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Robe Spills onto Backseat Lovers Tour

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The Backseat Lovers are on the road with an innovative and interesting production and lighting design created by Meagan Metcalf, who has been working with the super-hot indie rockers from Utah since 2022, with 22 x Robe ESPRITES and 24 x Tetra2 moving lights at the heart of the lighting rig!

Meagan was offered an initial short tour with the band in early 2022 after her work with Caamp who share the same management. While everything was quite low key then, Meagan loved being imaginative with a small lighting rig, enjoyed the music and knew that the band were ones-to-watch, a roller-coaster that gained serious velocity following the release of their debut label album, Waiting to Spill, at the end of last year.

The Backseat Lovers are now on a much larger full production tour playing 3,000-5,000-capacity rock clubs and theatres, selling out every time and amplifying the buzz and energy around them. The current tour started in April and runs until mid-August all over North America and Canada.

Meagan's starting point for the stage and lighting design was the band's desire to have projection as part of the show. They used it earlier on a week-long run of shows for the album launch for which current lighting director on-the-road Gerry Dintelman co-ordinated the design (as Meagan was fulfilling other commitments). They wanted to expand the scale of the projection, but use it sparingly and judiciously at key moments.

From here the idea of the 'pillowfort' drape design evolved as a workable surface for projection from a single 21K source rigged at FOH, that also offered the quirky distinctive basement feel they wanted as a 'base mood' for the shows.

The natural muslin cloth is made up of two sections – a back piece plus the overhead hanging canopy, designed to enable a row of upstage lighting fixtures to be rigged in the gap!

Once the draping and projection concept was developed, Meagan looked at lighting with all of this in mind. It needed to be suitably constrained at times to support and augment the projection, but also able to effortlessly step up and stand out as a visual entity.

She had been wanting to use these two types of Robe fixtures in her work for some time, and this tour proved a perfect opportunity, having had them fully demonstrated at the Florida HQ of Robe North America, and again at LDI 2022 before making the final specification.

The Tetra2s are arranged in two rows, upstage and mid-stage to amplify the depth of the space.

Meagan appreciates “the sheer punch and versatility and of course the Flower effect,” saying that she knew this was THE fixture she wanted. Knowing also that Robe Tetras are in high demand, she was delighted that lighting vendor LMG was able to supply.

All the profile fixtures on the rig are ESPRITES, with six located onstage at the sides, eight hung on the upstage truss and another eight positioned upstage on the floor behind the backdrop.

The back row of ESPRITES is used to back and blast light through set pieces onto the muslin adding another dimension of texturing to the picture.

During programming with Gerry Dintelman, Meagan built the Tetra2s thoughtfully into the show, gradually revealing them by using different effects, starting off with some super-subtle candlelight flickering and twinkling in a selection of reds and ambers. “They do this brilliantly,” she commented.

The luminaires are used for a multiplicity of effects, sometimes for very specific parts of the song like the intros. Various pixel effects are utilized through the set, with full-on the Flower look used just once with huge impact, delighting fans every time!

Meagan remarks that the units are mainly being run at around 30% brightness for standard operation!

The ESPRITES she particularly wanted for the beautiful flat beam field which offers fabulous, even coverage and super high quality of light, and for their well-known excellent color mixing.

The profiles needed to be a compact fixture in physical size as there's not a massive amount of space in which to rig them, and the upstage deck luminaires needed to cover the backdrop from just 12 ft away, so the 5.5 - 50 degree zoom was ideal for this scenario.

Meagan likes the gobos and the power and intensity of the fixtures to be able to project through the props. "ESPRITES were always my first choice, I'm very pleased with the performance and they are doing exactly what I wanted," she stated, adding that it was also important to the style of the show to have only two main types of fixtures.

Creatively, the show lighting is more like evoking a series of interlinked atmospheres than a standard 'lightshow'. Naturally, there are big, significant, and impactful moments, but it's based around lighting the band and the set and underlining and emphasizing those special moments in the music.

The color palette starts off reserved and low key, lots of ambers, CTO whites and reds creating soft incandescent glowing looks, and this M.O. remains for about two-thirds of the set, just as everyone is getting comfortable, bursting into more color, vibrance and oomph towards the end!

"I generally use color for the translation of emotion in a song," explained Meagan. When you restrict the color palette you can't rely on it as such, but you create a very different emotional impact when you finally break the rule!"

Gerry is operating lights using a grandMA3 console, and "doing a great job" noted Meagan, who is enjoying this project for multiple reasons including the music and the overall collaboration with the band who are very nice people with a great work ethic, lots of ideas and "a strong sense of integrity."

Blending the two light forms – lumens and projection – in an intelligent and integrated approach to underline the dynamics of the music and performance has been interesting and creatively rewarding for all involved. Most of all, it is being appreciated and enjoyed by The Backseat Lovers fans everywhere.

Photo Credit: Steve Jennings





