



Behind the Parisian leg of a 24-hour broadcast, dubbed 'the biggest concert in the world'. Photos: STUFISH Entertainment Architects, Alexis Lipoff.

Paris pulls out all the stops for Global Citizen Live 2021

With three stages on three continents for a 24-hour broadcast, TPi heads to Paris to witness the French leg of 'the world's biggest concert'.

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Back in 2018, TPi and TPMEA were lucky enough to visit South Africa to witness *Global Citizen: Mandela 100*, with the likes of Beyoncé and JAY-Z taking to the stage all in the name of celebrating Nelson Mandela as well as raising awareness for the devastating poverty across the globe. It was a show that demonstrated the sheer scope and ambition that **Global Citizen** has for its live events. So, after a global pandemic and 18 months of inactivity for live events, it was no surprise that the organisation was going to come out of the gate swinging. The result: 'the world's biggest concert'.

With events happening in cities all over the world including London, Los Angeles and Rio, the production highlight came in the form of three stages set up in three cities – New York, Paris and Lagos – all with large in-person crowds, and a 24-hour live broadcast to Global Citizen's huge online audience.

With executive production for the entire project coming from **Live Nation**, the three shows welcomed some of music's biggest names including, Ed Sheeran, Elton John, Stevie Wonder, Jennifer Lopez and BTS. With one of the three stops just across the Channel from our HQ, TPi took the opportunity to visit Paris to meet some of the technical personnel involved behind the scenes.

CREATIVE CONCEPT

Leading the design on all three stages across the world was **STUFISH Entertainment Architects**. "We are honoured to continue to work with Global Citizen and to be part of this very special concert," commented STUFISH Entertainment Architects Partner, Ric Lipson. "We believe urgent action is required to help protect our planet and to help those suffering from poverty, which is why it was important to us to take part in this incredible event and celebrate the amazing work of Global Citizen."

Across each of the three sites, STUFISH had an overarching goal for the design to echo the messaging of Global Citizen, not only in style but in the materials used on site. For each stage, Lipson and the team chose materials that were either recyclable, made from recycled materials or would have a second life. To enforce the message of fighting climate change, tree and plant saplings were used as part of the stage design and will be replanted in areas local to the venues following the show.

The New York stop was hosted in Central Park, the African rendition was in Lagos at New Africa Shrine and the Paris show in which TPi took particular interest was in Champ de Mars in the shadow of the Eiffel Tower. Across each of the three sites there was a familiar theme, with each of the stage designs featuring the brand's red circle prominently.

"The nexus of the Global Citizen Live stages was to create sustainable designs that inspired viewers and functioned highly efficiently for a fast-paced, global variety show with over 10 artist changeovers and about 50 speakers on each stage," said Global Citizen Vice President of Global Events & Experiences, David Beame.

"We are honoured to have worked with STUFISH and the many production vendors to accomplish this challenging task and bring our stages to life around the world. The stages were a connective tissue between the events, each maintaining their own identity and becoming part of the cultural fabric of each city. No matter when viewers tuned into the broadcast, it was clear these shows were united behind the goal to defend the planet and defeat poverty," Beame stated.

PARIS

With over 30 shows on the Champ de Mars ground under his belt, Stéphane Nicolas of ULTD Evenements was brought in to take on the role of Site Manager and Technical Director for the entire site. Having worked on this show since February, he had been there for every twist and turn as he and Global Citizen attempted to make this event happen despite the ongoing issues with COVID-19. "One of the initial hurdles was getting the American team over to see the site," he began. "Although this looks like a big area, it's actually quite a long but narrow one to work in."



The famed park that looks onto the Eiffel Tower presented an interesting challenge for any incoming productions, mainly due to the entire space being flanked by residential buildings along with the typical issues that go along with attempting to curate a show in the centre of a major capital city, such as general traffic and entry points.

Despite hosting some enormous shows in the past – namely Johnny Hallyday’s 700,000-cap show – the capacity for the Champ de Mars was set at 20,000 for the Global Citizen show. “We could have had 25,000 people but due to COVID-19 we opted to reduce the capacity to 20,000. This means it works out at two people per square metre rather than three,” Nicolas said. Although by the time Global Citizen 2021 opened its gates, French law had made face masks optional, Global Citizen still asked anyone coming onto site to wear them.

As for the crew, Nicolas explained how his team had set up “the highest possible procedures, going above and beyond what the law required.” Even if vaccinated, every crew member entering the site was tested daily and there was even a lab on site that could produce PCR results in 20 minutes. Nicolas was keen to keep the number of different suppliers to a minimum. “I didn’t want hundreds of suppliers for the simple reason that we don’t have enough space to handle that quantity of vehicles,” he said.

