The HD Test

13 September 2010

Download PDF

Vari*Lite VLX on Joyce Meyer Ministries' Conference Tour – *Special thanks to Lighting & Sound America for permission to use this article which featured in their July 2010 issue. Click on PDF to view photos. To visit the Lighting & Sound America website, please go to* www.lightingandsoundamerica.com

When the 2010 Joyce Meyer Ministries Conference Tour got underway, it was the first time that the international tour would be broadcasting in high definition to its worldwide audience. As a result, the lighting fixtures used in the past had to be replaced to better complement the higher broadcast quality of HD video. To accomplish this, Jeff Cranfill, the tour's lighting designer, was faced with the challenges of color temperature consistency, color matching, and long throw distances. The solution that he, and the team at Special Event Services, found was the Philips Vari*Lite VLX Wash unit.

"We first started working with Joyce Meyer Ministries in 1995, using a basic sound, light, and video system for the conference tours," says Cranfill. "Back then, we would use over 300 PAR cans for our TV lighting, with a total of 16 rigging points. Now, we have grown into an eight semitrailer tour with over 80 moving lights, 50 rigging points, and, this year, the integration of HD video. It's basically evolved into a rock-'n'-roll worship service, all shot in HD."

Held in arenas, the Joyce Meyer Ministries Conference Tour hosts 1316 conferences per year. Each conference is three days long, and provides the content for the Enjoying Everyday Life television broadcast, which airs in 38 languages worldwide to more than two-thirds of the globe on networks like ABC Family, Discovery, TBN, Daystar, and God TV.

"The set-up for each conference is a 64?-wide stage at one end of the arena, and two large HD video screens positioned stage left and right," says Cranfill. "We have truss running throughout the arena for key lighting close-ups and also to light the full arena for the wide shots during the broadcast. The broadcast set-up consists of a six-camera shoot, and, since they were all changed over to HD this year, my goal was to bring a rock-'n'roll atmosphere to the conferences in order to take full advantage of the depth of color that HD video gives you. To do this, I needed to bring everything up into higher color temperatures, from 3,200° to 5,000° Kelvin, to make it all pop on screen."

Looking at the fixtures that could give him what he needed, Cranfill already had ideas about what he wanted to use. First, he was looking for an intelligent LED lighting fixture that would provide him with a beautiful array of colors and consume less power than a typical automated luminaire.

Next, he knew that the fixtures would have to handle a 40? throw for the key lighting areas without losing any color consistency across the beam. And, finally, the fixtures would have to give him higher color temperatures while still providing the deep, saturated colors he wanted on screen.

"I have used automated LED fixtures on other designs in the past, but there was always some aspect that wasn't quite right," he says. "For this design, I really needed my key lights to be intelligent LED fixtures in order to capture the atmosphere we wanted.

When I got my first real look at the VLX Wash during a product demo, I was very surprised by the output, and knew it could easily handle the throw distances. When I saw the full color spectrum it could produce, plus the

fact it could give me a color temperature anywhere between of 3,000K and 9,000K, I knew this was the light for me."

Special Event Services purchased an initial stock of 12 VLX Wash luminaires, while also becoming an authorized Philips Vari-Lite dealer, and Cranfill put the new fixtures immediately to work.

"I'm using five VLX fixtures as my front key and face lighting for the speakers during the conferences and simultaneous telecasts, and I have three fixtures on stage left and three on stage right. On the stage right and left fixtures, one on each side is used as side fill to throw deep, rich colors into the house, and fill the TV shots with a fantastically full beam of color.

The remaining two fixtures on each side are used for front-row audience light so that the light patterns flow easily into the house, and we don't have any dark areas or shadows in front of the stage."

When the conference tour took to the road in February 2010, Cranfill and the Special Event Services team knew that this would be a test of the Wash and how it actually performs out on the road. During an HD broadcast, the slightest performance variances between the key lighting fixtures would definitely be noticeable. However, Cranfill says, "They are great. During the initial programming, I put a color meter in front of one VLX Wash, took the color reading, and then typed it in for each remaining VLX Wash, and the colors matched exactly. It used to take two hours to color-match our old fixtures during each set-up, but now it takes no adjustments. When moving from one venue to the next, we unload, hang the fixtures, power them up, and go to dinner. The color consistency is simply amazing."

What one sees in person is not often what is seen during a television broadcast, especially when broadcasting in HD. In this case, however, Cranfill saw the technicians behind the camera thought of the new key lighting. "The video guys absolutely love them," he says. "The VLX Wash makes everything so pure. For example, this year we're using a dark background for the first time, for an edgier look.

One day, the speaker wore a dark suit, and we were worried we might lose her in the background. But the VLX made her look great. It was able to bring out the black variances between her suit and the background, and it also brought out great skin tones. It really makes every detail really pop on screen so much that, when we go to broadcast, nothing needs adjusting.

"We are currently using other LED automated luminaires in the light plot, but I am planning to change them all out for the VLX Wash," Cranfill adds. "The VLX simply has better whites, and the colors it mixes are amazing. Whereas other LED luminaires may muddle through color variances, you can actually physically see the changes in the slightest color variance of the VLX across everything, from deep saturated colors to pastels, all with color-temperature perfection.

This is easily the most user-friendly and best performing LED wash light on the market.