

QUEEN + ADAM LAMBERT @ TRNSMT

On Friday 6 July, the second weekend of TRNSMT, the bill was topped by a headline show from Queen + Adam Lambert. This was quite the coup for the festival. From a production point of view, the festival environment is typically one of limitations and compromises - so many bands to accommodate and one main stage to do it on. While it may be feasible to replicate elements of the touring show, it is usually impossible to recreate it anywhere near exactly. When Queen + Adam Lambert and DF Concerts joined forces for TRNSMT 2018, the 'typical' and 'usual' rulebook was thrown out the window.

Working closely with Walker and his team, Queen + Adam Lambert's production team - headed up by PM Paddy Hocken - succeeded in bringing the band's entire arena show into a metropolitan festival environment.

This included a guitar-shaped 26m thrust, a dynamic 9-tonne scenic halo, all lifts and risers, plus full lighting and video packages.

Hocken said: "The festival has been super accommodating. Bringing 16 trucks into a festival is not a normal situation but James and his team have really understood what it is we're trying to achieve and have put in extra resources in terms of labour, plant, real estate and infrastructure.

"They were able to accommodate a 2-hour sound check, which is amazing in a festival scenario. The band weren't available to see any of this in production rehearsals, so it would have been quite a steep learning curve for them to just walk out onto it today. Although it's very similar, it's also quite different, which is hard from a performance point of view."

Hocken worked closely with the tour suppliers to make the transition into the festival setup as smooth as possible. The tour had taken in 74 dates around North America, Oceania and Europe (since June 2017) before

heading to Scotland for TRNSMT and was departing for another outdoor show in Ireland 2 days later.

The tour suppliers were Clair Global for sound, Neg Earth & Upstaging for lighting, Creative Technology for video, Neg Earth for rigging, Rigorous Technology for load cells, TAIT Towers for set, staging and automation, Quantum SFX for special effects, ER Productions for lasers, and Dark Art Creative for real time tracking. Also on board was Power Logistics, Road Radios / WiFi for radios and IT, VER for wireless show comms, Pieter Smit for bussing, Fly by Nite for trucking, Rock-It Cargo for freight, GLD Productions for backstage furniture, Eat Your Hearts Out for catering, Piper Event Services for health & safety, Glide Travel, All Access Staging for camera platforms and Mission Control for wireless licensing.

The amalgamation of suppliers and kit meant for a tight coordination between the festival and visiting band. Walker commented: "Queen + Adam Lambert is the biggest production we've done at TRNSMT. Festivals aren't something that they would usually do, so we wanted to give them assurances that we could get their arena show in, which is very important to the band - being able to walk onstage and be totally familiar with it.

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“If you look at their rider from the outset, you wouldn’t necessarily think it would be achievable for a festival, but we did a lot of work - coordinating with Paddy and his team to get it to a point of saying ‘yeah, we can do this’. Once that agreement was made it was about making all the modifications and changes needed to make it happen.”

The festival stage wasn’t identical to the arena show, as the guitar-shaped thrust protrudes from a rectangular base, but this configuration allowed the band to do every show move. Beneath the stage, a scaffolding underworld was created to access the lifts and a scaffolding subdeck was installed at the front of the stage for the band’s rolling TAIT Towers Thrust and B-Stage to sit on top of. There was a prop lift for a drum kit and another for ‘Frank’ - a giant robotic head that is a prominent feature in the show. The prop lift also brought up a tricycle that Lambert rode during Bicycle Race. In addition to the prop lifts there is a large scissor lift that lifts Brian May to the top of the downstage curved video screen giving the impression he is standing on top of it.

Hocken explained: “We’ve got all our onstage risers from the arena tour, we’ve just had TAIT modify them so that they have wheels on them. When we did our tech rehearsals, we did the arena set-up first and then we did our festival model where we brought a Serious Stages scaffolding deck in to replicate how it was going to be in a festival environment and to check the interface between our stuff and their stuff.”

He added: “All of our stuff is geared up for rolling in and out of arenas quickly, so James has made concessions to be able to accommodate all of huge dimmer dollies and things like that.”