“I lent towards rental stager **Dushow** as they were able to handle the majority of our requests, which meant I only needed to speak to a few personnel to ensure we were all focused on the same goal.” Not only this, due to Dushow’s size and resources, the production was able to call upon other branches from the Novelty Magnum Dushow group – with **Magnum** responsible for all the cable drawing and powering.

While a 20,000 in-person attendance is by no means small, Nicolas asserted that this was primarily approached as a broadcast show. “When the focus is on the broadcast rather than live, it’s important to get the main objectives right,” he said. “Broadcast-focused shows are challenging as all the timings are of the utmost importance and you have to think about camera angles and what the director wants to see.” This is particularly important as this show would be broadcast worldwide.

On stage, one of the key members of the team who ensured clear communication between the technical crew and incoming productions was Stage Manager, Frédéric Hamonou. “My role is to make everyone happy,” he chuckled. “We work hand in hand with décor, production and guests. Our job is to make sure that artists can perform in the best conditions possible.”

Hamonou kept an eye on around 120 technicians throughout the day and during the build. “Although we had six days to put everything together, two of those days were booked for rehearsals, so we really only had four,” he said. “We were then on hand on those rehearsal days for last-minute tweaks and changes.” Hamonou highlighted the difference in his workflow for this show compared to a traditional outdoor setup – mainly the incredibly fast changeover times. “For a festival, there is usually around an hour, but here the production had a mere six minutes,” he revealed.

There were also several challenges for the stage manager to contend with during the build. “We don’t usually have stage decorations in live environments, so we had to work hand in hand and sync our building plans in order to respect each other’s space and, most importantly, avoid any accidents. We went to see the technical design studio Y-Lines in Belgium and planned quite a lot in advance, which made things much easier during build-up,” he said, praising his fellow collaborators.

To close, Nicolas explained that while crewing “wasn’t too much of a concern”, due to his selection of a company that has the “power and scale to grab good technical and get them here”, security wasn’t quite so straightforward. “This was more difficult due to the large



number of events happening in the city and further afield, from football games to festivals,” he conceded. “However, I’m pleased to say that our security agency delivered.”

THE DESIGN

The view of the stage from the middle of the Champ de Mars saw the Eiffel Tower framed by the giant red circle of the stage – affectionately called ‘the donut’ by the crew. “The scale of the Eiffel Tower was certainly one of my first thoughts when approaching this project,” began Al Gurdon of Incandescent Design, who took on the task of lighting the stage. “It is a national landmark – truly iconic and it was important to give it the prominence it deserves,” he said in praise of the backdrop.

The Eiffel Tower acted as an extension of the show design. Société d’Exploitation de la Tour Eiffel’s Stéphane Roussin commented: “There is an interaction with the Eiffel Tower for a lot of events that are put on in the Champ de Mars.”

According to Roussin, as soon as you have an event with the Eiffel Tower in the picture, you are aware of “exactly where you are”. Roussin went on to explain that organisers were keen to showcase the Eiffel Tower and have it interact with what was happening on stage. “The tower doesn’t have a fixed-install AVL system apart from the architectural lighting with sodium lights, so we had to install gear on the side facing the Champ De Mars,” he stated. “For this event, we did something that we very rarely do, which was to allow the event to control the lighting, including the now iconic sparkle effect, so that the Eiffel Tower lighting evolved based on the artist and song being played. The Tower actively participated in Global Citizen and really added to the project.”

Everything that was rigged on the Eiffel Tower, namely Star Way TourKolor, Claypaky Super Sharpy, and Elation Professional Proteus lighting fixtures, as well as on the Champ de Mars was installed by Magnum. Magnum also installed specific towers of an unusual height of 18m for the performance.

As well as playing a key role in the aesthetic of the production, the Eiffel Tower was also part of the contingency plans in case of any issues with the live show. A more intimate second stage was prepared on the first floor of the Eiffel Tower for musicians and personalities to continue the broadcast without an audience. “With the recent flooding in various countries, plus the potential issue with a terrorist attack, we had to have a plan B,” Roussin noted.

Focusing back on the stage, Gurdon discussed some of the workhorse fixtures he utilised for the show. “One of the biggest considerations was the weather and therefore we used mainly waterproof fixtures,” he stated.

On the lighting rig were SGM P-6s and Elation Professional Proteus Maximus and Proteus Hybrid fixtures. “We didn’t want to spend a lot of time fixing equipment or protecting lights in ugly ways.”

As well as being able to withstand weather conditions, Gurdon added that the power of the various fixtures was also important. “We needed fixtures that could reach the stage from FOH – a distance of around 70m,” he said.

According to Gurdon, most of the artists were more than happy to work with the design. “We had a few additions here and there but, on the whole, we designed and programmed the entire show,” he said. “We’ve had some input from management, and my approach is to take all that on-board and try and give the artists something so they feel reassured.”



