

Simple Minds Goes Global with Robe

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Simple Minds, iconic Scottish rock band of the 1980s and 90s whose string of anthemic hits include “Don’t You Forget About Me”, “Waterfront”, “I Promised You A Miracle” and many, many more, are back on the road for their 2024 “Global Tour”, playing arenas and proving perennially popular to both old and new generations of music fans.

The production has also been growing and developing in size and dynamics with Robe iFORTE and BMFL moving lights assisting show and lighting designer Mark Wynn-Edwards to produce a colourful, eye-catching, and emotionally charged show supporting the band’s powerful up-tempo set which is thrilling the crowds.

The show design is new but contains some threads inspired by the 2020 arena tour which was abruptly halted due to the pandemic. Mark has been working with the band since 2018, initially coming onboard to look after media servers.

The tour features 14 x iFORTE in the floor package and 3 x iFORTE for follow spot duties plus 37 x BMFLs in the flown rig which are the main hard edge and workhorse lights of the design. All kit is supplied by Solotech, the complete lighting technical production equipment package provider for lighting, video and sound.



The fourteen iFORTES are deployed on the floor – also part of the floor package that will be

touring festivals in the summer. Eight are positioned upstage of the band on top of 7 video carts (also part of the floor package) and the other six are on the stage deck at the bottom of the video carts, also upstage of the band.

This lighting and video 'low backdrop' is a concept developed during the previous leg of the tour, with the idea of providing constant back-fill / back-of-shot eye-candy for video and camera recording and photos, rather than a black empty space, and bringing a nice depth of field to the stage.



This televisual approach - worked out precisely in terms of height and other dimensions - features 2 tiles of Roe Vanish screen per cart, and the cart numbers are scalable to fit the performance space or venue.

The iFORTES are perfect for shooting through the band, creating dramatic and powerful silhouettes and for blasting out into the audience and filling the venue 'void' spaces (between the ceiling and the top of the audience heads) and for impressive beam work during Simple Mind's many foot-tapping hits and rock-out moments.

Mark chose iFORTES for multiple reasons including the intensity, the quality of the light output, the vitality and authenticity of the colours, the excellent zoom and focus. This is his first tour using iFORTES, although he's previously worked with them on TV shows and film shoots. "They tick all the boxes," he declares.

The other three iFORTES are rigged on the front truss flown in the 'advance' position just above the front rows of people and run via a 3-way RoboSpot remote follow spotting system. The RoboSpot system will also be part of the festival package.

The BMFL WashBeams are all in the overhead rig, which has lighting and video 'pods' hung on four above-stage trusses.

Five video screens are built into the pods complete with hanging positions for lights, and on the bottom rail of these, Mark can hang two BMFL WashBeams, a strobe and a smaller LED panel light. The truss-hung BMFLs are clustered together in threes, worked extensively and are central to the show.

He frequently shoots these lights out into the audience filling that airspace mentioned above between their heads and the venue roof with colourful and spectacular aerial beams split up with gobos. This is a hallmark of the aesthetic Mark has developed for this show, which is virtually guaranteed to get the energy coming off the stage and out into the crowd every time for the dancey numbers!

Mark has used BMFLs for many years and they have become a rock-solid go-to. While he's now likely to move to iFORTES in the future, he comments, "BMFLs are still a fantastic luminaire ten years on, and I'm still very happy to use them."

He fully appreciates the products that Robe is currently producing. "As a manufacturer, they are innovative and very much at the top of their game, which is amazing!" he stated.



The general look and style of the show is a very clean, modern streamlined look with a few nods to late 20th-century touring stagecraft.

Mark didn't receive so much input from the band but lead singer Jim Kerr's brief was quite specific. "He wanted light to hit the furthest physical points in the venue at times and generally to make the whole experience huge," explained Mark ... and that's exactly what he's done!

The fragmented video look is also part of Mark's design, totalling 8 surfaces including the side

screens. All of these receive video content commissioned by Mark and band manager Ian Grenfell and produced by John Minton plus the camera feeds which are also directed by John, with Adam Maffatt-Seaman for the European leg.

Originally the screen surface was a 'blow-through' product, but a higher resolution surface was utilised for the European tour, which, Mark notes, will likely change for future legs as he really likes the way the blow-through can melt away to invisibility with well-planned lighting.

The challenge was to create a design that was adaptable and would go in and out quickly and straightforwardly, and that was also flexible enough to be able to light up to 140 different songs from the potential 'pool' of touring musical content from this incredible band who rolled out hit after stomping hit back in the day!



Mark is thoroughly enjoying the tour finding it invigorating creatively as well as a friendly and positive environment filled with great people ... as well as being a massive success.

He is working closely with his lighting crew chief Steve Percy.

Photos by Thorsten Samesch – ToddeVision