

# Saturday Night Fever at the Lyric

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(Pic by John Hogg) The musical, Saturday Night Fever, has finally arrived on South African soil after a decade of celebration on both Broadway and West End. The Lyric Theatre, which opened her doors in September last year, along with gear from Robe and MA Lighting, have proved a successful combination to ensure two hours of solid entertainment for all patrons attending the show.



(Pic by John Hogg)

Lighting Designer Declan Randall from Congo Blue Design was given the freedom to experiment with the lighting design. “The set was a combination of elements brought in from both the UK production and the touring Australian production, which included the lit dance floor and a seriously big mirror ball,” said Declan. “The choreography and sound were retained, but they didn’t want the old lighting plots.”



That said, the lighting had to be based on the original and having two versions of the show on DVD at his disposal, Declan began the process of trying to limit the effects to recreate the 70’s period feel, but at the same time adding a modern twist to keep the audience captivated with the lighting that enhanced the outstanding singing, choreography and unbelievable costumes.



Ferdinand Gernandt (Pic by John Hogg)

The set essentially consists of three truss “goal-posts” which is where the bulk of the automated lighting is rigged. 18 Robe 700 Washes and 13 Robe 700 Spots make up the overhead lighting rig with 6 Robe Tungsten washes and a bunch of Source 4’s making up the vertical sections. The balance of the 8 Robe 700 Spots were rigged on side ladders and boom positions along with a number of additional Source 4’s. Over and above that, there were 24 Source 4 PARs, all fitted with scrollers which were used and the truss toners. Another 36 scrollers went into the rig for side lighting and FOH. There are 6 Clay Paky framing projectors and 6 ADB Warp M’s which help make up the FOH lighting. The fixtures and all 260 dimmers are controlled via the grandMA.

“The Robe units were great,” commented Declan. “The Robe Washes were awesome and hard working. The Tungsten units really impressed me. There were moments when I felt the Spots could have been a bit brighter, but they are real workhorses and didn’t give us a moments trouble.”

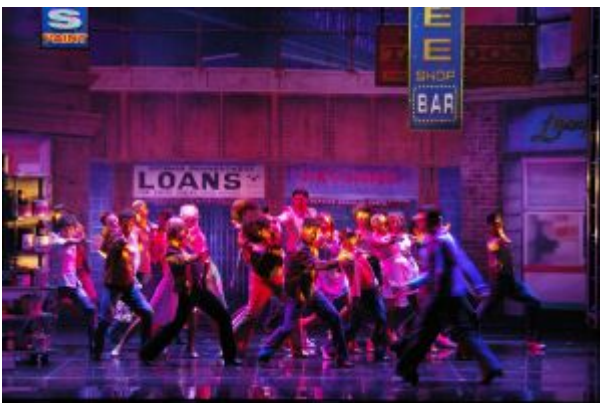
With only three weeks from load in till the opening night, and a week set aside for set-up and focussing, it was a tight squeeze to fit in 500 lighting cues. “It was the first time that I had used an entire Robe rig although I had experimented on one or two Robe fixtures. It was also the first time that I worked with the grandMA desk.”



Working alongside Lighting Operator, Glenn Duncan, who effortlessly handles control desks and has had enough experience in the field to come up with great ideas, the team were satisfied with the final product. “I have known Glenn for such a long time, and he has actually made me a lazy LD,” smiles Declan. “He gets on with the complicate programming syntaxes which frees me up to focus on the creative part. This really helps to speed things up as he is often a step ahead.”



Like any other event, there certainly were challenges to overcome like lighting up the back cloths! “We didn’t know until we had physically unpacked the cloth as to whether it was a front or rear lit cloth,” says Declan. “As luck would have it, they were rear-lit cloths which required some on-site “creative engineering”. All the flybars had been used to hang the trussing and other scenic elements, and the nature of the rear stage area meant that we could not simply put the lighting units on the floor and backlight the cloths. The solution we came up with was to dead-hang a ‘bounce cloth’. This gave us about 450 mm of space between the bounce cloth and the first painted backdrop. We used the ETC Source 4 battens to upright the cloth which then in turn rear lit the painted cloths beautifully.”



Declan stayed with the show until Press Night, and will attend the Bee Gees infused performance every two weeks to tweak and take note of any subtle differences. “I liked what I saw when I was watching Saturday Night Fever, but there is always something you think should be changed. There comes a point though when you’ve lit enough, everyone is happy with the end result and you just have to walk away.”



With a cast of 30 handpicked South Africans bringing a legendary collection of songs and disco music to life, it seems that all the equipment on stage performed as flawlessly.