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Dan+Shay Obsessed with Robe

Products Involved

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Country music duo Dan + Shay - vocalists and songwriters Dan Smyers and Shay Mooney - are engaged in an extensive touring cycle following the success of their second studio album, "Obsessed," released in June 2016.

Lighting is designed, programmed and operated for them by Jeff Mathews of Borealis Stage Lighting in Nashville, Tennessee, and includes Robe Spiider, Spikie and Pointe moving lights. Jeff has been working with the artists for about 18 months ... and with shows in venues of all types, shapes and sizes, the core touring lighting rig is designed as a dynamic and flexible specials package which can be brought in 'under' the various house rigs.

It was one of various creative options that Jeff pitched to Dan + Shay and chosen as the best concept to work for the combination of headline gigs and festival support slots that they will be playing until the end of 2017 and into 2018. They are a band certainly not shy of touring and getting 'out there' for their fans!

The entire lighting rig is deployed via four custom set carts designed by Jeff and fabricated by Accurate Staging in Nashville. They added some cool features like gas pistons for lift-assists and a neat gearbox drive system that determines whether the cart is going up or down and keeps carts from rising up inside the trailer.

The set carts are rigged with LED panels in a diamond orientation, with bars of LED video across them also in a diamond shape. Each has three diamond frames, complete with video diamonds and video bars ... which hang between the carts once onstage.

Across the top of the carts is a row of eight Robe Pointes, used for the upstage spot / beam specials which produce a wide range of looks and effects throughout the show.

Nine Spiiders alternate at the top and bottom of the rig as the main wash fixtures. "They are also fast and intense, with great color saturation and many "cool gags" that can be pulled out when necessary," commented Jeff.

Four Spikies are located across the mid-stage risers with another four across the edge of the stage ... so when Jeff wants a look with multiple broken-up beams ... he uses these very effectively in combination with the central LED / flower effect of the Spiider. He finds the

inbuilt patterns on the Spiiders are ideal for disrupting the beams and keeping the looks different and fresh.

As the main spot / beam fixture, he uses the power of the Pointe juxtaposed against any larger profiles lights that they might encounter on the house rigs.

While zoomed out, the Spiider functions superbly as the principal wash light, the flexibility of the zoom itself also makes them into a good beam option.

The Spikies provide additional general aerial eye-candy, while the beam, prism and flower effects are used to enhance aerial breakup looks.

Spiiders were picked because Jeff “really likes the direction Robe has taken in recent years”. So when he heard that lighting vendor 4Wall had them available, he jumped at the opportunity.

He loves the large face of the Spiider, the color saturation, zoom range, pattern and flower modes. And, as the lighting / video package incorporated KlingNet for pixel mapping, the Spiider was a must-have!

The two types of LED video fixture on the rig – tiles and bars – are also all pixel-mapped via KlingNet using Arkaos MediaMaster which, he observes, does an “incredible job” of pulling everything together.

He appreciates the saturated colors that the Spiider can create, thinks the pure white is “beautiful” and that the incandescent emulation is “convincing”, and very useful as many song looks are composed from an amalgam of different color temperature whites.

He also finds the CTO functions realistic and useful. Spikies were used on Dan + Shay’s previous tour in the same format, where they added depth and dimensionality to the set. Rather than just having a flat wall of light, they brought a layering of beams and washes, to the mid-stage and downstage. Since they are low profile with a tiny footprint – as well as being “surprisingly bright” - they hold up well against the ambient lighting coming off the video panels and support the Pointes fluidly when in beam mode. The low power consumption is another bonus.

Jeff has been using Pointes “religiously” since they were launched in 2013, and they have been featured on almost every design he’s created since then. He loves the small size, speed, brightness, the great colors and interesting gobo package. “It’s a great beam, a great profile – and with the frost – also a wash!” he declared.

His biggest challenge in lighting Dan + Shay is the range of musical sounds and styles a typical set contains – from feel-good country crowd-pleasers to pop-tastic smash hits to good old hard-driving rock ‘n’ roll, so any lighting rig had to be adaptable and offer plenty of scope.

The other challenges were the amount of trailer space available ... and – as is often the case - time!

Playing around 50% headliners and 50% festival supports, it was vital that the lighting package could be rigged quickly and cleared off the deck within 10-15 minutes of the set

finishing ... leaving enough time for the next act to get their backline set up and any extras on!

Luckily, with the way this rig was designed from the outset, none of this has been a problem. The quickest de-rig and offstage time to date has been just 8 minutes Jeff revealed proudly! On the most recent leg of the tour they travelled in two buses each towing a trailer so designing a set cart to be deployed quickly AND look large - 36 ft. wide and 20 deep - onstage was most definitely a brain-teaser!

With the assistance of Accurate Staging, Borealis Stage Lighting found the ultimate solution that looked fantastic and packed down into a 16ft trailer!

4Wall Nashville are the main tour lighting vendor, with Borealis Stage Lighting providing all the video elements - LED video tiles and bars, ArKaos media server, processing, etc. - plus the ChamSys MQ80 console Jeff is using to run all the lights and trigger the playback video cues.

Jeff thinks Robe is "doing some very cool things right now," bringing some interesting technology to the table, and he's really excited to see what's coming next.

Jeff Mathews has been a production lighting designer for 6 years - before then he worked in music technology for two years - and is based in Nashville.

He founded Borealis Stage Lighting with Christian Hall as a creative company focusing on production design and programming services for tours, emerging artists and one offs. Their specialist area is in designing practical and tour-able large production and specials packages that will pack down into a trailer or a minimal amount of truck space, and be fast and straightforward to deploy every day. To this end, they have a modest amount of moving lights in stock, lots of creative LED video products and strong relationships with most of the major rental houses across North America.

Although Jeff's production industry career started on the 'other side' as a Noize Boy - studying for a degree in Recording Technology, he had always been fascinated by lighting and the effect and drama it brought to the stage! Eventually some of his good friends persuaded him that lighting would actually be a 'better fit' as a vocation. He was then offered a job with a lighting company upon graduation... and has never looked back!

Photo Credit: Rob Norris

