



## Power and speed: grandMA3 convinced at the Brit Awards 2021



The Brit Awards has long been noted for its spectacular productions, and the 2021 event was no exception,

staged at the O2 Arena, London, UK featuring an elegant and dynamic production design by Es Devlin and Yinka Ilori with spectacular lighting created by Al Gurdon. The live broadcast event celebrated some of the best British and international music and broke ground as the first major indoor live music event with an audience – of key and frontline workers – since the pandemic shut down of March 2020!

Hosted by comedian Jack Whitehall, and aired on ITV, a stellar line-up of artists played live entertaining music fans with some unique collaborations that rocked the show with Coldplay, Dua Lipa, Elton John, The Weeknd, Griff, Rag'n'Bone Man, Pink & The Greenwich & Lewisham NHS Choir, Headie One and several more.



Al Gurdon worked alongside a talented lighting programming team comprising Alex Mildenhall looking after the show's 'effect' lights using a grandMA3 full-size console running grandMA3 software, and Ross Williams who took care of all the key lighting. The impressive lighting rig consisted of around 1,600 fixtures, with over 105 DMX universes containing 43,000 parameters!

Alex himself owns three grandMA3 light consoles – one of which was running as his backup on this event. He had been working with the powerful and versatile new grandMA3 software for some months already, and decided it was the way to go for this year's high profile 'Brits'.

The show was moved back from its usual February slot to May, so Alex had already had the chance to use the full grandMA3 combination on shows earlier in the year, including "Dancing on Ice" also for ITV at Bovingdon Airfield, and "Game of Talents" at Maidstone Studios. When it came to The Brits, he was confident it was the ideal control solution. He loves the overall power and speed of the grandMA3, and the fact that the console can effortlessly handle very large quantities of fixtures / data very quickly.

New features he appreciates include Phasers (the new effects), which offer the ability to create discreet and complex multi-step effects easily and efficiently, while the new Selection Grid facilitates quick building of Phasers, especially when using uneven fixture quantities or fixtures non-symmetrically positioned on the trussing or set.



Recipes is another popular feature of grandMA3. Recipes enabled Alex to program “the intent of cues” without knowing at that stage exactly which fixtures would be used. When the team later worked out which lights worked best for specific tasks / scenes, all the cues were rapidly populated with the correct data. As well as using time very efficiently, Alex highlights that this allows some “serious flexibility” in changing which lights are doing what on the fly without masses of re-programming!

The ability to import MVR files direct from CAD programs like Vectorworks is another asset for Alex, making it a speedy process to build a patched show file. Some of The Brits show programming was pre-visualised in Depence2 during the first couple of days on site, while the set build was ongoing and before they had access to the rig, and this MVR file allowed them to create both the Depence2 model and grandMA3 show file from the same Vectorworks data.



Additionally, Alex thinks the grandMA3’s inbuilt visualiser is a “very handy tool” for checking and update programming when running in Blind mode, without changing the output on the real fixtures! On top of all of that, he likes the grandMA3’s new timecode structure which makes it easier to break down tracks into different groups. All these features he used extensively while programming the 2021 Brits extravaganza.

The biggest challenges working on a high-profile and high-pressure show like this are usually that the FOH creative teams – both lighting and video – will receive artist material and requests right up to the last minute as rehearsals evolve and are fine-tuned. Tracks and cues need to be modified and tweaked, new choreography might be developed and there are often copious and detailed notes, all of which must be incorporated almost instantaneously to keep the assorted artist’s creative directors happy ... and the rehearsal schedule on track. That is why it is imperative to be able to work quickly and seamlessly, and the grandMA3 fully enables this.





Like everyone involved in the event, Alex was “delighted” to be back working on a live show and with an audience again, and especially alongside such a “brilliant, imaginative and inspiring” team of technical and creative experts.

Lighting equipment was supplied by PRG and video by Ogle Hog. The lighting crew chief was Rich Gorrod and follow spot caller Chris Henry operated a grandMA2 full-size system (main and backup consoles) running PRG’s Ground Control follow spot system. The camera director was Julia Knowles. The MA Lighting distributor for the UK is Ambersphere Solutions.

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## **Company Profile**

MA Lighting International as master distributor is responsible for worldwide sales and marketing of the professional lighting control solutions of MA Lighting Technology. The current product range offers the grandMA3 series and the MA Network Switch. In the past MA has become well known for its grandMA2, grandMA and dot2 series.

Today, MA Lighting is respected for its technical knowledge and has achieved a unique international reputation for its operational philosophy. The company offers several decades of experience and strictly follows a professional user-centric approach, getting as close as possible to the market via its own international offices and support centers in the UK, North America, Latin America, the Middle East/India, Asia Pacific and Scandinavia/Eastern Europe/Russia – supported by a world-wide distribution and service network.