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A Heads Up with Juanjo Saunier

With Covid-19 lockdowns worldwide and health authorities urging people to self-isolate and practice social distancing on a massive scale as part of an enormous effort to #FlattenTheCurve of this global pandemic ... we are reaching out to industry friends, colleagues, associates, partners, etc., and asking them to share their #StayAtHome and #QuarantineAndChill activities with us during this extraordinary time.

Juanjo was born in Buenos Aires 46 years ago and has devoted - to his great surprise - almost half of his life to lighting.

After many events, he has been able to focus on the most creative part of the process and become a lighting designer. A very high percentage of his current shows ('current' as in the pre Covid-19 era) were fashion shows and corporate events in which he enjoys designing like a kid in a sweetshop!

Robe: Where are you right now?

Juanjo: In Barcelona, the city in which I settled almost 20 years ago.

Robe: How are things emerging from the lockdown in your region / country?

Juanjo: Slowly and with great care! These days, with this new - second - wave of infections, a lot of projects have been cancelled or postponed once again. That makes me very sad since it means we are still far from going back to normal.

Robe: How did you spend your time during lockdown?

Juanjo: It has definitely been a different experience. I never thought I would undergo something like this, going through all possible moods: anguish, unease, joy, sadness, hope...

At a professional level, building a contact network with other Spanish colleagues has enabled us to share new knowledge and to continue growing professionally.

At a personal level, I have enjoyed having more spare time, I have read and cooked a lot! The lockdown has given me the chance to enjoy my son's and partner's company with no schedule or agenda. That was very cool!

Robe: What are your biggest concerns / considerations as lockdowns ease worldwide?

Juanjo: My biggest concern is not even knowing when we will be able to go back to the way we used to be ... I really need an expiration date for this!

It is difficult to plan for the future with such uncertainty, and I am not just talking about the professional field. I think this extraordinary situation has unmasked us as a collective, and hopefully it will make us better people... But I must admit I am quite pessimistic about it.

Robe: Do you have any thoughts / predictions about how and when live events and the industry will re-start?

Juanjo: I would love to have an answer to this! But I don't, at the moment. Here in Spain, the market was beginning to reactivate in the second half of the year, but due to the second wave we have had to stop again. I hope we can start working again soon... I look forward to doing what I really love.

Robe: Going forward, how do you think live events and the entertainment technology industry will change in a post-Covid 19 world before there is a vaccine widely available?

Juanjo: I believe that until the vaccine arrives our industry will be on a constant roller coaster.

I see this situation as a marathon where the priority is to reach the finishing line, no matter how long it takes. Unfortunately (and this makes me very sad) I think there are many companies and professionals in this sector not strong enough to achieve this goal.

Hopefully, we can take up our previous life soon without so many restrictions. In the meantime, I guess we will have to accept this industry as more digitalized and encapsulated than before; a new format that neither today nor ever will be able to replace live events but in the future it might become an interesting complement to reach wider audiences.

Robe: Has anyone / anything particularly inspired you since this crisis started?

Juanjo: It has surprised and inspired me the way many people in our industry have thrown themselves altruistically into sharing their knowledge and experiences through different platforms during the

lockdown. It has been very gratifying to discover and meet colleagues worldwide who experience the profession we like so much with the same passion as I do.

Robe: Own question / answer / message of solidarity or something you'd like to say?

Juanjo: I sincerely hope that this whole experience will convert us into better people. That Covid-19 will become an anecdote in the short-term, but we will still learn not to make the same mistakes in the future. Wishing everyone the best of health!

