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Mega Show for Dead & Company

Products Involved

BMFL™ Blade **BMFL™ Spot** **BMFL™ WashBeam** **MegaPointe®** **Spiider®**

The stars truly unite for Dead & Company, the celebrated group featuring original Grateful Dead members Mickey Hart, Bill Kreutzmann and Bob Weir alongside singer/guitarist John Mayer, Allman Brothers' bassist Oteil Burbridge and Fare Thee Well and RatDog keyboardist Jeff Chimenti.

Reflecting the stature and profile of the band, the first gigs of their current fall tour were two sold out nights at Madison Square Garden for which LD Chris Ragan of Raygun Design has created a fresh and spectacular lighting scheme utilizing 24 of Robe's new MegaPointes, 36 x Spiiders, 37 BMFL Spots and six BMFL Blades ... all of which are at the core of the rig.

The tour follows a series of summer stadium shows where Chris's rig included 70 x Spiiders and 60 x BMFL WashBeams, also supplied by Upstaging, the lighting vendor for the tour. Chris has been working with Robe products for some time and always relishes the chance to use new technologies. He was aware that MegaPointe was on the horizon as far back as January 2017 and was itching to use these highly anticipated lights.

The Dead & Company fall tour was only confirmed in late August ... and the MegaPointe was officially launched in September, so time was tight, and Upstaging, anticipating another killer fixture from Robe - was among the first US rental companies to place an order.

Chris attended the Robe North America MegaPointe launch event in New York City and was even more excited, and time wise all the parameters fortuitously aligned so Chris could have his MegaPointes for the tour!

The tour trussing configuration comprises a straightforward 48ft downstage truss, with six overhead trusses mid-stage and a 14ft. diameter circular upstage truss. The moving lights are distributed across all of the trusses.

Twelve of the MegaPointes are rigged around the circular shape and frame the stage beautifully and geometrically.

The downstage truss has 12 x Spiiders for general stage washes and the six BMFL Blades for key lighting.

The circular truss is flanked by two 16 x 9 ft LED walls and at the bottom of these are six MegaPointes with six more upstage on the deck.

Chris is still discovering a host of new and cool MegaPointe looks as they go, and the fixtures are used extensively throughout the show.

He loves their crisp intense beam and the fact it can be fuzzed out smoothly and elegantly to form a nice rare wash across the band. "On top of these basic functions, the prism is fantastic for making kick-ass aerial looks" he commented, "It's an incredibly useful and flexible light."

He goes on to say that they are perfect for indoor shows, and for small to medium venues, he thinks they are all that's needed for a complete profile and wash combination.

Chris's history with Robe goes back a few years. He has kept a close watch on the product developments, and feels that MegaPointe takes moving light technology to a whole new level.

Chris has programmed and operates the Dead & Company show on a grandMA2 console, assisted in the programming process by Jim Rood who also takes care of the key lighting and video effects as every show is streamed live in the internet. This set up allows Chris to concentrate fully on producing the wild and creative visual psychedelia characteristic of the performance.

It is a colorful, lively collage of action and movement with plenty of surprises and dynamic asymmetric focus positions. "Serious hours have gone into crafting this current showfile" he stated.

There are 120 songs in the pool they can pick from every night, and due to the organic nature of the gig, no set is the same each night and no song is performed twice the same way!

To deal with the high levels of improvisation needed to react appropriately with lighting and visuals, they gave a "pump page" on the console giving Chris all the attributes at his fingertips, which helps keep it invigorating. This is another especially important consideration as many fans will come to multiple shows ... reigniting the spirit of the 'Deadheads'.

There are about 20 potential 'greatest hit' numbers in the song pool which can get thrown into the set at any time, so Chris has some macros ready that will quickly load a selection of tricks for these.

Keeping up with the band and what they might do next ... is one of the challenges and most enjoyable aspects of working on this tour!

Chris Ragan's fascination with lighting started at age 14 when he was taping arrows to the stage floor - to denote the path from backstage to the center mic - at a Bob Dylan concert in New York. After school, he studied fine art at Syracuse University and ever since, as Raygun Designs, has been finding inventive ways to fuse music and art with lighting and set design. Early on in his career he purchased some Trackspots moving mirror lights and started lighting warehouse parties and underground raves which then led to music tours. He is also a special sales consultant for New York based BML Blackbird Theatrical services.

Photo Credit: Katie Friesema





