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Arcadia Lights Up Glasto 2024 with Dragonfly and Robe iBOLTS

Flames, lasers and lights fired up the night sky at the 2024 Glastonbury Festival of Contemporary Performing Arts in the UK as Arcadia launched its amazing new “Dragonfly” spectacular concept – a sculptural installation, performance arena, a live show and a complete world of visual, aural and sensory experience, taking the art of imagining recycled industrial and military scrap metal to new and different levels.

Lighting included six of Robe’s new iBOLTS, a massively bright laser-source searchlight style moving light capable of jaw dropping effects, and 12 x iPointe65s – an IP65 version of Robe’s famous MegaPointe moving light – fixtures stood out from over 200 lights illuminating the Arcadia Arena.

The Dragonfly’s body was projection mapped adding texture and depth, the head comprised a custom transparent video screen made from 200 LED tiles and lasers were its wings. Naturally – in true Arcadia style – the show featured an impressive array of fire effects.

Originated and designed by Arcadia’s Pip Rush (creative director) and Bert Cole (technical director), the 30-metre-long 8.5-metre-high biomechanical Dragonfly is built from an ex Royal Navy Sea King helicopter, and it was at the heart of a 70,000-capacity evolved geometric space at the festival.

The sculpture ‘awakened’ every night at 11.30 during a breathtaking 9-minute show, “Warraloo”, developed by Arcadia in collaboration with the Wadjuk Noongar nation of Western Australia and based on the Dragonfly’s pupation cycle. This was followed by a full lineup of DJs and artists playing over the three main performance days of Glasto 2024.

In addition to being a stunning piece of art and engineering in its own right, the Arcadia zone was the core of the festival’s vibrant late night entertainment culture.

The Dragonfly’s production lighting design was by Dave Cohen of creative lighting studio MIRRAD, with technical production manager Katie Davies overseeing all related production elements on site throughout the two-week build and 3-day run periods, including coordinating 47 core crew and technicians.

With the DJ booth located in the cockpit of the helicopter / head of the Dragonfly and surrounded 360-degrees by the bespoke transparent LED screen construction, Arcadia fans enjoyed banging headliner sets from Fatboy Slim, Eric Prydz, Amelie Lens, Andy C and many, many more, delivering superlative music and vibes throughout the three-day festival, which is among the best known worldwide.

The six iBOLTS were rigged on the top of six 11-metre-high trussing towers positioned around the Arena, and used for blasting beams and effects out into the sky and creating those massive, big site-wide looks that ensured the Arcadia arena was visible from everywhere across the undulating site at night, helping to generate that special Arcadia energy.

The weatherised iPointe65s were positioned on four inner podiums circling the dragonfly, each with a large flaming bull-rush and smoking grass sculpture on top, comprising three fire jets. The bull-rush podiums were also made from recycled metal parts and crane arms and provided an organic environment for the Dragonfly.

The iPointe65s were rigged below the podium's metal grated floors and used for architecturally lighting the bull-rushes while the podiums were utilised by performers during the show.

Katie commented, "The iBOLTS were fantastic as a powerful and dynamic lightsource seen from all over the site, while the iPointe65s were perfect for ensuring the bull-rush podiums stood out during the show!"

Reliability was a key factor for Arcadia for both these fixture types, and anyone familiar with the unpredictability of the English summer will know, the weather can be erratic!

"We already knew from previous experience that Robe fixtures are rock solid, you can put them up and they will just work and work, and IP rated Robe fixtures – even better. We are really confident using these products and they worked from day 1 of the installation," noted Katie, adding that the technical partnership between Arcadia and Robe has been "really valuable in helping to bring the Dragonfly to life" and deliver unique and memorable shows.

Everyone worked intensely and with passion and excitement on this project as the show evolved, seeing the dragonfly morph from a slightly prosaic collage of utilitarian grey metals and objects, transforming into a beautiful, living, breathing Dragonfly pulsating with colour, movement, and positive energy.

The Warraloo show was inspired by strong connections made by Arcadia and the Aboriginal First Nations of Western Australia during a residency in Perth in 2016. The performance explored multiple themes including renewal, climate change and our relationship with technology.

Lighting for the show was operated by Sam Werrett, also from MIRRAD, using an Avolites D9 console. Avo has been another enthusiastic technical partner of Arcadia for some time. The lighting crew included head of lighting James Bunning, Arcadia lighting crew chief Jake “Sharkie” Cawkwell, dimmer tech Stu Barr and lighting techs Nat Archer, Charlie Knight and Rupert De-Renzy-Martin plus lighting power specialist, Jack Coffin.

They were joined by three technical interns, Sinead Brooker and Becky Winrow students from the Confetti Institute of Creative Technologies and Tyler Haines from Robe’s NRG initiative.

The Arcadia arena and the showcase performance were a massive success, and the area continues to be one of Glasto’s favourite and most visually stimulating and innovative creative performance spaces.

With conflicts currently raging around the world, the transformational nature of a one-time weapon of destruction into a monument of hope for a more peaceful future brought additional resonance and symbolism to the Dragonfly as a cross-cultural symbol of courage, strength, and happiness.

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