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LD Systems Ramps Up the Robe for Rodeo Houston

Products Involved

iBOLT™ **iFORTE® LTX WB** **iFORTE®** **TetraX™** **RoboSpot™**

Lighting designer Nathan Brittain from Houston, Texas-based lighting rental specialist LD Systems oversaw a major lighting upgrade for the live concert element of this year's Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo – AKA Rodeo Houston – which included adding over 150 Robe moving lights to the rig.

Staged at NRG Stadium, Nathan has also created production lighting for the concerts for several years, with LD Systems as the lighting vendor.

Every five years a major technical upgrade takes place ensuring all the latest and best technologies are available for the benefit of all artists. Lighting is rigged on a bespoke TAIT-designed and built stage / roof structure, and this year Nathan and LD Systems made a major investment in Robe including the addition of 62 iFORTE, 70 x TetraXs and 16 x iBOLTS.

It was the first time iBOLTS had been used in the USA on a concert series.

Also, after successful testing last year, Nathan and the team changed up to be using a full RoboSpot system for remote follow spotting with 16 iFORTE LTXs running on 12 x RoboSpot BaseStations, giving fantastic 360-degree coverage from all around the stadium.

These new Robe products were added to the 128 x Robe Spikies and 49 x MegaPointes which were installed on the rig in 2018.

The 20-day Houston Rodeo event features a stellar lineup of artists for each of the nights and is the largest livestock exhibition and rodeo in the world attracting more than 2.7 million visitors, also making it Houston's biggest event of the year!

Being the first to use Robe's iBOLT laser source fixture – since FDA approvals were granted in late 2024 – was hugely exciting, and Nathan positioned four iBOLTS in each of the four corners of the stadium on the floor where they could be used for breathtaking aerial effects

throughout the stadium and for texturing those corner spaces which so often get left in the dark on massive shows like this.

Nathan remarked that this was a perfect environment for iBOLTS!

Four years ago, they had been using another brand for a searchlight style effect, but were already on the lookout for something more modern that would surpass those, which had simply not been possible ... until the iBOLT arrived on the scene!

He first saw the iBOLT when it was still a prototype and loved the big lens, the fat light source emanating from it, and its “beautiful, elegant” flat field which is ideal for cameras. “It was a very distinctive look and an absolute match for what we wanted,” especially the texturing effects in the corners which was achieved using the prisms and gobos.

Thirty new iFORTES were positioned in the overhead trusses and another 32 iFORTE on trusses over the audience.

These were chosen as a powerful, fully featured profile light to replace the previous ones, which struggled against the considerable ambient light output from the large upstage LED wall, so after extensive testing, iFORTE ticked all the boxes as the best option.

The IP rating was a factor here. While it is an indoor show, there’s copious amounts of dirt, dust and other detritus constantly floating in the air, so the sealed optical chamber was a big plus in that context.

The TetraXs are also on the overhead rig and looked nothing short of “awesome!”

They replaced a previous effects fixture. “We really wanted something to boost the texture of the bigger lighting picture and a light source that was highly flexible, as we have to maximise all the looks across all the performances, so the rig must be ultimately versatile,” Nathan explained.

He likes the linearity of the fixture, a disruptor in the ocean of round beams, the pan functionality opens many possibilities, especially having multiple TetraXs running together in sequences. “I like the look, it’s an extremely dynamic light that can be used in so many configurations, and it was that ability to produce so many contrasting looks that persuaded me to make the choice,” he stated.

They were rigged so that when oriented in a straight line, they mimicked the star shape of the stage, which looked super-cool and was an effect that riffed positively with the overall

aesthetic.

Some of the RoboSpots were run in doubled-up pairs to cover the furthest 365ft throw distances from positions on the stadium perimeter to downstage center, with single iFORTE LTXs covering the slightly shorter 300ft throw positions along the shorter sides.

They provided all the main key light and were critical to how everyone looked onstage and on camera.

The Spikies are still looking good and impressive doing their super-fast movement and kinetic style effects, plus bringing an individual look to the space, and Nathan still totally rates the MegaPointes as “fantastic tools and rock-solid reliable workhorses,” which in this case were deployed on the deck around the star stage, as well as above the backdrop behind the band.

The main challenge of integrating lighting upgrades to this event rig is the scale of implementation and responsibility involved – basically making the right decisions and spec’ing kit that will work constructively for everyone’s shows.

The complete lighting control network was also new this year, with fiber running around the whole stadium.

The shows are run more like a TV production than a festival. Guest LDs rock up with their artists and give input beforehand, but the shows are all programmed and run by Nathan and his crew.

Working alongside him as lighting systems engineer / programmer was Lance Williamson, who took care of all the perimeter lighting. Rodeo’s lighting programmer was Carson Beckman, while Dan Barrett was the RoboSpot ‘wrangler’ and tech. They were also joined by lighting techs Fred Deci, Wade Henry and Elijah O'Day.

Last but not least, LD Systems’ project manager was Rob McKinley.

LD Systems purchased its first Robe products in 2013 when the Pointe was launched. The company – part of the Clair Global Group – also celebrates its landmark 50th year throughout 2025, so it was a big deal to be able to make this investment and underline the commitment to the brand via a great working relationship with Robe’s North American team.

Photo Credit: courtesy LD Systems





