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Going in Circles with Nephew

Danish alt rockers Nephew – one of the most popular, successful and critically acclaimed bands in Denmark – announced at the end of 2017 that they were reuniting in 2018 after a four-year hiatus. Simultaneously they announced two major gigs in October 2018 at the Jyske Bank Boxen Arena in Herning and the Royal Arena in Copenhagen – the two largest venues in Denmark 12 months in advance. Over 30,000 tickets sold out in a day.

Lighting designer Theis Wemuth of design company Create This was asked to produce a production design – lighting, video and set – for these landmark shows ... which will be followed by an extensive arena tour in 2019.

For this he specified 149 x Robe MegaPointes as the main moving light fixtures.

They were chosen multiple reasons, including their multifunctionality and brightness which Theis knew would be a perfect complement and contrast to the epic 420 square metre widescreen video backdrop that was central to the look and aesthetics of the stage.

Eight BMFL Spots were on the front truss, six working as remote follow spots in conjunction with six Robe RoboSpot systems, together with other lights, all of which were supplied by Copenhagen based rental specialist Comtech.

It was an ambitious, high-profile and high-pressure gig, with 10 trucks of equipment, limited production and tech time and an enormous amount of expectation.

Theis was chosen as the designer for his innovative approach to visual, lighting and stage design and his penchant for thinking 'out-of-the-box'.

These shows also coincided with new music released by Nephew comprising four EPs – related to the seasons – and then an album which combined all four EPs plus additional tracks. A recurring theme of this music is the concept of 'what goes around comes around', circles, infinity, 360-degree cycles – both natural, artificial, literal and metaphorical, historical and contemporary.

These ideas informed the depth and visuality and suggestivity of the video content much of which was created by Nephew's keyboard player Rene Thalund who is also a prolific visual artist.

Circles and spheres were also inspiration to Theis for the basic set architecture, with three distinctive curved steel beams per side radiating out from the centre and breaking up the rectangular LED screen.

The six steel curves were each rigged with 12 x MegaPointes and the curves metal arcs were lined with LED tape which was pixel mapped.

The 35-metre-wide screen was made up from two different resolution surfaces – 5 mm for the central section flanked by two sections of 30mm – a decision partially led by practicalities and keeping the weight and rigging time reasonable in compressed load in and rig times.

Despite the short production time for these shows - with no production rehearsal or run through, but Theis received the music beforehand and was therefore able to do a reasonable amount of pre-vis - video and lighting were beautifully and fluidly integrated, working seamlessly together.

In addition to the 72 x MegaPointes on the six curved steel beams, there was a row of 17 fixtures on the back truss, with the rest positioned on the deck and around the risers down the sides and front of the stage, grouped in threes to give an ACL-style look when being run in beam mode.

Theis chose MegaPointes - as we already know - for the brightness and light weight and because he had the potential of three fixtures in one physical housing.

He declares, "I honestly believe that MegaPointe does not compromise at all when running in beam, spot or wash mode - every time I get a perfect result! It's absolutely the best 'hybrid' around right now".

He added that the MegaPointes had "absolutely" lived up to his expectations for these shows and he's looking forward to using them again on the tour. He's also specified them for several other current and on-going designs.

The BMFL Spots were in a line on the front truss. The six in the middle of the row were running with the six RoboSpot BaseStations ... all located at the back of the stage, while the two standard BMFL Spots were focussed on the keyboard and drum positions.

Theis had used RoboSpots systems earlier in the year on another band, Scarlet Pleasure, and "loved them".

"They make my life infinitely easier" he stated. With the operator controlling pan / tilt and all the other functions run through the console ... it means the on cues and blackouts can be programmed into his cue list and be absolutely bang-on every time!

Also on the main stage rig were 37 strobes and a load of blinders.

There are many complexities and much detail involved in this Nephew show, with lighting cues picking up multiple intricacies in the music with accents and emphases.

You could be forgiven for thinking it was run to timecode ... such is the precision and accuracy of Theis' operating!

A circular truss was flown above the B-stage in the middle of the audience where the band played an acoustic of the set amidst their fans. This was rigged with 12 Robe Spiiders alternating with 12 x Pointes.

Theis programmed and ran the show on a grandMA2 light console, assisted at the first show in Herning by Anders Tinggaard. He also triggered the Green Hippo media servers - tech'd by Johan Kvartborg - running the video cues via the lighting desk.

Photo Credit: Louise Stickland

















Stage