

Avolites Helps 3 Doors Down Celebrate 20+1 Years

It's safe to say that a lot of plans were derailed in 2020. Tours were cancelled, plugs were pulled, and calendars were rescheduled. One of the bands that perhaps got impacted more than most was US rock act, 3 Doors Down. The Mississippi-based five-piece had planned a nationwide US tour to celebrate the twentieth anniversary of its breakthrough album 'The Better Life', which spawned international hit single 'Kryptonite' amongst others. Covid, however did for that, and by the time the band could hit the road in 2021 it was both the 21st anniversary tour and several things had changed.

"Because nobody knew what to expect post-pandemic, we had to scale down; we couldn't just rely on the amphitheaters," says Warren Cracknell, Production Manager for 3 Doors Down. "That meant we had to change all the original designs for the lighting, video and audio from 2020, and come up with something that could scale to different sized rooms."

A lighting rig and video wall was designed that would give the band as much flexibility moving from venue to venue as possible, and lighting director and designer Benjamin Moffitt was brought on board to make it all work in a fairly challenging timeframe.

Creating the footage for the video wall was the first challenge. Moffitt was required to run the video and lighting control, for which the use of Ai and Synergy enabled him a smooth and easy transition even with a complex diamond screen shape. He created a mask of the Superman logo so that the video footage could run in that iconic diamond shape while actually being on a 16:9 screen to tie in with the Kryptonite theme. Stock footage and 3 Doors Down's extensive video back catalogue was then used to create the video elements for each song, Moffitt panning and scanning where required to fit the video into the silhouette.

During the 52-date tour, Moffitt used his own Avolites Sapphire Touch console coupled with an Ai Anjuna license running on a Dell rack server to run the lighting and video, a combination which gave him the flexibility to respond to the sort of evolving set-list that a storied rock band often likes to tour with.

"Timecode works with pop acts who have a strict setlist and a strict format and know what they're doing every night," says Cracknell. "With a rock band they can change the setlist in the middle of the set, and that's a hard move on the fly with timecode. But we know what Benjamin can do. We hear over the comms there's going to be a different song, and he can push those buttons and make it happen."

The key to such ‘buskability’ is, of course, being organised. Moffitt has one song that he starts with v15’s new timeline feature (“It’s scary to me because I don’t have control and the sliders are moving up and down their own”) but the rest of the performance is live and runs with copious notes and planning. Moving forward Moffitt intends to use the new v15 timeline to cue all the video one for every song, that way he can add to the v15’s timeline throughout the tour.

“I use the setlist and the Avo software,” he says. “If they can give me a setlist two minutes before the show starts, I can move the set list songs up and down which in return re-organise my playback pages. I’ve been using the notes on the setlist for my spotlight cues too and, because I use an Avo console, I can actually see the video on the Sapphire if I choose to.”

According to Cracknell, everything with Avolites was rock solid through the course of the tour. An Avolites Arena console was always on hand as a back-up, but was never used, though at one point the idea was floated of using it as a desk for the support acts to use with some of the full show lighting disabled. Maybe for the next tour.

Perhaps though the key tool that Moffitt rates from the delayed 20th anniversary tour this year is the ability to drive the console from an App. “I use my iPhone to do my palettes every day,” he says. “Sometimes Front of House is 125 feet out and you can hardly see what you’re doing. And if I can stand on stage and use my iPhone to do my position palettes, that’s perfect. I have a lot of scenes where the lights centre around Brad the singer, and you can’t get any more precise than the lighting guy actually standing at the mic tweaking those positions.”

