

All Hope is Gone:

Lighting Slipknot

By: Sharon Stancavage

With songs like “Wait and Bleed” and “Psychosocial,” Slipknot is more than an ordinary thrash metal band. The musicians’ masks lend a dark, *Texas Chainsaw Massacre*-type vibe to their onstage presence, but their fans, known as “maggots,” feed on it voraciously. The title of the band’s new tour is *All Hope is Gone*, and it can be described as anything but mellow.

“It’s very aggressive music,” says the programmer and lighting director, Philippe Vachon, “so the lighting director, Lawrence Upton, wanted very aggressive lighting that would attack and have punch; that means no profiles and no gobos.” The gear package, supplied by Upstaging, does include 10 Martin Professional MAC Profiles, but “they’re only used as key lights,” notes Vachon. Also used are 54 Martin Mac 2000 Wash units. “You get a higher light output from a Martin Mac 2K Wash than the equivalent profile light,” explains Dave Watson, the assistant lighting designer.

That output is key to the design; however, over time, issues began to arise with it. “There is so much show in your face that we would lose the guys on stage; we had to beef up the front-of-house truss,” explains Vachon.

The rig is comprised of a FOH truss, two straight mid-stage trusses, and two three-quarter angled trusses located upstage, with two sub-hung trusses below them. There are two Lycian Starklite medium-throw truss spots, and an assortment of specialty lights, including 54 two-light Molefays, 10 four-light Molefays, 2 six-light Molefays, six PAR 36 rotating beacons, and 24 Martin Atomic 300 Strobes.

The rig also includes a number of LED units. “They’re capable of being very bright, and they shine straight out



into people’s eyes,” notes Watson. Currently, there are 65 Philips Color Kinetics ColorBlast 12s, twelve CK ColorBlaze 72s, and seven Color Blaze 48s, which create a wall of light upstage. “We only have 16 fixtures in the air, and they make a big difference,” explains Vachon.

Vachon uses a grandMA console, from MA Lighting. “It’s the desk you can do the most with LEDs; if you want to go further, you need a media server,” he says. The latter wasn’t in the cards, so Vachon used a full-size grandMA plus two NSPs, which provided him with the necessary extra channels.

Initially, the color palette of the show was somewhat restricted. “There is a lot of white, as well as lighter colors; that’s what Lawrence used to get the

most output,” explains Watson.

Upton’s original palette was also based around steel blues, sea green, CTO, and amber. As the tour has progressed, Vachon has done some editing, adding additional bursts of color, including intense oranges, reds, violets, and some surprises as well: “For the song ‘Get This,’ I used a pastel white CTB and a pale lavender,” he says.

Although the look of the show has changed over time, “there is a lot of white in it, and, in my own opinion, it’s good, because it’s very aggressive brutal music. As soon as you add color, you diminish the impact of the lighting,” Vachon explains.

After completing its U.S. tour in mid-May, Slipknot heads to Europe to headline summer festivals. ☺

