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Proteus peace of mind at Eric Church record-breaking Nashville concert

Christie Lites musters 135 of the leading weatherproof arc source fixtures for LD Butch Allen

On May 25th, country music star Eric Church played a very special show at Nissan Stadium in Nashville, Tennessee. The show was extraordinary in that it marked the first stadium headlining performance in Church's 15-year career and with 56,521 fans in attendance impressively broke Taylor Swift's previous venue record.

The show was special for another reason as well. The last date of an extended spring run on the artist's "Double Down" tour, lighting and production designer Butch Allen specified 135 Elation Professional IP65 Proteus Hybrids™ to fill the stadium in beams and effects. The multi-functional weatherproof lights were an addition to a large lighting package that also included some 420 Elation ACL 360i™ single beam moving heads.



Unpredictable weather

"We chose the fixture as it was the last show of the spring leg, outdoors and a completely different show than we normally do," Allen said of the Proteus. "Because we couldn't predict what was going to go on weather wise, the search for an appropriately rated fixture to be in the unprotected part of the stadium was a pretty big task. Once we discovered the Proteus though, it solved all our problems."

With the help of Robert Roth at Christie Lites, a large number of Proteus fixtures were sourced from a number of different sub suppliers. "The Christie team did a great job. Robert Roth beat the industry hard and found enough fixtures to cover our needs," Allen said, adding that he finds it stunning that with so many festivals now on the calendar across the U.S. that Proteus fixtures aren't absolutely everywhere. "I really didn't want 135 floor lights wrapped in those big, plastic balloon domes so I'm glad we found enough Proteus."

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"There's no excuse now"

"Double Down" is the fourth Eric Church tour in which the experienced lighting veteran has served as lighting designer. "Choosing to use Proteus was really about being responsible. If the weather turned, I didn't want my client to absorb a huge claim for damaged gear. We've all done a ton of outdoor shows and have had to fill out the insurance paperwork," Allen commented while reminiscing about a show years ago in Fenway Park where 150 lights went down and were unreparable after a downpour. "Both myself and Eric's production team didn't want to put anybody in that position. There's no excuse now."



Lining runways

Taking the stage without an opening act, Church played a characteristically long set, playing 37 songs across three-and-a-half hours. The setup featured an extensive runway system with a center runway extending to about the 50-yard line and side runways stretching to about the 30-yard line. The 135 Proteus fixtures lined the hundreds of feet of unprotected runway, everything past the downstage edge where the entertainer spent much of the show. From the beginning to the end of the show, they were used to light the audience, provide big beam looks and light the staging.

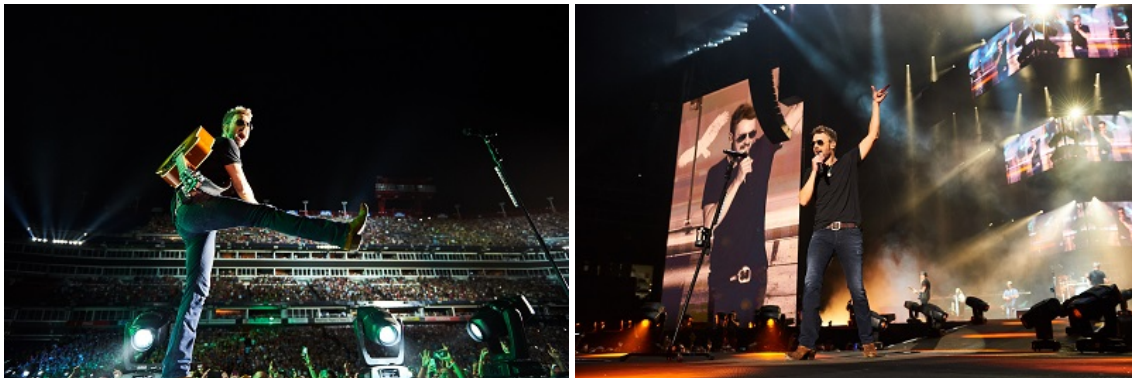
An arrow in the quiver

"Our biggest challenge was to find enough different angles for audience lighting and enough different fixture types so it's not too fatiguing on the crowd," Allen explains. "The floor-based angles to light the audience with was really efficient. I sat in it all night and it was far from obtrusive. From the stage you could see people in the upper corners of the stadium and could even see their eyes! They were bright! It's a fantastic fixture and they performed flawlessly. If you're doing a lot of festivals in sheds or spend a lot of time outside doing shows like we do more and more, it's an arrow to have in the quiver."

Lighting director Gavin Lake was equally satisfied with the choice of Proteus. He commented, "When selecting a fixture, the Proteus quickly rose to the top of the list. We needed a large format fixture with huge amounts of light output, yet versatile, fast, and safe for outdoor use. The Proteus performed beautifully. Once they were up and running we didn't have to worry; they did exactly what we needed, rain or shine."

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In the end, the Proteus fixtures didn't get rained on. "I like to think that in some odd way our diligence in finding these fixtures played a small karmic role in the evening's beautiful weather," Allen contemplated.



There were of course many other fixtures on the show, including 420 Elation ACL 360i™ single beam moving heads. The compact RGBW beam fixtures – an integral part of Church's touring package – were housed in ten upstage pods, sometimes stacked to form five rectangles, and added a massive backdrop look to a show that requires a huge number of looks.

With a fluid set list of 70-80 songs with another 10-12 other songs that could pop up on any given night, the show goes through a wide variety of looks that keeps Lake and Allen on their toes. "Essentially every show is different than the show before it," Allen concludes. "It's so much fun but you've got to be prepared for anything. We went into the Nashville stadium show prepared and didn't get hammered."

The "Double Down" tour kicked off again in September with dates scheduled through November.

Photos: John Schearer

About Elation Professional

Based in California with a European office in The Netherlands, Elation designs and manufactures a comprehensive range of innovative lighting and video products known for its superior performance, excellent efficiency, and outstanding price:value ratio, all backed by a hard-earned reputation for Total Support. Through nearly three decades of intelligent lighting development, our mission has always been simple: to provide best-in-class products and service while offering the best value:performance ratio in the industry, helping show designers and producers achieve their vision. From discharge to LED, intelligent to conventional, Elation products continue to be a part of the industry's most exciting projects across the globe and our list of references is always growing. We invite you to take a closer look at www.elationlighting.com

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