

Another Double Innovation Award Winning PLASA for Robe

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Dave Whitehouse (product manager) on the right with Robe CEO Josef Valchar

Robe received two more PLASA Innovation Awards – for its Footsie and iFORTE LTX products – at the 2023 PLASA entertainment technology expo staged in London last week, capping off another busy and brilliant 3 days for the Czech moving light and LED manufacturer.

Robe also celebrated its acquisition of leading lighting console manufacturer, Avolites, now officially “A Robe Business” and premiered its brand-new expo live show “Power of Imagination”

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that will run through 2023-24, designed to show off Robe's newest technologies in situ in a high energy live performance spectacle.

Two other major new products were officially launched at the expo in addition to the iFORTE LTX – the FORTE Fresnel and FORTE PC – while a range of other popular and current luminaires featured in the show were demoed in two closed studio spaces filled with people and interest throughout.

Also previewed were a couple of very cool looking brand-new products – the HolyPATT and the MolyPATT – both new additions to Robe's desirable scenic PATT range of luminaires, and these attracted substantial interest. People loved the classic design and the warm incandescent glow of the squirrel bulbs.



The Robe stand was as busy as always, the visitor quality was high with industry practitioners from a wide range of different sectors checking out the great vibes of the show which had expanded from last year with the full floorspace occupied by exhibitors.

The Robe UK sales team commented generally that people spent meaningful time on the stand,

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which resulted in many orders taken and confirmed – always a positive sign!

Six Robe NRG (Next Robe Generation) students from five associated colleges worked alongside the Robe international team – with one assisting the Avolites team – all gaining valuable experience, contacts, and insights into the world of production technology. Three of the students operated RoboSpot systems during the live shows.

Power of Imagination

All eyes were on Robe for the launch of this new 9-minute live show featuring three dancers including an aerialist. Ballsy, bold and full of BIG, bright looks and statements, the narrative was inspired by the rich and diverse performance cultures of illusion, dance, cabaret, and theatre.

Using around 200 lighting fixtures, the 4-part extravaganza was conceived, storyboarded, designed, and produced by Robe's ever-inventive in-house creative team led by Nathan Wan and Andy Webb with Jordan Tinniswood and Tomáš Kohout. This was presented complete with flames, confetti, smoke, and much anticipation ramping up the drama!



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“The goal is always to illustrate the versatility of the products and how it is possible to hop from one genre to another using them and also how they can all work together,” explained Nathan, who also created all the video content.

Andy, who generated the special soundtrack, added, “We’ve just launched the most powerful fixture in the LTX, so the show needed to have a massive impact, to be highly visual and have that BANG to ensure that people went away with memorable impressions of what the fixtures can potentially achieve.”

Nathan and Andy worked with choreographer Jaye Marshall to produce the slick, kinetic fusion of movement and fun that thrilled audiences who gathered in advance each day to enjoy the magic.

Nathan notes that the products assisted in pushing the visual bar higher, particularly in Olympia’s Grand Hall which has a massive glass roof! Even with the stand encased on 3 sides by thick red velour drapes, effectively it was a daylight show, and especially with the glorious Indian summer weather which reached record highs!

Fourteen iFORTE LTXs were at the heart of the lightshow together with the other two new fixtures – FORTE Fresnels and PCs, mostly rigged on the over-booth trusses.

The truss design was deliberately styled to bring an architectural look, including some curves and drop bars allowing positioning that added depth and three-dimensionality to the picture as well as creating the illusion of a larger space!

A row of iFORTE LTXs on the upstage edge of the stage blasted through for retinal disruption, while 360-degree rotating TetraXs clad the upper balcony section on vertical bars and provided back-of-shot texturing for the hundreds recording the show.

Also dotted around were LEDBeam 350s and PAINTES – fixtures perfect for small-to-medium applications – with PAINTES across the lower sections of the stage together with the Award-winning Footsie – a fully IP rated lighting concept that replaces traditional ‘footlights’ with a super-smart cable-tray styled LED foot light batten removing any visual barriers between audience and performers!

Robe’s elegant T1 Profiles were used on a 3-way RoboSpot remote follow system and T11 Profiles, PCs and fresnels were also on the rig for fillers and to highlight the set and scenic elements.

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One of the numerous finishing details was the six new MolyPATTs across the downstage edge, based on the casing of Robe's popular PicklePATT, complete with lamp holder for a 'squirrel' filament bulb. On the back were six HolyPATTs, their slightly larger counterpart, which is based on the PATT 2013 scenic luminaire that has eye-candied a myriad of television shows, livestreams, studios, and concerts.

All lights were programmed by and run to timecode via an Avolites D9 console. Robe's stand shows have traditionally been running with Avo consoles illustrating the already excellent synergy between the two brands, both of whom are very excited about the future.

