

28.8.2020

Robe Helps put Hands in The Air for L.A.B. Auckland Gig

Products Involved

BMFL™ Blade **BMFL™ Spot**

The first live arena concert in the world ... since coronavirus silently spread global mayhem, was headlined by sizzling hot rising-stars L.A.B. at Auckland's Spark Arena, New Zealand, a momentous occasion offering the artists, their management, crew and fans a joyous and heartfelt night where they could once again all embrace the emotions, experience and adrenaline rush of live performance!

Robe moving lights were on the rig in a production design created by lighting designer Jack Hooper – his first gig for the band – together with the artists, their management team Loop, visual director Olivier Jean and live video specialist Big Picture. A truly collaborative effort that made a big impact.

This event was enabled by New Zealand's highly effective coronavirus response which saw a nationwide end to lockdown in early June and social distancing relaxed, with a return to the prospect of live shows and events.

All that changed on August 11th when new cases were recorded for the first time in 102 days, a sign of just how volatile the situation is. Auckland was immediately returned to lockdown!

In the intervening period however, this concert, promoted by Loop, was also L.A.B.'s largest gig to date.

Originally planned for another famous gig in the city – Auckland Town Hall – the demand for tickets was so insane that they shifted to the larger venue! This also effortlessly sold out and was packed with a diverse and wildly enthusiastic audience of 6000 who enjoyed L.A.B's distinctive dynamic loungey electro sounds together with a great line up of openers.

“We wanted to make NZ feel good about the world's first arena show post lockdown, blow the budget ... and make a statement!” declared manager Michael ‘Mikee’ Tucker of Loop.

It's not so often you get management making budget-related statements like that, but this was no ordinary occasion!

Judging by the reviews, comments, and chatter ... that was the shared experience that evening in Auckland!

Oceania was the lighting rental supplier. Jack worked with them for four years before launching his freelance career at the end of 2019, and that's where he first started working with Robe products.

Being familiar with the brand and all the creative options that brings, he specified 22 x Robe BMFL Spots, 8 x BMFL Blades as the core fixtures of the design, which he extrapolated at short notice from a version being developed for arena shows being planned for later in the year.

The music was Jack's main inspiration for lighting. On that he had a few pointers from the band, sometimes arguably labelled 'reggae', so any red, gold and green colour combinations were absolutely out, and “help create a night Kiwi's will always remember ” front and centre of the brief.

Also shaping the lighting design were the video aspects, starting with the set architecture and stage design which comprised three 4-metre-wide by 7-metre-tall columns of 7.8 mm LED upstage, with the three main riser fronts also clad in the same product. This configuration immediately added more depth and definition to the performance space than a standard single slab of LED might have done.

Jack positioned his BMFLs on three overhead trusses – Blades on the front for key lighting – Spots on the back for effects, with another 6 x BMFL Spots on the floor behind the band for powerful aerals and blast-through looks.

“The brightness is phenomenal, the gobos are great, and the features are super flexible,” he commented, “I can do so much with these fixtures!” And whenever he has the chance, Robe is on his lighting plots.

These Robe BMFLs all worked hard, accompanied by LED washes, beam moving lights, strobes, and LED battens. Four pre-rigged truss towers were lined up along the back on the

stage – in between the LED columns – loaded with LED battens and strobes adding another layer of lighting to the picture.

All lighting was programmed and operated by Jack using a grandMA2 full size console.

Jack drew everything up in Capture beforehand, working closely with Oliver as he went, as it was fundamental that lighting and video were crafted together as one fluid visual entity.

They worked tirelessly on this, even though it was a one-off, putting in the same effort as if it was a full tour. “We were all just absolutely elated to have a live project to work on again!” declared Jack.

For the show visuals, a disguise d3 media server sat at the heart of the system which also allowed everything to be previewed and sequenced in advance in the studio – again saving vital time on site, and scheduling enough of this precious commodity to streamline the live Notch FX integration.

Additional visual effects elements came from content programmed on a Resolume Arena media server.

Tim Budgen joined the visual team VJ'ing and playing in additional media from Resolume while Olivier concentrated on running the d3 and Notch elements. Special content for this show was created by Olivier, Tim and Delainy Kennedy.

Notch was used to heavily stylize the IMAG & live camera mix creating a plethora of cool and unique live video effects and looks for the various different tracks featuring

IMAG, an approach that fully integrated iMAG with the overall visual aesthetic.

All seven cameras – three stationed at FOH, two on stage plus two PTZ robo-cams – were mixed live by camera director Wendy A'Bear, they had the latitude to either use live cut PGM outputs or directly process and display multiple cameras simultaneously.

An L-Acoustics sound system was supplied by College Hill Productions, and L.A.B's audio was engineered by Richie Allen at FOH and Charlie Rodgers on monitors.

Everyone was delighted with the results.

Mikee stated, "The feedback was 100% positive and apart from resuscitating the live entertainment industry it was awesome to see 6000 happy, smiling faces!"

He added that Kiwis have trusted their government's leadership through the crisis and that now the vibe is more relaxed and highly positively charged ... more arena-sized shows are being planned for the coming months.

One of many happy reviewers, Sarah Kidd in the Ambient Light blog noted that the "light show and on-screen effects as well as the accompaniment of dual backing singers elevated the show to the next level and reminded us all just why we crave live music so much!"

More than just a landmark for the live music in the pandemic world, this illustrated the strength and diversity of Aotearoa talent from which we are likely to be hearing and seeing a lot more, and was a truly magical occasion for all involved.

*Ambient Light - Review by Sarah Kidd - www.ambientlightblog.com/l-a-b-auckland-nz-2020/
3rd July 2020

Photo Credit: Mark Russell





