

Popping It Up for Polish Idol



The recent edition of Polish Idol featured a distinctive filmic styling emanating from the visual influence of LD Artur Szyman, one of the country's leading lighting and scenic designers, who was assisted by 96 x Robe Spikies and 80 x LEDWash 800s among other lights on his plot.

Artur has been an LD for 17 years and was a renowned film and TV DoP for 10 years before that. He's known for taking creative risks and delivering new and invigorating designs, and for this show – returning to Polish national TV prime time after a 13 year break – his mission was to ensure that the lighting and scenography worked consistently from all camera perspectives.

This approach informed every aspect of the lighting, video and scenic design, bringing a cool cinematographic ambience to the studio.



A reasonably open brief by producers Freemantle Poland meant it didn't have to be an exact replica of anything that had gone before, and the opportunity to design both set and lighting brought a slick, streamlined default visual harmony to Studio 1600 of the Polsat complex in Warsaw.

"It's a big space, and so I wanted a multi-layered set but with lots of transparent elements that could be through-lit. I definitely didn't want any solid walls," he explained.

The headroom at 9.5 metres was relatively low so a spherical and curved layout was adopted to maximise the space. Artur examined this from all camera angles. He anticipated their moves, their static positions, their viewing angles and elements like Steadicam paths ... so that director Konrad Smuga would be able to get all the shots he needed from every angle.



Eighty-two of the Spikies were positioned on ladders either side of the oval shaped upstage LED screen, effectively forming a wall which could be twinkling one minute, full of solid razor-sharp beams or bursting with flower effects the next. The other 14 were stationed around the back of the stage.

Artur is a “big fan” of this product, and having these neat, lightweight little fixtures at his disposal offered plenty of options for the multiple new songs that had to be created each week.

He thinks the LED sources of the Spikies match the LEDWash 800s well ... and all are uniform for the cameras. The LEDWashes were dotted around the studio on different roof trusses and were used for lighting the set and audience, for texturing and illuminating the main screen surround as well as back-lighting the judges. “They are a great very solid all-round wash light,” he comments.



The Idol series' lighting equipment was supplied by ATM, a leading Polish rental company and the first one to invest in Robe's Spikie, which was launched last year.

LEDWashes have been well established for some time in the Poland market by Robe's highly active distributor Prolight, and now all the major rental houses have a stock of LEDWash 800s, and they are universally popular for TV and stage shows.

Artur started using Robe in around 2010 / 2011 when the game-changing LEDWash 600 hit the scene and started getting specified on TV shows. He thinks the quality of the products is excellent and having Robe on a spec adds value and a level of gravitas to any production.

He's always looking for fixtures which are new and that have unique features and will specify a show according to what is best for the design rather than always sticking with a particular manufacturer ... however, Robe is a brand now featuring regularly in his work, and he appreciates givens like reliability, robustness, quality engineering and low noise, etc.



The biggest challenges in lighting this series of Polish Idol were the intricate layering of lighting and scenic for the camera, a technique that brought a lot of depth and dynamics to the end result. With the series being back after a lengthy break, there was much expectation how the production would look as well as how the contestants would perform!

Artur worked alongside a talented FOH team for the Polish Idol project ... including assistant LD Michal Wlodkowski; moving light and main console operator Robert Iwanski; white light, LED tape, moving prop programmer and pyro firer Michal Dobek. He commissioned Piotr Szablinski to produce bespoke playback video which was stored on a d3 media server operated by Marcin Staszewski.



Photos : Louise Stickland