

Another music icons return: Genesis

After their separation more than 10 years ago, this popular band joined once again to carry out the Turn It On Again world tour. There are about 50 concerts planned by now and during them Phil Collins, Tony Banks and Mike Rutherford -together with Chester Thompson on drums and Daryl Stuermer on guitar- are visiting countries like Finland, Denmark, Germany, Switzerland, Austria, Czech Republic, Poland, Belgium, France, Holland, the UK and Italy. After that they are traveling to Canada and the United States.

SPECIAL LIGHTING

The lighting designer was -for the second article in this issue- Mr. Patrick Woodroffe who was contacted by the band in November of last year. They met in New York and had two days of meetings to discuss the first ideas for the show. According to his own words about how the experience of working with Genesis was he said that “They were great. Very collaborative and generous and easy to work with. These artists are very particular about the lighting and video so they were involved in every part of the creative process”.

Genesis and their manager Tony Smith were very involved in the show aesthetics, and stayed in active discussions with the creative team throughout the evolution process. As a band, they are acutely knowledgeable about lighting, and also played an important historical role in the development of the moving light industry.

The production carries all the lighting equipment with them while on tour, whether the UK or USA, depending on where they are working. They even take their own generators for power. The main elements in the lighting design were the lighting towers which reached high into the air and the giant LED video screen that reaches almost across the arena. “The set designer Mark Fisher integrated these two elements to make such a beautiful stage”, he added. “We have about three hundred automated lights including BigLite, Little BigLite, Coemar wash, Robe profile, Vari*Lite VL5 and VL6. The control console is a GrandMA”. There was no special audience lighting except some Molefay over the PA towers.

There are many special moments over the show he was asked to highlight but the three big production numbers are Mama, Home By The Sea and Domino. All the effects accompanying lighting are very integrated. “This is the secret of a good rock show. Video, lights, pyro and sound all working with the performer to make a complete whole”.

The lighting designer has selected two grandMA full-size used in Multi-User mode for preprogramming and rehearsals. During the concerts they run in full-tracking backup mode. The consoles trigger twelve universes of DMX. Four NSPs are integrated into the network, three for running the show and one as spare. In case of a failure the spare NSP could easily keep the show going. On the road, the lighting is being operated by show lighting director Dave Hill who is also the programmer. Neg Earth supplied the lighting equipment, and Adam Bassett is the associate lighting designer.

When it came to choosing moving light fixtures for this tour, Woodroffe sought three different types: a strong profile, a strong wash light and a larger searchlight. On outdoor shows the main requirement is for a bright, reliable and useable light rather than layers of subtleties. So the lights had to have the punch to reach the stage and make impact from some seriously long throw distances. For example the Robe CS 2500s -located on 7 curved metal "ribs" of varying heights up to 28m at the rear of the LED screen- are used for gobo, color and beam effects, while the floor-based ones are used for panning behind the band from their upstage position and blasting through from the back.

The lighting rig consisted amongst others of 36 x Vari*Lite VL5, 14 x Vari*Lite VL6B, 50 x Robe ColorSpot 2500E AT, over 120 x Coemar Infinity Wash XL, 65 x High End Studio Beam PC, 41 x Martin Atomic 3000, 20 x ZAP Technology BigLite 4.5, 6 x ZAP Technology Little Big Lite 3.0 and 6 x Hungaroflash T-Light 85kW.

THE SET

Mark Fisher was in charge of the set design for the world tour. We also got in contact with him and the people at his studio who gave us the following details. The set is really impressive with an unusual shape and a big screen having more than 50m.

The concept: Over several meetings in November 2006, Mark discussed ideas with the band. They kept coming back to an image of the band floating on a small island in an open sea of colour. He studied organic shapes; shells, flowers, weathered rocks, searching for a form that could serve both the poetic and practical demands of an outdoor stadium stage. A conch shell and a lotus blossom provided some inspiration for the final shape. From them came the sweeping organic silhouette of the video screen and the curvaceous spiky backdrop, with spines arcing up into the sky. The spines provided support for the kinetic elements: fast-moving lighting gondolas that travel from stage level to 24m in twenty seconds, and a diamond mesh backdrop loaded with strobe lights that separates the stage from the stadium behind.

