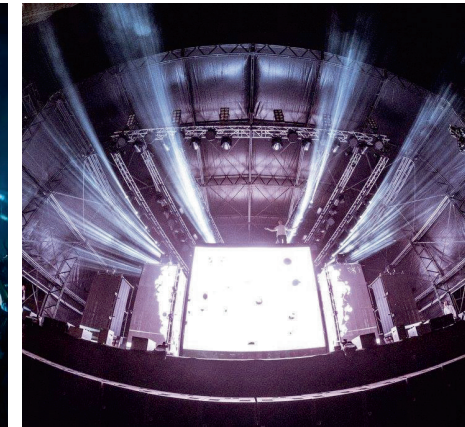


PRODUCTION MANAGER JOEL STANLEY



PRODUCTION MANAGER JOEL STANLEY, OF PRODUCTION VALUE, HAS WORKED WITH THE LIKES OF GORILLAZ, BASTILLE, KANYE WEST & RECENTLY, NORWEGIAN DJ, KYGO. HE TALKS TO TPMEA ABOUT INTERNATIONAL ACTS VISITING THE MIDDLE EAST AND REVEALS WHY HE ENJOYS WORKING IN THE REGION'S BLOSSOMING LIVE EVENTS COMMUNITY...

When did you first start touring the Middle East for work, and had you visited the region beforehand?

After going on holiday to Dubai in 2007 I first worked in the UAE in 2010, with the Brand New Heavies' tour. After that initial show, I think I've lost count of the amount of times I've returned in the last 7 or 8 years; let's just say it's a lot! Mainly I'll be with an act who is part of a festival bill, or an event like the F1 shows in Abu Dhabi.

The recent Kygo show you came to Dubai for [see cover story!] didn't take place in a typical gig venue... did that create any challenges for you?

As with any show, having technical equipment provided locally will always bring challenges. Add to that the fact that it's typically almost 50 degrees Celsius in the summer, you can have some issues during long hours. I'm always so impressed with the local crew working in that heat night and day! The sand and dust is another factor. As far international touring goes, Dubai is a relatively new territory and whenever that's the case, it sometimes causes minor nerves. Luckily, everything worked out fine with Kygo's performance and the local festival package was as per the rider requests.

How did Kygo's UAE performance & production differ to the rest of the tour, if at all?

We currently have 3 types of show: a festival DJ set, our full touring production, and a touring festival production. As this was an on-the-fly show, it was the first type; a locally supplied festival date. The design is different, in that we simplified it due to the lack of crew with us.

This restriction meant we couldn't add any set pieces to our show, but at each festival we are able to build an upstage high-res LED video

wall, with an 8ft high DJ riser featuring an LED facade and 4 ground-stacked LED fingers to represent the keys of a piano.

As much as Kygo is branded as a DJ, he also incorporates piano, keyboards, electronic drum pads and other instruments in his setup, which I personally feel separates him from other EDM style acts. The set is designed to be turnkey, and using common products, fixtures and special effects helps as I only have 2 crew in my party on that type of fly festival show.

You travelled to Beirut following the UAE show. How did playing here with Kygo differ from your experience in Dubai?

Beirut was amazing! It was first time for me, so I had absolutely no expectations. As Lebanon is slightly less versed than some other countries in the Middle East when it comes to putting on big live productions for international acts, you have to re-work your standard advancing. In general, I'm used to huge volumes of freight waiting for me, but in this case I didn't have the luxury. If a promoter or local production rep is willing to help despite limited resources, that's all you can really ask for and I'm grateful for the help we received.

A challenge outside of the UK can be H&S. Kygo is a very pyrotechnics and special effects-heavy show, so coming from the UK myself (which our industry affectionately calls Safety Island!) I am used to a certain protocol. Next time I'll consider taking additional crew for this aspect.

Did you have pre-existing relationships with any of the vendors you used in the Middle East?

From doing multiple shows in the UAE, I certainly did. I have done shows with ex-pat colleagues such as Malcolm Giles of 117 Live. He even worked with me when I was a Stage Manager at

[British festival] Secret Garden Party, where he was working as an audio technician. In Dubai, Delta Sound have always been great to me for my audio needs. From supplying my local radios (when mine have been stuck at customs!) to a local audio control packages, I always opt for their services.

Were there any logistical hurdles?

On a recent trip to Dubai with Gorillaz, I had 20 tonnes of cargo stuck in customs due to travelling from the US using carnets instead of the traditional manifest route that Dubai is used to. Eventually it cleared and the show went on, but there was a little bit of stress on my part as, although we had the whole night to set up prior to our show day, our load-in ate into valuable programming time and any potential issues with the gear would be found out much later on. If the act is due to sound check the following morning, obviously that makes me nervous! Luckily it all arrived safe and sound... if just a little bit late.

What are your thoughts on the future of concerts in the region?

It's certainly is well on its way to becoming a destination on the international touring map; there's venues popping up all over the place & I'm looking forward to the continued improvement in H&S, especially on festival sites. It's always very rewarding putting on shows there, from working with the locals, and the regional suppliers, to adapting to the customs & cultures, especially during prayer time. I think experiencing so many different countries as part of your touring job is what often makes it so interesting.

*Photos: Waleed Shah
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