The Robe Village



The Avolites booth was positioned adjacent to the Robe booth along one side, while on the other side of that wall, the 'Robe Village' continued, with the stand of architectural sister brand Anolis; engineering control solutions specialist Artistic Licence, and fog / haze aficionados MDG Fog Generators completing the triumvirate of diverse brands with which Robe collaborates closely.

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Robe's architectural and LED lighting brand Anolis had its own space on Stand C28 that highlighted its new Calumma™, Ambiane™ and Eminere™ product ranges.

Artistic Licence also had its own area on Stand C28 showing a selection of lighting control technology products popular across the entertainment industry and a favourite for systems integrators and installers.

Atmosphere engineers and experts MDG were also located in the Robe Village, and as well as all the products being shown there, The Power of Imagination featured theONE and Ice Fog Q in action.

Avolites - A Robe Business.

PLASA 2023 saw the finalisation of a deal announced in June with Robe acquiring the UK-based lighting control manufacturer, Avolites, so this was the first international trade show for the two brands lining up side-by-side, with Avo on an adjacent booth.

Avolites presented its newest (and smallest footprint) console hardware - the T3 - for the first time in the UK, along with its flagship Diamond 9 (D9).

Other hardware presented included classic popular consoles - Arena, Tiger Touch II and Quartz, still loved for their great performance and affordability.

Avo's Q3 media server was showcased demonstrating their Synergy feature set which unites lighting and video offering creative programmers logical and streamlined workflows for all visual elements on their stage.

Avo's software platforms Titan, Ai and the newest media software platform Prism were the main features of this year's PLASA stand, all comprehensively supported by Avo's excellent networking products Titan Net Switch (TNS) and Titan Net Processor (TNP).

The Avolites team reported a significant boost in visitor numbers to the stand this year, and an overwhelmingly positive response to the Robe acquisition, which they are hailing as the next exciting chapter in the company's history.

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Innovation Awards

The PLASA Innovation Awards are run in association with LSi (Lighting & Sound International) magazine and honour future-focussed technology that improves safety, efficiency and performance through new methods and materials.

A record number of 40 products were entered this year, whittled down to just seven lucky winners, chosen by a diverse judging panel comprising 12 independent technical specialists, and Robe was delighted to pick up two of these to add to its growing collection.

Commenting on the iFORTE LTX, the judges said, “The full feature set in an IP-rated enclosure allows the light to be used as a long-throw or short-throw follow spot, as well as a good moving light.” Coupled with the interchangeable camera, the combination of useful features impressed them.

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The Footsie, they reckon, “will be welcomed by anyone needing to route cables across the front of the stage.” They liked the integrated safety marking lights, performer markers, and the integration with Robe’s RoboSpot system, coupled with the ability to light actors / performers in a traditional way using new tech.

The two products are very different but equally innovative. The Footsie is a dynamic system with many inbuilt safety features, while the iFORTE LTX is all about power and output with the ability to go down to a piercing narrow beam for stadium and outdoor performance.

The Awards were collected by Robe s.r.o. CEO Josef Valchar and theatre and product development specialist Dave Whitehouse.

A smiling Josef enthused, “It’s always a great honour to receive a PLASA Innovation Award and especially because you know that it is being judged by your peers and by industry professionals who are not easily impressed. There was stiff competition this year, and of course we are all delighted to have won. It’s a great tribute to the hard work of our R ‘n’ D team and the foresight of our product specialists. As a company, we are dedicated to constantly pushing ideas and

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invention to create the best solutions!”



New Products

In addition to the award-winning iFORTE LTX, Robe launched two other excellent luminaires, the FORTE Fresnel and FORTE PC.

These also utilise Robe’s revolutionary TRANSFERABLE ENGINE technology which maintains super bright light quality over time, combined with an innovation-packed high-output wash luminaire, so both products deliver powerful, intense washes without losing any theatrical subtlety or control.

Featuring either the classically soft fresnel beam or the slightly more defined PC beam, they are both great for any performance space and application.

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Resounding Success

Robe UK's sales director Ian W Brown commented, "PLASA 2023 was a tremendous success for Robe UK. The amazing show brought the show floor to a standstill and allowed our customers to see all the newest lights in action. We saw people from all over the UK, Ireland and Europe proving PLASA really is a show where business gets done!"

While Robe UK's head of marketing, Theresa Gibson, concluded, "The vibrant atmosphere of PLASA London delivered three exhilarating days of high calibre visitors from a wide cross section of the industry, giving us the perfect opportunity to reconnect with our existing customers and forge valuable new relationships, whilst providing an excellent platform to showcase Robe's newest technologies.

"We were proud to return as headline sponsor and continue our long-standing relationship with PLASA which saw an increase in visitors from the UK and Europe, also attracting customers and distributors from further afield like South America and Southeast Asia who joined us on the booth.

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“PLASA London always delivers lots of magic with the best of our industry all under one roof and 2023 was hugely invigorating and no exception!”



Photos: by Louise Stickland