The construction: The stage structure is an efficient mix of rented and custom-built components. Beneath the sweeping organic forms stands a frame built from steel. The trusses are part of the kit that Stage Co normally use to build outdoor concert stage roofs. Having served their purpose on this tour, they will go back into stock to be reused on shows for many years to come. Overlaying the steel frame is a veneer of custom elements that create the shape and character of the stage. The Genesis tour schedule demands that the stage to be built on the day of show on up to four consecutive days in different cities. So the custom elements are all modular, designed for easy handling, efficient truck packing and fast construction. The stage is planned so that each of the custom elements has its own position on the floor at the start of the scenery build, minimising interference as the components are lifted into the air.

The high-tech stuff: The steel frame and the custom elements support a high-tech layer of rented equipment. The rented PA is a high-performance stadium rig, designed for fast erection. The rented lighting equipment, fitted into the moving gondolas, the curving fascia and the cantilever roofette trusses, is all installed on the ground before the scenery is lifted up. The video screen is built from 15,089 rented Barco 'O-Lite' modules. The modules are built into custom-built frames. The frames travel on carts completely assembled, and unfold as they are lifted up. The band perform on a lightweight stage that integrates lighting, musical instruments and backline equipment. A compact roofette above the band gives local weather protection to the backline and technical crew.

For this stage, one of the providing companies was the automation specialists Kinesys who have supplied 7 custom designed G2 winches used to lift 7 lighting pods up and down 7 architectural "ribs", positioned upstage framing the set. Additionally, Kinesys are supplying 16 Liftket 250kg 30m/min chain hoists controlled by Elevation 1+ variable speed hoist controllers and being run on the same Kinesys Vector control system as the winches. These lift 8 cargo nets -embedded with over 500 egg strobes- which are stretched taught to fill the gaps between the ribs.

Kinesys was initially approached in January by Jeremy Lloyd, executive project designer for production designers Stufish (Mark Fisher) to provide automation for the tour. Working closely with the lighting designer, the design team wanted an effect that would provide a real WOW factor at strategic moments of the set and conceived the lighting pod idea.

The G2 winch was commissioned by Kinesys and custom designed by the legendary Mike Barnett -as no suitable alternative was already available offering the right combination of speed, lifting capacity and compact dimensions.

The ribs vary in height from 20-27 meters and follow an asymmetric curve around the back of the 55m wide stage. The 7 Kinesys G2 winches can lift 800kg at up to 1 meter a second and are controlled by 11kW Velocity drives. They are being run at 800mm per second for the show.

To simplify the rigging and maximize get in times -which are tight due to the production's sheer scale- each winch is fitted into a cart (designed and built by Hans Willems of [Wlcreations](#)) along with 2 Liftket hoists for the adjacent cargo nets, and their associated Elevation 1+ controllers.

All the Kinesys drives and distribution have been configured to fit into three rack cases making load ins and outs as quick and easy as possible and Kinesys' "Array" range of power, data and emergency stop distribution units are also in the package. The company is supplying two automation crew to look after all aspects of the system on the road: Iain Macdonald and John Richardson. Macdonald operates the show from a backstage centre position, and Andy Cave is Kinesys' project manager.

THE SCREEN

XL Video UK -via Blink TV- is supplying the 15,089 Barco 510 O-Lite panels with 270 control boxes, plus 102 panels of Mitsubishi 16:8 high resolution screen in a record breaking 9 million pixel LED surface. The O-lite makes up a spectacular 13m high 55m wide set back wall and is surrounded by 7 lighting towers ("ribs") reaching heights of up to 28m, which together resemble a giant conch shell.

The screen provides an elegant 3D curved wall and an elegant architectural backdrop immediately behind the performance area. It is an interactive canvas for video playback, graphics images and IMAG which are integrated with lighting effects, helping to create the show's visual identity. The O-Lite pixels are fitted into customised touring frames designed by XL Video and made by Brilliant Stages populated at different pitches to give multiple resolutions across the whole surface. The screen ends at either side of stage with the two elliptical Mitsubishi's which seamlessly 'flow' into the main screen.