The LD explained that “communication” was one of the key factors to ensure that all parties were happy. “It may not be possible to do exactly what they want, but engaging with the process is important for success.”

That said, some artists brought additional floor packages for their sets, notably Christine and the Queens, with Dushow supplying a total of 48 GLP JDC1s arranged in a line, taking the entire length of the stage, which were attached to a bespoke interconnected roller to take them on and off the stage.

Aiding Gurdon on site was PRG's Richard Gorrod. Although Dushow was the primary vendor for this project, Gurdon brought in Gorrod due to their shared experience of working together, not to mention for the use of PRG's followspot solution, the GroundControl. “We provided the production with six PRG BestBoys and the accompanying GroundControl base system,” Gorrod stated. “Al really enjoys the freedom the GroundControl gives him as he can control the colour and intensity remotely.”

He outlined some of the other highlights of the lighting rig for the system. “On ‘the donut’ structure, we had 64 Robe Tetra2 bars, which are fantastic,” he said. “We used around 200 of them on the BRIT Awards, and Al loves them.”

Alex Mildenhall and Alex Parshall were responsible for operating the show on the day, with Mildenhall operating an MA Lighting grandMA3 with MA3 software. “There are not too many people doing that yet, but it seems to be going well,” Gorrod said.

Like most of the production, he noted that this was not your run-of-the-mill festival setup, with the focus being very much on the broadcast. “Being a live broadcast brings a lot more pressure,” he stated. “That said, some people really like the pressure – it just means we have to have a few more measures in place.”

He was complementary of the level of communication between all parties. “I’m a great believer that success all comes down to preparation. Most of the work should already be done before you get to the site. Dushow has been great and all their gear is in great condition.” He praised Dushow Technical Coordinator, Régis Nguyen, who worked closely with Gurdon and Gorrod during the early stages of Global Citizen's Paris live production.

STAGE DÉCOR

Handling the décor for the giant ‘donut’ structure was Belgium-based set construction company, Y-lines. “I only started Y-lines a few years ago, although I’ve been making scenic elements for shows for the past 25 years,” began Y-lines Founder, Yves Vervloet. The initial brief for Vervloet and his team was to do all the scenery for the show with fabrication starting in the middle of August. “We delivered everything in four weeks,” he enthused. “We then travelled to Paris to build the show. The ‘donut’ was certainly the biggest challenge we can to contend with as it is such a big piece.”

The skeleton of the structure comprised rental trusses with a few custom pieces to form the circular shape. The skin provided by Y-lines was then stretched across the truss. This was the first time Y-lines was able to trial the skin, which Vervloet happily reported “fit perfectly”.

At every turn, the designers used as much recycled or recyclable material as possible to fall in line with the Global Citizen ethos. “The ‘donut’, for example, didn’t use any wood, so it created far less waste than a traditional stage setup,” explained Vervloet. “The recycled



tiles on the front of the stage came from a company in Amsterdam and are used to clad buildings. Once the show is broken down, they will be sent back to the company for them to be reused.”

VIDEO EXCELLENCE

LED Technician, Cédric Frécon of **Alabama Media** – part of the Dushow group – ran TPi through the technical details of the various LED video surfaces present on the site. Focusing on the stage and very much inbuilt in the show design was what Frécon referred to as the “ticker screens”.

Integrated in either side of the stage design, and measuring 1m by 9.5m and 1m by 8m, these Absen Polaris 3.9mm screen stripes displayed Global Citizen messages throughout the performances. The LED on the inside of the ‘donut’ was made from 76 tiles of Absen T5 LED panels provided by PRG Paris. PRG conducted some tests at Y-lines prior to the show to make sure the LED kit could be installed safely and rapidly while minimising the rig lines between the tiles.

The curved Absen LED screen was built in a day by four techs and eight crew. PRG Paris Project Manager, Greg Douglas commented: “Our collaboration with the different teams and departments was admirable; it was a great pleasure to participate in this event.”

Flanking the stage were two IMAG screens comprising AbsenAltair Series AT5 Pro. “Each side has a total surface of 79.2 sq m – 20 panels long by 5.5 high,” stated Frécon. “Each screen has a 5.5mm pixel pitch pre-rigged with Absen frames, which allows us to save valuable time during set up and also make the structure more robust to factors such as shock or wind while still benefitting from very fine panels.”

He added: “Resolution and screen quality were extremely important as this event was broadcast worldwide, so we needed to have the best performing screens possible.” An additional two screens measuring 4.2m by 2.4m on the far delay towers were made up of Absen Altair Series. Feeding each of the LED screens, the production was routed between an OB Van and the NovaStar media servers. “Content is a mixture between live and pre-recorded content along with animations,” stated Frécon.

