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Lotus Blooms with Robe

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Popular Philadelphia-based jam band Lotus evolved their own distinctive “jambatronica” sound and style and brought this to the instrumental bedrock of the jam genre. In an exhilarating rave-tastic collage of electronica, hip hop, dubstep and multiple other genres, they have been inspired by artists like The Orb, Aphex Twin and many others critical to the roots of dance.

Lighting designer Scott Huston has been crafting Lotus’s lighting since 2004. It is a job he loves and combines with his thriving carpentry business which keeps him busy and creative when off the road.

The band has always had a penchant for lighting – a fact even noted in their Wiki entry – and for their 2023 tour, the first full touring stint since the pandemic, Scott specified Robe MegaPointes and TetraX moving lights as part of a floor-based specials package going in ‘under’ house top rigs at each venue.

Scott has loved the MegaPointe ever since he first used the fixture about six years ago, and has specified them ever since, both for Lotus shows and festival floor packages. He has never been without some MegaPointes in the rig.

“It is still hands-down the best profile type of moving light fixture available in my opinion,” he enthuses.

“The optics are great, and you can build very complex layered effects and still have impressive output,” he explained, adding that he uses a lot of indexed prisms and gobos for this visual treatment, which works well for the improvised lighting operation that he delivers completely live and ‘on-the-fly.’

On this latest tour, the MegaPointes were all deployed in upstage positions, set up on flight cases along the back of the stage to get maximum elevation, so they could shoot forward as

well as being able to illuminate the back cloth.

This tour featured a relatively stripped back package as it was effectively testing the water post-Covid, so Scott needed fixtures that would fit anything from a 600 to a 2000 capacity room, that he knew were ultimately flexible!

He also needed reliable kit, as he tech'd as well as operated, so there was precious little time to fix anything he explained, missing trusty technician Matt Almond, who he's toured alongside for at least the last 10 years.

He mentioned that the MegaPointes can produce a "nice wash" when zoomed out and with a frost added, but mainly he spec'd them for their famous MegaPointe aerial looks and effects.

The original Pointe was the first Robe product that Scott utilized in his work shortly after the fixture's launch. When the MegaPointe appeared 4 years later, he was super excited to have CMY colour mixing ... and has been a big fan ever since.

The TetraX's were a new addition for this tour, and the first time Scott has used this impressive 360-degree rotating LED batten from Robe. Previously he has used and really liked the Tetra2 LED battens, so to now have an exceptionally fast 360 degree pan available was very exciting!

With no wash lights in the touring rig, the Tetra X's, running in 96-channel mode also doubled in this role, in addition to being extra FX in their own right! This also enabled him to control the flower effect independently plus all the RGBW pixels, so he was also able to indulge in some mesmeric visual trickery utilizing the pixel mapping looks.

Scott programmed and ran the show on a ChamSys Stadium 500 console which is owned by the band. The rest of the lighting kit was supplied by Main Light Industries out of Wilmington Delaware, where Rick McKinney was the account handler.

"The service was fantastic as always," stated Scott about the company which has also supplied Lotus's lighting requirements for the last 15 years. For Scott, it is great to have that long term continuity and relationship.

One of the challenges in lighting a jam band like Lotus is that, with no lead singer or obvious focal point, it is as much a part of the setting and mood enhancement as the music, a more democratic relationship effectively that is sometimes different with other artists.

“Lighting essentially takes on a role of another band member,” he notes, “part of my goal in lighting the show is helping to pull the audience into that full and enriching ‘Lotus live’ experience.” Which aims to get people moving, grooving, dancing and immersed in having a bit of a rave!

He appreciates being able to play with the dynamics of this scenario, sometimes starkly lighting everyone with whites, then plunging into colors and textures, as well as more subtle nuanced differences like juxtaposing light and shade with one another more gradually.

The tour kicked off in Philadelphia and finished in Pittsburgh. A tragic and heart-breaking postscript ensued when the band’s much loved percussionist Chuck Morris and his 20-year-old son Charley went missing whilst kayaking during a spring break trip to Beaver Lake in Arkansas. Sadly, nearly a month later, their bodies were recovered.

Lotus commemorated Chuck and Charley – their life, many talents and the positive energies they brought to all around them – with two concerts at the Filmore Auditorium in Denver and other upcoming shows will also benefit their devastated family as well.

Scott concluded, saying, “Chuck was such a unique and gifted musician, an instant friend to everyone he met, and a devoted father and partner. He was like a brother to me on the road. Charley, also a talented musician, always seemed wiser and gentler than his years. They will be dearly missed by the many people they inspired in their full, but tragically short, lives.”

To donate to the fundraiser: <https://www.gofundme.com/f/support-for-jenny-thompson-family>

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