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Marillion Convention in Berlin

Products Involved

ESPRITE[®] **Spiider**[®] **LEDBeam 150**[™] **MegaPointe**[®]

UK-based Rock band Marillion has built up a formidable and near cult-like following over a career spanning five decades that has spawned 20 studio albums plus a string of top 40 hits since their formation in 1979. For the last 21 years, they have staged biennial 2 and 3-day summer convention events for fans, which include special live performances plus additional Marillion world activities.

Lighting designer Yenz Nyholm's specification for the 2023 Marillion 'convention tour' included nearly 100 Robe moving lights – 31 x Robe ESPRITES, 22 x LEDBeam 150s, 16 x MegaPointes and 30 x Spiider LED wash beams.

Conventions were staged in the UK, the Netherlands (twice), Germany, Italy, and Canada. For the shows at Berlin Tempodrom, Leipzig-based rental company Konteg supplied the full Robe package, so Yenz was delighted.

It was also a completely new lighting design for this year.

Marillion treat the conventions as a chance to up the production values and have a larger show than they might necessarily carry on a standard tour, seizing the moment to present an ideal stage and production design suited to their music.

Over the past 5 years, the band has veered away from having prominent video surfaces onstage, but this year a striking upstage LED screen was back, which provided a major starting point for Yenz's lighting design. For obvious reasons, output was central when choosing lighting fixtures.

"I always start with Robe MegaPointes if I can fit them into the design," he explained. "They are always on the plot somewhere as one of my must-haves." For the Berlin show, half the MegaPointes were hanging from the back truss and the other 8 were positioned on the floor.

These were used for all the potent beams, fast movement, and funky effects for which they are known and loved, and for creating some spectacular mirror ball moments, a look which has crept increasingly into the set. “MegaPointes shooting onto mirror balls look simply amazing,” enthuses Yenz, adding that just 8 MegaPointes and multiple mirror balls unlock a massive range of looks all perfect for the huge dynamics of a Marillion set.

Next on the plot were the LEDBeam 150s.

“They are brilliant – small, light and very powerful,” commented Yenz, noting that any weight saving was a bonus for some of the gigs when the lighting was being ground supported, although that was not the case in Berlin.

The LEDBeam 150s were utilised for audience lighting, rigged on the front truss in Berlin where they beamed out and enveloped the crowds, also providing nice tight beams back onto the band and some even key lighting. “They are just so versatile!” he commented.

All Yenz’s lighting designs since the pandemic have started with a case of eight LEDBeam 150s. Whether it is been a bus-and-trailer tour or a stadium show! “They are incredible value for any show and budget!”

The 31 x ESPRITES were at the core of the convention tour design. Like the LEDBeam 150s, Yenz thinks they are “amazing luminaires”, and appreciates the brightness, clarity, mid-air effects, etc., “every feature hits the spot!” and they have become his main workhorse.

He wasn’t lucky enough to have 31 ESPRITES at all the conventions, but they were there in Berlin, 19 spread out across the overhead trusses, with 12 on the floor. They provided all the base looks and building blocks of the show.

This convention tour was the first time he had actually used ESPRITES, one of Robe’s current TE (TRANSFERABLE ENGINE) series, but he has been wanting to do this for some time and assures us that “it won’t be the last!”

Describing them as a “rock-solid reliable” product, he appreciates the uniformity of colour, gobo selection, speed and the smoothness of the fixtures: “ESPRITES are a new go-to for me.”

Spiiders are another moving light that he likes and often encounters on festival rigs. He thinks these are adaptable in all modes, and another robustly made top-of-the-list Robe regular for festivals.

For some larger UK shows, Yenz has started spec'ing RoboSpots, usually with BMFL WashBeams. When possible, he specs 3 RoboSpot systems to cover the three main artists.

He enjoys lighting the conventions where there are multiple levels of palpable energy and the genuine interest of everyone attending is invigorating. He also likes Marillion's music, and being able to get some fantastic looks out of the rig, from moody solos with a single light source to classic anthemic big arena rock scenes.

He programmed and ran the convention tour shows using an Avolites Titan Mobile console running the latest software, which he also loves.

Challenges included having to programme lighting for between 55 and 60 songs as each convention live show is unique with a different set. A few favourites are always played, but with 20 albums to date, there is a massive back catalogue, and no one is quite sure what might pop up.

All this keeps Yenz on his toes whilst designing, operating, and enjoying being part of the Marillion family. He lit his first Marillion convention back in 2004 and has seen the phenomenon grow steadily ever since.

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