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NRG takes on the adventure of a lifetime at PLASA 2018

At the recent PLASA entertainment technology trade show in London, Robe once more offered high energy, high profile roles to half a dozen NRG crew members. For three non-stop, high octane days, students and young technicians from every corner of the British Isles supported the international Robe sales team in the jungle adventure that was the Robe stand.

Hailing from England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales, six students from six different colleges and universities came together to work as a close-knit team to provide a frontline 'welcome' to all the trade visitors coming onto the Robe stand and offering them product demonstrations whilst acting as ambassadors for the NRG programme run by Robe UK.

NRG (Next Robe Generation) is a networking community for students, apprentices and young technicians who are serious about pursuing a career in the world of performance lighting and visuals. The initiative provides NRG crew members the opportunity to meet influential industry professionals who are happy to offer advice and share their enthusiasm and passion for lighting. NRG also offers the chance for young technicians to showcase their talent in real working environments at top industry events, as well as exclusive access to technical tours of venues and organisations such as Sky Studios, the Royal Albert Hall, X Factor, Westfield Shopping Centre and the Roundhouse.

Ian Brown, Sales Director for Robe UK was clear about the skills he was looking for when he conducted interviews with all the applicants for these very special roles on Robe's PLASA stand.

"PLASA is a flagship show for Robe and we need to offer the most informed and welcoming introduction to all the visitors coming onto our stand. I selected students based on their interest in, and passion for Robe products. Many of the previous students who have had this experience have gone on to forge very successful careers in the industry. Each and every one of the students excelled in their roles this year - we were proud to have them on our team."

The successful applicants were buzzing about their experiences at the show and what the opportunity meant to them.

Will Blackie felt very privileged to be offered the opportunity for a second year running. Since leaving Cheshire South & West College as a student last year he has now embarked on a Level 3 apprenticeship in lighting. "This is one of the best things you can do! Having worked on the stand last year, I couldn't resist applying again - the networking is unprecedented."

Jack Coker is a second year at Royal Central School of Speech and Drama and acknowledged the breadth of technical insight he gained: "Working for Robe at PLASA has been a fantastic way to get more involved in the NRG project and I have gained so much product knowledge which will be invaluable in my studies, and, longer term in my career."

Karyn Wilson is just starting her final year at the Royal Conservatoire Scotland. "This was my first experience of PLASA and it was amazing to work on the Robe stand. I met some inspirational people and it was an incredible educational and networking opportunity – one which I will utilise as I enter my final year of study."

Charley Lidster kick started her 21st birthday celebrations working on the Robe stand. Now entering her second year at University South Wales and on the lookout for an international work placement for her third year she said "what a great way to further my network within the lighting industry.

Opportunities like this are so worthwhile and whilst it was exhausting, it was amazing!"

Matt Carnazza from Rose Bruford College is just starting his dissertation and third year. A regular at NRG Technical Tours and Networking Social events for the past 12 months he agreed that he had "become part of the Robe family and this PLASA opportunity has been invaluable for my future career prospects. Wearing the Robe uniform at the show was an absolute privilege and it has really helped build my confidence when speaking to industry professionals."

Gavin Mooney from LIR Academy in Dublin was absolutely delighted to be offered the opportunity to travel over and meet other students from around the UK studying different courses. "It was a privilege to be chosen to work on the Robe stand and learn more about all the fixtures we were talking to customers about. I met so many inspirational and genuinely interesting people from all aspects of the lighting community."

Many of the tutors and course leaders also came along to the show to see how their students were getting along.

Angie Berwick, Cheshire College South & West, couldn't be more delighted. "I think the NRG programme is fantastic. I have had the opportunity to see the inspirational opportunities and experiences that it offers students. I cannot think of a better partnership than working with Robe as a training provider of technical theatre. We are very proud of our connections with Robe and the NRG programme."

Hansjorg Schmidt, Programme Director, Rose Bruford College commented: "NRG is a fantastic initiative, and many of my students are making use of this network to meet with other students and professionals from across the lighting industry. Opportunities like this where students are invited to represent NRG provides a real confidence boost and enables the students to further develop their understanding of the lighting industry as well as preparing them for their future careers. Robe, through NRG is offering terrific support to the next generation of lighting professionals."

NRG creator Ashley Lewis sums up how the whole Robe team felt about Charley, Karyn, Gavin, Jack, Matt and Will working alongside them. "In general it is fair to say that the industry used to shun students – but with the plethora of vocational lighting courses now on offer to students at colleges and universities around the UK, these young technicians are the talented future of our industry. They are engaged, they are charming and they are driven and we are so pleased to work with them through NRG. It's clear our industry will be safe in their hands!"

The six members of the 2018 NRG@PLASA team have now disbanded and returned to their studies around the UK, but all of them are determined to keep in touch, not least through further NRG

initiatives and events.

NRG is open to those studying on professional lighting courses, and young technicians already working in the industry - simply get in touch with nicky.rowland@robeuk.com for more information on how to join.

Photo Credit: Louise Stickland

