



RAMMSTEIN

LIVE AT HORSENS STATE PRISON

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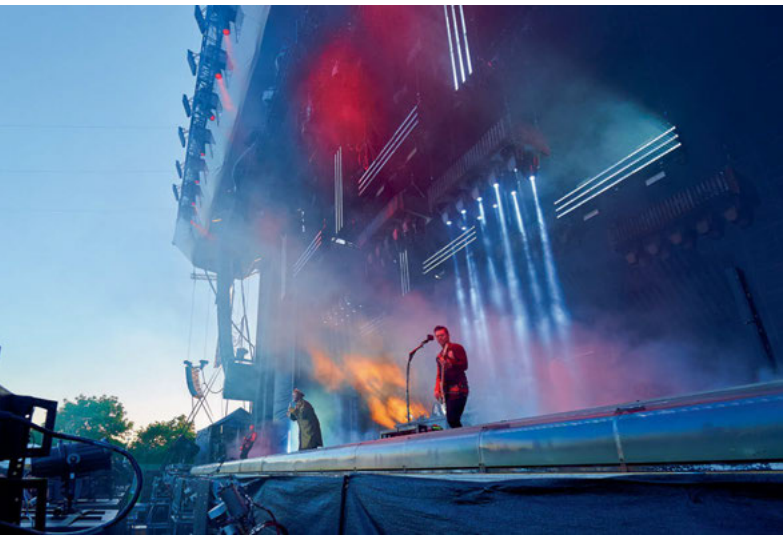
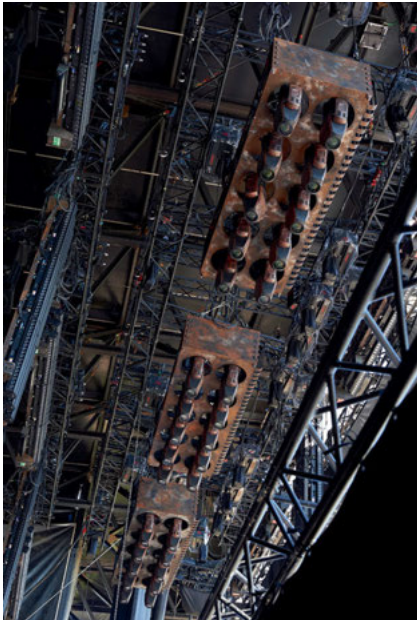


Opposite: Caption.

RAMMSTEIN

TPI was on site at Horsens State Prison in Denmark to marvel at the theatrical madness that came courtesy of the seasoned showmen and their tight-knit touring family.





According to Lighting Designer LeRoy Bennett, the whole look of the show is based around the custom built stage, which now features a great deal of automation.

Much is made about the alchemy of pairing an artist with their perfect venue; whether that is David Gilmour in a Roman amphitheatre or Queen at Buckingham Palace. While industrial metal titans Rammstein's search is not necessarily over, their appearance at the imposing Horsens State Prison in Denmark certainly conjured up a good degree of excitement for the band's ardent fanbase.

Horsens has long stood as a fairly run of the mill seaside town, verging on the precipice of eternal mediocrity, until 2001 when local businessman, Frank Panduro, said: "Give me a bag of money and I will make Horsens the metropolis of rock 'n' roll in Denmark." Since then, the area has become a lodestone for some of the biggest acts on the planet, including Bob Dylan, Paul McCartney, The Rolling Stones and return visitors Metallica.

FEUER FREI!

Perhaps surprisingly in the cut and thrust of today's music industry, Rammstein's lineup has remained unchanged since its inception in 1994. From then on, singer Till Lindemann, guitarists Richard Kruspe and Paul Landers, bassist Oliver 'Ollie' Riedel, drummer Christoph 'Doom' Schneider and keyboardist Christian 'Flake' Lorenz have collectively been at the helm of some of the most explosive and dangerous live performances ever seen from a solely musical act. Since the beginning, the band's attitude has been to push the envelope at all times, courting critical acclaim and controversy in almost equal measure along the way.

This journey has led to the creation of a tight family unit behind the

scenes; well drilled in taming the fiery beast that is Rammstein's stage show and precise to a fault. While all departments of this crack team are being challenged on a daily basis, it's not an exaggeration to say that Rammstein's pyrotechnics crew must be among the most tested of their ilk the world over.

Now, for those of you who are unfamiliar with the band, saying they use a lot of pyrotechnics is missing the point entirely. With Rammstein, the special effects are as much a part of the show as any other aspect of live production; they wear guitars, but they also wear head-mounted flame units. Lindemann in particular is well trained in the use of pyrotechnics, donning flaming angel wings for one song and wielding a spark-shooting bow for another.

