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Elation Smarty Hybrid™ workhorse lights on Walker Hayes “Duck Buck Tour”

Last fall, Darkroom Creative enlisted Elation [Smarty Hybrid™](#) moving heads on Walker Hayes' “Glad You’re Here Tour” as a multifunctional workhorse on the country star’s first headlining arena tour. Currently out on his followup “Duck Buck Tour,” the leading design firm has again turned to the compact moving head as the only hard-edged fixture in the rig.

“It met all the needs and continues to carry far more of a workload than you think a fixture of that size could accomplish,” stated Seth Jackson, partner at Darkroom Creative, of the CMY color-mixing hybrid moving head. Darkroom Creative is again handling lighting design, set design, video production and content for the 2023 outing with lighting supply by Bandit Lites.



Expanded, evolving production

Limited in both crew and truck space on last fall’s tour, the set and lighting rig for “Glad You’re Here” was understandably restricted. Now, however, it was “time to do a show.” Following consultation with management, Seth says it was clear that they didn’t want to limit themselves to a single environment. “This time it had to keep evolving.”

In contrast to “Glad You’re Here,” “Duck Buck” includes much more production, including multiple screen surfaces and an upgraded lighting approach that brings the audience completely into the show. Nate Alves, Seth’s partner at Darkroom Creative, was tasked with creating a different 3D visual environment for each song, including moment-to-moment changes to I-Mag, “to keep things moving and present a much larger stage picture than was actually there.”

Smarty

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Seth and Nate enhanced the rig to add impactful effects to play alongside the video content. Lighting fixtures included LED bars, moving heads and strobes, along with the Smarty Hybrids. Having used the Smartys in the past, most notably in designs for Barry Manilow, Nate and Seth knew the fixture well. “The Smarty Hybrid packs a lot of features in a small format and earns its pay in a variety of roles, most notably as a remarkably bright light that can punch through where needed. We use them as our only hardedge fixture on the show,” Seth said.



Smart reflection

In a unique take on a moving mirror effect, the Smarty fixtures are placed directly overhead of highly reflective moving mirrors that redirect the beams of light, adding depth and dimensionality to the look. A relatively narrow beam shoots down onto the mirror and becomes a massive beam reflected out with almost no loss in brightness.

“It is awesome to see them feeding the moving mirrors,” Seth asserts. “The power and brightness of the Smarty give the mirrors the punch needed to shoot out a powerful and thick beam. I wanted to get a mirror in there for another layer of effect and for the speed but I had no idea how much more I would achieve. When the Smarty hits that mirror surface, as either an open beam or gobo, the result is an enormous beam reflected out. Everyone was shocked in rehearsals. The brightness of the Smarty and the quality of mirror surface produce a beam that just cuts through everything. The Smarty optics are so reliable that even the focus of the gobo transfers to the mirror.”

Kudos to Bandit and lighting team

Bandit Lites are supplying lighting for the “Duck Buck Tour”, a partner that both Nate and Seth know well from their many years in the entertainment technology industry. Kudos go out from Darkroom Creative to Bandit and the lighting team. “We have some incredible people on our side pulling this off – Jake Tickle and Jimmy Hatten at Bandit, AJ Quintel is our Bandit Crew Chief, Jacob Padgett is our Lighting Director, and Jordan Karow is our Video Director. The whole ship is steered by our Production Manager, Chris Newman.”



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Lastly, Seth expresses his gratitude to Walker Hayes and his camp who, he says, are a pleasure to work with. "There is a mutual devotion between artist and crew and the friendship shows in making a great place to work."

The "Duck Buck Tour" kicked off on April 13 in Rosemont, Illinois and tours across the U.S. until early August.

Photos: The Darkroom Creative

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

For more information, contact:

Elation Professional US

6122 S. Eastern Avenue
Los Angeles, CA 90040
USA
Tel: (866) 245-6726 (toll free)
Tel: (323) 582-3322
sales@elationlighting.com
www.elationlighting.com

Elation Professional EU

Junostraat 2.
6468 EW Kerkrade
The Netherlands
Tel: +31 (0)45 546 85 66
info@elationlighting.eu
www.elationlighting.eu

Elation Professional Mexico

Av Santa Ana 30,
Parque Industrial Lerma,
Lerma, Mexico 52000
Tel: +011 52 728 282 7070
ventas@elationlighting.com



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