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Tyler, the Creator had no color palette dictates, so his show was bathed in vibrant color.

BLACK AND WHITE IN COLOR

The Tyler, the Creator/
Vince Staples tour featured
a striking contrast in palettes

By: Sharon Stancavage

"These two productions were so drastically different from each other, but, at the same time, they were very engaging and appropriate for their artists. I think we both were really able to put on a unique show for the fans," notes lighting designer/programmer Max McDougall. He's referring to the Tyler, the Creator/Vince Staples tour that hit venues, from arenas to theatres, earlier this year; McDougall was out on tour with Tyler, the Creator. Mark Fetto, COO of Las Vegas-based Morpheus

Lights, which provided lighting and crew for both shows, says, "Vince Staples' show was very monochromatic...black and white, with the only backlight coming from a massive DreamPanel wall, as he worked the downstage edge. Very dramatic looking. Then the set changed to Tyler, the Creator and the contrast couldn't have been more remarkable. The Kabuki drops, and a magical forest was revealed, with four large trees as scenic elements, a star drop, and a very colorful and well-lit

stage. It's the first time the audience saw any overhead lighting. The change was amazing, and it made for an excellent show." Soft goods and scenic elements were supplied by Gallagher Staging, located in La Mirada, California. For Staples' portion of the tour, Corey Smyth, the singer's manager and production designer, says, "My tour manager, Danny Wasby, showed me the [Ayrton] DreamPanel-Twin fixture and from there, conceptually, I

thought of a way that we could utilize them to design our current tour configuration." One hundred ground-supported Ayrton DreamPanel-Twin hybrid LED/video luminaires formed a dynamic backdrop for Staples. "This configuration is an idea that Vince and I had," Smyth says. "I went to the Morpheus shop in Vegas, and we talked through it," Fetto says. "The first step was to develop a floor base for the [Tyler] GT Truss that would allow us to efficiently stand twenty 10' sticks of

Photos: Todd Kaplan

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GT truss side-by-side in a way that would make the array of DreamPanel Twins quick and easy to set up and take down. We worked with Andrew Gumper, at [North Las Vegas-based] AG Light and Sound, to develop a 2' X 4' base that had two rails on the long dimension that the GT truss could pin into at various locations. This allowed us to adjust the placement of the truss on the base, to balance out the weight of the fixtures that were yoked out on the

onto its floor base, the GT wheel assemblies could remain attached to the truss. Casters on the custom floor bases and interlocks permitted the individual, five-fixture, towers to be easily aligned to form the 100-fixture wall. We also added casters under our base and booms for the sides of the stage, each mounted with four [Ayrton] MagicBlade-FX units, so they could be wheeled on and off stage easily.” These solutions enabled an incredibly quick set change.



Working with the DreamPanel-Twins, the creative team blended lighting and video looks in a distinctive way.

downstage side of the vertical truss. “Five Twins won’t fit inside a 10' stick of GT truss in the ‘normal’ inside-the-truss hanging configuration, so we top-mounted them on the truss,” Fetto continues. “This meant that once the truss had been rolled onstage and flipped up

“Morpheus was able to get all that gear off stage and the changeover done to Tyler’s set within 15 to 20 minutes every day,” McDougall says. This is the first time that Staples’ lighting director/programmer Tyler Santangelo has worked with the



One hundred Ayrton DreamPanel-Twins, provided by Morpheus Lighting, were featured in the rig.

DreamPanel-Twin. “Having the ability to control all the pixels individually allowed us to be a lot more diverse and more creative,” he says. “We were able to do lots of different angles and swipes and different hits, using different parts of the rig to make the show.” “Because of the hybrid video-MagicPanel nature of the DreamPanel-Twin, they were able to blend a mixture of video content and lighting to create looks that I have never seen before,” Fetto says. “Not just an upstage video wall, not just an upstage wall of lighting fixtures, but a combination that looked incredible. They explored all the features DreamPanel-Twin has to offer and used them to the max.” The DreamPanel-Twin is capable of continuous 360° pan-and-tilt movement; one side of the head is a 6mm pitch video panel, while the other is an eight-by-eight beam projection matrix—a variation on the original MagicPanel-602.

Fetto adds: “The video side is controlled through the DreamPanel-HD Box, while the MagicPanel emitters and the pan-and-tilt movement are managed via Art-Net or sACN through an Ethernet link. There is no other fixture on the market that offers this unique set of features.” The video content was controlled via Resolume Arena software V.5.1.4. The DreamPanel-Twin was a big hit with the Vince Staples camp. “At first, I was little concerned about them and thought they might be gimmicky,” Santangelo admits. Working with them convinced him otherwise. “Being able to use the video side, and then flip it around and have a whole different world, has been really cool. The continuous spin is great. With DreamPanel, there are no limits; whatever you want to do creatively with them, you can do.” Smyth adds, “I love the DreamPanel-Twins. I want more of them. I



Santangelo used Philips Vari-Lite VL3500 Spots to create a base shade of white light.

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would like at least 300 more DreamPanel-Twins to use exclusively for the next two years.”

Staples, who played a major part in the design process, wanted a show done primarily in tones of black and white. Smyth explains: “We don’t necessarily care if we see him clearly, as a lot of artists would want to be seen; it’s really a mood that we’re setting. We’re trying to deliver art that could be interpreted on many levels.”

“People have moved away from black and white because we’re living a world with 4K and 1080p and



McDougall worried that the upstage star drop and cyc would limit his creativity, but ultimately found it fit the production quite well.

everyone wants vibrant colors,” Smyth says. “I think there’s beauty in things that don’t come across as vibrant when it comes to color.”

