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Upping the Illuminations with The Best Lightshow in Town

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Barry Walker's TV and recording showgroup SMACKEE has invested in a new Robe Show Lighting moving light system, complete with Robe 1024 control desk, for their busy live performance schedule. The move was prompted by their popular "Abba - The Show" landing a high profile seasonal booking at Blackpool's North Pier Theatre. Walker explains, *"Blackpool is world famous for its illuminations, and the time was definitely right to get some new lighting technology onboard. Lighting can make or break a show, and we wanted to have the best lightshow in town."*

The hugely successful "Abba The Show" has extensively toured Europe and the UK for four years. SMACKEE also has several other shows in their repertoire, including, "The Musicals" featuring the top scenes and sounds from everyone's favourite blockbusters.

When it came to specifying a lighting rig, Walker - also show producer and MD - wanted fixtures that were highly versatile, robust, easy to use and great value. He looked around at what was available and Robe came up with the best deal on all fronts. He had also seen the Robe lighting rig installed at The Willows Variety Club, Salford in action, and was suitably impressed. He purchased six Robe Scan 575 XTs and four Spot 575 XTs plus the Robe 1024 desk ... and is so pleased with the results, that he's about to add more Robe fixtures to the rig.

Walker, who plays the part of keyboardist Benny Andersson in "Abba - The Show" also designs the lights, running the show via a MIDI link from his keyboard that triggers the desk. Once he'd chosen his fixtures, he looked around for a simple and cost-effective controller, *"I needed something I can set up in 5 minutes"* he says.

The lights and desk arrived at the theatre on the afternoon of their first gig of the Blackpool season. By the time they were unpacked, rigged and configured, he had just 90 minutes before showtime to programme a show into the new desk - the first time he had used the whole rig in situ. He reckons it took him approximately 20 minutes to figure out the desk's basics. By the time doors opened, he'd recorded enough of a show for the press to declare it "The best lit show in Blackpool".

Needless to say, they've not looked back since. "Abba The Show" receives constant positive comments and rave reviews on the lighting everywhere it goes from theatre staff, technicians, press and audiences. People are always struck by the dynamics and impact of their colourful lightshow, and the lighting for "Abba The Show" is now absolutely integral to the performance's presentation.

Walker likes many features of the Robes. Firstly there's the phenomenal light output for the size of the fixture - the result of Robe's high quality optics and lens system. *"A 575 fixture is easily powerful*

enough to work in most medium sized to large theatres" he enthuses. He also likes the colour range - specially the cool blue end of the spectrum, and he's impressed with the accuracy of the prism effects and the precision of the gobos. The bottom line, however, is the great asset of affordability!

Barry Walker has been presenting cabarets, corporate shows and live acts for 27 years, during which time, he reckons the lighting is often the last element of the performance to be updated - now with the affordability and functionality of Robe, the time is here for all that to change!

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