

Robe Reverses Polarity for 'Return to the Forbidden Planet' Tour



Photos and words by Louise Stickland

Bob Carlton's cult high speed, hi-energy intergalactic musical romp – very loosely based on Fred M. Wilcox's classic 1956 sci-fi movie "Forbidden Planet" – echoing Shakespeare's *The Tempest* with extra hallucinogenic qualities, pumping 1950s and 60s jukebox soundtrack and a cast of highly talented actor / musicians ... celebrates 25 years with this special UK theatre touring production.

Quicker than Lighting Designer Mark Dymock could say 'telegenesis', he specified Robe moving lights to help create the vast array of special X Factor moments in the show, with 10 x Pointes, 12 x LEDWash 600s and 4 x LEDBeam 100s on the rig.

Mark originally lit the show two years ago at the Queen's Theatre in Hornchurch, Essex, and was asked back to keep the action moving on tour, with a chance to upgrade the rig he'd originally used.



The brief included retaining a classic retro rock 'n' roll feel – when the show was first launched it would have been lit with a selection of theatre lanterns and PARs which would have been considered radical at the time in that environment. In keeping with the glorious narrative genre of 1950's fantasy, there was also a desire not to make it too flashy or distracting from the highly stylised story.

The lighting action all takes place within the framework of the spaceship stage set – designed by Rodney Ford – so Mark positioned the Pointes right at the centre of the rig, rigged on the venue house bars and an advanced truss.

Their "Flexibility and dynamics are ideal" comments Mark. He's been using them constantly in his work over the last 18 months, and they also appealed to him in this context because they were perfect for replicating that

classic 'ray gun' style of lighting that characterises sci fi B movies of the Ed Wood era.



The acting area itself is relatively compact, so he didn't need a huge quantity of lights, and having such a full range of effects with the Pointes – in addition to their sharp beams – gave him plenty of options to light the 27 pop and rock numbers.

With the Pointes on-board, he could give each number its own treatment and still have plenty of special effects in hand for seminal moments like the monster attack and the meteorite storm, etc.



The four little LEDBeams are placed discreetly on top of the set where they act as practicals. "I wanted something small to do the job and upgrade what was there before and they tick all the boxes," he explains. They're used for plenty of eye-candy and low backlight looks, with their pokey beams working perfectly through the haze as secondary beams to the Pointes.

He likes the speed and the sharpness of the LEDBeam 100's beam, bringing light down onto the lower sections of the set, and they are also excellent for specials during solos and for highlighting the upstage area.

The LEDWash 600s are also positioned on the overhead LX bars and on the advanced truss washing the stage and set. They are a great update to the pars / scrollers on the rep show that Mark lit and a "Great punchy base-wash source".



Some of the characters in the cast also have their own colours e.g. Captain Tempest is frequently lit in reds and the mad genius Prospero is often accompanied by purples and greens. Mark makes full use of the LEDWashes being able to go from a generalised colour source to a very specific one that is focussed on particular characters or elements of the action.

The Robe fixtures for this tour are all being supplied by Point Source Productions, a rental company based in Sutton, south London, and were purchased specially for the show. Lighting is being looked after on the road by Gary 'The Clamp' Cooper and the company Manager is Mark Shayle.



Talking about the Robe brand generally, Mark comments, "More companies are investing in Robe so it's easier to spec it and know you will definitely get the fixtures you want, and they are definitely breaking into the theatre market".

Just before this show hit the road, Mark used Pointes and LEDWash 600s on "Walking The Chains" in Bristol, a site-specific production celebrating 150 years of the Clifton Suspension Bridge with lighting supplied by Fineline.