

Ramazzotti

tours 'clean & high tech'



PHOTO: FRANCO ORIGLIA

Roman singer/songwriter and DDD/BMG artist Eros Ramazzotti is Italy's number one pop export and the first leg of his *Dove c'è musica* world tour kicked off recently. Before catching up with the entourage in Milan, to get an insight on what has been described as "the most international, high-tech world-class show ever put out by an Italian artist", **Mike Clark** spoke to Rikki Farr, the 'living rock production legend' called in by Eros' management company, Radiorama, to design and supervise production through ITS

Rikki Farr explained that he and Ian Knight had designed the set. He adds: "It was built by California's All Access, and then we worked with Billy Bigliardi on incorporating his lighting design [Billy's design for the last Ramazzotti tour won a *Live!* Award nomination for design of the year in 1993] and designed the sound system with Lars Brogaard, also the tour's advance production coordinator.

"We went for a very clean, hi-tech look with absolutely no gear on stage – and Eros is the first Italian to use the raked 9ft-high crescent-shaped Velodrome ramp with some of the 11 musicians on podiums in the middle. Parts of the LSD rig were sent over from the States, a lot was built in the UK and the custom trusses – a sort of Chinese puzzle – were put together in LSD UK's Birmingham shop and trucked down."

At the third sold-out night at Milan's 11,000-capacity Forum, Billy Bigliardi took up the story. "Rikki proposed several set models; Eros chose the most suitable and we decided on a light rig nicknamed 'the chandelier' – four truss rings varying from 12-48ft in diameter. These all move, becoming a 'cake', a huge rock'n'roll wall and other shapes, transforming the whole set." Fixtures on the rings (from the smallest out) are eight Icons, four Wash Lights, eight Cyberlights, plus 16 more Wash Lights and Cyberlights.

The rest of the lighting design comprised Icons and Wash Lights, 16 of each, on an arch at the rear of the set, 12 more Cyberlights round the ramp, six 2.5k followspots, 16 Molefay 8-lights and 120 PARs with Chroma-Q colour changers.

Bigliardi continued: "As I got more familiar with the show, I tried out other things I had on the Avo Diamond II desk, and added ideas as the tour pro-

ceeded. Eros is the first Italian to go out with Icons, and I'm really enjoying working with them. This is helped a lot by the crew – crew head Tommy Booth (US) looks after the motors, Andy Kitchen is a top-class dimmer op, and of course Mark Payne is a great guy to work with."

At the Icon desk, Mark 'Pope' Payne said: "The arch at the back provides a lot of bread-and-butter lighting – we also use its screen quite a lot with washlights and Icons. The (Spot Co-rented) Cyberlights are used a lot in the air with smoke. The trusses have all been custom built – everything moves, so measurements were very crucial, but we have resisted the temptation to move it too much, which has resulted in some nice things."



Audio: Midas and EAW

FOH engineer Maurizio Maggi, who has a reputation as a perfectionist, commented: "Sound-wise, abroad I was particularly pleased with the shows in Paris, Ghent and Stuttgart, and a great gig at Barcelona's Palau Saint Jordi. In Italy, the two nights we played to over 28,000 punters on the curve at Rome Olimpico soccer stadium were good, too. Milan has been the most difficult gig from a sound point of view: it was decided to use the same set-up that we would be using abroad, so no delay rig was mounted. The venue was packed,

with a lot of folk in the seating on either side of the stage, right up to and even behind the main arrays, so we altered the main cluster's focus point to privilege the crowd behind our mixer riser by cutting the boxes on the middle of the venue, moving the sound out and up. Boxes were also moved down stage-front for near-fill on the punters on the floor."

This time out, Maggi is using a single Midas XL4 desk. "Because it has two separate inputs for each channel, I can use the same channel for two different instruments, greatly

compacting everything. It has loads of useful extra functions – like the 16 mono plus eight stereo sends and direct outs which I'm using, for example, to give the drummer a direct feed."

In Milan, each side of the Crown-powered EAW PA (supplied by Milano Music Service) comprised 24 flown KF850s, 12 SB850s stacked on the floor, along with four more KF850s with three KF650s on top.

Monitoring

Apart from two EAW wedges on the far-edge stagefront, two sidefills flown behind each cluster to give the set a sound wash, and drummer Dave Palmer's personal Aura/Amcron system, the rest was all on Garwood IEMs.

On monitor duty, David Bryson (other credits: Rod Stewart and Tom Petty) manned a second XL4 and a Crest Century for talkback and eight channels of percussion.

He and Jim Staniforth used a scanner with a computer chart for everyday set-up of the (Westfalen Sound-supplied) monitor system.

He commented: "Italy is a big problem due to the incredible number of cellular phones used. It's really fun when somebody comes up behind the monitor desk and blanks out the bass guitar because he's decided to call and say he's at the concert.

"It doesn't necessarily happen if just one person does it – but if somebody keys the microphone on a police or a fire brigade radio at the same time, the harmonics set up by that can interfere with our systems – six channels of Samson systems for the backline and 11 Garwood Radio Stations, two of which are exclusively for Eros, so he's got four possible frequencies we can switch him on to, plus a back-up for emergencies."

The concert itself was, said Mark Payne, "A slick, professional looking show – sound's good, lights are good, everything's in order – it works!"

Congratulations to patient production manager Chrissy Pohl for keeping the multinational crew (US, Canadian, Danish, German, French, Italian and a complete cross-section of the UK industry!) running so smoothly, and thanks to stage manager Paddy Fitzpatrick for the magic photocopier – and Eat Your Hearts Out for a fantastic candle-light dinner.

■ **live!**



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