

dBs Light Fittings

A Paper by the Deputy President (Finance & Service)

The light system at dBs is in poor state and not fit for purpose. A large number of the fittings were bought over 5 years ago, with some fixtures being older than 10 years old. It should be noted that the refurbishment of dBs, as part of Phase 3, is not planned to start for a number of years. It should be noted that when the refurbishment takes place, the light and sound fittings will be removed and reinstalled in the new venue.

Current Situation

The lighting rig has not been load tested in a number of years and we are currently using a light desk that is poorly programmed. The current light system is not reliable and for larger events it is now routine to hire lights from an external company. Whilst this guarantees we always have the most up-to-date equipment, it is not cost-effective.

The lighting desk has caused great problems for the Entertainments technicians when working with the current lighting rig. This has been highlighted at a number of events this year, such as at the Circus of Horrors where the lighting system was not functioning as required or the first Colin Murray event where the lighting system cut out completely.

With the current fittings, on longer nights where dBs is at capacity, the temperature and atmosphere within the room causes a number of light fittings to overheat which are a result of clogged filters and poor heat dissipation. This is despite the lighting system being well looked after, with servicing each year which includes changing bulbs and cleaning air filters; this is further shown by a number of the fixtures lasting over 10 years.

With larger events such as during Freshers' Week or at the end of term carnivals, the Union hires in additional lights from external companies to enhance the atmosphere within the venue.

Proposed Solution

Firstly, in the interests of health and safety, it is suggested that the lighting rig should be serviced and load-tested. This would cost £550 (excluding any further work required) but would ensure that we establish the limitations of our equipment.

It is suggested that firstly, the lighting rig is upgraded to include eight 150W moving head profiles which would be complemented by LED battens. These would allow atmosphere of the room to be changed by varying in the intensity and colour of the room. The room was been painted white at the end of the summer by a number of over-keen Sabbaticals which has meant the walls can be washed any colour required. Additionally, the LED battens could potentially be used to provide additional lighting during the daytime. The Martin smartMac, a 250W moving head light, is an example on a product that would suit our venue due to its fanless operation, highly effective heat management and energy efficiency; however this comes with a high price tag of approximately £3,000 a unit. By purchasing the light fittings from smaller manufacturers, we would obtain similarly performing lights under the same guarantee as brand new fixtures but at a much cheaper cost. Given the lights can be expected to last a large number of years; the reduced lifespan of purchasing refurbished units is not significant. Additionally, it should be stated that purchasing cheap lighting equipment is purely a false economy, as they require increased servicing and are prone to fail prematurely.

In addition, instead of purchasing a new lighting desk at great expense, it would be sensible to reprogram the current desk instead of "bodging the current system". This work can be conducted as part of the fitting of the LED battens and moving heads.

Finally, please note that the equipment suggested for purchase is not held by anyone else in the Union so it is not possible to establish a dry lease arrangement. This avenue was explored last term with no success. DramSoc were contacted earlier in the term and agreed to provide technical input and expertise which would be utilised to ensure we gain the best value for our money.

By upgrading our lighting system, we would be enabling the Union entertainments to move forward with the increased growth we have seen this year with our most successful Freshers' Week ever and our Radio 1 residency which is the first of its kind in London.

Cost Scenarios

Presented below are a number of cost scenarios, with Option 2 being the preferred solution. All costs are excluding VAT the quotes obtained are by far the lowest.

Option 1 - Total cost: £4,000

Servicing and load-testing of existing lighting rig
Reprogramming of lighting desk and rig
8 x 150W discharge moving head profiles

Option 2 - Total cost: £7,500

Servicing and load-testing of existing lighting rig
Reprogramming of lighting desk and rig
8 x LED batten fixtures
8 x 150W discharge moving head profiles

Option 3 - Total cost: £15,500

Servicing and load-testing of existing lighting rig
Reprogramming of lighting desk and rig
8 x LED batten fixtures
8 x 150W discharge moving head profiles
1 x LED video backdrop

Equipment Profiles

Discharge moving head profiles



Currently we have two of these units (Robe Clubspot 150) within dBs already, and they are very versatile units. The use of these units would bring the rig up-to-date and allow for flexibility in the rig.

The recommended retail price of a Robe Clubspot 150 is £899.99.

LED Battens



The LED battens provide a strong visual effect and can be used in a multitude of ways. These we used to great effect in the Beit Quad marquee at Summer Carnival last year and this year's Freshers Week.

Additionally, they could be arranged to follow the outline of the truss structure on the roof or alternatively they could be mounted on the wall to follow the outline of the room.

Business Case

For the following events we have hired additional lighting:

- Freshers' Week (3 large events)
- Christmas Carnival
- Easter Carnival
- Summer Ball
- Summer Carnival

The savings are broken down below:

8 x LED batons at £70 each per day	£560
7 events a year at £600 per day	£3,920
8 x moving heads at £50 each per day	£400
7 events a year at £400 per day	£2,800

Whilst for the large events it would still be likely that we would continue to hire additional sound and light, the anticipated savings each year would be in excess of £6,500. Additional savings are made with reduced labour charges associated with fitting of these fixtures prior to the event.

Decision Required

- 1) To approve a potential cost scenario.