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LD Benoit Richard takes Rob Thomas on tour with all Elation rig

Matchbox Twenty frontman Rob Thomas just kicked off his solo “Chip Tooth Tour” with an all Elation lighting rig specified, designed and programmed by Benoit Richard.

Richard, who has worked with Matchbox Twenty since 2000 and has designed Rob Thomas’ first two solo tours, serves as production and lighting designer on the outing. Lighting vendor is Bandit Lites of Nashville with lighting direction and additional programming by Patrick Hayes.



“My goal has always been to deliver a visual experience that is very ‘clean & classy’ and also offers forward thinking ideas by using new and exciting lighting technologies,” comments Richard, who has created plenty of visually stunning moments in the show, reinforcing hits from Thomas’ solo career as well as a few songs from Matchbox Twenty. “The toughest part is to avoid repeating key gags and effects more than once to create the anticipation of ‘what’s coming next?’ Having a bunch of multi-purpose lights that are more than one-trick ponies though certainly helps.”

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Anchor of the design

Richard's choice of cutting-edge fixtures includes Elation's new Rayzor 760™, a compact wash LED luminaire with SparkLED™ technology that he incorporates as a key visual component of the show. "The Rayzor 760 is the anchor in my design," he says. "This brand new luminaire is so versatile and looks great as a simple wash or as a specialty effect light. We are using 48 Rayzor fixtures and they are everywhere in the rig."

The Rayzor 760's SparkLED is a patent-pending pixel effect of 2W white LEDs placed inside the fixture's oversized front lenses that works as a sparkle effect and fresh way of creating interest and depth on stage. When asked if he incorporates SparkLED in his design, Richard commented, "I certainly do! Rob has a song called 'Her Diamonds' which was an immediate source of inspiration for me when I saw the SparkLED feature."

Multi-functional lights

Although an all LED rig was the designer's original thinking, he says that due to the wide variety of venues they play, especially outdoors, he chose the IP65-rated arc source Proteus Hybrid™ as his hard edge light. He extolled the different possibilities that it offers as a spot, wash or beam fixture, 22 of which populate the rig, all in the air. Everything else, he says, is LED and IP rated.

Seeking another multi-faceted light that could take on a number of roles, the designer turned to the recently launched Protron Eclipse™ with flexible 4-in-1 functionality. "With the Protron Eclipse, once again the recurring theme is versatility," he says. "In one song, the Eclipse is a static wash light, then later on it's a special effect light, and once in a while it's a traditional strobe!" Located between the Eclipse fixtures on the front truss and used to illuminate the audience in warm tones are variable white DTW Blinder 350 IP™ LED blinders, 2-lights that the designer calls a throwback to the days of tungsten moles.

Richard says when he designed the set for the tour he was looking for a compact pixelated backlight to place on the floor behind the band. He chose the Chorus Line 8™ LED batten with zoom and convenient tilt axis movement, which he says reveals more and more of what it can do over the course of the show. Raking a stunning textured backdrop with light from above and below is another LED batten, the slim, 6-foot Colour Chorus 72™, which the designer chose to reduce the upstage footprint. In addition, placed on the floor under ramps and risers to back light custom fabrics is another hybrid fixture, the Paladin™ strobe/wash/blinder, whose wide-angle zoom Richard says caught his attention right away. Finally, the set is lined with 12 custom runs of Acclaim Flex Tube Pixel RGB LED strips to accentuate the contours of the risers and ramps.

Special identity

When asked why he chose an all Elation rig for the tour, the designer said there's a special identity that comes from having a rig with luminaires from the same manufacturer. "I was able to achieve



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that in the 90's and the 00's with other manufacturers and then it got a bit mixed up where it made more sense to build a rig by going to more than one grocery store," he said. "But this year, I felt it was the right time to be 'elated' by Rob's music and by Elation's new products. I am looking forward to delivering a great visual experience for Rob and his fans."

Supplying the lighting package for the "Chip Tooth Tour" is Bandit Lites, a vendor Richard has worked with since his time with YES and Dream Theater. "Michael Strickland and I have been great friends for many years and I knew they would be the perfect vendor for Rob's tour in North America," he said.

Rob Thomas' North American run launched May 28th at the Count Basie Center for the Arts in Red Bank, New Jersey. Touring in support of his recent "Chip Tooth Smile" release, the tour will extend throughout the fall, wrapping up on September 28th in Napa Valley before a series of Australian shows in November 2019.

Tour Personnel:

Management Company: Lippman Entertainment
Tour Manager: Jessica Suchter
Production Manager/Monitor Engineer: Andrew Crow
Production Assistant: Lindsay Baker
FOH Sound Engineer: Mark Chase
Production & Lighting Designer: Benoit Richard
Lighting Director: Patrick Hayes
Stage Manager/Rigger: Harry Gray
Set Carpenter: Chris Hazelton
Bandit Lites: Jeff Archibeque, Justin Wilk, Andrew Ellis

Elation Equipment:

48 x Rayzor 760™
22 x Proteus Hybrid™
21 x Protron Eclipse™
24 x Chorus Line 8™
14 x Colour Chorus 72™
10 x Paladin™
10 x DTW Blinder 350 IP™
12 x Custom runs of Acclaim Flex Tube Pixel LED strips

Photo: Jim Trocchio Photography

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