



HEATHCLIFF SET: BUILT BY
BRILLIANT STAGES

◀ p29 pals – everybody else has DPR402s and BSS graphics inserted. Drums have DS201 gates. A 480L is my main reverb, along with a PCM80, two SPX900s and SPX1000s; two SPX 990s and Roland SDE330.”

BSS EPC-870 and EPC-760 amplifiers drive the entire rig including quads and delays, while system processing and control is under the command of four FCS-901 graphics and two TCS-804 digital delays, plus FDS-360 crossovers for the JBL cabs. Varicurves, DPR-402 and DPR-404 comp/lims and more FDS-960s complete the BSS line-up.

The final element in BRP'S *Heathcliff* contract covers the theatre-style CCTV monitoring, on three circuits. These enable the MD to be seen by the SM and house engineer on 9in monitors, and by the cast on two 21in monitors – while a long shot of the stage can be seen by musicians in the trailer, with more on the prompts and in the production office.

Next up on the *Heathcliff* touring itinerary is the tour's first theatre, the Edinburgh Playhouse.

Said Norfield: “We're all looking forward to that.”

Other venues include the NIA again for a week and a half (after which Pro Celebrity Tennis goes in), “which we're doing as well [laughs]. After Christmas it's on to Manchester, then the Apollo. Then it may open up for longer.”

■ Mike Lethby

HEATHCLIFF/lighting

Lighting designer Andy Bridge brought to this production another glittering track record, which stretches from Broadway and the West End to some

of the icons of industrial and commercial lighting design. Winner of a Tony award (1995) for the musical *Sunset Boulevard* and numerous awards for *Phantom of the Opera*, he also crowned a long consultancy role at top design house Imagination with a National Lighting Award for his floodlighting of Lloyds of London's HQ building.

He told me about his approach to *Heathcliff*, his latest commission. “It's a hybrid animal because, obviously, knowing Cliff Richard, it's going to be a music concert-based operation, and we've been told that it's a musical. Yet it's neither; it's just really a good spectacle with a storyline. At times the storyline's development has been very difficult...it's been a little bit foggy at times.

“But originally the brief was to create a solid musical-looking show and base a lot of the images on a painter called Casper David. He's like the German equivalent of Turner, and he does these most amazing-looking skylines and very sort of demonic shadows and crags and churches and stuff. So a lot of the initial projection ideas were based on that – the stage projection, not the 'front' stuff which is the story-telling material; and so I've based the lighting design on that brief, and mixed in to it a sort of slightly more 'concert' feel as well.

“One does an overall picture, and then within it you do little, more obvious, cues, which in my game a lot of the time – in opera and all that – you just don't do. You do a general picture and then leave it for the acting and the story to tell itself, but here we've got to nudge it along. There's a lot of series of tableaux and things like that, so it's been an interesting production.

“The other challenge technically was how to get it on in such a quick time-frame in these venues. We started in Earls Court, so for anything to do with flying we had to put our own flying systems in, whereas when we go to Edinburgh Playhouse it'll be much simpler: no big deal. So on that side it's been a little bit more complicated and because they want to move it between venues in two days and we haven't got time to focus lights as we would on a normal show with three hundred units, we've relied on the automated kit a lot more.”

ML: So it's a more rock and roll approach?

“Well, rock and roll and theatre does move like that; but a theatre show can be run for a long time and we can't afford that sort of budget a lot of the time – but it's definitely a 'fast rig' system, so we generally kept the focuses in a big broad stroke – rather than having absolute precision in our focusing which we haven't got time for. That's where the general 'big pictures' come in, and then you put your other mediums on top.

Theatre Projects (TP), was appointed as main lighting contractor by production manager Dick Parkinson to supply all the lighting and rigging equipment for the touring show, including over 50 Vari-Lites, a large conventional rig and 24 Martin PAL 1200 moving lights with their framing shutter capability. The Vari-Lites are controlled via an Artisan, whilst the PAL 1200s are driven off a Wholehog II.

According to Peter Marshall at TP, *Heathcliff* marks “probably the largest theatrical production taken on by the company” in terms of the quantity of automated equipment involved. TP was chosen for its experience across both theatre and concert

lighting – a combination at the heart of *Heathcliff*.

Special FX come courtesy of Martin Pro PAL 1200s and follow spots, all manually-operated.

“We used the lighting to create atmosphere, rather than be too extrovert. The set itself is very open so the lighting is important in creating the right location, as have been the various special effects. The Martin PAL 1200s are a sort of extension of the projection system, because they can rotate and frame and get out of the way of screens and add on bits and bobs. And then we're using five followspots as visibility on top of that, hidden around the place. A normal lighting board fills in with solid cross light for the dance routines.

“And then,” he continued, “we've got the 'weather department'. We've got smoke, haze, mist, and several different kinds of snow – English snow, chemical foam snow and Japanese paper snow which flies horizontally across the stage – and we've got various different sorts of fans and all sort of goodies so at one point I was thinking we should inform the Met Office. We've used DF50 haze machines, an F100 smoke machine and Dataflashes for lightning, various different types of fake snow, projection systems and some huge wind machines, all to create a really intense spectacle for the show.”

ML: “What about the set?”

“Well again, what the management wanted for the tour was a good solid base to tell a story. It's a mixture of total realism with sort of sculptural shapes; it does its purpose and creates a really good atmosphere, and then it's down to the people on stage to tell the story. Earlier on it was like, maybe the lighting should be clearer or more obvious, but I think now it's bedding-in here quite well.”

ML: “Does the man himself have an eye for your details?”

Bridge: “Cliff has eyes in the back of his head. He knows exactly what it is happening on stage. He comes out and says: 'Wow, that looks good; can we use that in the show?' He's very helpful and I respect him because he knows his area of work – and we're introducing him to more of a stable 'musical operatic look', which doesn't have to be 'effects effects effects'.

“We very carefully blended in a laser: I thought initially, 'God, it's a different language here', but at the end when he 'dies' we do manage to get it in relatively tastefully.

“The projection has come on leaps and bounds. Initially, the time that it takes to get artwork software worked out through the labs and all that is always so slow when you're really fast-tracking a show through. That's been a little bit slow to keep up with us at times, but now it's all blended in really well.

“We've got four Pani 2.5K compacts onstage and then out front we've got four 4k Panis that do the storytelling, with black and white graphics. They go on to the moving screens – solid and scrimmed screens which are all on the UMC (Mac-based) automation system. It's a good hybrid.”

He concluded: “You're not coming here to see a Chekov play and you're not coming here to see Cliff in concert, you're seeing Cliff telling a story the way he does it. And the audiences love it.”

■ ML ➔ p33