Flown elements included 3 small lighting trusses, which was the backlight for the Main and B-stage, as well as the automated curved screen, which was the main IMAG for the show. The moving 9-tonne scenic Halo was equipped with Claypaky Sharp Wash lights and a special cover, which masked the reflector lampshades during the support slots. Two inner delay towers were upgraded to integrate lighting fixtures that, in an arena, would be suspended over the audience.

Hocken said: “With the delay tower exercise, we had to combine lighting from 3 different vendors (Adlib, Neg Earth and PRG) and sound. Adlib were really great coming up with a plan that works and getting everything all

singing and dancing together.”

There was an upstage, rear lighting truss which was hung on the TAIT Nav hoists, plus an under-video truss that fired under the upstage screen, a 3-stack truss that fired through the video screen, as well as a rear black truss that masked the back of the stage.

In addition to the Sharpys, the lighting design utilised Scenius Unico and Mythos spotlights also from Claypaky, as well Philips Vari-lite VL6000 Beam and VL3500 Beam, plus Martin by Harman Atomic 3000 LED strobes and 8 PRG GroundControl Long Throw fixtures to supplement the ‘arena’ key lighting. There is also haze from MGD and smoke from Look Solutions. Lighting Director Neil Holloway is working on a Jands Vista L5.

One of the main features of the set was the curved 10mm pitch carbon fibre Glux header screen measuring 24m x 4m from Creative Technology, which was built with a custom-made structure (by Acass Systems) to create a curve with 3 different radii. The company also supplied the 17m x 6m upstage screen, which also has a custom-made structure that allows servicing of the screen via a tracking ‘Librarian’s ladder’.

Queen + Adam Lambert Video Director and TPI Video Visionary, Steve Price explained: “We actually took our own video department with us - all the crew and gear were from the tour. It had to be that way because our screen set up is quite unconventional and there are times during the show when I’m directing three mixing and effects scenarios in different aspect ratios. TRNSMT has IMAG screens but we didn’t use them, preferring to contain all the video coverage on the screens built into the set. Sometimes there can be a disconnect between the artist and the crowd if the audience are looking off to the side screens and our design brings the audience back to the stage for the whole show.”

Creative Technology’s Head of Music/Entertainment, Graham Miller, said: “Ric Lipson from Stufish Entertainment Architects had come up with the design and concept, working in tandem with LD Rob Sinclair and Content Producer Sam Pattinson at The Third Company, and we had to find the right solutions to bring all that to life. We worked with the Production Manager, Paddy Hocken and fabricator Acass Systems to create this beautiful curve. We then had to send different video images across the different video surfaces – even animating the eyes in the robot head of

Frank, which pops through the stage during the show.”

The all-important content for the show was run from 2 disguise gx 2 media servers with integrated Notch. Miller added: “As we got closer to delivering the project we decided that the gx 2 would give us the ‘grunt’ we needed to deliver across all of the screens. The disguise gx 2 enabled us to apply real-time effects with the integrated Notch set up for several songs. Notch integration was especially useful for this project.”

Price added: “We couldn’t bring in the whole video rig as one of the trusses that normally hangs over the audience couldn’t be rigged in this setting so my overhead stuff for the B-stage was binned but that was compensated for in other ways. For example, being in the open air meant the start of the show was in daylight so I was able to include the crowd in my mix a lot more than I usually would, particularly in my reverse shots, and this generated a new and interesting connection between the band and the crowd, especially for B-stage parts of the show. This was the first time we’ve played in the open air with this design and it worked very well. It injected a different kind of energy into the show and I’d love to do some more of it.”

The band used the festival’s sound system. Hocken explained: “We opted to go with the festival PA as it was in-place already and designed specifically for that site. DF are also in tune what needs to happen for local authority compliance, so it made sense to stick with their PA.”

