

Dalis lights up Sophiatown



Lighting designer and consultant, Denis Hutchinson, was loaned six Robert Juliat Dalis 300W LED Cyclights by DWR Distribution to ‘test drive’ on the musical Sophiatown which played at the Market Theatre in Johannesburg and at the State Theatre in Pretoria. P

In South African history Sophiatown, apart from violence and poverty, was the renowned “mixed suburb” in the days of Apartheid, affectionately remembered for the lively politics, music, jazz and blues. It was where people lived together, undivided by colour, before the authorities tore it apart. Sophiatown, the musical production, played tribute to this society and also formed part of the Market Theatre’s 40th birthday celebrations.

“Initially I wasn’t quite sure how I was going to use the Dalis units on the show because they’re cyc lights and I didn’t have a cyc,” commented Denis. “But I was not going to let that stop me! I ended up using three units for footlights, which saved my bacon, as Sophiatown is set in a period where people often wore hats. Although people didn’t necessarily wear them indoors, the director wanted the cast to wear the hats all the way through. A lot of actors don’t know how to wear hats and you end up struggling to see their eyes. Having a set of footlights solves a whole bunch of problems.”



A footlight fan at the best of times, Denis adds that although the Dalis is beautifully compact as a ground row, it sits about 150mm off the deck which is a little big for a footlight. “In the case of Sophiatown, it didn’t matter because the stage was raised so I was able to go below stage level anyway and it worked really well.”

The Dalis has been thoughtfully put together. “It’s an 8 colour system and I’m really impressed with the coverage,” he said. “It’s a genuine asymmetric cyc unit which can be used either on the ground or hung overhead. Unlike some of the other LED models on the market, the coverage is quite tight on the horizontal axis, which means that you can literally light vertical stripes on the cyc if you wanted to. Due to the way the unit is built, the stripes can be butted up against each other without any gaps.”



The design features also impressed. “The way the plugs are arranged on the unit is very clever. They come standard with the combined DMX power cables, which I love. I found them really interesting units to use, they are bright, and if anyone has a permanent cyc and requires a permanent cyc light, I think it’s would be a very good investment,” he said.

“The Dalis is competitively priced, perhaps slightly more expensive than some of the other units out there, but not so much that it’s an issue. I would imagine that television studios are going to love them both as ground rows and overheads because they’re compact, low power and you’re going to get an absolutely even coverage. So I think they re going to make a killing in the tv market.”



In South Africa, there are a very few theatres that have the luxury of an exclusive cyc lights other than the larger one such as the State Theatre in Pretoria and the Artscape in Cape Town, Denis explains. “Most of our smaller theatres need something a little more versatile, so I’m not sure that they’re going to break into that market, but I can quite see the bigger ones going this route. When I think of Artscape, as an example, where the flying space around the flood bar is really tight, this unit could solve a whole bunch of problems for them because it’s more compact and brighter than what they have at the moment.

“I think Robert Juliat are going to do very well out of this unit, I really do, and I certainly enjoyed using it,” ended Denis. “I’m looking forward to using them again; Duncan Riley of DWR promised them to me for Saturday Night Fever which runs in September, and I’m going to use them to light the backdrop which is what they are actually designed for.”

About Robert Juliat:

Robert Juliat was founded in 1919 and is still a 100% family-owned company today. The company is the renowned manufacturer of top quality lighting fixtures based around superb optics and ergonomic design. All Robert Juliat luminaires are designed and built in France.

