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Definitely Robe for AJR's Maybe Man Tour

Products Involved

FORTE® **Tetra2™** **Tetra1™** **Spiider®**

AJR – Adam, Jack & Ryan Met – are singer-songwriters known collectively as a tuneful, quirky, intelligent and highly entertaining band with witty lyrics, massive energy and skyrocketing popularity! They are a joy to work with for lighting designer Ezra Donellan of Moon Bolt Designs, who considers himself very lucky.

He's lit them for over 7 years, starting off in small rooms which have steadily expanded as their fanbase has exploded over 5 highly successful studio albums with the tours getting larger and longer.

For the current "Maybe Man" campaign which started at the end of 2023 and continues throughout this year, Ezra specified over 200 Robe moving lights, including 83 x FORTES, 88 x Tetra2s, 44 x Tetra1s and 32 x Spiiders, all delivered by Gateway Studios & Production Services (GSPS).

AJR comes with a fully realized visual concept and production design created by Mitchell Schellenger of Station Six, which is a combination of his and the band's ideas – they are constantly buzzing with these. So, while having great clarity on what they want to see and how it should be achieved, beyond that, it's up to all the creative talent heading up each technical department to make it happen.

"It's a very invigorating way to work," comments Ezra on the collaborative nature of the design process. "There are challenges, and we all enjoy dealing with these and finding the best solutions."

On tour, there's a prominent curved video screen upstage, and a downstage 'vanish' screen divided into 6 sections, each independently moveable via a TAIT control system, which also forms a rounded edge and moves into different formations to keep the scenography very dynamic.

Robe FORTES are right at the essence of the lighting plot.

On the previous tour, these had been ESPRITES, but as they moved up to the larger venues, Ezra changed up to the larger and even brighter FORTE, currently Robe's most powerful LED moving light.

"It was the logical choice and perfect for its greater firepower but using the same excellent color and optical systems as the ESPRITE," noted Ezra, adding that "punch" was extremely important with so many LED screens in the production design.

The FORTES are mainly positioned on two curved upstage trusses that match the curved video walls.

Due to some flying treadmills and other moving set elements, real estate in the roof for lighting onstage was extremely limited, so Ezra kept the lighting rigging simple, with a ring of lights upstage and another one downstage, filling the negative airspace in between these two entities with Tetra fixtures.

Over 100 Tetras are positioned mainly upstage above the FORTES, and 'yoked out' around the rear video screen to give extra orientation and more jauntiness in the angle. This enables some impressive geometric shapes to be created, together with a bunch of cool kinetic fluid movement effects that ripple through the Tetra lines.

It was the first time that Ezra had used Tetras in a show design, something he's been wanting to do for some time. "They have completely exceeded my expectations," he stated, explaining that he coordinated intricate musical hits and accents with hi-impact Tetra effects that massively boost the energy and flow of the show.

He describes himself as "like a kid in a sweet shop" creating all these Tetra pixel effects from random shuffles to bumps and blasts, "Even a single Tetra pixel can create a significant effect - I am super impressed by these luminaires," he enthuses, adding "and that's before I've even applied the flower effect!"

Talking of which, flower is used judiciously and thoughtfully, "It has its moments, but the trick is definitely not to over-use," he says, treating fans to Tetra flower effect chases in only two songs "Don't Thow Out My Legos" and "Birthday Party".

The Tetra2s have three flower effects offering even more scope for imaginative effects and the lensing, and being able to pan and tilt the whole Tetra fixture further enhances the

options and transformations from single straight pixel lines to sheets of lighting.

Ezra is super happy. Tetras will definitely be on future lighting plots! “I have sooooo much more to do with Tetras!”

Spiiders are “a great wash light” that he’s used extensively on previous designs, and he also appreciates their beam light capabilities.

He is running a 3-way RoboSpot system on the principal artists which is connected to 8 of the FORTES giving a back and a front light on Adam and Ryan and two FORTES front and back for Jack.

Ezra’s zest for being part of the team translating AJR’s unique sound, look and style in a live setting is a pleasure and also a great creative challenge he loves, and he also programs and operates lighting for each gig.

Designing lights for a band that is super-specific about what they want and a show that incorporates so many dimensions is galvanizing. Much of it is flashy and bouncy, but the words are also key. It’s very theatrical, every minute needs to be intricately lit and it’s completely full on all the time plunging from craziness to decorum and every level in between. “Super-fun,” says Ezra.

He loves using Robe fixtures to help accomplish this, seamlessly flipping between all the moods and nuance, supporting the video content which is also integral to the show, and making every visual moment memorable.

The show is always a work in progress with notes from the band after every gig, a positive scrutiny he enjoys being a part of, and working with an artist that really appreciates the importance of good production in creating thrilling seat-edge live performances.

Ezra has been using Robe for several years and is delighted that AJR’s success has opened more choices, so there is always some Robe on the designs.

The Maybe Man tour is the first time he’s worked with Gateway Studios & Production Services as an equipment vendor (lighting and video), and they have been “fantastic,” he reports.

His GSPS team includes David Haskell, president of business development, project manager Adam Ellis and lighting crew chief on the road, Jeffrey Metter.

Photo Credit: Austin Roa