When Production Manager Nicolai Sabottka was hired by the band in 1997, the already considerable pyrotechnics were handled by the band and crewmembers in a rather unorthodox way to say the least. He explained: "As we grew larger I faced a lot of pushback from venues and authorities due to shows the band had played there in the past. Even though they were very spectacular, no one wanted to have us back using self-made pyrotechnics and flame throwers!"

In order to placate these venues, the band started using more legitimate pyro companies that carried the appropriate licences, which allowed the band to increase their level of international touring. Sabottka continued: "I got sucked into the world of pyro so I could handle permitting and product distribution around the globe, finding local suppliers in each



Above: As well as being a formidable frontman, singer Till Lindemann is experienced in the use of pyrotechnics.

and every market we were due to visit.

“To be honest, I wanted to be a pyro tech ever since I was a boy and played with matches all the time, but it got lost over the years and I only rediscovered it since I began working with these strange musicians!”

Sabottka eventually resolved to become a qualified pyro tech and purchased his own equipment. He said: “I offered to take over special effects for the band since most of the work ended up on my desk anyway while taking care of the production advance. Alongside some of our very talented pyro techs and the band’s lead singer we started developing and enhancing our own flame systems and the arsenal grew larger with every tour. It doesn’t feel like double duty as I would probably be bored to death if I only handled the standard production tasks!”

As Rammstein continued to amass international touring experience, the special effects, much like the rest of the production, became more complex and spectacular. Sabottka explained: “As technology developed and we gained the ability to have custom pyrotechnics manufactured through Evolution in Montana - combined with the band’s unquenchable thirst for new effects - we were able to come to a level I would call unique in concert touring.”

All of the special effects on stage at Horsens were shot manually using a Galaxis system for the pyrotechnics and an MA Lighting dot2 XL-F for the flame effects and Co2, with backups everything also supplied by ffp. The crew all had in-ears monitors, headset radios and a ProTools feed to keep track of every aspect of the show and ensure that everything was happening with safety at the forefront.

ffp’s Pyrotechnics / Special Effects Crew Chief, Nick Thompsett, explained: “Our shooter, Oliver Jost, will arm whatever unit or units are up next, radio that he’s ready and whoever is standing by those units will clear him to fire. Nicolai calls the shots and if there’s even a fraction of a problem then we won’t shoot.

“If you rely on timecode for something like this you can become complacent, which isn’t an option for us. Sometimes we need to use it when we physically can’t do some of the faster or more complex moves, but

we try and keep it to a minimum. For example, the opening sequence is pre-programmed, as is the beginning of *Ich Tu Dir Weh*. We obviously have a stop procedure but we haven’t had to use it yet.”

Given Lindemann’s experience and the rest of the band’s comfort in operating their own personal pyrotechnics, many of the weird and wonderful ideas for an upcoming tour start with them. Thompsett continued: “On the first tour there might have been six or seven songs without pyro, now there are two. Even though the pyro is so heavy, it always tells a story. It’s more like a musical in that way and there’s a meaning for each gag. Nicolai and band talk creatively, he brings them products some times, and we do our best to implement it and make sure it works in the real world.”

He continued: “We rehearse a lot and we’ve had some of these elements for 10 years or more, like the pyro headmasks the band wear for *Feuer Frei!* or the milk canister sparks that Till appears to pour over Flake on *Ich Tu Dir Weh*. In that case, Till sees if Flake is safe and then tips it forward - if he doesn’t tip, then Oliver doesn’t initiate the gag. Everyone knows the score by now and it’s as safe as can be.”

As well as refining old gags and adding new ones, the crew “beefed up” some of the effects with this run of outdoor venues in mind. “The best, and probably most dangerous, effect is on *Sonne*,” the Crew Chief said. “It’s only a flame cue but we basically shoot 14m fireballs across from both sides of the stage to meet in the middle with the band still there. You feel it at FOH so I’m sure the band and audience can feel it too! We’re really proud of that one.”

Although Thompsett was keen to praise the structured load in called by Stage Manager Björn Harder, the show at Horsens didn’t leave much time for testing the gear in anger before going on stage. He said: “Any strong wind could affect the flames but we can always get to them and vary the angles half a degree or so to account for it. We look at the units again during the changeover and blast Co2, which always gets the crowd going even though it will be another 20 mins before showtime! The kabuki drop at the start also gives us a good indication of the wind.”



Prior to Bennett's involvement, Rammstein were unashamedly against the use of moving lights; a prejudice Bennett has worked tirelessly to overturn since he began designing for the band.

