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Features

CREATING ORGANIC LAYERS OF LIGHT

LD Robb Jibson relies on VARI*LITE luminaires for the Incubus World Tour

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by Philips Vari-Lite



As the indie rock band Incubus prepared to launch their 2011 World Tour in Berlin, Germany, lighting designer Robb Jibson stood ready to unveil both some old and new tricks. Having been the bands designer since 2005, Jibson was familiar with how the music and lighting should blend together, but this year he also had a brand new look that no audience had ever seen before. So to help him achieve his latest design, Jibson relied upon the lighting instruments that he knew would perform exactly as needed; VARI*LITE automated luminaires from Philips Vari-Lite, supplied by Upstaging and HSL (Europe).

“Having worked in the industry as a designer and technician, I am familiar with the complete product line and I have always been a fan of the VARI*LITE color,” began Jibson. “I mostly default to VARI*LITE fixtures on my projects because of their optical clarity and color systems, but on this tour I chose them for a few other reasons as well. First, the overhead system is extremely full with t-bars and pantographs. Next, production management stipulated that the show needed to fit in five trucks which would give us only about one and a half trucks for lighting. And finally, the tour is scheduled to play venues that vary in size and layout. So when adding all these requirements together, we knew the lighting rig had to be flexible with a smaller number of lights handling a variety of responsibilities.”

When Jibson began his design process, he started with the lighting aspects that he knew the band members would want to see. Knowing that there would be five main positions for band key lights and knowing how each band member liked to appear in the light, he started with identifying the key lights.

“The band doesn’t necessarily like to go over the top with lighting, but they do like to keep it fresh. To accomplish this, I try to develop organic layers of light that blend seamlessly with all the production elements of the show. This year we have a large video element with a 48’ wide x 19’ tall curved LED wall, so we knew that 1200-1500 Watt

sources would be needed to punch through. As I first started laying it all out, there are always five band member positions on stage, and they each like to have their own 'beam-me-up' look with a big column of backlight. Since there was not a lot of room in our overhead truss or the trucks for a series of wash and spot fixtures, I had to find an automated fixture that could act as both. The VL3500 Wash FX fixture was perfect for this application because it has a great zoom that can easily wash a large area, it can create powerful columns of light and color, and it provides aerial breakups. Plus, using the VL3500 Wash FX as a front-mounted truss spot, it is actually acting as my key light as well."

With his key lighting elements identified and in place, Jibson next turned his attention to the newest aspect of the lighting design. Inspired by a look from the bands "Adolescents" video, Jibson was tasked to recreate a unique idea.

"For the customized portion of the lighting design, we were inspired by a look created by the Art Director of their latest video with what they called a 'parabolic shroud'. The look consisted of a reflector from a sodium-vapor warehouse light that was welded into a frame to create the shroud. On the video, they used photographic flash bulbs inside the shroud for a unique lighting feature, so they wanted to apply this to the tour. Knowing that the flash bulb would not work for a live performance, the search was on for an LED-based fixture with a homogenized beam. At first I wasn't even thinking about moving lights, because the light inside didn't have to move, but as we looked at what was available in the LED market, nothing was really 'wowing' me. Then while we were at Upstaging preparing for the show, they mentioned that the VLX Wash might look great with the honeycomb face coming through the reflectors, and they were right. The VLX is bright and it's all about the lumen count. No other LED can deliver the lumens and you actually get a beam in the air. I don't think of the VLX Wash as an LED fixture, but rather as a powerful wash light with great color and a fantastic zoom range. They look awesome."

Now that he had found the ideal fixture for the new reflectors, Jibson worked on completing the rest of the design, which would also heavily feature VARI*LITE automated luminaires.

"All my hard edge fixtures are VL3000 Spots. I use them from the front truss for color and a template wash; I use them as side light; and I use them for a low back light under the video wall. I love the color flag system in the Series 3000 fixtures because there is no gap. In one effect during the show, I am in the lavender flag and I place it in a slow fade into the amber flag, slowly rolling in between the two colors using the color timing of the fixture in programming. I personally like to use the color wheel more than color-mixing so the fact that there are two color wheels in the Series 3000 system makes it a perfect fit for me."

Now needing to round out the organic layers of light, Jibson looked for an automated wash fixture that was small enough to fit inside lighting pods overhead, but still powerful enough to create pure colors. For this, he turned to the VL500 Wash luminaire.

"The final portion of the design included five lighting pods that hang overhead to provide a general stage and audience wash. We needed lights that were compact enough to fit inside the pods, but able to color-match what we were doing with the other lighting elements. So for this we chose the VL500 Wash for both overhead and side wash lighting. I love the color that you can only get out of a tungsten unit and the unique VL500 color system. They are a rock-solid fixture."

As the tour rolls on to its final stop in Brisbane, Australia, Jibson continues to rave about the performance of the VARI*LITE luminaires. Understanding that there are numerous instrument options for his lighting fixtures, there are two main qualities of a VARI*LITE that keep him coming back time-after-time.

"For me, it's all about the color and optics and those are what make a VARI*LITE luminaire. VARI*LITE fixtures are the only fixtures capable of creating true projections with optical clarity and beautiful color. I love the precision of the fixtures. They give me the precise color and the exact color temperature I need to create the layers of light night-after-night no matter what venue we are in."

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Alan Kibbe Joins Vari-Lite