The lighting was done entirely in white, and not shades of white, as Santangelo explains: “I used the truest white I could get; I used [Philips Vari-Lite] VL3500 Spots as the base for all the instruments, and it was a little on the cooler side. Programming with one color did pose a challenge, but it forced a creativity for each song.”

In addition to the DreamPanel-Twins, the rig included 34 Ayrton MagicBlades-FXs, two Ayrton MagicBursts, and two VL3500 Spots. “We had a downstage line of eight MagicBlades per side on vertical pipes, and the VL3500s on each side for sidelight. We also had a MagicBurst on each side of the stage,” the lighting director reports.

Santangelo programmed and ran the show on an MA Lighting grandMA2 console with six NPUs: “It was very heavily programmed. There was a huge arc; it started minimally, with the video side of the wall and simple effects

like simple bumps and chases. Things got more complex as the show went on, and there was an entirely different look for each song. By the end of the set, everything was being used to its fullest potential; we had very specific programmed hits to sounds, and lighting and video were used at the same time, so you saw both.”

This is the first time the Vince Staples team has worked with Morpheus. “We love those guys and I’ll continue to work with them in the future. They are very supportive of us and our creative; that’s the best part about it,” Smyth says.

On the road, Santangelo has had positive experiences as well. “I’m really glad we worked with Morpheus Lights,” Santangelo says. “Their techs—Brad Brown and Matt Medina, aka Skip—were amazing. If it wasn’t for Brad and Skip, we wouldn’t be able to get our day-to-day things done and troubleshoot the gear. Mark Fetto made it a great experience.”

Into the forest

As for the Tyler, the Creator production, McDougall says, “Both Tyler and I start with basic ideas for the lighting of a given song. Ultimately, it’s Tyler who decides what we end up with; we share creative input on the looks. Some of the most powerful moments are ideas that came directly from Tyler, and each song is very much an extension of his personality.”

The team settled on a forest theme, McDougall notes:



One MDG Atmosphere and two Ultratec Radiance Touring Systems provided haze onstage.

“We brought a scenic designer, Tim Brown, from [Brooklyn-based] Tim Brown Design, and we ended up having Gallagher build the set.”



The tree-laden set was fabricated by Gallagher Staging.

The show was simpler than McDougall initially imagined. “Not having an LED wall meant having an old-school star drop in front of a plain old cyc,” he says. “At first, I wasn’t too thrilled about that, but as we started programming and I was working with Tyler, I realized that it was a lot more appropriate for the show. A lot of things that we were going to do, that were going to be big and flashy, I think would have taken away from the show.”

As opposed to Staples’ ground-supported production, McDougall had four trusses for his lighting rig and four forms; the downstage truss was home to VL3500s [used primarily as front light], Claypaky Scenius units, Ayrton NandoBeam-S9s and Chauvet Professional STRIKES. “I had a handful of NandoBeams in all three sizes: S3s [24 total], S6s [22 total], and S9s [six total],” McDougall says. “The majority were up in the air and used as my primary backlight/washlight; I also had them on torm positions and on the ground to light scenic elements. The six S9s out on the downstage truss, over the crowd, were used in combination with the blinders to glow the crowd and help facili-

tate the whole crowd interaction with Tyler.” The NandoBeams were new units for McDougall. “They weren’t even on my radar, and I had never used them before. They are amazing washlights and I was really happy with them.”

Twelve Chauvet Strike 4 blinder/strobes were placed on downstage and midstage trusses. McDougall says they functioned as blinders, adding, “I also used a couple of them on the ground, behind the hidden log, to give us some nice silhouette effects. There were moments when we did a full blackout with just the blinders from behind Tyler that looked really great.”

Twelve GLP JDC1s served as McDougall’s strobes. “What was nice about the JDC1 is they have the tilt. The song ‘IFHY [I F---ing Hate You]’ started with only strobes, and I was able to tilt the strobes back and do some shadow play with the trees onto the white cyc,” the lighting designer notes.

For key light, McDougall relied on the Claypaky Scenius; there were 22 in all. “The Scenius was the work-



Tyler, the Creator routinely wore neon colors on stage, contrasting nicely with the color palette.

horse,” he says. “One reason for selecting it was that I really liked the multitude of effects offered and the stock gobo selection. With the tight pre-production schedule, I knew I would have the right features to tackle last-minute changes and do it gracefully.”

Downstage was the location of 18 Ayrton MagicBlade-FX units, borrowed from the Vince Staples rig. McDougall reports: “It helped on the changeover to leave those downstage. I initially had more [Chroma-Q] Color Forces downstage as footlights, but we decided that, with the zoom ability on the MagicBlades, they’d make great footlights, which they do.” The rig also included an MDG Atmosphere hazer [McDougall’s], two Ultratec Radiance Tour System hazers, 12 Chroma-Q Color Force 48s, 13 Color Force 72s, and 12 Claypaky Mythos. “We used Mythos on the last tour, and I was quite happy with them. I wanted to stay in the Claypaky family just for color consistency between my beam units and spot units,” he says.

For control, McDougall ran his own MA Lighting

grandMA2 Light. He reports: “Tyler Santangelo and I would put our desks in session and use the other desk as back-up. We each had our own network racks, so I’d be programming on a different session ID, he’d be on his own session, and we’d be able to work on our shows in tandem while the Vince set was staged in front of my rig.”

This is also McDougall’s first time working with Morpheus Lights. “We got a really great package from Morpheus. Both Jason [Henry] and Greg [Nunz] did a fantastic job; my assistant tech Duane Goldberg was out with us as well and worked with me and the Morpheus crew to get everything up every day,” McDougall notes. Production manager Paul Wichmann was also a key player in the process.

Tyler, the Creator has dates in the US until the ending of May; he then takes his show into Europe. Vince Staples has several festival dates in Europe in June and July; he’ll be on tour with Childish Gambino starting in October. 🎵

