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Creating the Best Guest Experience

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Creating the best guest experience and superlative customer service for visiting lighting designers rocking up to the Arena Stage at Roskilde Festival in Denmark ... is the objective of Sune Verdier and his team co-ordinating and running lighting for this busy and popular venue.

Building on the success of the 2017 move to an all-Robe moving light rig, Sune repeated the move again, utilising 76 x Spiiders, 48 x BMFL Spots all supplied by Copenhagen based rental company, Comtech.

We all know what it's like under a pressured touring schedule! There's always limited FOH time available, changeovers are busy and hectic, own-show festival designs and touring packages are getting ever more ambitious, access is often difficult and you're frequently jostling with several others in the same position!

Sune has cultivated a vibe that 'FOH at the Arena' should provide a calm, inclusive and well-organised working environment where LD's needs can be fully prioritised, while their onstage options are also equally flexible and dynamic.

Sune designed the production lighting rig for the 17,000 capacity inside venue - with another 17,000 outside - and liaised with the many visiting LDs to ensure that they received the best show possible. Joining him and the great vibes this year at FOH were Frederik Heitmann and Nicolai 'Gubi' Smith. Sune first introduced Robe to the Arena in 2016 with BMFLs. Last year Spiiders replaced the previous wash fixtures ... and everyone was so pleased that it stayed all-Robe for 2018, this year with the added bonus of 22 x Robe Pointes which were added to the audience lighting positions - a serendipitous decision made independently!

Also on Sune's team was software developer Christian Olsson who has devised a custom control system for the Arena's environmental and periphery lighting which is on a separate console to mimic the action of the main console. 'The Apprentice' sits on the ArtNet network and follows parameters like colours, iris and shutter chases and movements on the main console, takes the algorithms and feeds these into the house lighting console, so the tones and textures can be mimicked.

This ensures guest LDs don't have to worry about other lighting that they can't necessarily see around the arena and was particularly effective after dark adding some extra illuminative magic!

The main stage rig is designed to offer all artists the best generic options. The Arena has one of the most eclectic line-ups of the festival so it's important to have a good generic base to the lighting with the latitude to offer additional dynamics.

For full flexibility, an automated truss system offered eight different truss designs based on 10 individual truss pieces. The truss design is selected in advance by the guest LD and these pre-selected truss designs can also be further tweaked if necessary.

This combined with artists' own specials packages enables the Arena stage to look far more like it's actually presenting a series of individual gigs, rather than being part of a festival!

On each of the 10 moving trusses were four Spiiders, three BMFLs and 2 strobes and there were Spiiders along the front of the stage and upstage at the back in front of the house LED screen (also customisable).

A house floor package was available to all artists which this year this was set up on six rolling boxes, each containing one BMFL and two Spiiders which could be positioned as required by the LD - at no additional cost to the production.

"Flexibility and maximum options really are at the core of the stage rig," explained Sune. He wanted to have up to three nicely defined lightsources rather than a bunch of different types, and hence his decision to choose BMFLs for the hard edges, Spiiders for the LED washes and Pointes for the effects. "In terms of type of light - three high quality fixtures which I knew would work and with which everyone would be happy!"

As with the last two years, all the LDs they encountered were extremely happy to use Robe and many of them were also carrying Robe on their touring packages or spec'ing Robe on their festivals riders! He observes that there's been a noticeable shift to Robe being in this position in the last couple of years.

All the fixtures were chosen for their brightness and multi-functionality.

Roskilde takes place during some of the longest days of the year, so intensity was crucial as it's still light when most bands are onstage, although the Arena does provide excellent dark cover.

Sune also knows BMFLs, Spiiders and Pointes very well himself, and has used them on his own designs for countless shows.

In Denmark Pointes and BMFLs have become industry standard fixtures in recent years and Spiiders and MegaPointes, both launched in the last two years are also universally popular.

When they changed out the previous wash lights to the Spiiders for the Arena last year it made a huge difference to how everyone looked onstage. The Spider also perfectly complimented the power and colour of the BMFL.

"The colour mixing of the Spider is great, the range and scope of the affects you can extract from the Pointes and the general usefulness of having BMFLs on a rig makes this a perfect combination of luminaires".

He is also happy in the knowledge that the fixtures are robust, well built and reliable.

The site itself is also used for livestock activities during the year and the footprint for the Arena is actually an equestrian arena ... filled with dust. "It's complete torture for the lights, and I am totally

impressed with how they survive so well”.

Sune, Gubi and Fredrik worked hard alongside six lighting crew from Comtech to ensure everything ran like clockwork.

At the FOH itself, the organisation and attention to detail was all evident. A house console was set up with spaces for up to three guest consoles and their visualisation facilities. Around 70 per cent of the 22 bands playing over the 2018 event brought their own LDs and Sune took care of the others and made sure that everyone looked great.

In addition to the technical detail and choices, there’s also the all-important human qualities that help ensure everyone feels welcomed, comfortable and happy when at the FOH, and this extends to a well-stocked fridge and a comfy sofa for those needing either to enjoy some great music ... or to quickly rest their feet from the usual festival mayhem.

Sune explains, “Every year we strive to make improvements. We ask each of the visiting LDs if there was something else we could do or an element we could do better and we take this on-board for the next year.”

“Everyone should leave with a big smile”.

The four day Roskilde event is one of the most iconic, popular and acclaimed summer music and arts festivals in Europe.

Photo Credit: Louise Stickland







