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Robe HCF Engine is The People's Choice

Products Involved

FORTE®   FORTE® FS

For lighting designer Emanuel (Manny) Treeson, Robe moving lights fitted with the HCF (high color fidelity) TRANSFERABLE ENGINE LED light source are currently unbeatable for the perfect key lighting of people with all skin types and complexions.

Manny, together with Abigail Rosen Holmes and Brian Gale, is one third of the creative studio, NYXdesign. Based in California and working internationally, he lights a diversity of shows, performances, events, and spaces, including high profile corporates, industrials, broadcasts and newer style hybrid shows fusing both live and streamed action.

With the dramatic rise in popularity of these hybrid events during and since the pandemic, good key lighting has become even more essential than it always was.
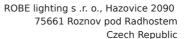
"Similar to when lighting for a standard television or broadcast production, key lighting makes ALL the difference to the final results and everyone's experience," he highlights.

He recalls distinctly the moment he first metered a Robe FORTE fitted with a 1000W HCF white LED engine. "I was amazed – I had simply never seen such a comprehensive color spectrum in a moving light before," he stated. It was very memorable!

"The CRI is truly impressive," he states. "It's a question of picking your tools," a task he does judiciously while paying much attention to detail, "and this is absolutely THE right one for the job of lighting people and faces," he explained.

Since then, Robe fixtures – specifically FORTES – with the HCF module have been his key lighting instrument of choice.

"The HCF engine is spot on. The luminaire's CRI creates a beautifully textured 'true' white that renders perfectly on camera – it's fantastic!"

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He adds that skin tones look more wholesome and genuine when lit with full spectrum light sources, and while he deploys lower CRI light fixtures daily on his lighting rigs for assorted other tasks, definitely not for lighting people!

"You have to remember that a person is an organic creature," notes Manny. "Every person's skin contains different pigmentation and is completely unique, and to make them look their best, a huge amount of diligence is needed."

Projecting a white light source made from a multi spectral LED engine has always been more erratic, as creating white from different colors inevitably means the omission of some colors and wavelengths, resulting in the skin tending to reflect back what's coming at it in the core light source.

While a person can look great to the eye, on camera it is another story – and on different cameras with various sensors – skin tones can also look dramatically different. They can easily be muddier and blotchier when some of those key areas of the spectrum are missing, especially given that perfect unblemished skin is extremely rare. Adding makeup … is a whole other universe as well!

That is an area that single chip light sources and the HCF TE (TRANSFERABLE ENGINE) in particular is addressing.
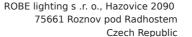
From the start of his lighting career in the theatre, Manny has been aware of the mission critical task of lighting people well and searching for solutions and a pure white light with the fullest color spectrum for the most accurate key'ing.

Now he believes that he has found it!

He highlights two corporate shows he key lit using Robe FORTES which were supplied by rental vendor, Illumination Dynamics.

The first was a conference for network security and encryption / decryption specialist, RSA, at the Moscone West Convention Center in San Francisco and the second was BlizzCon, a gaming symposium for fans of Blizzard Entertainment's various franchises, staged at the Anaheim Convention Centre.

BlizzCon in particular was a big test, as the FORTES used for key lighting were rigged 130 ft from the stage in steep angled positions on the rig as he wanted to use them as follow spots.

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Having seen the high CRI engine in action, he was confident that they were plenty bright enough and would work running on RoboSpot remote follow spotting systems, which they did brilliantly.

A total of 85 x FORTES were utilized on that project, with dedicated FORTE Follow Spot versions – with the internal camera – for the 14 main key lighting fixtures.

Six of these were positioned on one front bar and eight on another slightly behind. Together with 85 x Robe MegaPointes, they created numerous big, beamy, dramatic and fast-moving looks for this buzzing, hi-energy environment.

The RSA event featured more of a standard conference presentation in style, using FORTE HCF engines for traditional front lighting and key'ing treatment, where they excelled in bringing out those natural skin tones that looked fantastic on stage and on camera.

"Everyone just looks beautiful when lit by a FORTE with HCF engine," Manny notes, with the bonus of FORTE colors also being sleek and rich when used for back lighting, making them a super-versatile fixture. Apart from that, he loves the big lens and the sheer presence and stature of the beam.

RSA was his first show using FORTES with the HCF module, which was shortly after the Robe North America team first demonstrated the luminaire to him, with the release of the FORTE Follow Spot version soon after. He has lit that same RSA event for several years, but this was the first time with FORTE HCFs.

Manny also enjoys using FORTES for producing altogether softer follow spot looks that don't, by default, create that hard edge definition sometimes so jarring, especially when juxtaposed against set architecture, glossy floors or whatever else might interrupt the beam edges!

He feels this feature unlocks a new development phase for the art of follow spotting with fresh possibilities and scope. "The person can be lit and followed, but this can be so much more of a subtle and understated process when needed," he concluded.

Photo Credit: courtesy RSA

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