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BEN ETRIDGE FOR EMI MUSIC, COLDPLAY LIVE 2012 DVD

In May 2012, I started preparations for Coldplay's Mylo Xyloto DVD with the director, Paul Dugdale, for JA Digital. The DVD film was to be made up of footage from several concerts around the world, as well as backstage footage shot at 50fps and 200fps, all centered around a one night record at the Stade de France in Paris.

**Mixed formats**

From the start I was keen to involve 35mm sensor cameras, such as the ARRI ALEXA and Canon C300, alongside Sony 2/3-inch broadcast cameras to help us capture the amazing colourful spectacle that Coldplay have been performing for the last 18 months. Paul and I discussed the issues around using mixed formats on the shoot, which would be based in an OB truck with nine Sony 1500s to record at 25fps, two Sony 2500s to record at 50fps and one Spidercam. There would also be four C300 cameras roaming in the audience to capture POV shots at both 25fps and 50fps, plus a Sony FS700 capturing shots of the audience at 200fps. I also planned to use four ALEXA Plus cameras to give us the master front-of-house (FoH) wide shot, tracking reverse shot, wireless Steadicam, plus close-ups of Chris Martin and the 'band relationship' shots from the pit. Slower motion pictures were a key requirement of the shoot as Paul loves to capture the energy of a performance and requires the control to slow down or almost freeze frame the artist in mid flight. After all, who can resist a sea of fans jumping in unison at 200fps for a great moving image?

When using such a variety of cameras I try to consider the advantages and disadvantages of what each camera will offer to the production and how they will cut together. For a standard television concert, using such a huge mix of cameras with different sized sensors would usually mean an uneven end result with 'jumps' between the different formats. But, in this case, both Paul and the band were adamant that their film should not conform to a 'glossy' look. Paul was keen to capture and grade this film with a more considered cinematic look, whilst not compromising the variety of shots we were able to capture – almost as if

it had been shot on 16mm film stock and pushed resulting in heavy grain. In fact, for one performance in Montreal the band used a super 8mm camera to film each other while other shots of the band seem to come from fans' mobile phones. Paul says, "Matching the multiple of shots on the grade was a relatively simple process. Grain was added universally across the cameras to provide a consistent look and perhaps a more 'organic' aesthetic from what one might expect on a regular concert film." We also agreed that by adding a 2:35 letter box each cameraman could frame more cinematically and each frame could be considered individually as a cinematic photograph.

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*We were able to use the prototype of the new ALEXA Broadcast system that could be controlled by a vision engineer in the truck using a CopperHead back... finally a 35mm chip camera that could be viewed live at the truck*

**Live ALEXA images**  
One of the exciting developments we were able to implement on this project was with the ARRI ALEXA. For a long time I have wanted to find a better way of integrating all these beautiful 35mm-chip cameras have to offer into the broadcast of music events and TV recordings. Until now the only option had been to involve them as a completely separate entity to the main OB

shoot. That was until I got a call from our unit manager at United Broadcast Facilities, Bolke Burnaby-Lautier. He explained that we were going to have the opportunity to use the prototype of the new ALEXA Broadcast system that could be controlled by a vision engineer in the truck using a CopperHead back linked to one of ARRI's Telecast RCPs. At last I could offer a 35mm chip camera to the director and he would be able to see a fully graded image at the truck. Not only that but we could record at 25fps at the OB truck and at 50fps Log C in the camera, giving yet more options to Paul in the edit. I knew that using the only four cameras in the world ARRI could supply with the prototype system would make a massive difference to the whole look of the shoot.

The less harsh digital image from the 35mm ALEXA chip, with its beautiful shallow depth of field that can't be achieved with a 2/3inch chip camera is, I feel, a must-have for any large concert. If the budget had allowed, and the film lenses could achieve the same magnification as broadcast lenses, then I would have pushed to shoot the whole concert on the ALEXA.

