

BMFLs for New Zealand Fashion Week



Simon Garret from Auckland based Oceania Productions designed lighting and visuals for the main showspace for New Zealand Fashion Week 2016, which was staged at The ANZ Viaduct Events Centre, a funky venue at the heart of Wynard Quarter, New Zealand's largest urban regeneration project, right on the Auckland waterfront. **Photos : Deane Cohen**

Simon, known for his own style in lighting, has been involved with the NZFW event as it's been known since 2004, since the start. This year he again transformed the showspace with bold and dramatic looks and scenes with the help of 24 x Robe BMFL Blades and 12 x BMFL Spots.



The venue showcased creations by some of the most innovative and interesting New Zealand designers , and with up to five shows a day for seven days, Simon needed as much flexibility as possible to change the ambience of the environment and meet the demands and expectations of an industry renowned for its attention to visual detail.

In addition to that flamboyance, there were the *de rigueur* fashion show pressures of producing fabulous shadow-less fleshtones for the amassed media.

Simon worked closely with event producer, founder and organiser Pieter Stewart and production manager Pak Peacocke who designed an adaptable runway scheme with five standard configuration options.

This could be set up as single, double or three parallel individual linear runways, a U- shape or a figure-8 all of which needed very precise lighting ... all with corresponding seating block positions, and it was this for which Simon needed a powerful arc-source fixture with shutters.

After an initial demo of the BMFL Blade from Robe's Australian and New Zealand distributor The ULA Group, he

felt confident that “with these 24 fixtures I could provide sufficient and appropriate back light at around 300 foot-candles from about 7 metres distance for all five runway options”.

So he went ahead and specified the BMFL Blades with the intention of using them as his primary back-light sources, with Oceania making its latest investment in Robe.

With tungsten still being the ‘go-to’ colour temperature for fashion shows, Simon thinks that “this latest generation of arc fixtures are an ideal complement, especially with their refined and accurate temperature control”.



At the Viaduct, five lighting trusses were installed in the roof running the length of the catwalk – the centre one aligned with the middle of the single runway option and trusses 2 & 4 with the wider (outside) catwalks.

Eighteen of the BMFL Blades were rigged on trusses 2 & 4 and used as the three-quarter back-light for models walking below when in the single runway mode or square back-light for the dual and triple catwalk mode, with another six BMFL Blades upstage delivering the same colour control on the varying backgrounds of the entranceway.

There was also a ‘fashion lunch’ mode set up which included two additional perimeter catwalks with tables and chairs where the central catwalks had been.

The BMFL Blades enabled him to match, balance or complement the predominant colour temperature for each individual show.

Employing BMFLs in this context meant Simon needed far fewer fixtures to achieve the myriad backlight effects than if he’d been using conventionals, and enabled him and his team to gain time on every show’s load in and focussing, freeing up more to be creative.

The 12 x standard BMFL Spots were rigged on the centre truss, where they proved ideal for effects, fill, and adding drama and excitement as and when needed.

Simon deployed 144 x PAR 64s gelled in CT 202 for his side lighting, complementing the slightly cooler hues from the back, keeping the front at 3200K tungsten.

With all these options the back flats (entranceway) became very mobile show to show. These were lit using tungsten ETC Revolutions which balanced beautifully with the front light mainly from nine pole-operated 5K fresnels. Together this added warmth and depth that is sometimes missed in lighting fashion shows too clinically. The 5Ks, with adjustment covered all of the three linear catwalks and the crossover options.



Lighting was controlled via a GrandMA2 console programmed by Chad O'Grady and Simon also designed lights and creative for a second smaller room in The Viaduct, which was operated by Stefaan Simons using a Hog. Also key on his crew was LD assistant AJ Henningsen.

He enjoyed lighting all the shows, although there were a few stand-out moments including Adrian Hailwood, featuring a curtain reveal of The Graduate Choir onstage at the top of the show, who sang accompanied by piano. This live soundtrack added a rich layer of texturing and as the segments of the show unfolded, the natural 'audio gaps' helped focus the audience on the well-defined retro-modern elegance on the runway.

Also memorable was Trelise Cooper's vibrant show with giant scenic flowers on the runway and a collection of bold and modern colours; and the avant-garde cool of the WORLD brand complete with stark raw white light and ear-shattering electronic soundtrack.



While Simon discusses the requirements and vibes with the individual designers, he's lucky to be trusted and given largely a free rein to apply his experience and imagination to create the right lighting ambience for their collections.

After all those years in the hot seat ... he's clearly doing something right and still relishing the challenges and achievements.

