



## THE PERFECT MEANINGLESSNESS: A CONSIDERATION OF THE LIGHTING DESIGN FOR ELECTRIC CALLBOY

### Notes on the TANZNEID WORLD TOUR 2025

It is flawless. Genuinely. The precision with which the lighting effects pierce through the fog, the synchronisation of the LED surfaces and walls, the perfectly timed strobe sequences: from a technical perspective, the lighting design for the Electric Callboy arena tour is a masterpiece. And therein lies its complete irrelevance.

One could assign this show to a grindcore band, an EDM DJ set, or a corporate event for automotive suppliers. The difference? Probably just the slightly different colour palettes in the pre-programming. What we're witnessing here is not a lack of competence - quite the contrary. It is the perfection of interchangeability, the artistic staging of nothingness.

Particularly commendable: some of the lighting blocks in the stage design appear to be from other productions. Recycling in the world of touring! Finally, someone is thinking about the carbon footprint. What once framed the stage of a rock'n'roll band now encompasses a fusion of metalcore, comedy and techno. Same material, different genre: this is circular economy in action.

But it also perfectly illustrates what has become the norm in contemporary concert lighting design: complete arbitrariness. When the same lighting blocks work for other bands as well, it's not because they're versatile, but because they're meaningless. They're the equivalent of IKEA shelving in stage design: they fit anywhere, but have significance nowhere. From a sustainability perspective: sensible. From an artistic integrity perspective: a capitulation to aluminium constructions.



Particular mention must be made of the monumental crosses that form the central element of the stage design. Equipped with LED video canvases, light sources and fog machines, they are motorised and mobile, which is undoubtedly technically impressive.

Here we see exemplified a trend that dominates contemporary stage design: the panicked overloading of objects with functions. What design theory has been preaching for decades - clarity of form, legibility of function, reduction to essentials - is cheerfully ignored here. Instead, every available element is upgraded into a multifunctional Swiss Army knife. The cross is not simply a cross; it must also be a screen, a light source, a fog emitter, a kinetic object. Where clarity should have been preserved, a wild, confusing hodgepodge emerges. The result: an object without clear visual hierarchy that wants to be everything simultaneously and is therefore truly nothing. Function maximisation as an end in itself - the design nightmare of the 21st century in stage construction form.

When they change position during the performance and arrange themselves into certain configurations, however, a visual effect emerges that one might describe as a misunderstanding. One wants to tell the designer: "Perhaps the geometry should have been reconsidered?" But probably someone sat in front of the 3D visualisation and thought: "Blimey, that looks good, the angles work!" Yes, the angles work. But in a sense one normally avoids.

At the press conference, one would probably speak of "unfortunate symbolic intersections in complex spatial body constellations". On Instagram, it's a photo you don't take. And in a historically conscious Germany, it's the sort of design decision that makes us wonder whether the previz software should have issued a warning.

As for the illumination of the artists, the design remains true to its line: why highlight specific musicians when you can let them all submerge in an evenly diffuse light? Backlighting? Overrated. Key light? Too precise. Targeted accentuation? That would mean having to make decisions.



Instead: a perfect wishy-washy affair. All artists swim in a uniformly lit soup of fog-catalysed wash effects, in which no one truly stands out from the background. It's democratic lighting: everyone is invisible. One could replace Kevin Ratajczak with a cardboard cutout, and as long as it were illuminated with the right flickering light, no one would notice.

This systematic refusal of spatial depth through light is almost admirable. Three-dimensional people on a stage? Why bother, when you can also transform them into flat silhouettes against coloured surfaces. This is not negligence, but a method. Artistic blurriness becomes the programme, the aesthetics of the approximate. When nothing is defined, nothing can be wrong either.

The lighting plays with itself. Chase effects run across pixel matrices, fixtures execute ballistic choreographies as if they were communicating with each other - only that no one is listening. These are beer pong lighting effects at the highest technical level: precise, repetitive and ultimately completely pointless. The ball always lands in the cup, the crowd applauds and no one asks why.

