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Robe Gets Closer to Kane Brown

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Talented American country music singer, songwriter and rising star Kane Brown is on the road opening for Chris Young's 'Losing Sleep' tour, and lighting designer Andrew James wanted a practical and spectacular specials rig to give the young artist's set full impact.

He turned to Robe moving lights - 18 x Pointes and five Spikies - supplied to the tour as a specials package by 4Wall Nashville, who he stated are great to work with, "friendly, helpful, knowledgeable ... and with top notch gear."

Andrew has been working with the artist for just over a year, and it's one of his first projects as a freelance LD following an introduction from his friend Erik Parker, LD on Andrew's first tour, NEEDTOBREATHE.

His starting point for this design was that he and production manager Tyler Oplinger wanted something different for Kane's set which needed to look fabulous and be set up onstage and de-rigged quickly and efficiently during the changeover.

Andrew had already started to think along cart-based ideas for movability, and he also happened to have Atari's Q*bert in his head! This inspired the basic shape of the set which he realized would also make a great base for lamp placement!

Q*bert is a 2D action arcade game with puzzle elements that uses stylized isometric graphics to create a pseudo-3D effect ... dating back to 1982.

He also wanted a walkway allowing Kane to run around and the band to be higher off the deck. After a lot of revisions and refinement to the initial ideas, the current stage set design emerged, complete with white cubes, geometrically positioned lights and runways connecting the center section with the two sides of the set. It was built by Nashville-based Accurate Staging.

Pointes have been one of Andrew's favorite lights since the launch in 2013, so these were chosen as workhorse fixtures. "They're super versatile with strong beams and also a great wash with the frost incorporated; the colors are bright, the gobos cut through and ... they hardly ever break! Perfect to fit my needs!" he declared.

This is the first time he has used Spikies, picked as a punchy small LED source primarily to silhouette the band and Kane during the show. He commented that the zoom is really advantageous together with the continuous pan and tilt which, although used sparingly, unlocks some “really cool effects”

The Spikies are mainly for back lighting, and sometimes zoomed in for additional beams. All the Robe fixtures are mounted - and live - on the cubes, designed for an expedient footprint in the truck, to make load-ins and load-outs quicker and to rationalize the focusing process.

The Pointes provide the majority of the onstage beams and create some great looks, and combined with the frost filter, are utilized to wash the stage and the white set in color. Andrew has used Robe products before, either on tours or locally supplied gigs. He sees a lot of BMFLs in action and thinks it's a great fixture and still the brightest and most adaptable on the market for large shows and 'sky packages'. He's always been impressed by the quality of Robe's products.

This Kane Brown tour is also the first time he has been in the position of designing and specifying a lighting rig and he's very happy to be able to partner with Robe in a creative context.

He thinks the brand commands an excellent market position right now. . :” They produce high quality, very reliable luminaires, and there are constantly new and interesting products on the horizon that really fit the needs and demands of designers and shows.”

A major challenge lighting the Kane Brown tour is creating the massive looks and epic scenes that are key to Andrew's design, required to ensure that Kane's set stands out visually for the audiences and looks different from other light shows, all the time reinforcing the music and lyrics. The young star has already topped the country music charts several times.

The music differs from many country artists in that “he draws inspiration from all genres” explained Andrew, “there are rock songs, ballads, pop numbers, classic country songs, fast, slow, up, down you name it, so flexibility is essential in lighting and presenting this onstage.”

He feels that this musical and harmonic diversity has really pushed him imaginatively to produce so many different and appropriate moods and atmospheres to suit each number. “It certainly helped to keep things fun and creative during programming.”

The overall look to the show is upbeat, bright and colorful with a bit of a party vibe, and from there, he interprets each song's lighting according to rhythm and narrative.

It's been a hugely exciting journey seeing his initial ideas shaped and come alive in the set collaboration with Tyler, and they have received many compliments ... some of them even noticing the resemblance to Q*bert!

He programmed and is running the show – which also includes some other beam lights and LED PARs – on a grandMA2 light console. Joining Andrew and Tyler on the road is Kane brown's FOH engineer David Loy.

About Andrew James

Andrew is a freelance LD based in Nashville, Tennessee. He became interested in lighting while studying at Middle Tennessee State University (MTSU), where he went initially to study sound and pursue studio engineering.

However ... he was gradually lured by the siren call of 'visuality' and lighting!

Cutting his technical lighting teeth working for schools' production services and as a freelance crew / tech during this time, after college he worked and toured for locally based rental company Bandit Lites for two years before launching his freelance and design career.

Andrew loves lighting, although still dabbles in ProTools when at home and enjoys picking Kane Brown's FOH engineer David Loy's brain about mixology and the best audio gear!

He enjoys the creative aspects of lighting, setting the scene and evolving visual moods to support the artist, as well as the constant challenge of working daily in new spaces and with new sets of people and crew Addressing these different issues sharpens his communication and political skills ... in addition to the lighting!

Photo Credit: Alex Alvga

