ours, in which we continue to see as jobs suspended / lost one after another.

Robe: How did you spend your time during lockdown?

Pacolop: This situation affected me like others; a barrage of project cancellations, suspension of dates that were already confirmed etc.

Initially, I used the unexpected time to finish some books that I had pending for a long time.

After this, I thought that we could take advantage of the fact that all our colleagues were locked down as well and do some work-related activities that we simply could not do in 'normal' work times.

Thinking hard I found a discussion group on a Facebook group that I had previously seen elsewhere. Three high-level technicians were discussing in reference to which console was better.

This made me think that many technicians face other colleagues in 'defending' their consoles, as if instead of it being their work tool, it was an "entity" on which their lives depended.

Taking advantage of that discussion forum, it occurred to me to unite the best technicians from around the Spanish-speaking world and continue the dialogue about their consoles, so that this discussion would go on forever.

It was time-consuming and expensive, since we had to gather everyone virtually, put together some base references and record everything so that we could then show data to the other colleagues and thus share the knowledge.

That in the end, it was what that original tech wanted, to spread knowledge, enable us to learn from each other and make sure that our colleagues at home were entertained and did not go crazy too much!

This is how Fast & Show Start was born!

The Spanish-speaking Facebook group has shared a lot of educational content already and, being totally independent from brands and manufacturers, embraces the spirit of being without profit... or budget!

The reception was so good that in a few days we had more than 1500 technicians, designers and programmers from all over the world join the group.

And they surprised us, by asking us to create new challenges for them, because they needed to continue learning.

And so, we got down to business! We contacted brands in the sector to somehow reward the effort of the participants, and thus, the most followed multi-platform lighting design contests were born.

I don't want to forget to send a big hug to my colleagues from Fast & Show Start - Antonio Luis Sanjorge, Juan Contreras, Joel Lozano and Guillermo Castro, without whom this adventure would never have been so exciting and effective!

Robe: What are your biggest concerns / considerations as lockdowns ease worldwide?

Pacolop: What worries me most ... is seeing outbreaks reappear and that the new situation is 'normalized' without our sector finding a safe space where we can carry on our activities.

Robe: Do you have any thoughts / predictions about how and when live events and the industry will re-start?

Pacolop: In my country, only events produced by private companies are taking place, and with very limited capacity, everything that has to happen to public bodies is suspended or paralyzed.

I think that until a vaccine arrives, 'show business' as we knew it will not return.

Robe: Going forward, how do you think live events and the entertainment technology industry will change in a post-Covid 19 world before there is a vaccine widely available?

Pacolop: Unfortunately, our industry has already changed, there are many small companies and professionals who will not work in our sector again, and that will be a very big loss.

As for the events, we will see smaller capacities and with other advantages and skills, more intimate concerts ... and if not, we will not see anything.

Robe: How sustainable do you think these changes will be?

Pacolop: Of course, the losses are notable, but we will have to reinvent ourselves because we have no alternative. So far here, the little that has been done has been to reduce capacity to 70% and reduce payrolls to 70% more or less.

Robe: Has anyone / anything particularly inspired you since this crisis started?

Pacolop: If I will remember something positive and much during this time, it is the union of professional colleagues from all over the world around the Fast & Show Start group, and how they have shared knowledge, skills and experiences during all this time.

Robe: Own question / answer / message of solidarity or something you'd like to say?

Pacolop: Not everything is lost! Let's continue showing that we love our profession and together we will get through this.

