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This is Why Robe Shines Bright for Paramore Tour

Products Involved

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Popular rock band Paramore are engaged in a world tour supporting their acclaimed sixth studio album, *This is Why*, which dropped in February. The live show features an eye-catching and interesting stage and lighting production design crafted by Sooner Routhier of Sooner Rae Creative and Trevor Ahlstrand of Ahlstrand Productions.

The lighting rig includes 67 x Robe ESPRITE moving lights, 3 x Robe BMFL FollowSpots and six BMFL FollowSpot LTs working on a 3-way RoboSpot system, plus six iFORTES.

Approached in the fall of 2022 by tour manager Andrew Weiss, it is Sooner's first work with the band. Trevor and Sooner were keen to collaborate on a project for some time, and for this one, all the stars aligned for it to happen. They also worked closely with creative director and video content designer Mike Kluge of Cour Content.

Mike's history with Paramore dates to 2014 when he first met drummer Zac Farro when they worked on music videos and on live projections for one of his HalfNoise side project shows. Later he met bandmembers Hayley and Taylor, and in 2017 Andrew Weiss asked him to work with the band. He designed two tours of visual content for the *After Laughter* album cycle and was asked to do the same for *This Is Why*.

Associate LD and lighting director on the road is Chad Peters, enjoying his 16th year with Paramore and also working with Sooner and Trevor for the first time.

Lighting programmers Chris Smith, Kyle Lovan, Nikita Jakovlev and Bobby Grey worked closely with video programmer Ciara Hegli, and live video director, Adam Peck.

Sooner explained that she and Trevor started with an overall set / production concept for the show, and once that had evolved to a certain point, started layering lighting over the top.

They leaned on Chad with his long-term band knowledge and familiarity to ensure that they were meeting the requirements in terms of cueing, with Chad essentially taking on the role of "band

whisperer" or "Paramoreologist", which Trevor confirms was "a great sounding board for the likes and dislikes" as well as having access to an encyclopedic knowledge relating to which gags had been done before!

Trevor explained how their architecturally driven design evolved into the environment they wanted to create after listening to the band's brief and tour design expectations.

With a lighting chandelier centerpiece at the core of the design, a major goal was to hide as much fixture hardware as possible so only the sources themselves were visible.

The album artwork features classic movie set designs from the 1970s and early 80s which they took as a theme and evolved a modern yet vintage aesthetic for the set. "Trevor and I researched iconic set designers from this era and were heavily inspired by the slick lines and solid, prosaic, brutalist architecture coupled with rich reds, gold and burnt orange tones," Trevor commented.

This led to the creation of the multiple, concentric ringed, trapezoid structures above the stage.

In the center, the soft lightbox was backlit with hidden strobes, and surrounded by semitransparent scenic "fins" to accentuate the retro feel. As soon as the trapezoidal shape was on paper, "it was the perfect shape for the lightbox's cinematic vintage," elucidated Trevor.

The outer rings, the back screen and stage all follow the same style. An upstage catwalk houses a large lift that raises the whole band into an architectural video scene that frames them beautifully for a couple of the more stripped back songs.

The Robe ESPRITES are positioned on three of the 5 LX trusses, and are used for effects lighting, cued to sync with the music and enhance the video content at specific moments.

"They have this beautiful, clean, bright beam, and their hallmark is a full even field," commented programmer Bobby Grey, adding that they "stunned" both as a versatile profile light and an excellent effect fixture.

They relied on them to do the BIG profile beam air fillers, bright gobo looks and stunning animation effects, while at other times they were irised right down to work as intense color mixing beams.

Some of his favorite moments in the show are when ESPRITES are "slammed straight out into the fans with break ups, where they aren't blinding or overpowering, but they fill the entire field of vision with a cool, shimmering texture which is really captivating," drawing people right into the setting of the song.

The three BMFL FollowSpots and six BMFL FollowSpot LTs run on 3 x RoboSpot remote follow systems and these fixtures are rigged on the two key light trusses, one over FOH and one upstage. They are grouped to most efficiently cover the three roaming band members. The four BMFL WashBeams are used as key light for the four static band members.

Bobby is also hugely enthusiastic about RoboSpots.

"They have 'revolutionized' how we design key light on contemporary stages," he states.

Being able to put a tracking follow spot anywhere in the rig or indeed anywhere in the venue including some more obscure and less accessible places on a set where having a spotlight might be unimaginable ... "is invaluable."

He adds that PSN control allows for massive creativity, and he feels that the industry is fortunate to have "this excellent technology" at its disposal.

Apart from all of that, he thinks it's very cool that Robe purchased the patent from long time industry programmer and designer Seth Robinson, "one of our own, and this demonstrates that the brand really 'gets' the creatives who are using their equipment!"

"As creatives, we are fortunate to have a manufacturer with a heart like Robe creating excellent and innovative equipment. Our designer's toolkit is so much richer because of it!"

The iFORTES are being used for key lights.

"They have amazing output with a proper clean, flat field even when fully saturated," noted Trevor, adding that the precision of the shutters makes iFORTE a perfect choice of light for the application.

Design objectives for this show included being able to light certain moments with only the soft light directly above the band to achieve a completely different mood. Getting extreme angles from the outer rings of the chandelier and painting these in contrasting colors enabled these specific looks "to feel more like something you would experience at an art installation," stated Trevor.

The aforementioned catwalk is connected to the main stage by bridges allowing the band to traverse the 'Paramote' and as the set draws to a close some lucky fans also get the chance to be part of the show as they fill up the moat, backlit with video to watch from a unique close-up angle!

For Sooner, the tour routing presented a few technical, creative, and practical challenges. Starting in South America, it then toured throughout the UK and Ireland, and went to North America in May,

which necessitated multiple iterations of the lighting rig.

"The team worked very hard to keep the integrity of the design throughout," she concluded.

For Trevor, "It was the first time I had the pleasure of collaborating with a team like this who made it such a fun and creative process for everyone." He sees the biggest benefit of this visual collaboration in the show experience that is enjoyed each night by fans.

Lighting equipment for the North American leg of the tour was supplied by LMG Touring.

Photo Credit: Todd Moffses







