

VARI*LITE

VARI-LITE VL2600 WASH DELIVERS A PERFECT PERFORMANCE FOR CIRCUS 1903



London, UK – When *Circus 1903* - the Golden Age of Circus came to London's Royal Festival Hall over the Christmas period, its world-class performers and life-size puppet elephants were beautifully lit by lighting designer Paul Smith, using 26 brand new VL2600 WASH fixtures from Vari-Lite.

Smith declared himself a fan of the new luminaire, impressed by its compact size, first-class framing, and versatile zoom capabilities, among other fine performance features.

Redesigning the lighting for the London run, Smith took the leap of swapping his long-trusted VL4000 BEAMWASH, VL4000 SPOT, and VL3500 WASH fixtures in favor of the latest compact LED wash fixture from the same brand. Supplied by Siyan, the VL2600 WASHES delivered “the best-looking version of the show that we’ve had so far – certainly the one that I’m happiest with,” says Smith.

The compact LED fixtures gave Smith a number of immediate advantages. “By switching to the much more compact fixture we’ve gained extra floorspace, which is important for the puppeteers controlling the elephants,” he says. “We’ve also replaced the heavier wash fixtures overhead, which is great as it’s quite a weight-restricted show. Now, all the overhead and side-light wash is from the VL2600s – they’re pretty much everywhere.”

Smith is also delighted by the VL2600 WASH’S internal framing system. “Having a wash with such excellent shuttering was the big break-through on this show. The framing blades are amazing: I can shutter down to insanely narrow corridors of light which, in lighting a circus format, is perfect.”

“I was absolutely blown away by the shuttering – I’ve never seen a moving wash with barn-doors that work this well. It was like using a bladed profile, but with a perfect, soft edge.”

Using the framing, Smith was able to visually segment the performance area, keeping the audience focused on the action while concealing the preparations going on around them. “Being able to divide the stage into so many areas so easily is a great advantage,” he explains. “Often there are cast members in the background, and we want to keep the focus on the act that’s happening downstage, or wherever it may be.”

“With the VL2600 WASH’S shuttering, I can separate out the two areas with intensity and color. I can put the light precisely where I need it, rather than having to re-aim the fixture and losing that hotspot on the action. Being able to shutter so tightly is perfect.”

Having used the VL4000s for so long, Smith found the switch to a lower-output fixture was not an issue, with the 19,000 lumen output of the VL2600 WASH providing more than enough punch. He explains, “Obviously the VL2600 has a lower output than the big VL4000, but whereas I was running the VL4000s at 40 or 50% output, now I’m running the VL2600s at say, 80%.”

Color-wise, the consistency of the Vari-Lite palette across the rig was a key factor in the quality of the result, as was the CTO adjustment. “Being able to get that uniformity of look across the whole rig is definitely helpful. It’s a very sepia, pastel color palette in the first part of the show, so everything is CTO’d. The VL2600s coped very well with that,” he says.



The VL2600's class-leading zoom range was another attribute noted by Smith. He says, "The zoom is perfect. I don't think I ever managed to use them at their widest, although frequently at their narrowest! It covers every situation I could envisage for this show. And the addition of the PC lens, which you can pop in and out as you want it, gives a nice variety of options from soft wash to hard edged wash."

"Overall," says Smith, "they were a pleasure to use. They were reliable, consistent, and they did everything I asked of them." ■

PRODUCTS FEATURED:
VL2600 WASH

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LIGHTING DESIGNER: Paul Smith

LIGHTING APPLICATION: THEATRE