Otherwise, the audio control package - supplied by Clair Global - was in use. This included the DiGiCo SD5 at FOH, Waves plugins, and outboard equipment from Lake, dbx, Alan Smart Research, Empirical Labs, Optocore and TC Electronic. The Clair monitors, Shure Axient wireless RF system and Shure R Series handheld system were also in play, together with Midas Pro X and DiGiCo SD5 monitor desks.

For DF, getting Queen + Adam Lambert on the bill and successfully integrating their arena production into a city centre festival environment sends a bold message, said Walker: “It’s important for us to show that something like the Queen + Adam Lambert show can be achieved at a festival. Some people might write the idea off because it’s not their show and they’ll need to make compromises because of other acts on the bill,



but we’ve taken that on, turned it on its head, and made it work.”

TPI

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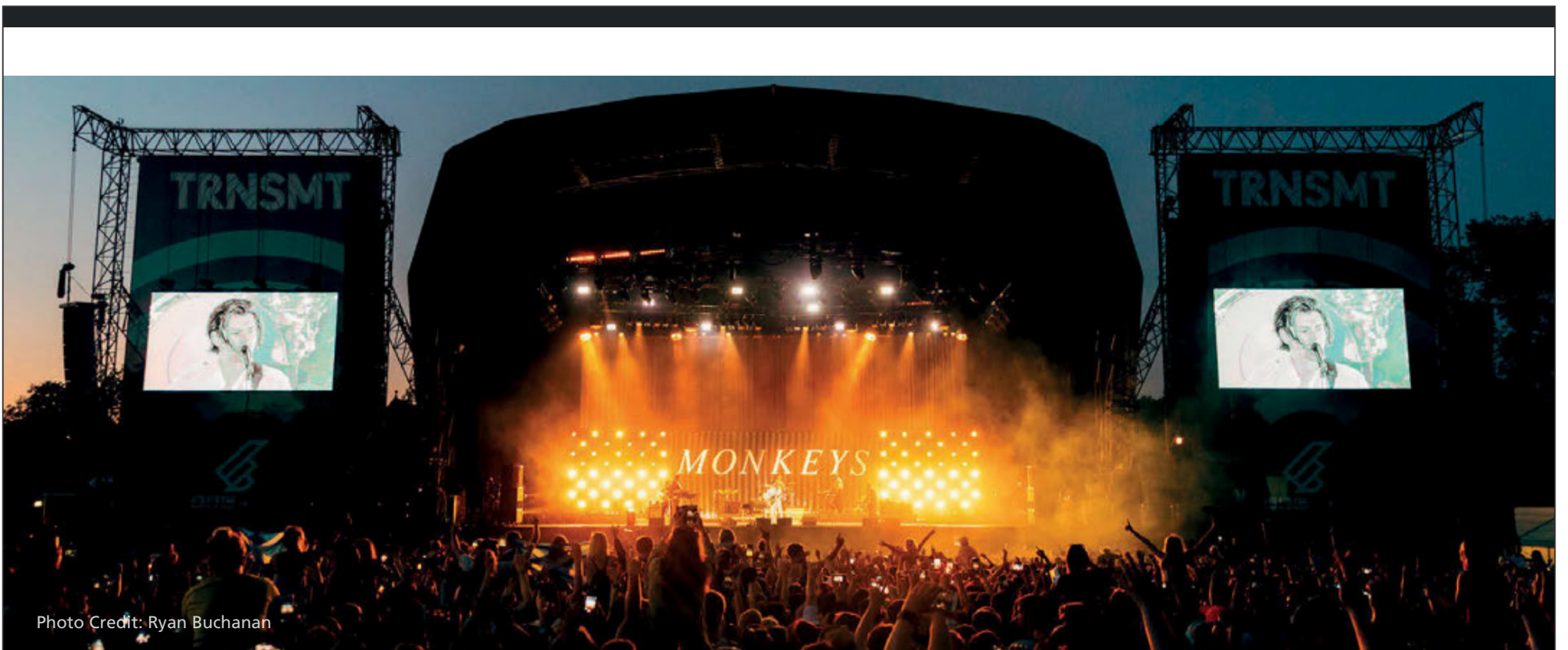


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