The screen is by far the most complicated that's ever been created in terms of engineering and processing and it presented a real challenge to the video boffins, namely Richard Turner, who took care of the processing, mapping and programming of the hard drives that feed it with

provocative and engaging images.

Blink's crew chief Stuart Heaney leads a video team of 14, and the IMAG video director is Ruary MacPhie who is taking care of a 5 camera mix which goes primarily onto the side screens and sometimes onto the main screen as windows appear. Custom playback material produced by Sam Pattinson from Onedotzero is stored on four GV Profile hard drives including a dynamic array of graphics and animations. This is operated live by playback director Bryan Myles using Barco's Events Manager, which drives the Barco Encore system providing the show's overall video control.

MacPhie's mix is coming from 5 Sony D50 cameras, two with long lenses at FOH, one in the pit on (a specially curved) track & dolly with wide angle lens, one hand-held onstage and a hot-head on the 'roofette' above the band performance area centre stage.

He is using one of XL's Kayak mixer/switchers and running it with a separate Out for the side screens coming from its Aux bus, with one sub-cut, and the side screens run individually on the Programme Bus plus ME1. This allows him to put any band member onto any screen anytime, and using the Aux Bus allows him to take any source to the main screen from the Kayak. MacPhie's mix is also fed into the Encore system, with some of the IMAG multi-screen effects pre-ordained and programmed into the Events Manager by Richard Turner.

The show also incorporates a few interesting video special effects, one of which is a head shot during the song "Mama" for which the band wanted to replicate an image from the track's original 1980's promotional material. This is done live by Collins activating (via foot pedal) a small red head light positioned at his feet while his face is framed with a tight camera shot - giving a ghostly shimmering halo of light around his face. The XL crew has rigged up a little camera in the pit so Collins can see the image this is producing and tweak it to his liking by moving his head in relation to the light.

SOUND

Swiss-based V-DOSC partner Hyperson has been appointed to handle sound reinforcement for the tour. Alain Schneebeili, Director of Hyperson explains: "This tour managed by Steve Jones brings together a team established on previous collaboration with Phil Collins". Effectively, the sound crew members boast several years of collaboration with Collins, with Alain Schneebeili as monitor engineer and Michel Colin, front of house mixing engineer. Michel Colin is working in close hands with Certified V-DOSC Engineer Manu Gares for sound design and system operation.

Manu and Michel comment on the sound system aspects: "Besides the expectations on sound one would have for a tour of this calibre, the Turn It On Again tour scenography has a strong emphasis on video and pyrotechnics. Moreover, the stage was primarily designed for stadium and large format arenas with a total width of 90m. Therefore, the sound design is challenging as it requires high throw capability and must be as visually unobstructed as possible with an unusual spacing of 46m between the L/R V-DOSC clusters".

In order to cover the stadium audience for almost every show, the main FOH consists of 96 L-Acoustics V-DOSC cabinets with 4 clusters LL, L, R, RR of 16 V-DOSC cabinets each. This 64 V-DOSC system is completed by additional V-DOSC outer fills featuring 16 additional V-DOSC cabinets each and additional delay lines. The complimentary subwoofer system design called for 18 SB218 per side completed with two central stacks of 8 SB218 in order to counteract

central build-up. Additional front fills are covered with 4 ARCS a side completed by 4 spaced mini stacks of dV-DOSC.

Schneebeli said that although the band mostly operates with in-ear monitors, keyboardist Tony Banks uses a pair of reference stage monitors 115 XTHIQ. The drum kit operates with an LF extension consisting of a dV-SUB.

Involving 5 steel crews and two advanced systems, 90 trucks and over 250 crew, the tour and production have received massive critical acclaim since kicking off in Helsinki. And as Patrick Woodroffe said... "This was one of the most successful productions we have made, I believe. It was the perfect marriage of music and visuals".

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