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Robe T1 PCs for Pilbeam Theatre Rockhampton

The Pilbeam Theatre in Rockhampton, Queensland, Australia, is a lively performing arts hub for the city and region. Located in a commanding position fronting onto the Fitzroy River, before the coronavirus pandemic dramatically impacted on all areas of performing arts ... the venue regularly presented a diverse mix of drama, dance, musical, concerts and comedy productions in its main 1000 capacity auditorium, and they also invested in Robe T1 PC wash moving lights.

These are replacing 12 tungsten moving head washes – from a competitor brand – as part of a general lighting upgrade which is part of a programme to transition to LED.

Jim Thorogood is the theatre's head of lighting. The venue is both a producing and a receiving house, and he lights most of the shows produced there. Jim was integrally involved in the specification of the T1 PCs together with Ashley Salta who, as supervisor of technical & production services, oversees all the equipment spends.

They wanted a product that had more output than the previous tungsten moving lights and that was good quality.

They looked at several single source LED options, but what struck Jim about the T1s was the richness and depth of the light produced by the multichip LED. "It was far superior to anything else we looked at," he commented, adding that he also liked the barndoor mechanism and other features of the T1.

"We were keen to replace tungsten with the newer technology, but the source also had to match as much as possible in appearance and style, and the T1 was the only fixture that did this well, specifically in the white ranges where the quality was outstanding."

Up to five shows would run during a standard (pre Covid) week in the Pilbeam's busy schedule. Sometimes, a show would play daily for three or four weeks and other times there will be a selection of different productions.

From Ashley's management perspective, "it was vital we chose a product that is reliable and well supported, both now and in the future". He explained that their geographical location, which is not near to any large cities, means they need to utilise their cap ex prudently and be able to rely on other factors like consistent and competent phone support.

He feels that they have developed a good relationship with both Robe and Australian distributor Jands.

"The transition to LED lighting is a big step and we are keen on getting as much tungsten emulation as possible from the replacement fixtures so we can offer Jim and any visiting LDs all the effects that they know and love but in a new and more sustainable source.

In addition to that, there are all the other advantages of LED like reduced power requirement and less heat being generated, so less AC needed, etc.

Often the case, this isn't always the cheapest option, but they do reckon it's the best and have been spirited and convincing in their arguments when applying for the funding.

The theatre's low pros arch meant having a wide zoom was important, and the T1 scored there too. "We have found a wash light that's great quality, compact in size and weight and offers great versatility," stated Jim.

The high colour rendering is also needed for perfect flesh tones, and the additive mixing is another essential for the range of performance genres that they light.

A further consideration was the ongoing - and changing - requirements of touring companies and lighting designers.

Jim has been head of lighting at Pilbeam for the past 10 years, and his association with the venue started before then when he worked there as a technician in the 1990s, so he has seen the technology and the demands change dramatically in that time.

The T1 PCs were also not the first Robe at the Pilbeam! Some ParFect 100s joined the house rig in 2015 when Jim needed to replace older LED backwash fixtures and chose Robe because these were "exactly the right unit for the job".

While he's more of a 'correct tool' person than a brand advocate ... he's been consistently impressed by the many touring productions that have come through with Robes.

The new T1 PCs join a generic rig including 48 x 1200W fresnels and 36 x Source Four profiles ... and everyone is looking forward to seeing them in action!

Photo Credit: Louise Stickland