Electric Callboy combines metalcore and techno, comedy and pathos, trash and self-irony. The band explodes the boundaries between genres with the energy of a high-speed train wreck. The lighting design? It nods politely and carries on as if nothing had happened. Flash strobe repeat. Sometimes anticlockwise, sometimes clockwise, like at the funfair. It's the visual equivalent of a "Like & Subscribe" button: functional, recognisable, interchangeable.

Therein lies the actual paradox of this production: we find ourselves in the year 2025. Technology no longer constrains anyone. Processor performance? Virtually unlimited. Motorised moving heads? They can do anything. LED technology? Without boundaries. Control software? Ultra-precise. Today, the only limits of an arena production are space and budget, and Electric Callboy has both. The arenas are large enough, the money is there.



Why, then, is the result still just a mediocre standard product? Because of vision. Or more precisely: because of its absence. All the tools are present, but the idea of what one could do with them is completely missing. It's as if someone had been given a fully equipped workshop and used it to build birdhouses. Functional, certainly, but frighteningly unimaginative.

Compare this with productions where the visual has an independent artistic voice, where the lighting design is not functional decoration but an integral component of the show. With Electric Callboy, the light is merely simple scenery. It is behind the band. In both the literal and figurative sense. It has no language of its own, no dialogue with the music, no position. It's like a jump-around DJ amongst lighting designs: it pretends to be doing something whilst a gigantic technical machinery runs in the background that would function without it just as well.

Precisely because it is meaningless, the lighting design provides the concert with a framework without intent. It asserts nothing, comments on nothing, contradicts nothing. It is the luminous manifestation of indifference. And in an era where all artistic directors are desperately trying to create "stories" and "immersive experiences", this radical refusal to bestow meaning is almost subversive.

The meaningless light gains its entire significance through its meaninglessness. It is the visual background of a generation that scrolls through TikTok feeds whilst physically present anyway. The lighting design knows this: no one is really watching it. So there's nothing to see. Except perhaps those ominous cross constructions. But no one really looks at those either; one films them with one's mobile and posts them thoughtlessly. Content is content. Arbitrariness has the inestimable advantage that it never fails. It doesn't disappoint because it promises nothing.



Electric Callboy breaks with musical conventions. The lighting design sticks them back together with hardware-store gaffer tape. Where the band combines metal riffs with Eurodance refrains, the lighting could have created dissonances, ruptures and visual contradictions. Instead: smooth transitions, predictable dynamic arcs, LED walls showing what is already obvious anyway. There's a fundamental difference between functional lighting design and conceptual show design. The former illuminates. The latter creates. With Electric Callboy, one finds only the former.

Evidently, the question asked was not "What does this music mean visually?" but merely "How can one light this well?" The result is technically impeccable and artistically meaningless. To visually support the fusion of genres would require not more technology, but an attitude. But an attitude is risky. It polarises. It can fail. They preferred to opt for the safe path: interchangeable perfection.

When the last confetti cannon has been fired, the motorised moving lights return to their default position and the crosses have assumed their final position - hopefully unambiguous - the question remains: is this critique or already capitulation? Perhaps both aspects have long since become meaningless. In an industry where lighting designers no longer work for bands but for production budgets and Instagram algorithms, conceptual meaninglessness is perhaps the most honest answer.

The power of the visual is no longer understood because it no longer plays a role. The main thing is that it looks spectacular in mobile-recorded videos. Electric Callboy deserves better lighting. Or worse. But not this: the perfect, precise, professional nothingness with recycled stage elements, contourless artist illumination, crosses of dubious geometry, and the resigned certainty that technology alone could never replace vision.

Ultimately, this lighting design approaches asymptotically the zero point of artistic expression - ever closer, without ever quite reaching it. The band may well proclaim "We Got The Moves", but visually, nothing here moves anymore.