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Robe Ups the Suwannee River Jam

Products Involved

BMFL™ Spot **CycFX 8™** **LEDBeam 1000™** **LEDWash 300™** **LEDWash 600™**
Pointe®

The legendary Suwannee River is enshrined in folklore and history – the wild backwater river rises in the Okefenokee Swamp emerging at Fargo, Georgia, passes through southern Georgia and northern Florida for 246 miles before flowing out into the Gulf of Mexico near the town of ... Suwannee.

The Suwannee River Jam is a popular and well known annual 3 day country music festival staged in Live Oak, Florida and attended by around 9000 music enthusiasts. Robe Lighting Inc.'s very own Tommy Hall - Regional Sales Manager for the southeastern U.S. and also an LD and programmer in his own right - has been involved with lighting both stages at this major event in his hometown ... for the last 7 years.

This year, he was able to supply a variety of Robe products for use on both the Main and Amphitheater Stages in what was also a fabulous working showcase opportunity.

Tommy worked closely this year with First Street Music & Sound of Lake City, Florida, who coordinated production on the Amphitheater Stage and Pyramid Productions from Lexington, Kentucky who delivered technical production to the Main Stage.

The Main Stage featured six of Robe's super-bright BMFL Spots and six LEDWash 600s, which were used together with some other lighting by a variety of artists including Alabama, Chris Young, Josh Turner and Thompson Square. Most acts brought their own LDs.

Tommy's production lighting design for the Amphitheater Stage comprised all Robe lights - four LEDBeam 1000s, six Pointes, eight CycFX 8s and four miniPointes, all provided by Robe, plus six of Pyramid's LEDWash 300s - which Tommy traded for the six LEDWash 600s on the main stage ... as they needed the additional power to throw to the stage in the larger space! Tommy ran lights for all artists on the Amphitheater Stage apart from Rodney Atkins who brought his own LD Adam Grey.

Adam commented that as a touring LD carrying only a floor package he had come into contact with some really great fixtures as well as some that "function better as sandbags!" He usually programs outside during the day at most shows and it's really more like guess work because he can't see the beams.

"This is NOT the case with the Robe Pointes and mini-Pointes," he stated. "It was mid-day and they are so bright that I was able to program with real precision. Not only could I see every color but I could see all the components of light created by the prisms."

He liked Pointes' robust color palate together with their speed but what impressed him most were the prisms and the amount of control he had of the beam. The Pointe has been his favorite fixture of this tour.

Using the LEDBeam 1000s was "a lot of fun. The independent control of all three rings makes this fixture very versatile and visually pleasing."

"As for the CycFX 8s....in addition to being an excellent cyc light, the zoom and tilt features made these great crowd blinders, but I would also love to use them on corporate shows".

With this diverse selection of very flexible fixtures he had plenty of scope to ensure that each artist had a different and individual look and visual style.

The logistics and set-up of the event meant that Thommy's busy schedule first saw him visiting the main stage early during load-in where he talked to the various LDs and familiarized them with the BMFLs and LEDWash 600s. He then spun them around the park in his way-cool Polaris utility vehicle, including taking a ride down to the Suwannee River itself and touring the festival campgrounds before whizzing over to the Amphitheater stage to run them through the fixtures installed there.

He found that many of the Main Stage LDs came back to watch the Amphitheater performances once their own artists had played ... giving themselves a chance to see the Robe lights in action – an opportunity made possible because only one stage was in operation at any one time due to their close proximity.

The amphitheater stage is a wooden structure that requires a slightly "off-beat" approach to rigging, explained Thommy, which is usually solved with a bit of lateral thinking and some imaginative use of pipe ... to facilitate hanging points for lights.

He designed the stage lighting based on the availability of demo fixtures from Robe's Cooper City HQ which determined the fixture counts ... and changed right up until a few days before the load-in – all adding to the challenges!

He programmed the Amphitheater on an Avolites Sapphire Touch which was supplied by Brad White from Avolites.

While he didn't receive any specific briefs from most artists that he lit on the main stage, he used his experience and talent for thinking on his feet to ensure they all had exciting and dramatic lightshows. Others like LoCash he's worked with for years on that stage so he already knew what they needed.

None of his acts on the amphitheater stage used follow spots, so the Robe fixtures provided all the key lighting as well as the effects and general washes and looks.

Thommy added "As a regional sales manager for Robe I do a lot of demos where I am shooting 30 ft. to a white cyc, so to be able to really use these fixtures in an actual concert setting is amazing. The miniPointes really blew me away with their output in the daylight."

"The best part of this event of course is being able to catch up with so many of my lighting designer friends and make new LD friends every year ... and running the Polaris around out in the woods!"

Photo Credit: Donna Jean



