

Major artists like Billie Eilish, Green Day, and Coldplay are bringing their fans closer than ever to their live performances, thanks to a deep collaboration between Vis-A-Vis Video and Blackcam Robotics.

MAKING EVERY SEAT THE BEST SEAT IN THE HOUSE

If you've booked to see Billie Eilish, Green Day, Coldplay or a dozen other major artists and bands on their global arena tour then you will be treated to dynamic, immersive cinematography, delivered through Blackcam Robotic Systems as part of Vis-A-Vis Video's showstopping live production.

Vis-A-Vis Video has created unforgettable events for fans of all of these A-list artists, as well as Ariana Grande, Genesis, Harry Styles, Pharrell Williams and Kacey Musgraves. A fixture on its inventory are the versatile automated robotic camera systems from Blackcam that deliver precise, silent camera movement for live coverage to LED screens.

"The aim is to work alongside artists and performers in order to deliver one, seamless, incredible live experience," explains Stuart Merse, owner and founder of Vis-A-Vis Video.

Vis-A-Vis specialises in creating immersive experiences for audiences, bringing them closer to the artists on the stage, no matter where they are seated. Traditionally that was done with camera operators using handheld and manual camera systems walking across the stage, but by deploying Blackcam's robotic systems, Vis-a-Vis creates a deep, direct connection between the artist and the audience.

A lot of artists find that on-stage cameras can act as a barrier between them and the audience," says head of operations, Andrew Shaw. "For the audience too, it can be a bit of a distraction if you've got crew breaking the connection they want with the band. The beauty of Blackcam's systems is that they not only solve this challenge, but they give our team the ability to create unique perspectives that fully immerse the fans into the live experience."

Blackcam delivers dynamic and diverse images without intruding on the audience's view. Its camera systems can be used upright, underslung from flying track, over short and very long track distances, wireless or cabled, indoor, outdoor, telescopic, automated. Blackcam equipment is also available for fixed studio installations and their new free roaming studio camera pedestal is already in demand.



Blackcam's systems achieve seemingly impossible shots where the camera moves from one place to another and around objects at high speed and great precision such as the meticulously choreographed sequence for U2's marquee residency at The Sphere, Las Vegas, in which guitarist The Edge could weave and duck around the moving Blackcam ARRO arm (Credit: Courtesy of Vis-A-Vis)

This versatility was illustrated by a meticulously choreographed sequence with guitarist The Edge, for U2's marquee residency at The Sphere in Las Vegas as he weaved and ducked around the moving Blackcam ARRO arm.

"You can use it for these impossible shots where the camera moves from one place to another and around objects at high speed with a precision that you simply can't do any other way," says Shaw. "It all ties in perfectly to the immersive experience of The Sphere. With the ARRO we need to hit the same points every time, through careful pre-programming and rehearsals, to ensure the performer and the cameras are in total synchronisation."

A NEW VISION FOR LIVE PRODUCTION

Merse, an experienced live director, started Vis-A-Vis in 2004 and first approached Blackcam a decade ago when robotics were only just gaining traction.

In 2010 Blackcam became a reality when another busy video director, Thomas Janze, had the idea for a small remote camera system. Teamed up with Jan Karabasz they built the first Blackcam B20 Dolly which was completed just in time for an Incubus concert Janze directed in Berlin.

Vis-A-Vis Video and Blackcam formed a steady collaboration. "We are a perfect match," explains Janze. "Stuart and I both work as live directors so from our first meeting we understood each other."

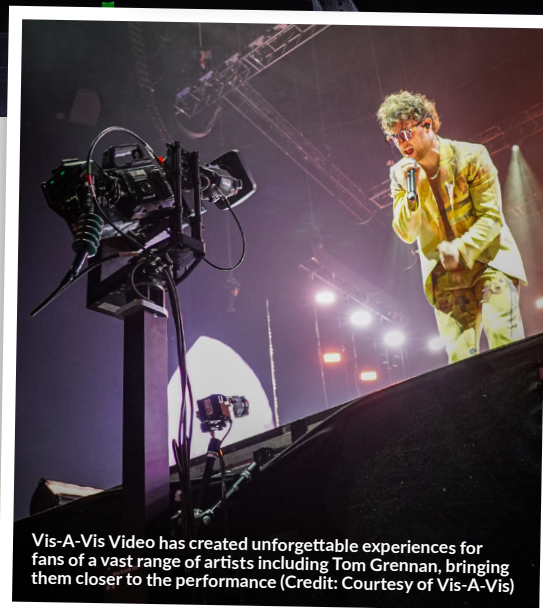
There are challenges for live venues. The systems must adapt to diverse outdoor environments. From thunderous rain to the blazing heat of the Coachella desert, Blackcam kit has to work all the time no matter the weather. It needs to survive the rigours of life on the road, bumped around in boxes, installed and set up with ease.

Then there's the constant R&D and design which Merse insists on to give artists and music fans the maximum possible live experience. "Clients will come to me with an idea. I'll give back how we might achieve that. Then I'll go to Blackcam and they custom build robotics to make it work. There are other brands out there but no one that will say, okay, let's make it work. Together we are the ones that make it work in the live environment."

STAR QUALITY

Billie Eilish's current 'Hit Me Hard and Soft Tour' utilises a number of Vis-A-Vis purpose-built Blackcam systems across an 'in the round' set design with a huge central stage. Four Blackcam railcams are integral to Coldplay's current spectacular stadium tour, with the kit dressed to blend into the set design to further strengthen the audience connection.

For Green Day's 'Saviours' tour Vis-A-Vis installed several Blackcam remote systems, including a curved rail along



Vis-A-Vis Video has created unforgettable experiences for fans of a vast range of artists including Tom Grennan, bringing them closer to the performance (Credit: Courtesy of Vis-A-Vis)

the front of the stage to keep pace with lead singer Billy Joe Armstrong's energetic stage performance, and a tight track with a Q-Ball camera that whirls around drummer Tré Cool's kit.

No two shows are ever the same, which is where skilled crew use the Blackcams to follow the action and time moves in sync with the music.

Another of Vis-A-Vis specialties is its preference for super 35 cameras (such as Blackmagic URSA) paired with cinematic lenses such as Fujinon Duvo PL lenses for stunning quality visuals. "We want to capture a very cinematic look and feel; it adds such a polish to the whole presentation," says Shaw.

There are a lot of moving parts. Vis-A-Vis is working on a new stadium show where all the robotics signals need to run on fibre. "It's something we've never done before," says Merse. "We've always done it over copper but we'll work with Blackcam to do that due to large distances."

"It's the versatility we value most. I'll come up with a crazy idea, one that's never been done before, and with Blackcam I know I can work with Blackcam's engineering department headed by Jan Karabasz, to achieve something incredible. Our success is intrinsically linked, and it all comes down to our close collaboration and shared commitment to creating the very best live visuals for the very best artists in the business."

THE NEW ROBOTIC TOOL

In just a short time there's a new wave of exciting technology within live entertainment that audiences can't seem to get enough of.

Robotics like Blackcam's ARRO Arm offers a whole new set of creative possibilities limited only by the artist's imagination. Thomas Janze points out, "As a live director I see endless images in my head, that could never have been captured before. But those images that were once out of reach can now be shared with the audience thanks to Vis-A-Vis and Blackcam Robotics." ■

Blackcam's systems - including the Blackcam B60 pictured at Coldplay's show - create unique perspectives that fully immerse the fans in the live experience (Credit: Courtesy of Vis-A-Vis)

