

Light Keeps It Dark Inside Yuma Tent At Coachella 2018

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Steve Lieberman of SJ Lighting has designed Yuma Tent at Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival since its inception. Working alongside Yuma's curator and facilitator—and one of his closest friends—Kobi Danan, Lieberman and Danan ensure Yuma's success year after year, with some guests arriving in the morning and never leaving until close. Click through the slideshow to read about the design, and check out the lighting plots here.



“One thing about Yuma is it's not like a stage environment,” explains Lieberman. “We're really trying to create more of a nightclub environment that's a lot more comfortable.” The fully air-conditioned tent is blacked out and features wood floors. This year, bleachers topped with padding and outlets with USB chargers lined the back of the tent. “People were really comfortable to camp out at this area.”



The activity in Yuma is constant, always luring the crowd to see what's next. The underground, DJ-driven environment demanded quick changeovers from one DJ to the next, unlike other stages that had 30 to 60 minute changeovers. “We go back to back to back from the time the doors open until they close,” says Lieberman.



One of the main design aesthetics for Yuma is “hidden in plain sight.” A black liner covers trussing and infrastructure. “Everything is pre-wired and rigged before the liner goes up. The lights seem to blend into the structure,” Lieberman describes. In contrast, the mirror balls and Yuma’s classic disco shark stand stark against the darkness.



“We keep it dark,” Lieberman comments. “The dominant colors you’d see are dark blue all the way into indigo and red. Every once in a while we’ll slash through with a couple of colors just to pop or highlight something, but because it is predominantly dark, deep techno, in-house music, that lends itself to darker, more saturated colors.”



“This year we went a little heavier with moving lights,” says Lieberman. The rig tallied 32 Claypaky B-Eyes, 32 Robe Pointes, 48 GLP impression X4 Bar 20s, ten Martin by Harman Atomic 3000s, and then 91 Martin Sceptrons, all supplied by Felix Lighting. Check out the lighting plots here.



“It is a very clean, organized grid layout,” explains Lieberman. “But it is meant for techno. It is designed to do chase patterns, to shift the room, and to do an AB pattern design.” New this year to the tent were the X4 Bar 20s. “They gave us a new flavor to the lighting system. The B-Eyes give us the wash or base of color in the room, and then they have all of the macros and pixel functions of the fixtures so we have a little extra candy.”



Lasers made their first appearance in Yuma this year. “We’ve never had them in here before, but it was fantastic as we keep the room so dark and smoky that the lasers really stepped it up for us quite a bit,” Lieberman says. Pyrotecnico provided the lasers and programmed all the looks, which Lieberman triggered live alongside lighting cues through an MA Lighting grandMA2 full size console.



A 2D, aluminum sculptural piece adorned the back wall behind the DJ to bring depth to the room. “We lined it with the Martin Sceptrons, and we pixel-mapped it through Madrix software. Then we triggered the Madrix through grandMA, so it was sequenced with everything else,” says the designer.



The upstage wall feature was approved a week and a half before the opening show. “SGPS actually made the frames for us. Eric Pearce and his team in Las Vegas, God bless ‘em, banged it out in like two days,” commends Lieberman. “We sent him some drawings, and a day and a half later, he sent me a picture of them hanging it in their shop. We coordinated with some friends to get it from Vegas on one of their trucks out to Coachella so there was a lot of logistical things that we had to tackle. But it is good to have friends in the business because they helped a lot.”



Also new this year were five cryo valves, supplied by Kryogenifex in Miami, and positioned down the center of the tent to cool off the crowd and add extra atmospheric effects. “Most of these DJs that come in to play are used to playing in large format nightclubs around the world, and they have access to these effects. So when they saw that we had it, they were coming up saying, next song, let’s hit the button. That was fantastic,” enthuses Lieberman.

Tune in next year to see what's have in store for Coachella's 20th anniversary.