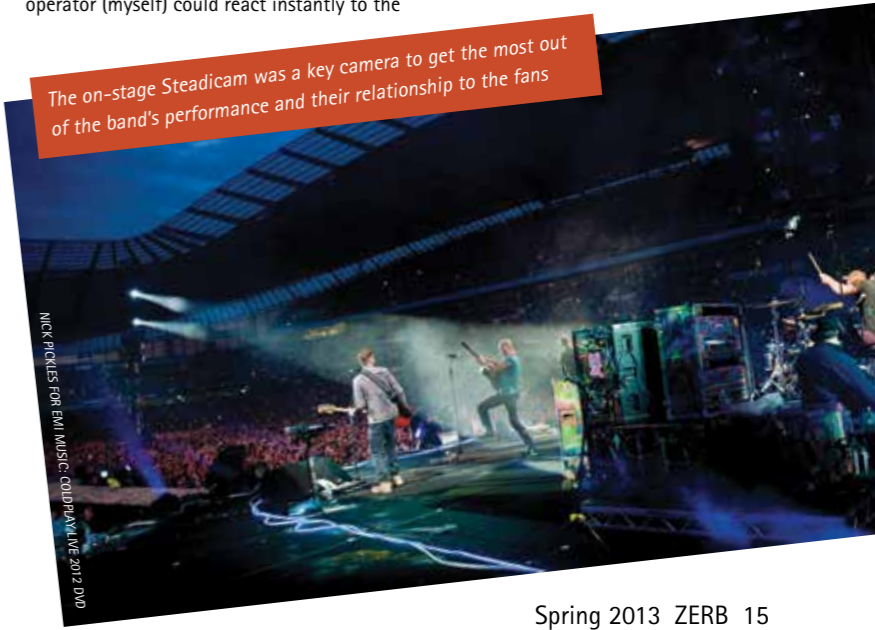
**Bright lights**

I also knew the latitude of the ALEXA would be a huge bonus on the tracking FoH wide shot and stage reverse camera from the Sam Dolly. The show includes moments when the only light in the stadium is from glowing wristbands worn by the audience; at other moments pyros light up the sky in bright flashes. Both situations will present a challenge for a digital chip at the best of times, but the ALEXA has been designed to cope with extremes like this with ease.

**On the move**

Paul and I positioned the third ALEXA in the pit, camera left of the stage catwalk. This camera had a vital job in getting artistic close-ups of Chris Martin, lead guitarist Jonny Buckland and the drummer Will Champion, as well as shots that related the band to each other. This was recording at 50fps on the camera's SxS cards at Log C and at 25fps Rec 709 back at the OB truck. So, this camera had dual roles, capturing the movement of the band as well as finding magic moments taking full advantage of the shallow depth of field. We had a very tight space to fit this camera into, as well as for its opposing pit camera on the right of the catwalk – a Sony 1500 on an Osprey ped. These cameras had to work around screen cameras and huge sub-speakers but I was determined to make sure we could achieve the same manoeuvrability that we would get from a broadcast camera on a lightweight Osprey ped on track. This meant the camera needed to be rigged as a one-man operation so that the operator (myself) could react instantly to the

*The on-stage Steadicam was a key camera to get the most out of the band's performance and their relationship to the fans*



NICK PICKLES FOR EMI MUSIC, COLDPLAY LIVE 2012 DVD

# Coldplay Live 2012

By Camera Supervisor Nat Hill

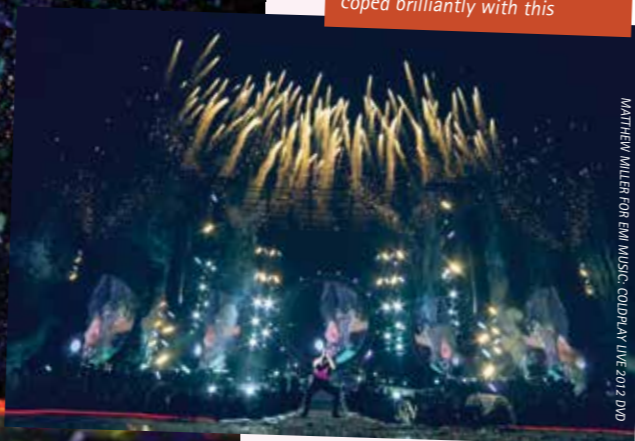


MATHEW MILLER FOR EMI MUSIC, COLDPLAY LIVE 2012 DVD



BEN FRIEDGE FOR EMI MUSIC: COLDPLAY LIVE 2012 DVD

Pyrotechnics explode over the stage - the latitude of the ALEXA coped brilliantly with this