He concluded: "I think I have the best pyro crew on the planet, and they certainly put in the hours. I've toured with a few bands and it's always a close environment but this crew really is like a family. Everyone helps each other and wants to put on the best possible show. When you can do that with a nice band and a great crew you really are living the dream."

HIER KOMMT DIE SONNE

Renowned Lighting Designer LeRoy Bennett has worked with Rammstein for 16 years, originally coming on board to oversee the visual aspects of the *Mutter* tour. Since then, while the band's stage show has generally remained true to its *Neue Deutsche Härte* aesthetic, Bennett has developed and refined the look over the course of subsequent tours.

He explained: "The whole look is very much based around the custom built stage, which now features a great deal of automation, as well as pyro and lights embedded in the floor and set pieces. There really is nothing like it out there; it's probably one of the most entertaining shows you can see, regardless of what kind of music you are into."

Prior to Bennett's involvement, Rammstein were unashamedly against the use of moving lights; a prejudice Bennett has worked tirelessly to overturn since he began designing for the band all those years ago.

He said: "We've retained some aspects from back then like the Falcon spotlights and PARcans but we've added a few different kinds of moving lights as well. For example, we have pods made up of the new GLP GT-1's. It's an amazing lighting instrument and the way we have them packed side-by-side in 8ft trusses like little soldiers creates a really solid look. The whole stage is very linear and there's not a lot of ballyhooin' in the rig. A lot of the fixtures change angle by truss movement rather than on their yoke. We have also had a lot of GLP impression X4 Bars that are built into the truss to create an updated version of the band's cross logo."

Overall Bennett's design made use of some 372 GLP fixtures. He continued: "The fixtures themselves are so distinctive and are great for Rammstein. I really enjoy using them to create sheets of light, which fits in so well with the band's industrial, linear aesthetic."

While the whole band has an interest in the stage show, stage left guitarist Paul Landers is the most involved when it comes to lighting

design, according to Bennett. He said: "Paul is very creative and has big ideas; I understand by now where he's coming from. I have done a lot in my time but I never claim to know it all, so I'm always open to suggestions and can generally filter them into a more workable reality."

"As a designer it's your duty to have an open mind. If not you can become stagnant and will always struggle to grow and improve. I don't like feeling comfortable and if I'm not struggling for a concept or design then I don't really feel like I'm doing my job!"

The LD continued: "As a rule, but particularly with Rammstein, I don't like it to be too busy on stage. I want certain textures but everything has to be clean and precise. I try to keep it to one, two, or three colours at most, and mostly rely on reds, ambers, greens, blues and variations of white. Basically anything that's slightly murky!"

Bennett's design consisted of 39 GLP impression X4 Bar 20's and 81 Bar 10's on the cross-pod truss, with another 24 Bar 10's flown. The GLP GT-1's were arranged in 7 pods of 10, while more Bar 20's, 20 SGM Q-7's, 11 A&O Technology FALCON Beam 3ks and 12 7ks were arranged on the stage floor. The riser and side light decks and the downstage edge were lined with more Bar 20's, and 18 more Q-7's were used as backlighting for the band. The rig was completed by Vari-Lite VL3000 spots, SGM P-5 washes, Martin By Harman MAC 2000 Wash XBs, and MAC 101 moving head washes.

Bennett gave the reasoning behind this intricate setup: "It looks complicated on paper but it doesn't appear that way on stage. It's all about committing to a certain level of limitation and finding variety in that situation. The movement of the trusses adds a layer of versatility and I love that there's no video in this show. A lot of my other shows have it because that is what the artists want but I'm trying to convince some of them away from it! They get nervous about letting go of it but Rammstein have always been."

UK-based manufacturer Perry Scenic created a number of pieces for Bennett's production design, as the company's Managing Director, Jonathan Perry explained: "Alongside a very labour-intensive 60ft wide 3D backdrop, we also manufactured the bespoke lighting pods, which were packed with different lighting fixtures and finished in Rammstein's signature industrial distressed riveted cladding. An A and B set design were



Above: The pyrotechnics crew; (L-R) FOH Olsen Involtni, and Lighting Operators Bertil Mark and Faren Matern; Cyberhoist operator, Martin Hoop; Production Coordinator Dea Porter; Head Rigger, Martin Gehring.

created to meet their demanding tour schedule.

"We've been involved in making sets and props for Rammstein tours since 1999, building LeRoy Bennett's imaginative and often challenging production design visions. They are one of the craziest bands in the business and also one of the most professional to work with, and we have a great relationship with Nicolai Sabotka."

With the design in place, Bennett left the show in the capable hands of Lighting Operators Bertil Mark and Faren Matern, the latter of whom has been with the band since the genesis of their now world-famous stage show.

