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Tedeschi Trucks Band reaches the Moon with Robe

Products Involved

FORTE® **Spiider®** **MegaPointe®**

Tedeschi Trucks Band (TTB) is a popular contemporary blues band, known for superlative musicianship and gripping live performances, so Nashville based lighting designer Tony Caporale of design studio InfinitusVox was delighted to be asked to design a new lighting scheme for their live shows.

Tony has enjoyed an action packed 2023 schedule and TTB is a brand-new client. They reached out to him after seeing some of his other work, particularly the Goose tour earlier in the year, for which he was lighting programmer, working closely with LD Andrew Goedde.

A long-term Robe advocate, when Tony started drawing up the plot, he reached for some of his most trusted moving lights – FORTES, Spiiders and MegaPointes – to help add that special magic and sparkle for TTB's stage presentation.

It started as a summer shed and theatre tour and crossed over to arenas towards the later US dates, so the rig needed to be scalable and adaptable. Tony's lighting also had to accommodate a raft of guest musicians and singers, all adding to the general stage dynamic.

With a 12-piece band to cover, he needed some bold and large lighting looks to complement their impressive set up.

All the band are very tuned into and aware of each other – such is the nature of the blues and more improvisational playing – so emphasizing the scale but retaining the correct band footprint and distances so they could best communicate freely was another lighting challenge.

"I decided to effectively 'wrap' the trusses around their stage set up, including the floor lighting carts on the deck as well, so it could envelop them on one hand, but I could also have lights shooting out to the audience and transferring the energy offstage," he explained.

When he showed Susan Tedeschi – a band founder together with husband Derek Trucks – the initial ideas, she loved the essence of the band being surrounded by lights. He also illustrated aspects like the Spiiders' Flower Effect, which she instantly latched onto, making Spiiders an absolute must have for the tour!

Tony mentioned that he also sent Susan and Derek some links to Robe product videos when proposing the lighting design. "Many musicians have a high level of interest when it comes to the technology you are using and how they are being lit, so I often send them product info so they can see for themselves."

The 70 x Spiiders were arranged in clusters on the mid and upstage trusses, enabling nice arrays of beams and pixels with two clusters of five on three mid stage trusses and sections of 20 fixtures lower down on the upstage trusses, all accentuating the depth and bringing added dimensionality to the stage.

Having the Spiiders rigged in this pattern meant the band could be illuminated and picked up in sections or if they were soloing or engaging in a special moment. They could also produce ACL-style 'beam technology' looks, and having these Spiiders in this arrangement just generally facilitated some very cool back lighting.

For the song "Midnight in Harlem" Tony created an animated, twinkling starry sky with Spider pixels on a slow dimmer chase. Caporale also utilized a Hippotizer media server running through the grandMA control system to produce many more fluid and flowing effects.

The fifty FORTES were positioned on the overhead and side trusses and in the floor carts. Tony had used them on the last Goose tour with Andrew, and loved them, choosing them for this project "because I knew I needed a bright, rock-solid fixture."

The FORTE shutters and beam shaping were invaluable in precision coverage for the substantial line up, and Tony noted that even TTB's regular lighting director Brian Pirrone, known to be extremely particular about having accurate specials and key lighting "was impressed!"

FORTE was needed for its output, especially the luminaires on the downstage truss, and they worked equally well as a rear keys, including a row of four upstage center, used to throw quality back lighting onto Susan and Derek.

“We learned so much about what these lights could do and how versatile they are on Goose, so I took some of that knowledge and used it for different applications on this design.”

MegaPointes were the third essential layer of lighting for the design.

Twenty MegaPointes were scattered in between the Spiiders and used for “fun patterns, and extra fire power” he explained. “We also used them on Billie Eilish last year, and while there were less units compared to Spiiders and FORTES, as MegaPointes do ... they went a long way and produced some stunning and diverse looks.”

They were great for highlighting Susan and Derek with interesting asymmetric and defocused looks from behind.

“I always have some MegaPointes on the plot” confirmed Tony “I love the speed; the prisms are fantastic, and you can simply do a lot with not so many fixtures.”

The overall vibe of the show was organic and relaxed with a need to amp things up for the up-tempo sections and jams, so they needed to get super intense with the lighting at times, following the music. “It’s basically a very musical lightshow” said Tony, noting again that input from Brian on the basic do’s, don’ts and other vital tips massively helped the harmony and success of his design, and understanding of where it needed to grow.

With no video onstage, all the visual emphasis was on the lighting, and that needed to be dramatic and emotional at exactly the right times without ever distracting from the music.

Tony loved the fact he was able to get a bit experimental while developing this show. The antithesis of a tightly timecoded highly cued set, the go-with-the-flow improvisation style demanded that the design worked for this way of operation, and could produce a different lightshow each night in line with a band who play a unique set each time they take to the stage.

“It was a different but very invigorating and exciting way to work,” he concluded

Lighting equipment was supplied by Gateway Studios & Production Services out of St Louis, and project managed by Mikey Cummings. The lighting crew chief was Sandy Paul, LX1 was Max Mackintosh, LX2 was Chazz Malott, Jim Crandall was LX2 and rigger, with Sarah Jaffee taking care of dimmers/networking.

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