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Jason Baeri lights Depeche Mode world tour with Elation Artiste and new Rayzor Blade

Depeche Mode is back touring in a big way with their “Momento Mori” world tour with lighting design by Jason Baeri and lighting supply by 4Wall. Elation lighting features in Baeri’s design, including three fixtures from the award-winning Artist™ series of LED movers—Monet, Mondrian and Rembrandt—along with Elation’s new Proteus Rayzor Blade.

The “Momento Mori” tour, which is out in support of their newly released album of the same name, kicked off on March 23 in Sacramento, California, marking their first tour in five years. The European leg begins May 16 in Amsterdam with a North American fall leg set to launch in September. Baeri has support from Joe Bay, who serves as associate lighting designer and lighting programmer, while Sarah Parker is out operating the show as lighting director.

M backdrop

His first outing with Depeche Mode, the designer says talks with the band began in late October of 2022 and by mid-December a preliminary design was completed, which later saw small refinements. The tour features a 27-foot-tall M backdrop, a large structural piece running video that Jason says was one of the most important aspects of the design. Dutch artist and longtime Depeche Mode photographer/videographer Anton Corbijn came up with the basic concept, which Baeri helped flush out and turn into a physical product for the production design.

Changing perceptions

The M has a dual role as Baeri explains. “It’s designed to be a scenic piece rather than just a video screen so it has depth and weight. So when you play video across both the main screen and the M, you have two planes of video that look different for anybody in the house. People who view it dead on have a different perception of it than people who view it from the side or at a higher angle. It physically changes what you’re viewing and how you

experience the films that Anton has made. That was the basic concept that we started with, a physical object that would not just be a video effect but would physically change your perception.”

Lighting is used to match that same idea while supporting the physical frame of both the video wall and the M. “We were trying to replicate the same type of scale overhead that we were looking at on stage,” says Baeri, “so the overhead lighting rig is actually a forced perspective mirror image of the M itself.”

Synth and rock

Active since the early 1980s, Depeche Mode is known for their distinctive sound, a blend of new wave/synthpop and rock. Jason uses the rig to accentuate the expanse of moods and textures. “The music itself is really based on two separate ideas and we really had to embrace both,” Baeri states. “We tried to pick one direction per song to go with—rock or synth—so the rig is broken into two parts that really reflect that. There are a lot of beamy looks and classic rock looks that are parcan reminiscent, and then for the synth songs there is more LED color and looks that feel more digital.”

Artiste Rembrandt

One of the workhorses of the rig, says the designer, is the Artiste Rembrandt LED wash moving head. “I love how much it’s actually a real wash light! Many manufacturers have what they say is a wash light with a PC lens but it’s really just a spot with internal frosts. They try to be the ultimate all-in-one tool but the quality of the light still feels hard edge. The Rembrandt on the other hand is a dedicated washlight where you get a good splashy feel and a real wonderful soft quality of light. It does it really well and not in a way I see in other fixtures that are on the market at the moment.” Baeri has the 51,000-lumen LED Wash fixtures working from the deck as shin lights. The fixtures feature throughout the show with the look for one of the band’s biggest hits, “Personal Jesus”, built around them.

Monet and Mondrian

Working from keylight positions and providing a bit of effect light as well are Artiste Monets, 45,000-lumen LED Profile luminaires with comprehensive FX package. “The Monets are a classic staple for me,” Baeri comments. “It’s such a clean, repeatable and reliable fixture that is just endlessly controllable. The ability to get them into those deeper, darker colors while still maintaining your output is a real big help.”

Rounding out the Artiste series lights used on the “Momento Mori” tour are 51,000-lumen Artiste Mondrian LED profile FX fixtures, which the designer uses as an upstage effect light.

“It’s got that big fat lens on the front of it; it really holds its own with presence. We only use six of them upstage but they feel like a whole upstage wall of fixtures. They explode through the band and compete with the video well.”

All three Artiste fixtures house Elation’s proprietary 7-flag SpectraColor™ (CMYRGB+CTO) color mixing system, and unlimited indexing and continuous rotation framing, along with a host of texture, animation and layering solutions. “It’s nice to have that consistency throughout the range and know that I can hit those colors when I need to.”

Proteus Rayzor Blade

Seeking to emulate the frame around the video with lighting, Baeri says they sought a fixture to line the downstage edge and found what they were looking for in Elation’s new Proteus Rayzor Blade. “The Rayzor Blade is a nice take on the bar light and fit that role really well,” he stated. “It’s a really high-output fixture with clean color mixing and a zoom that has a great range. They definitely help to ground the downstage edge of the picture.”

The Proteus Rayzor Blade is a tiltable linear LED light that functions as a wash, strobe or FX light. Available with 6 or 12 independently controlled 60W LEDs, the fixture zooms to 6° for mid-air beams and out to 45° for washes and a 210° tilt rotation allows them to position dynamically. The fixtures are IP65 rated and are unique in other ways as well. Two high-intensity strobe lines of cool white LED dots run along the length of the unit, and they also include Elation’s proprietary SparkLED™ twinkle effect.

“The strobe line is great!” Baeri exclaims. “It’s like a big slap in the face. Even when there’s a lot of brightness in the room it cuts through well.” The designer incorporates the SparkLED effect in a couple of songs. “It helps diffuse the nature of the unit being such a technical object. It’s a fun effect and even more useful for TV and camera work.” Baeri shares that the original plan was for the Rayzor Blades to also line the runway but that idea had to be scrapped due to sightline issues.

The Elation equipment for the “Memento Mori” tour is being supplied by 4Wall worldwide and is a component of a more extensive lighting setup. When the band embarks on their European tour on May 16, the rig will expand slightly for stadium shows.

Photos: Steve Jennings

About Elation Professional

Based in California with facilities in Florida and Mexico City, as well as European offices in The Netherlands, Elation designs and manufactures a comprehensive range of innovative lighting products known for its superior performance, excellent efficiency, and outstanding price:value ratio, all backed by a hard-earned reputation for Total Support. Elation also offers an advanced line of lighting control products through Obsidian Control Systems, as well as a full range of dependable specialty effects called Magmatic. Our mission has always been simple: to provide best-in-class products and service while offering the best value:performance ratio in the industry. Elation products continue to be a part of the industry's most exciting projects across the globe. We invite you to take a closer look at www.elationlighting.com

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