He commented: "LeRoy's design is fantastic and the way he has coupled some of the fixtures together creates maximum impact. In a sense, he's building big lights out of smaller fixtures."

As is to be expected with such an established look, it was initially a challenge to integrate new fixtures into the rig, as Matern explained: "The main difficulty lies in the fact that even the smallest fixtures can affect the look and feel of the stage. We are still adding new fixtures now, despite the potential difficulties, and that is always an exciting process."

Mark went on to discuss the surprising subtlety with which the band's incendiary performance is lit on a nightly basis. He explained: "Working with light also means working with shadow, and sometimes when we shut the rig down it is just as effective as turning it up to 100%. For instance, when the pyro is bright and outstanding, it makes no sense to fight against it. In this case we can focus on accenting it or just creating an atmosphere. We light very theatrically in that way."

"The pyro can also act as an overdrive to the rig - when we max out, it can push the brightness that little further. This combination makes the whole look so timeless and iconic. With the updated technology we are able to do even more. I personally think it would be easy to tour this for two years and it still hold its own."

The entire system at the State Prison ran on an MA Lighting network, clocking in at around 65 universes, of which all NPU's and nodes were MA. The operators had two MA Lighting grandMA2 Full Size consoles at FOH. While the show is timecode-based, a number of the lighting changes were operated manually. Matern said: "Like everything in the show, the band and lighting have to be completely in sync in certain places. We have to adapt each day to small changes depending on the mood of the guys, but I've been with them since 1993 so I have a pretty good idea of it by now."

The crew also had 4 TimeCores from Visual Productions as a backup

solution for their main timecode setup. In this context, these boxes essentially refresh the timecode signal and send it to specified locations where they are needed, such as FOH, dimmer city, the pyro technicians, and the CyberHoist technicians. Given free rein, it can generate, follow, convert, trigger and analyse timecode signals, even potentially handling a number of non-timecode protocols.

Visual Productions' Zoë Castle commented: "The operators are very positive about the stability of the TimeCore and see it to be a reliable product, doing exactly the job that it should. Later in the tour their intention is to swap out the main timecode setup so that it is all run with TimeCores."

ES IST MEIN TEIL

Martin Gehring of Dortmund-based Dart Rigging + Projekt, who served as Head Rigger on site at Horsens, explained the logistics of flying the fearsome lighting, audio and automation package: "This is not a normal outdoor or arena tour. In essence we are adapting a festival package alongside what can be supplied locally, which takes a lot of planning and drawing."

Everything has been calculated with load cells and I double-check the loads once all of the trusses and motors are in the air. If our documentation is right, which it usually is, then we can generally rig the whole set up in six hours."

The stage, trusses and PA system in place at Horsens were already rigged by the local supplier, Nordic Rentals, as were the side IMAG screens. Gehring continued: "It's a 22-truck arena show we have but we can do this with nine thanks to the support from Nordic. We still have to be spot on in terms of the stage and planning really is everything. Whether we are in South America, Russia or Germany we have to deliver the same standard of show, and that means the locals have to give us the same conditions every time."

Ampco Flashlight has provided motion control for Rammstein for several years, with the inventory in Horsens consisting of 67 CyberMotion CyberHoists, controlled by a MotionCue3D console and operated by Martin Hoop, Frederik 'Frits' Ton and Michael Jahns. Ampco Flashlight's Rudolph Nagtzaam said: "The CyberHoists ensured the crew could smoothly and safely move several objects scenic and lighting pieces above the stage, which greatly contributed to the dynamics of the Rammstein show."

Hoop gave an insight into his duties on the show: "The motors in the roof weigh 10 tonnes, with 12 tonnes underneath them. It's the biggest



Above: Horsens State Prison looms ominously over the outdoor venue.

system I have run, touring wise, though we have had much larger one-offs in Europe. We are essentially the only department that has no time off during the whole six-hour load in period. The heaviest thing we have is the pyro truss, which weighs 1,200kg in total, but we have 6 motors for it so the weight distribution is good.

He continued: "We use the CyberHoist and CyberHoist II systems - the II in particular is incredibly safe so we can lift pieces above people and even lift the band members themselves with absolute confidence."

As well as moving band members up and down for various gags during the show, Hoop was also in control of the truss movement that created the versatility previously lauded by Bennett. "Take the song *Mein Herz Brennt*, for example," said Hoop. "LDs usually want everything symmetrical but I was given the freedom to design all of the settings for each lighting part. We made it totally asymmetrical and have it line up for the climax of the song, which is one of the best moves in the show for me. Although we read the

timecode clock to make sure these changes are at the right time, we still have to visually confirm there is no danger before we trigger them manually. Artists can be late or accidents can happen at any time so we can't risk the timecode being in control of these big moments."

