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Robe Rocks the Circus Again

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Rock Circus Volume 2 – a completely new version of this exhilarating performance concept – returned to the stage at IFEMA in Madrid, Spain, produced by Productores de Sonrisas, choreographed by Albert Sala and lit by Juanjo Llorens with a set design by Anna Calvo. The show meshed the thrills of extreme circus with a string of the most inspiring and monumental rock anthems!

Ten dancers, an 18-piece rock ‘n’ roll band and over 100 Robe moving lights brought the performance to life, embracing 40 musical moments from iconic artists like AC/DC, Kiss, Metallica, Miguel Rios, Iron Maiden, GNR, Led Zeppelin, The Rolling Stones, Tequila, Queen, David Bowie, Rosendo and many more.

Having lit the first Rock Circus edition in 2022, Juanjo once again enjoyed working collaboratively with a great creative team including video designer Romera Infografía and technical director Flavio Bañuelos alongside producers Manu & Rafa González. They combined minds and imaginations to choose the best themes for several different eras of rock history that were covered in the show.

Lighting was developed in a theatrical style that blended the precision and drama of circus performance with the emotion and power of rock music.

Juanjo explored the relationships between the various music genres – hard rock, heavy metal, rock ‘n’ roll – and daring circus acts, a process that evolved more into a musical show aesthetic than a circus.

Recalling his vast experience and knowledge of working in big top venues and understanding challenges and nuances presented for rigging and fixture placement, the size, weight, and deployment of the lights was critical, and Robe MegaPointes and LEDBeam 150s immediately were a clear choice for the backbone of the lighting design.

“Both these products are very flexible and can be positioned in multiple locations due to their expedient size and weight,” he noted.

The moving lights were rigged in some of the set pieces positioned around the musicians and taking advantage of the venue’s structural elements, with weight limitations and sightlines top of the agenda.

The left, right and central side sections of the tent were each lit with four MegaPointes and four LEDBeam 150s, complemented with 13 x MegaPointes, 20 x Spiiders and 21 x LEDBeam 150s in a 12-metre square structure above the ring.

Above the square was a 14-metre circle truss loaded with 12 x Pointes and four Spiiders, and on the floor were another two MegaPointes and six LEDBeam 150s.

Upstage on a series of scenery trusses were six more MegaPointes and six Spiiders plus 14 x Pointes. Getting exactly enough haze in the air to enhance the lighting without obscuring anything was a major part of the task and a delicate illuminative balancing act.

The major challenges of lighting the show included disseminating the massive raw live energy of rock music through the language of dance whilst presenting a circus show, for which Juanjo relied heavily on the adaptability and multifunctionality of the Robe products.

While he loved lighting all 40 of the songs, “Killing in the Name” by Rage Against the Machine was a favourite, featuring a performer walking upside down and leaping from a height of 14 metres without a safety net or harness!

Juanjo also enjoyed lighting “Maneras de Vivir”, a favourite by Spanish hard rock legends Leño, a band he grew up with in the 1980s. For Rock Circus II, they were accompanied by a teeterboard (a Korean plank resembling a playground seesaw) act and a rocking party atmosphere.

Productores de Sonrisas purchased the Robe fixtures via Spanish distributor EARPRO&EES, with technical support and co-ordination for this project by rental company Smart Fussion.

Juanjo has a good relationship with them and in 2021 worked on “Camino a la Vida” (Pathway to Life) at Madrid’s Plaza de Cibeles with the same company. This acclaimed outdoor lighting installation utilised 200 x MegaPointes and 40 x Pointes as it told a Covid-related story on the facade of one of Madrid’s most famous and eye-catching squares.

Juanjo mentioned the “outstanding” backup and support received from their account managers Mario Ortega and Alfonso Pintado for the Rock Circus project.

On site, he was supported by programmer Rodrigo Ortega, lighting chief and operator Fernando Berzosa, as well as Blanca Roldán and Jorge Olalla, his assistants and follow spot operators.

And he also mentioned how great it was to be working with the González family – Manuel, Rafa and María (Productores de Sonrisas) – “for enabling me to develop my work on such a brilliant show concept!”

For Juanjo, Rock Circus 2 offered an amazing opportunity to use his talents and skills as a lighting practitioner to engage in two of his other greatest passions – hardcore rock ‘n’ roll and circus – and be part of a seat-edge entertainment concept that delighted audiences of all ages.

They were treated to a collection of music that will always be relevant in a lively, invigorating and fresh setting.

Photo Credit: Pepe Castro





