

Robe Helps Monumental Liberty Lights Shine Bright

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World firsts are always exciting and invigorating, so when French artist and music producer Michael Canitrot collaborated with show director Romain Pissenem from High Scream and became the first DJ ever to perform at the Statue of Liberty in Upper New York Bay with “Liberty Lights” ... Robe lighting was also super-proud to be part of the art!

This was another unique performance inspired by Michael’s “Monumental” touring concept as well as a special event celebrating the 250th anniversary of American independence and 140 years since the Statue of Liberty was gifted by the French to America to commemorate the centenary of the abolition of slavery.

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Photo by Geoffrey Hubbel

The specially composed 15-minute musical work – also broadcast on ABC – was accompanied by a vibrant and spectacular visual show with lighting and laser mapping designed and produced by High Scream, led by Romain, working closely with the artist and his Monumental creative team.

Romain and Michael Canitrot had been wanting to collaborate for some time and for this project, all the stars aligned to unite their collective talents and artistry. “Liberty Lights” was staged following an invitation from the Consulate General of France in New York.

Lighting was designed and directed by High Scream’s Ian Tomlinson, and Robe moving lights –

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including 12 x iBOLTS, 30 x MegaPointes and 4 x iSpiderXs – plus others, were used to set the tone, style and aesthetics.

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Photo by Peter Moore

Monumental shows are site-specific and devised to transform beautiful, interesting or culturally significant sites and spaces into immersive performance environments, each different and distinctive.

This one had an extra frisson of excitement due to the truly iconic nature of the monument, the groundbreaking idea of surrounding it with mixed media art and the outstanding location which offered up yet another world-famous sight – the Manhattan skyline – as a stunning backdrop.

Additional lighting equipment was supplied locally by PRG, with the Robe fixtures supplied by Robe North America and support by Robe France. Due to the intricacy and detail of the laser mapping – designed by Jérémie Bellot and François Deretz – lighting needed to be very precise and well thought-out.

“We needed elegance, simplicity and impact in equal measures,” explained Romain, who together with Michael developed a creative brief for lighting, which Ian then co-ordinated and delivered on site.

Ian explained that they used the Robe lights as “bright, flexible, reliable” sources, which “enabled us to achieve all the desired lighting effects.” This also included illuminating 20 dancers performing around a layered plinth at the base of the statue for the video team.

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Photo by Geoffrey Hubbel

Ian commented that “maintaining the integrity and poise of the Statue at all times” was mission-critical, as was keeping it as the central element of the visual collage unfolding to accompany Michael’s music.

Ian’s biggest challenge was fixture placement. Being a heritage-protected monument, there were some restrictions on what could be positioned where, but he also discovered that they were able to utilise the base layers of the 93-metre Statue to their advantage, so the architecture helped achieve the best positions by “almost making some natural suggestions,” commented Ian.

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Another logistical challenge was that all the kit had to be transported onto the island by ferry and the monument was also open to the public during the day, so the crew were only able to work and access certain areas at certain times during the production site build, which was followed by one VIP performance and two evenings of filming.

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Photo by Peter Moore

The iBOLTS were positioned in two rows, six to the left and six to the right of the Statue on the middle of the three main base levels. They were primarily used as super-bright beams to vertically frame and delineate the Statue.

The 30 x MegaPointes were positioned on the third tier – closest to the Statue – and the first tier, which was the lowest and the furthest away.

The combination of these positions – they were alternated with some other light sources – provided a great depth of field for the effects and the cameras. Ian notes that the “natural synergy” between the historic architecture and modern production added to the imagination and magic of the event.

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The four trusty iSpiiderX luminaires were the main key lights for Michael, placed in each corner of his DJ booth, which stood in front of the Statue on the highest plinth level.

All the lights were rigged in optimal positions to be able to provide effects and illumination directly onto and around the Statue, supporting the multi-faceted laser work.

The main creative challenge for lighting was dealing with the sheer presence and size of the Statue, which overshadowed everything and everyone on site. It needed to be treated with reverence and respect, while also being transformed into a striking piece of ephemeral and transient pop-up art.

Some superlative teamwork, planning and innovation from the production teams – including all the film and broadcast crews involved – plus a great energy and a sense of historic occasion shone through to make Liberty Lights the truly awesome phenom that it was.

The cinematic capture of Liberty Lights was co-ordinated by OS Studios and directed by Remco Evers.

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Photo by Peter Moore

Robe has been an enthusiastic supporter of Michael Canitrot's art projects for some time, and its products have featured on several other Monumental shows, including at Mont-Saint-Michel and the Eiffel Tower. Also, Robe lights highlighted the very first one, staged at the impressive Phare des Baleines (Lighthouse of the Whales) on the Ile de Ré off the west coast of France near La Rochelle, a 'digital gig' idea to bring people, music and visual art closer as a community, spawned during the pandemic.

About the Statue of Liberty.

The world-famous monument was initially proposed in 1865 by French abolitionist Édouard René de Laboulaye, and sculpted by Frédéric-Auguste Bartholdi, gifted from the people of France for the centennial of the US Declaration of Independence / abolition of slavery in 1876. It was dedicated by President Grover Cleveland on October 28, 1886.

The construction process was a convoluted and colourful story in itself and included the genius and input of innovative designer and builder Gustave Eiffel and his structural engineer Maurice Koechlin (who also built the Eiffel Tower). The pedestal area on which Lady Liberty is mounted was designed separately by American Richard Morris Hunt.