



VARI*LITE

VARI-LITE DELIVERS A UNIQUE DOUBLE ACT FOR STEREOPHONICS

London, UK - Lighting designer Brent Clark chose the unmistakable large-format pairing of the Vari-Lite VL6000 BEAM and VL6500 WASH to add a striking retro presence to his design for the latest tour by UK rock band, Stereophonics. Touring in support of their seventh UK number one album, *Kind*, the much-loved band drew fans to packed-out venues across Europe and the UK.

Clark, who trained originally in theatre lighting, has designed for Stereophonics for 15 years. This time around, the band's design brief was for a 'Bohemian, 1970s feel,' drawing on classic concert and cultural influences from the period. "We had a lot of pictures as references," explains Clark, "from Bob Dylan's Rolling Thunder Revue, to Springsteen, to weddings and all kinds of things. But the basic concept was to go back to the 70s; stay away from contrived, big video looks and make it more theatrical, which is where all the pastel colors come in."

This "warm and fuzzy kind of vibe," as Clark summarizes it, also called for a more inclusive audience experience, bringing them and the band closer together in the shared environment. With all this in mind, Clark eschewed screens entirely and created a strikingly beautiful, theatrical design characterized by gorgeous drapes, twinkling festoons, 'neon' (LED tube) accents and a refreshingly subtle color palette.

Festoon lighting extends out over the audience's heads, while a thrust B-stage brings the performance further into their midst. It was here that Kelly Jones opened the show under bare house lights - a true democratizer if ever there was one - before the show lighting kicked in.

"The drape takes light very well. I mean, it eats light," says Clark of his dominant set element. "So I played around with the wash lights to see what I could get, looking for some funky, weird colors, and the pastels worked so well...there are still primary colors, but I challenged myself to experiment and expand on the looks, with colors you wouldn't normally see. Over time, I built a library of colors - weird CTOs and off-greens and stuff you wouldn't find anywhere else. It was kind of fun."

Lighting-wise, the powerful looks are largely achieved by the unique, big-faced fixtures from Vari-Lite which form the backbone of the rig, all of which was supplied by Neg Earth. Clark has 12 VL6500 WASH fixtures rigged upstage overhead, providing washes on the drape and stage, the distinctive Dichro*fusion vanes softening the apertures, adding an attractive complement to his subtle, pastel looks. "The way I've got them spaced they kind of point straight down, so they have this beamy, spotty kind of look over the top of everybody."

Describing his favorite VL6500 WASH moments in the show, Clark says, "There's some really nice wash looks I get for some of the new songs that are almost country," says Clark. "I do some really interesting CTO things with them ... I took a long time figuring out how to get that. It's pretty cool."

Above the thrust B-stage he has a ring of eight VL6000 BEAMS, which deliver strong, defined beam looks for sections of the show when lead singer Kelly Jones - or at times the whole band - comes forward. "They're great," says Clark, "especially out there on the thrust, where I can do these big beam looks over the house. But mostly I like them to throw a big chunk of light down, like there's guitar parts where they shift down on Kelly as he plays the song."

Clark also uses the VL6000s on the large mirror ball suspended above the thrust, creating one of the 'wow' moments of the show. But despite their power, the VL6500 and VL6000 combination worked perfectly as a complement to the variety of fixtures and looks that Clark's design encompassed, from the "Tron-like" LED tubes to the subtle, theatrical color palette. "Unbelievably, it really does all kind of flow together!" Clark laughs.

Commenting on the VL6500 WASH fixtures, he says, "I just really like their look. To me, it's perfect for what we're doing ... they have that kind of throw-back to the old VL5, which I love. And I really like the new VL5LED too - if I'd had the chance, I'd have had some of those in here as well!"

This was a great design, from a skilled and versatile designer. Clark managed to explore and broaden the possibilities of these unique, large-format fixtures, and successfully integrate them into a varied but cohesive whole. The result was at turns dramatic, futuristic, retro, theatrical, pretty, surprising - and always well worth paying attention to. ■

PRODUCTS FEATURED:

VL6000 BEAM

VL6500 WASH

PHOTO CREDITS: © Oli Crump

LIGHTING DESIGNER: Brent Clark

LIGHTING APPLICATION: TOURING