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Robe for Dead & Company Tour

Products Involved

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

Dead & Company's critically acclaimed 2018 tour kicked off in Mansfield, Massachusetts at the Xfinity Center and returned for a two-night stand at iconic venues such as Citi Field in New York; Alpine Valley Music Theatre in East Troy, Wisconsin; Shoreline Amphitheatre in San Francisco, California; and Folsom Field in Boulder, Colorado, while also adding new venues, including Los Angeles' historic Dodger Stadium and Autzen Stadium in Eugene, Oregon, to the tour.

Striking lighting was designed by show / visuals director Chris Ragan of Raygun Design who has worked with Dead & Company since the project started in 2015.

Dead & Company was formed when the Grateful Dead's Mickey Hart, Bill Kreutzmann and Bob Weir joined forces with artist and musician John Mayer, Allman Brothers' bassist Oteil Burbridge, and Fare Thee Well and RatDog keyboardist Jeff Chimenti.

The result was one of the most successful touring bands of the decade. The inaugural tour kicked off in the fall of 2015 with two sold-out shows at the legendary Madison Square Garden and ending the year with two sold-out performances at the 'Fabulous' Forum in Inglewood, California.

On the lighting plot for this tour were almost 150 Robe moving lights - 62 x Spiiders, 30 x BMFL Spots, 24 x MegaPointes, 6 x BMFL Blades and 24 x BMFL WashBeams.

Chris has been working with Robe products for some time and loves the chance to use new technologies. He first used the MegaPointe on the fall 2017 tour and was very pleased to have these back on the rig this summer, along with the BMFLs and Spiiders.

A major objective with the design was to ensure it was straightforward enough to facilitate quick loads-ins, so they had sound, lighting, video and all the band kit installed and ready to rock for 3 p.m. sound checks every day.

Many HUD trusses were installed above the stage including a 48 ft. long downstage truss, which was loaded with 10 x BMFL Spots, 6 x BMFL Blades, 8 x Spiiders, some strobes and other lights, plus a 50 ft. mid-stage truss, rigged with 10 x BMFL Spots and some LED batten effects lights and strobes.

One of the strongest features of the tour was a grid of 36 Spiiders, 3 fixtures attached to each of the 8ft. sticks of HUD truss, sub-hung from 'spanner' trusses.

The 50ft. upstage truss featured another 10 x BMFL Spots for back-impact, and two 8 ft. side trusses were used for positioning three Spiiders each, together with LED effects batten units. Four pre-rigged forms were positioned between the three upstage LED walls, an ideal location for blasting in dramatic rear light effects, and each of these was rigged with 4 x MegaPointes and 3 x Spiiders, adding plenty of extra energy to the mix and more spectacle to the visual picture.

Two 30' trusses out in the audience had six BMFL WashBeams on-board, together with strobes, and on the floor, were another 12 x BMFL WashBeams and eight strategically deployed BMFL Spots.

All lighting equipment was supplied by Upstaging

Chris is working closely with lighting programmer and assistant LD Jim Rood who also provides drawings and some design input. Chris has about 20 songs (out of the bands 200+ song library) that have some special cueing that may or may not be played on any given night.

Considerable studio time is devoted to listening in depth to the tunes in depth while exploring different lighting FX and ideas. Jim provides Chris with a handful of unique tricks for each song and he chooses the ones he likes best. They are constantly adjusting the cueing throughout the tour.

As the band was generally taking the stage at dusk, Chris would hold back on the MegaPointes and WashBeams until the latter half of the set when it became dark enough for their full presence to be seen and appreciated.

He used the Spiiders for 'pixel tricks' in the first half, and then for more concentrated beamy and -style looks later, when the atmosphere and darkness creeps in by the minute, and the band get into serious jam mode and ... this is when the lighting system really comes alive! Chris again enjoyed using the MegaPointes. "They are fast, beamy and you can't beat the prisms," he stated. Having used them on the fall tour, he could get beyond the basics and drill down into the more creative aspects of the fixtures.

For Jim, it's the MegaPointes' complex optical system. Utilizing the two different prism wheels they can produce a wild variety of psychedelic shapes and patterns that work fluidly and perfectly for Dead & Co. "They also have a great narrow beam with a thick aperture that can cut through the bright looks."

Chris appreciates working with this band for many reasons including the opportunity to experiment with the lighting and the overall show presentation. He operates the show himself using a grandMA2, a task on which he works hard with Jonathan Singer who designs and operates the video content.

Both Chris and Jim have been using Robe products in their design work for some time, "mostly due to the level of support from the Robe team which is unmatched in our industry"

concluded Jim.

Photo Credit: Adam Miszewski





