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Robe Up All Night with Black Coffee at Zamna Festival

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The beauty, magic and history of Mexican Caribbean indigenous cultures blended with superlative dance beats as the rhythm and free spirit of rave sent a rush of positive energy and human experience coursing through the 2023 Zamna Festival in Tulum.

The stunning eye-catching jungle venue surrounded by nature reserves and sacred cenotes, provided a perfect setting for this iconic Mecca-of-music event, and into this dreamscape reality stepped lighting designer Eran Klein, working with artist Black Coffee on the Island Stage.

Eran was asked to light Black Coffee's performance by techno visionary Oren Heknin – a long term client and extraordinary underground club promoter / presenter. Eran insisted on having Robe Spiiders, MegaPointes LEDBeam 150 and Tetra2 moving lights on his rig, which involved swapping out the originally proposed moving lights ... for his Robe luminaires.

"I could not contemplate producing such a special show without the right tools," he commented.

The Island Stage – one of several performance spaces across the site – is surrounded by water and an integral part of this large outdoor club environment which energises each year through January, attracting major DJs and music producers from around the world.

Behind the DJ booth and stage was a permanent ground support structure which could be utilised for lighting positions, but Eran and the Black Coffee team built their own 8 metre high "heart" centrepiece in front of this.

This comprised custom goalposts creating four arches in a slightly abstract heart shape – open to interpretation in numerous imaginative, interesting and amusing ways!

Loaded with the Robe lights, this became the architectural hub of the Black Coffee performance, radiating energy all the way around the dancefloor, pulling people into its celestial boundaries. Black Coffee shows often have a visual feature to suit the specific performance space and place.

Eran put the 10 x Robe MegaPointes, five a side plus strobes, on the outer arches. The inner arches were used to rig the 32 x Spiiders plus 16 x 1-lite blinders. Underneath the structure, four Tetra2 moving LED battens were deployed horizontally orientated, complemented by three vertically hung Tetra2s per side, so a total of 10 x Tetra2s.

Another two Spiiders were on the downstage PA towers for artist key lighting. They “did a fantastic job,” enthused Eran.

Carefully curated ‘atmospheric engineering’ was key to the show he wanted to produce and having the Robe fixtures onboard was “fundamental” to creating the dynamics that fed this concept.

He was delighted when it the Island Stage production confirmed he would get exactly the lights he wanted. “A smaller quantity of lights like these ... can go a very long way!” he noted.

The party started at 10 p.m. and Black Coffee was onstage at 4 a.m. – preceded by Who Made Who – so everyone was aware that come 6.30 when everything was moving and grooving along the sun would be rising.

“I needed a design and lights that would work best with the biggest lightsource of them all rising in the morning sky ... and I thought Spiiders!” commented Eran with a smile.

He knew that they would be visible as the shadows of the night revealed a bright and crispy dawn through the haze.

Ambience is at the centre of any Black Coffee show and Eran’s art is to create harmonious energy to match, complement and also contrast the music and make people’s journey’s complete.

“We already had the perfect conditions in this incredible jungle setting with a very friendly and nice crowd, so the task of the visuals was to help elevate everyone in their already happy space,” he stated.

While he has been using Spiiders for many years now, he's still pleasantly surprised with how bright, powerful and versatile they are. "Doing this gig was like falling in love with them all over again," he declared!

They follow a very specific colour philosophy as the set unfolds. Inspired by synaesthetics, the colour palette passes through phases with multiple different shades of a featured colour, e.g., orange or Aqua green blue or magenta, for certain sections of the music.

"The idea and being able to recreate it onstage is enhanced by the depth and texture of the colours that we can get out of the Spiider's colour mixing, and that's why they were the principal tools for this show," he elaborated.

Effectively Eran built a three dimensional 'temple of light' with Spiiders, an idea "inspired by the Mayan indigenous warriors whose culture and historic legacy permeates the whole region!"

Eran programmed and ran the show on a grandMA2 console. All lighting equipment was supplied by rental company LOGRA Mexico, via their Cancun office.

The inner 'heart' Spiiders were more focussed on the artist and create a closeness and sense of intimacy with him and the music while the ones on the wings fanned out, embraced and touched the audience, drawing them in.

Eran feels very lucky and privileged to have had the opportunity to work on this cool event. In electronic music and dance worlds it's of similar stature to playing the Royal Albert Hall or the Ministry of Sound in London!

Black Coffee had a small and efficient crew and this minimal but well specified production held its own at Zamna 2023, and as we all know, it's not about how much kit you have it's about what you do with it!

The more passion and intelligence involved, the more in tune the artists and their visuals and sonics are to the rhythms of the music and the vibes of the audience ... and the closer everyone will be to the ultimate connecting experience of being as one in a unique space.

The sound designer was Jeronimo Ignacio Sanches AKA 'Nacho', Island Stage Manager Borja de Torres kept everything running on time and the Heart piece was a collaboration between Pomelo and Dynamic Waves.

The Zamna Festival was produced by EBM (Entertainment Business Management). Head of production Miguel Lovera worked closely with Donald Hernandez, Lisa Bevers, and Toni Rocio.

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