

Clay Paky Sharpy

Nothing bodgy about the new genre-busting Sharpy.

Text:/Paul Collison



IF YOU WERE WONDERING about the whirlwind of excitement that blasted through Sydney and Melbourne in February, it was Italian lighting manufacturer Clay Paky, showing off its latest innovations to lighting professionals. Recently re-forming with Australian distributor Show Technology, Alberico D'Amato from Clay Paky was the all-smiling ringmaster showing off his troupe of exciting new moving lights. Among an impressive array of new features and fixtures, was a little surprise packet called, Sharpy. What a fuss it caused!

Clay Paky has most certainly been the most innovative lighting manufacturer in recent times. Its amazing beam fixtures redefined the moving light and spawned a plethora of 'me too' copy-cat fixtures. Now Clay Paky has done it all again with the Sharpy.

ULTRA LUX

If there are three types of moving lights – profile/spot, wash and beam – then the Sharpy is more likely to fit into the 'beam' category. With a killer 0° to 3° beam angle, the Sharpy produces a beautiful, sharp, almost parallel beam. It simply needs to be seen to be believed. What's more, it is bright – the specification says 55000lux at 20m. Hold your hand in front of the light at a few meters and you can actually feel the intense heat in the beam. Place your hand on the fixture and you notice the unit is barely warm, indicating that the vast majority of energy is being transferred through the optical system, rather than out of the back of the unit. The optical field is certainly peaked, however, given the beam is so small, this doesn't present a problem. There is no halation to speak of, resulting in an immaculate, strong beam that could easily outdo older searchlight generations 10 times the physical size of the Sharpy. In fact, the Sharpy has the potential to redefine the searchlight rulebook. What is amazing to note at this point is the lamp source is only 189W, meaning the total power consumption for the fixture comes in just shy of 1A! The source is a Phillips Platinum short arc MSD, burning at 8000° Kelvin and has a life of 2000 hours. It is this lamp that holds the key to the exceptional beam and size of the unit. With an extremely small arc size, Clay Paky is able to harness the majority of the light source in a relatively small area – creating a beam with little or no halation and amazingly crisp and clear definition.

LOW PROFILE

After being blown away by the beam of this fixture, it's the physical size that really makes you look twice. At only 16kg and barely 500mm high and 300mm wide, the Sharpy is a fixture that can easily be hung anywhere. Sharpy is tiny compared to its bigger 1500W cousins, and this size comes with huge advantages. Because Sharpy is so light and small, the pan and tilt speed is fast. The inertia of its head movement is minimal allowing for amazing movement, unprecedented in a moving head – the rapid movement of simultaneous pan and tilt is reminiscent of moving mirrors. Used in numbers, this fitting can really begin to get the same kind of snappy movements normally attributed to lasers.

There are some cons though. Due to the incredibly complex and compact optical chain, a colour-mixing system is not possible. A single colour wheel with 14 dichroic filters covers most of the normal 'go to' colours. Again, this wheel is incredibly fast – snapping to different colours at the extremities of the wheel is lightning fast. Due to the intensity of the lamp, even the more saturated colours hold their intensity and the split colour positions look amazing.

It is quickly apparent that the Sharpy will never be asked to actually 'light' something. However, the gobo module of the unit plays an important role in allowing the fixture to work effectively with aerial imagery. Somehow the technicians at Clay Paky have been able to fit 17 gobos inside the unit. Unfortunately, these gobos are fixed (non rotating). Saying that, there is an onboard, rotatable eight-facet prism, so implied gobo rotation is possible. Some clever texture selections make for some really great effects – it is amazing what can be done with such a narrow beam. The prism mechanism moves up and down the optical chain providing a zoom like effect – a new innovation that provides some more tricks in the bag of the designer.

INDUSTRY AGOG

Simon Barrett of Show Technology in Melbourne notes that the Sharpy is a special fixture that has generated a lot of excitement. "It really is a ground-breaking light, a breath of fresh air. The Sharpy is going to allow designers to create some great looks

never before seen. We are very excited about the year ahead with the Sharpy."

In this writer's mind, not since Martin's mass market penetration with Mac 500 and 600 Series has there been such an industry-wide buzz. Dramatic? Sure, but true. Tim Hall of ResolutionX in Melbourne was so impressed that his company quickly snapped up 16 Sharpy units after spotting them at PLASA. Tim says "It takes a lot to make my jaw drop, but the brightness of the Sharpy, while being so small and fast is amazing. They are going to people to realise previously-impossible new design concepts. Our Alpha Beam 700s have been hugely popular and we expect the Sharpy to complement them nicely."

Demand has seen delivery times for the new units slip to almost six weeks – a testament to the popularity of the new fixture. Already specified (sight unseen) on two new television projects, the Sharpy absolutely seems to be ready to make a splash on broadcast television and live events across Australia.

Price

\$xxxx

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