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Protec Dubai invests in Robe

The Protec Group's Dubai branch, the largest and most prolific full production company in the Middle East and one of the largest globally ... has started investing in Robe moving lights in the last two years, a move that's seen a range of fixtures - including BMFLs, Pointes, MegaPointes, Spikies and RoboSpot systems - delivered and deployed on various projects.

This has been spearheaded by Protec's head of lighting Aaron Russ, recent winner of the 2019 TPMEA Award for Lighting Designer of the Year. As that implies, Aaron is also an accomplished production lighting designer and takes on this role - often collaborating with a team of designers - to creatively light up event spaces varying from intimate shows to stadium spectaculars.

The company, founded in 1999 by Steve Lakin, delivers innovative and imaginative full technical production solutions across entertainment, leisure and commercial sectors - from corporate presentations to music festivals - throughout the UAE, Middle East and UK / Europe. With fully operational branches in KSA, UAE and the UK, Protec is delivering world-class events across the UK, Europe, the Middle East, Africa & Asia.

Aaron explained that it was a case of the right product at the right time with Robe.

Obviously, they had other moving lights in stock up until this point, but the first batch of 96 x Pointes were sourced to replace a competitor beam light product, together with 48 x Spikies on the same order.

Then in 2018, for the ground-breaking Opening Ceremony of the Qiddiya Theme Park in Riyadh, KSA with a design by US-based LD John Featherstone of Lightswitch, they needed a powerful wash light ... and purchased 24 x BMFL XF Washes with the barn door module. "Every design we receive from John specifies a lot of Robe," commented Aaron, and he has been a big champion of the brand in the US across his portfolio of work.

Also delivered by Robe Middle East with this second batch of luminaires were another 24 x Pointes and 12 x MegaPointes.

The next purchase was two RoboSpot base stations with two BMFL Blades luminaires and separate motions cameras specifically to be used as remote-controlled follow spots on which he comments: "I love them, they work really well, especially outdoors in adverse weather conditions - in fact, I've never had to send a Robe fixture back to be repaired - they are really tough, and believe me, we've beaten them up enough times in terms of harsh operating environments!"

He thinks the products are generally well designed and have been engineered to make life as easy as possible for those using them. The crews greatly appreciate the fact that they are not "needy lights."

From the design perspective, Aaron says the optics are "impressive" and he likes flat beam field, the gobo selection and the fact that they make good workhorse lights for both theatre and rock 'n' roll. He cites the Opening and Closing Ceremonies of the Presidents Cup Football in the Hazza bin Zayed Stadium, Al Ain as a good example, where he positioned 24 x BMFLs on one of the balcony handrails at the top of the seating bleachers shooting a long way down to the field-of-play. "They were completely still - rock solid - which was noticeable compared to some of the other lights on the job!" he confirmed.

In addition to these creative advantages of using these Robe units, he appreciates the great service and support from Robe Middle East which is headed by Elie Battah.

"Robe has come a long way, especially in the last five years," he observes.

When he arrived at Protec seven years ago, they were heavily invested in alternative moving light brands and - coming from New Zealand - he'd not heard so much about Robe, and the company was still a young pretender in the global moving light stakes.

"It was the launch of the BMFL five years ago that really alerted me to how much Robe had advanced in that short time."

Robe is now regularly on his event and show designs. This includes the Opening Ceremony of the Nas Sports Challenge at the Nad Al Sheba Sports Complex in Dubai, a high-pressure, high-profile gig that Protec approached with its characteristic enthusiasm, zest and vision.

Robe wise he utilised Pointes, MegaPointes and RoboSpots amongst other fixtures, and the RoboSpots turned out to be the stars of the show! The event was staged in a room with no follow spot rigging facilities other than flying a special truss, and the 6 to 8 hours show standby times meant that having operators up there for that long was totally impractical.

A young football star needed highlighting as he showed off some of his playing skills and when his performance position was changed right at the last moment ... Aaron was still able to get two of the RoboSpots to point almost vertically down to cover his new area, a feat that would have been impossible using conventional spots.

"They are fantastic ace to have up your sleeve," he concludes.

Photo Credit: Louise Stickland