He concluded: "I've worked for Rammstein for 13 years now and I'll continue to do so because it's one big family - the band, crew, and management all come together to make this a really special family. Every tour cycle we think of something new and crazy that has never been done before. They are such a pioneering group of people in the way they accomplish these things, whether that is using the latest technology to its fullest or using older gear in ways that have been forgotten."

ZERSTÖREN

The man in charge of ensuring that Rammstein's aural assault matched up to the visual madness on stage was FOH Engineer Olsen Involtini. Due to



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the brief nature of this pre-festival run, the crew made use of local suppliers to provide the bulk of the audio gear necessary to translate the band's colossal industrial thud to open air audiences.

The main system, provided by Nordic Rental, consisted of 20 boxes per side of L-Acoustics K1, which was reinforced by flown SB28 subwoofers. A further 12 K1 per side were used as downfill, with hangs of K2 serving as nearfill and outfill. The Horsens show also required delays, which were made up of more K1 and SB28 subs.

Black Box Music provided the 7 L-Acoustics LA8 amplifiers necessary to drive the system, as well as the LA-RAK amp racks to house them. The FOH Engineer used L-Acoustics' Soundvision software to map the area in front of and around the stage and identify the possible impact it would have on the surrounding properties.

He explained: "As soon as we arrived we were quite shocked to see how close some of the houses were. The band creates a very powerful and punchy sound, so we used the software to make sure we achieve the right levels without fuelling any complaints. The L-Acoustics system has a really controllable output and the simulation software is very useful in these situations."

Black Box Music also provided an Avid Venue Profile complete with select outboard gear for FOH, a DiGiCo SD7 for monitors and a selection of Shure, beryerdynamic and Audix microphones, as well as a Sennheiser IEM system.

Involtini, who has a long history with Rammstein both live and in the studio, opted for an older desk for this run: "The Avid Profile desk we have here is an old analogue version that we carry everywhere with us. It's what we're used to and it allows us to keep things simple when it comes to potential complications with plugins and so on."

Monitor Engineer Alex Becker, System Tech Andreas Vater, Jonas Fengler and Manu Schröder completed the audio crew on site at the State Prison.

OHNE DICH

As well as working together as a single unit, the Rammstein crew also have to move around the globe together - and on time. One of the principal crew members in charge of this is Production Coordinator Dea Porter. She explained: "I usually run ffp's office in Los Angeles but I change hats when going out on tour with Rammstein. My main duties here are to coordinate the crew travel and accommodation, local transport, catering, runners, and run the production office.

"We have 50 core crew plus another 10 -15 that travel to selected shows, plus 16 team drivers in North America and 9 Truck Drivers in Europe. At the start of the tour we send out over 850 flight confirmations, as we are 'all-fly'.

I have a dedicated line with our travel agent that allows us to be in constant communication to adjust air and ground transportation.

"We deal with flight delays, cancellations, and airline / ground crew strikes almost every travel day. Additionally, we work together to monitor possible strikes or terror alerts and come up with all of the transportation back up plans, as our tight schedule does not allow for any delays."

EFM was trusted to handle freighting requirements for the run of shows, which began with 15ft x 40ft ocean containers being transported from Berlin to Reykjavik, Iceland for a show at the Korinn Auditorium on 20 May. Five of the containers returned to Berlin but the bulk of the equipment, some 89,000kg, was flown by Boeing 747F charter to Billund, Denmark for the show in Horsens.

Two of EFM's most experienced crew, John McCafferty and Paul Jones, travelled to Iceland to oversee the operation and continued on board the charter to Denmark. On 17 June, McCafferty and Jones were joined by Alex Jonas from EFM Germany to load the equipment onto the second charter this year, which departed from Frankfurt into New York.

While in North America and Canada, EFM provided eight 53ft semis to transport the equipment, with the final show in Las Vegas on 2 July. On 3 July the final charter departed from Los Angeles, managed by Steve Botting of EFM USA into Vitoria, Spain.

HAB' KEINE LUST MICH NACKT ZU SEHEN

The last word went to PM Sabottka, who was initially taken aback by TPI's final (somewhat rhetorical) question, before giving a surprising response: "Could we ever do a stripped back tour? It's possible; we have certainly thought about a version of the show that does not contain any special effects and only very minimal production - Rammstein naked, if you will. Who knows what the future will bring, but the main production will probably always carry some kind of effects and we have several things in mind to top what we are currently doing out on festivals. There is never a dull moment!"

TPI

Photos: Allan Toft
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