“On site, we had a NovaStar NovaPro UHD Jr controller, which had 16 Neutrik Ethernet outputs, lots of functions such as PIB, 4K and a CVT fibre optic converter, allowing a large distance between the controller and our LED displays,” he said. “This saves on cable runs and means we can go as close as possible to the screen to get the best signal quality imaginable.” Finally, and only for the eyes of those on stage, was an Absen Polaris 3.9mm LED screen used as a teleprompter for the presentations, politicians and guests.

LIVE AUDIO

Despite the focus on the live broadcast element of the show, a substantial PA was still required – in this case, a Meyer Sound LEO system. The system comprised left and right hangs with clusters of 16 LEOs and 12 1100-LFC subs, which were all hung as the site did not permit ground subs to be used. There were four delay towers, each with 12 LYONs and six 1100-LFCs. “The advantage of using Meyer is that you’re able to push the delay hang a bit further due to the power of the system and the distance it can cover from the stage,” stated Dushow Head of Sound, Alexandre Capponi, who noted that this was particularly important in keeping delay towers out of shot.

“The sheer size of the audience and the fact this is central Paris meant that we had some sound requirements to contend with – a strict limit of 99dba,” Capponi added, continuing to explain the choice of system. “We were not allowed outfills due to the surrounding



residential buildings on either side of the park, so we had to basically shoot the PA down the site. The Meyer system has great directivity and is ideal for this standpoint.” Sébastien Nicolas of Best Audio and Lighting – distributor of Meyer Sound, and Elation Professional, both of which featured heavily in the show – was on site in Paris.

Although not directly involved with the production, he was keen to highlight some of the features that made the Meyer LEO system ideal for the project. “It is such a powerful system, which means you can push your delay towers back,” he said, recounting many conversations he has shared with the team at Dushow about Meyer’s prediction software.

“The predictions are so close to reality, which makes it an invaluable tool to technicians,” he said, explaining how the production used RMServe to provide diagnostics for each box on the rig. “This means you can go through each box and test temperature and power.”

Moving onto the control setup, Capponi explained how FOH ran an A and B system to ensure seamless changeovers between acts. “On each system, there is a DiGiCo SD7 for monitors and an SD5 at FOH,” he stated. “We also had each system on its own Optocore loop, which was advantageous for change-overs.” Both Optocore feeds delivered two MADI feeds, which the audio team were then able to deliver for the broadcast team.

There was an additional SD5 at FOH that purely looked after presenters and those speaking at the stage lectern between each act. “As most of the artists were not on tour, we ended up providing the lion’s share of the equipment,” stated Capponi. “We only had a few of the artist touring crews bring in their own equipment such as Christine and the Queens, who brought in two Avid S6Ls, and Ed Sheeran’s team, who brought in an extra SD7 for monitors, which was controlled from FOH.”

He highlighted wireless frequencies as a major area of contention. “Prior to the show, we had a lot of talks with The National Frequency Agency [ANFR] – the regulatory official who reserved sections of frequencies for us to work within France. Bands need between 20 to 30 channels of RF, so you have to do everything in your power to make it work,” Capponi explained.

The ANFR brought in an antenna that could scramble any attempts from the outside to take control of the frequencies. On the subject of wireless, Capponi pointed out the Shure systems tasked with the delivery of microphone and wireless in-ears duties, with an Axient Digital system used for mics and PSM1000s being provided for the show.

FIN

This latest iteration of Global Citizen raised \$1.1bn in commitments and pledges over the weekend to fight extreme poverty. Specifically, over 60m COVID-19 vaccines were donated for developing countries, 157m trees to defend the planet, and the president of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, pledged €140m for food security.

Along with the charitable success of the event, Global Citizen was a demonstration of production excellence. To this end, Live Nation France Technical Director, Charlie Boxhall spoke of the efforts of the technical suppliers. “Dushow did an outstanding job despite the short time frame,” he stated, giving his thanks for the company’s involvement with the show.

The show also demonstrated the lengths the events industry can go to have forward-thinking stage designs with the environmental impact at the forefront of the conversation. Sharing his thoughts on this point was Global Citizen Chief of Staff, Blaec von Kalweit, who



was on-site in Paris. “STUFISH echoed our calls to action to defend the planet within the design concept. A green and organic backdrop was created for the Paris stage,” von Kalweit reported. “We used 100 tree saplings and plants to celebrate nature and the need to plant, restore and protect trees to help tackle climate change. After the event, the trees were replanted around Paris.”

This show was a case in point that the hybrid format where live and broadcast coexist, can have a tremendous reach and impact – perhaps even more so now than prior to March 2020.

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www.globalcitizen.org

www.livenation.co.uk

www.stufish.com

www.dushow.com

www.alabama-media.com

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www.magnum.fr

www.prg.com

