

4.1.2010

Brilliance for Robe in Blackpool

Products Involved

ColorSpot 2500E AT™

Robe moving lights are at the core of the spectacular "Brilliance" installation in Blackpool, UK, a major light art work consisting of 6 elegant aluminium clad architectural arches traversing the seaside town's Birley Street, combined with additional lighting pods along the surrounding Church, Corporation and Clifton Streets.

The £3.5 million 'regeneration by light' scheme, commissioned by Blackpool Council, has been funded by the Northwest Development Agency, the European Regional Development Fund and Blackpool Council. The design concept was developed by Manchester based BDP, the lighting was conceived and programmed by Greg McLenahan of World Wide Lighting Design working in close conjunction with Blackpool's Illuminations department. The installation was overseen and co-ordinated by principal building contractors, J. McCann & Co (Nottingham) Ltd.

Blackpool has historically been a city of light and illuminations, and this latest ambitious scheme brings a whole new level of contemporary aesthetics and fun to the downtown area of the city. It is designed to encourage people to visit and stay into the evening and take advantage of the many restaurants, bars, cafes, clubs and entertainment venues in this lively area.

The Birley Street lightshow takes place every 10 minutes to a specially composed sound track including a stomping section by the Pet Shop Boys to get everyone in the mood for moving, grooving and having a good time.

They needed really bright, high impact lightsources, so McLenahan and the Illuminations department chose Robe's ColorSpot 2500E ATs as the only moving light fixtures of the installation. McLenahan has used Robe for a number of other projects including a giant mirror ball work along the Promenade right on the sea front in 2005 which was one of the original inspirations for this much larger project.

The Robe ColorSpot 2500E ATs – 36 in total - were supplied by Robe UK, where they dealt with Bill Jones. McLenahan comments that he's always been impressed with the reliability and robustness of Robe, and how well they stand up to demanding and more unusual

environments like this. He adds that the service and support from Robe UK is also “Excellent”.

In Birley Street, there are 3 ColorSpot 2500E ATs per arch encased in weather domes. These are used for the majority of the effects, throwing dramatic gobo patterns along the street, on the pavement and up the buildings, highlighting the fabulous glistening curvature of the other arches and beaming up into the night sky.

Also on the undersides of the arches are LED floods, 200 nodes of CK i-Color Flex and 4 Bose speakers.

All the street lights have been replaced by 45 lengths of white LED strip made by DW Windsors, who were tasked specifically with building the arches. All the arches are linked with power and data running down the street via three catenaries.

Along Church, Corporation and Clifton Streets, a further 18 Robe ColorSpot 2500E ATs encased in the same domes that are integrated into the top of custom columns, looking a bit like super space age street lights! These are located at strategic intervals along the street, casting their beams all around the floor, onto buildings and into the air, effectively creating a scene setting vibe for those about to turn into Birley Street and be blown away by the arches and main piece of light art.

Church Street is pedestrianised, so the Robes are set on slow colour, gobo and movement chases, offering the additional flexibility of having special season gobos e.g. snowflakes, suns, etc., swapped in as needed. The fixtures in Corporation and Clifton Streets are used for higher level beam work.

Lighting control for all 4 streets is from a central office half way up Birley Street, utilising 3 ShowCAD Artists systems, one dedicated to Birley street, the second for the other 3 streets and the third as a fully redundant backup. Church, Corporation and Clifton Streets are all run via a W-DMX wireless system, and 16 lines of DMX are run through a PathPort DMX manager for Ethernet to DMX conversion. The sound track is stored on a KL3 music server which also plays between-show music.

A Scada intelligent power management system is incorporated into the control set up which allows power to be cut to any fitting on the site, and also controls the conventional street light dimming via photo cell & dali conversion.

The scheme has been a massive success – bringing vibrance, warmth and fun to the chilly winter evenings as the arches and the lightshow have fast become a local talking point.

While at first some were sceptical about the architectural insouciance of the project, now it's complete, up-and-running and being enjoyed by so many people, the response is overwhelmingly positive.





