

zactrack assists Superbowl Half Time Spectacular

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Among the most watched and anticipated entertainment and broadcast moments of the year - the Apple Music Super Bowl LVII Halftime Show - saw superstar Rhianna rock back to live performance at State Farm Stadium in Glendale, Arizona, USA, in a showstopping performance accompanied by a slick, elegant and super-epic production, setting new WOW factors for this hi-energy extravaganza!

The set was defined by seven flying platforms on which the artist and dancers started the show, mirrored on the pitch below by a striking red runway dancefloor where the action shifted for the latter half of the 12-minute segment.

Choreographed by Parris Goebel, this breath-taking piece of art was lit by Al Gurdon, who has

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sprinkled his luminescent magic on the event for several years, with cameras directed by the legendary Hamish Hamilton.

AI needed to ensure that all performers on the moving platforms were evenly and consistently lit for the whole time as well as providing lighting for shots from two remote 'NavCams' flying above and between the moving platforms (but unseen during the broadcast).

Enter zactrack - the world's most straightforward and intuitive real-time tracking system!

Technical challenges abounded in carrying off such a visually stunning and smoothly delivered production, one of which was how to keep approximately 200 overhead moving lights following the movement of the floating platforms and the NavCams which were running on a TAIT TOWERS Navigator automation system.

A zactrack solution was suggested by Eric Marchwinski of Earlybird.

Earlybird provided pre-visualization services and onsite support as they have in past years, and Eric and Mark Humphrey programmed the show lighting collaborating closely with AI, his two lighting directors, Harry Forster and Ben Green plus others on the creative team.

Eric tapped into the power and flexibility of being able to connect the zactrack PRO server with PSN (PosiStageNet) data from the TAIT Navigator system, and embed this in the lighting cues recorded on the grandMA3 lighting console which was running in Mode 3.

This enabled any of the overhead moving lights to be assigned to any of the 7 performance platforms and the two flown cameras with the current position of each platform sent in real time from Navigator to zactrack via PSN.

zactrack received those positions and accurately aligned the selected fixtures on the moving targets.

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These lighting fixtures were used throughout the whole show, as the platforms moved at different heights and formations above the field of play delivering some effortless-looking set choreography.

The same moving lights were also utilized when the show narrative reached the ground and Rihanna and the flying dancers stepped onto the runway which has been deployed on the pitch for the latter part of the show.

This ambitious masterpiece of show design was originated by Willo Perron and Rihanna with creative direction and production design from Tribe Inc's Bruce Rodgers.

"A reliable and active tracking system to keep light on the platforms was essential, and zactrack allowed us to do just that," stated Eric.

The zactrack PRO servers were supplied by North American distributor, ACT Entertainment, with

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technical assistance from ACT's resident zactrack expert, Aria Hailey. The zactrack feature enabling PSN to be used in this way - to track 'virtual trackers' - was developed in 2022 during "Awakening", another acclaimed show at The Wynn in Las Vegas produced by Baz Halpin, Bernie Yuman and Michael Curry, on which Eric and Earlybird also worked.

This attention to detail from the manufacturer and support from the distributor has impressed Eric who notes that zactrack's international team is "very supportive, they listen to our requests and have brought expertise and imagination to the software to enhance the system's usability."

The lighting contractor for the Apple Music Super Bowl LVII Halftime show was PRG and the lighting gaffer was Alen Sisul. The flying platforms and Navigator camera design and engineering were delivered by TAIT TOWERS with the field staging design and engineering completed by All Access.

These were just some of the talented players in an all-star performance, technical and creative cast that have made this show one of the most talked about of the year so far!

Photos: © Earlybird Visual