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Robe Shines Bright at Sziget 2023

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Hungary's Sziget Festival celebrated 30 years in 2023 earning its place as one of Europe's largest, most popular and diverse music and cultural festivals which is staged annually in August on Óbudai-sziget ("Old Buda Island"), a fantastic leafy green 108-hectare island on the Danube just a stone's throw from central Budapest.

Robe moving lights had a big presence this year across three major performance areas – the Main Stage, the massive FreeDome Tent and the dropYard rap stage – as well as on some of the other venues around the site that hosted over 1,000 performances on the “Island of Freedom” as it's known for the duration.

Headlining the Main Stage this year were a host of internationally acclaimed artists like Imagine Dragons, David Guetta, Billy Eilish, Florence + The Machine, Lorde and Macklemore, plus a plethora of other top level artists, together with events all over site from wild dance parties to alternative arts, pubs, cocktail bars, chill out zones, seminars dedicated to current hot topics like AI and climate change; workshop areas and places where charities and NGOs could showcase their work and campaigns.

There was something for everyone – even a pop-up Aldi supermarket for those needing that extra something to make the camping cuisine rock!

In The Main

Production lighting for the Main Stage was designed by Mark Kontra, part of the team from rental specialist Colossal which supplied all the lighting kit for this area.

Mark has been involved in some capacity with this stage and the festival for the last 12 years, and since 2015 has been the head of Main Stage lighting.

The Robe count here this year was over 160, with 42 x FORTES, 8 x iFORTES, 64 x Pointes and 56 x ColorStrobes. Four BMFL Spots running on four RoboSpot systems were available for those requesting it, which were Florence & The Machine and Lorde. Imagine Dragons brought in their own 7-way touring RoboSpot system complete with BMFL LTs.

The philosophy with Sziget's Main Stage lighting is to be as "accessible and accommodating as possible," explained Mark, and as the basic design process starts at the end of the previous year and well ahead of any technical riders being available, it also must be flexible!

The production rig is also designed to make overnight headliner programming sessions as smooth and seamless as possible. "We provide enough of everything," states Mark, "but also try and keep it simple so everyone can clone their show files without any hassle!"

They don't usually offer a generic floor package for this stage, but for any artists needing one and not bringing in their own, it is built exactly to their individual specs.

The initial stage lighting design is finalized and tweaked when all the main technical riders are in a couple of months ahead for the event.

One of the final elements of the design to take shape is the final truss positions which are established at the end stage to allow for the logistics and practicality of incorporating all the headliner's rigging requirements.

The stage this year measured 24 meters wide by 15 deep with 15 meters of headroom expanded slightly higher from the 2022 event. A thrust extended out at the front to a B stage so artists could get amongst their fans. Most of the lighting was Robe fixtures, rigged on 4 main over-stage trusses plus another two wing trusses.

The FORTES were positioned in an 8-8-8 formation on the three upstage trusses with 10 on the front truss, as requested by Mumford & Sons. The iFORTES were on the PA wing trusses which were fully exposed positions.

Mark was excited to be using FORTES as he loves the power and functionality of these, currently Robe's highest powered LED moving lights.

The Pointes were also deployed 8-8-8 in the upstage three trusses, 8 & 8 on the wing trusses and 8 & 8 on two mid-stage ladders. That same 88 format was repeated for the ColorStrobes. Mark likes the number 8!

Commenting on the Robe ColorStrobes, he says, “They are still a brilliant wash and a great blinding fixture – very bright, ideal for festivals and super reliable – we’ve never had to use a spare!”

This comment was echoed by Mitchell “Mitch” Schellenger, show designer for Imagine Dragons who remarked that the ColorStrobe still packed a good punch as a wash light.

David Guetta brought in one of the more complex floor packages (designed by the team at High Scream) which included his own LED screen part flown and partly ground supported immediately behind his DJ platform and in front of the large 20 metre x 7 metre house LED screen at the back. This was supplemented by a left and right IMAG screen.

At FOH, two grandMA3 full-size consoles and two grandMA3 lights provided control running with 5 NPU's over a Luminex network.

Colossal also provided a visualization suite on-site for anyone wanting to take advantage. Mark comments that as a 15-year festival veteran, Sziget is a big part of his life and something in the calendar that he looks forward to every year.

Celebrating FreeDome

The Visual Europe Group (VEG) were the lighting, audio, and video equipment suppliers for this very large tent. They have one of the largest Robe rental inventories in Hungary, and Robe was once again prominent on the rig which was designed by Laszlo Szonyi, head of lighting at VEG's Budapest office.

Helping to make an eclectic variety of styles and genres of music move and groove with four live acts each evening were 42 x Robe BMFL Spots, 24 x Tarrantulas and 24 x MegaPointes plus some other lights.

As with the Main Stage, these were all chosen as “Rider-friendly, reliable and festival appropriate products that offer consistent quality,” noted VEG's account handler and project manager Kristof Nagy.

The BMFL Spots and MegaPointes were mainly on the upstage trusses and on some angled trusses in the upstage corners. The Tarrantulas were in these positions with 10 units on the front truss which produced excellent washes both in the audience and onstage.

The other lights on the rig included blinders, strobes and LED PARs.

Also on the kit list were 24 x Robe Tetra2s and 12 x miniPointes which were requested by two of the acts, with all this run via a grandMA3 full-size console.

dropYard

This busy underground hip hop stage features a semi open tent, the stage located at the closed end and the FOH at the open end, with lighting co-ordinated by David Kovacs and the kit also supplied by Colossal. In fact, the production design for lighting was also completed by Mark Kontra.

dropYard hosted four live acts per evening and was used throughout the day for breakdancing workshops and other activities which also needed some lighting.

Main Stage lighting was rigged on a ground supported structure upstage and on this 24 x Robe Spiiders and 16 miniPointes were deployed which worked perfectly for the range of artists as well as the other action.

On the front truss were another 12 Spiiders, plus some blinders, with LED floods attached to the stages of the tented structure to help light the audience further back and cube LEDs on the front of the stage that also lit the audience and were good for boosting the daytime atmosphere. The front truss Spiiders were also used for DJ key light.

For control, there was a grandMA3 light, and David and his colleague Mark Stiller operated for those acts not bringing their own LD. The challenges were keeping everyone happy onstage and getting some nice audience reaction from the lighting, something that David loves. "It makes all the hours and days of hard work worth it when what you're doing gets a reaction," he commented.

The Spiider is still one of his favourite fixtures, a solid wash light with great zoom and colour mixing, plus all the features – flower effect, pixel control – which really extend its usability!

David has worked as a freelance lighting tech and operator in Hungary and internationally and still enjoys revisiting Sziget each year as it has also become a large part of his life. "I love lighting this event, I am very lucky that my work is also my hobby!" he concludes.

Photo Credit: Louise Stickland