MATTHEW MILLER FOR EMI MUSIC: COLDPLAY LIVE 2012 DVD



Rigging the ALEXA remote system

band's performance without having to rely on a grip to read my thoughts. So the camera was rigged on a ped column with track skids and ARRI were able to supply us with a set-up that included a CMotion adapter box allowing us to use Canon TV remotes on an Angénieux 24-290mm Optimo lens. This was a very welcome set-up and made the camera a lot more user-friendly, allowing me to track, zoom and focus all at the same time although, I have to admit, it was not the lightest beast to try and manoeuvre!

The fourth ALEXA was on a Steadicam with an Angénieux 16-42mm Optimo and a wireless link so Dom Jackson, the operator, was free to roam across the whole stage, and to track the band backstage and to their satellite stage. This camera recorded locally at 50fps on the camera's SxS cards Log C. The Steadicam was a key camera to help us get the most out of the band's performance. There were set moments when Paul could call the Steadicam on stage and allow him free reign to capture the whole spectacle, especially the band's relationship to their fans.

**New drum shots**

Paul and I particularly wanted to add a new dynamic to the drum shots we've all seen a million times when watching live music. We were desperate to make the drummer, Will, have equal time on camera as every other member of the band. I managed to track down a small remote minicam tracking system offering a semi-circle of track that we could wrap around the front of the drums to zoom in and out of Will and the drum kit. It took a bit of effort to convince everyone that this camera would make all the difference - even Will, who is quite camera shy, was a little doubtful, but the results speak for themselves.

**Controllability**

The end result of the camera set-up meant that the OB truck had full control of all the cameras apart from the C300s and the FS700 in the audience. Even the ALEXAs, with their Telecast CopperHead back with SMPTE fibre running to the OB truck, gave the vision engineer control of iris, colour balance, blacks, gamma, shutter, knee, gain and detail. This all helped to achieve the desired look of the concert on

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site and to match the ALEXA image and camera set-up with the Sony broadcast cameras, also allowing for a quicker and smoother post-production process.

I love all that the advancement of technology offers us in this industry. Cameras are becoming smaller, cheaper, and yet at the same time better than ever before. There is so much choice for the cameraman to offer a director now, yet it is also lovely to be able to shoot on older formats that are almost forgotten. Creating a look and style is heavily influenced by your choice of camera.



Trying to give the viewer the best seats in the house, yet still let them feel as if they are among the fans in the stadium, is always a challenge but something we hopefully achieve in this film. The feeling that both crew and fans are involved in capturing the concert adds a dynamic that I have not seen on any other concert film I have worked on so far. The film ends and you feel like you have not only been to the concert, but experienced something quite personal from the band. More importantly, it makes you want to go and see the band live.

**Fact File**

Nat Hill has been involved with many recent large music productions as camera supervisor, including the *Take That Progress Tour*, *Emilie Sande Tour 2012* and *Coldplay Mylo Xylo Tour* DVDs. His credits as a DoP include the *X-Factor* ident shots from year 1 to the present, *X-Factor* auditions Series 4 to 8 and *Britain's Got Talent* auditions 2011-13. He has also been camera supervisor on *Jonathan Ross* 2011-13 and Alan Carr *Chatty Man* 2011-13. Recently he has also been DoP on several short films, the most notable being *Red Balloon* which has been well received in film festivals around the world. He considers himself very lucky to be able to work with some of the most creative directors in the industry.



Contact Nat Hill at: [www.hdfilmsltd.com](http://www.hdfilmsltd.com)

Picture courtesy of F Stop Academy

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