

Bright Future

A good light show can really enhance the clubbing experience. DJ Mag Tech talks to Lighthouse Studio about its work

It's 8am on Monday morning, and Ben Price — one half of The Lighthouse Studio, a light and design workshop based in Bristol — has had a quiet weekend. He needed it, after three intensive weeks in Norfolk setting up and breaking down Houghton Festival. As well as running The Lighthouse Studio with his long-time business partner Billy Jukes, Price is one of the creative leads at the event.

Price and Jukes were both in the dance music space for over a decade prior to setting up Lighthouse, having started running events at university. They began working together on a venue in Bristol that Ben set up through the Studio 89 parties, with which he was involved.

"That's where the idea of making the lights more interesting came into effect," Price says. "We were trying to find what makes a perfect clubbing experience. Through going to clubs for years, [we realised] people aren't utilising lights as well as they could be.

"It's about simplifying. [If you] over-spec a nightclub and put tonnes of different lights in there doing different things, it's sometimes detrimental to the experience. It would be like putting loads of sound in the club and making it really loud. You don't need a lot of sound, you just need it to sound good."

In 2020, the duo decided to channel this philosophy into The Lighthouse Studio, a light and design business that creates art pieces and bespoke installations for fashion shows, and most notably clubs and festivals. Lighthouse' work is instantly recognisable: it employs audio reactive LED strips and shapes to create a distinctive and immersive experience for clubbers and festival goers. Lighthouse has two main trains of work. It is responsible for permanent work, such as the distinctive lighting system in the main room of London's Night Tales, and the new installation in Bristol's The Love Inn; it also works on temporary site responsive projects



Night Tales installation

— those on this summer's festival circuit will have spotted temporary works from the studio at Houghton and Glastonbury, the latter of which included a collaboration with Batu.

Its site-responsive work is approached in a modular way. "Going into a venue or a field like Glastonbury, we'll go, 'We've got these lights, how can we design something with this that feels like it fits in and is responsive to the experience?'"

The studio employs several different light configurations in its work. "We use LED batons a lot, custom circles that we've built, and other things as well," Price says. "All of our lights are completely customised, they're either built by us or we've got a company to build them to our specifications. If you spec the lights to be unique, you can do the job of ten times as many lights." The lights are all controlled by software, which is developed in-house.

Its permanent club installations are designed with the people who are going to be operating the system

in mind. Lighthouse' lighting systems can be centrally controlled from an iPad, and come with presets. Members of staff with no light tech experience can easily flick between presets, or the system can be left to its own devices, reacting to the music playing through the club's system.

"The reason we're doing that is because a lot [of the venues] are smaller 150-, 200-, 300-capacity venues, and don't currently have the budget to put lights and a technician in every night."

Price and Juke are curious to see what happens when they install their lighting systems in larger venues. "Can you still have the same impact in an 800 or 1,000-cap venue using our systems?" Price muses.

• lighthousestudio.co.uk



Glastonbury



Houghton

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PICT: JAKE PHILLIPS