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Prelite's Previsualization Helps Dr. Dre, Snoop Dogg at Coachella

by PLSN Staff • in News • Created: June 12, 2012

INDIGO, CA – The annual Coachella Valley Music & Arts Festival, with its 24/7 schedule and desert location, poses a challenge for performers and their lighting and media crews alike. So when the lighting designer, lighting programmer/director and media programmer for Dr. Dre and Snoop Dogg opted to use Prelite Studios' previsualization services prior to the show, they gained some distinct advantages.

More details from Prelite (http://www.prelite.com):

INDIGO, CA – The annual Coachella Valley Music & Arts Festival, with its 24/7 schedule and desert location, poses a challenge for performers and their lighting and media crews alike. So when the lighting designer, lighting programmer/director and media programmer for Dr. Dre and Snoop Dogg opted to use Prelite Studios' previsualization services prior to the show, they gained some distinct advantages.

With the sun rising early, boiling temperatures throughout the day, no chance for atmosphere (fog/haze) due to the high winds and dust storms, and opening acts starting at 10 am, it's tough to lock in a show without previs. Brian Jenkins teamed with production designer Demfis Fyssicopulos on Dre and Snoop's set. Add to the mix that they were not the only artists performing and other LDs needed time for their shows as well, and the technology from Prelite became a no-brainer. The team couldn't imagine the nightmare if they had only programmed some elements in rehearsals and waited to do the other elements on-site at Coachella.

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Jenkins, Fyssicopulos and media programmer Matt Shimamoto spent about seven days in rehearsals at Santa Monica's Barker Hangar where Prelite principal Tom Thompson set up the system. Jenkins, who was new to the Prelite experience, had begun coordinating with Thompson about two weeks earlier on plots, unit numbers, patches, fixture orientations and a few required revisions. The team arrived on site in Santa Monica, plugged into the Vision software and were running.

The biggest advantage for him during rehearsals was having the entire Coachella lighting rig six feet in front of them while he was programming.   Budget, space and trim height restricted them to a certain amount of physical gear that could be used in Santa Monica.

Prelite had top-notch machines running Vision, with internal parameters adjusted for the best performance. The show translated perfectly from partial previs at rehearsals to the actual rig at Coachella. Everyone was surprised how well the machines handled the large inventory of moving lights and LED components without bogging-down.

Dre and Snoop's set was divided into segments: Dre and Snoop together, Dre alone, Snoop alone and each with guest artists.

All of the previs and programming was based on the fact that set-up on site would begin after the sun was setting and the miscellaneous field lighting from merchandise booths, palm tree lights and carnival lights was shut off.   The team gives kudos to Neil Ryan and the Coachella staff for turning off the lights – it was helpful to have the environment set for the entire performance, and it was crucial to have total darkness for the Tupac segments.

It was a monumental task for the stage crew to perform an extreme makeover from night to night, allowing each headliner to load in their entire show. There were 24 universes of control between moving lights, LED products, miscellaneous site lighting fixtures and video control for the Hippos. It was a big Brown United roof, so there was lots of space to put fixtures and elements of the set.

Instead of programming unnecessary lighting cues that would never translate onto the stage, they created big, bold looks – along with the necessary hits and sweeps, of course – and let video push the envelope. For the majority of the performance, video content was the driving portion of the show because they were outside, in the desert, and atmosphere was hard to control and maintain.

Custom video content, timed to the beat of the songs, was displayed on a main upstage WinVision LED wall, the band riser (which was wrapped in flexible paper LEDs hugging the curve and rigid LED tiles for the straight portions), and IMAG screens located stage left and right.

Sometimes the LEDs were supportive elements for lighting. For some songs they'd tone in color on the riser to match the lighting scheme for a cohesive look. At other times, like the beginning of the set, which featured an iconic downtown LA open, all the LED elements and the IMAG screens played as one for an engulfing experience. The stage was completely overtaken by LA imagery so Dre and Snoop could claim it for their home turf in an artistic way.

Unlike Jenkins, Shimamoto was a Prelite veteran, having used the previs system on Eminem's and Jay-Z's Home & Home Tour, a Little Wayne tour and for the Activision booth at the E3 convention.

The team spent long hours in rehearsals locking cues into timecode and stepping through the show song by song. A few songs used static imagery on the LED surfaces and Fyssicopulos turned Jenkins loose to cue out a song.

At Coachella, Shimamoto, at the FOH, had four Hippo HD media servers, two grandMA full systems for video and another two grandMAs for lighting at his disposal.

Curtis Battles was production manager for Dre and Snoop's set. Derek Burt of Upstream Touring supplied the video package and crew in conjunction with VER. Matt Waters was the media tech during rehearsals. Loren Barton was head FOH and Hippo tech for the show.

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