

ENVELOPING A MUSICAL RHAPSODY IN THE EMBRACE OF LIGHT

How Ground Control's Lighting Designer Naveen Deshpande infused experiential lighting for Anoushka Shankar's India Tour



Photo Credit: Maan Boruah

*Designing a lighting setup for an acclaimed Grammy nominee musical maestro's tour is no easy feat. But celebrated Lighting Designer, **Naveen Deshpande** knows how to nail the task to perfection. In a conversation with **PALM Expo Magazine's** team, Naveen dives deep into the nuanced process of designing the lights for The Anoushka Shankar Tour's India leg.*

Anoushka Shankar is a multi-hyphenate in the truest sense. An accomplished sitarist, a well-known film composer, the first Indian musician to perform live at the Grammy Awards with nine nominations to her name, Anoushka Shankar is also reputed for her global music tours, where she enraptures the audience with her fusion musical pieces. Her most recent tour, setup to support her latest EP releases, "**Chapter I: Forever, For Now**" and "**Chapter II: How Dark It Is Before Dawn**", which she has been promoting since last year, had a successful India leg at the beginning of the year. Ace lighting designer, **Naveen Deshpande** from **Ground Control** illuminated the Tour's India run, spread across multiple cities, including Delhi, Mumbai, Pune, Hyderabad, and Bangalore, marrying experiential lighting techniques with tried-and-tested lighting equipment. In a conversation with **PALM Expo Magazine's** team, Naveen Deshpande opens up about deploying transient lighting, the reason behind choosing a particular lighting inventory, and how he departed from conventional lighting setups for this Tour.

The Brief:

Talking about the brief given by the client for the Anoushka Shankar Tour,

Naveen shared, "The clear brief was emphasizing the importance of maintaining a dynamic atmosphere without excessive movement from the fixtures. The original design by Stuart Bailes outlined this requirement, and I was given some flexibility to improvise based on the set list tailored for the India leg of the tour. Anoushka Shankar herself had specific preferences, requesting that there be no complete blackouts during the show. Instead, she preferred dim lighting to be maintained during transitions, tunings, and specific solos. Thus, simplicity, minimalism, and thoughtfulness were the guiding principles for managing the lighting rig throughout the tour."

A recce of the venue can give a lighting designer a fair idea about the structural and technical nuances while installing the lights. But Naveen already had a good understanding of some of the venues, since he had previously worked as a lighting designer at these certain venues. According to Naveen, "Having previously worked in some of the venues on the tour, I already had a good understanding of their limitations. Additionally, the production agency responsible for the tour provided me with a detailed recce report. This report contained crucial information such as the existing fly bars at each venue, load-bearing capacity, power capacity, and other necessary details. This information was invaluable in helping me plan the lighting setup more effectively."

The Challenges:

Naveen surprisingly mentioned that he didn't face any significant technical or logistic challenge throughout the process. He explains, "The inventory suppliers we collaborated with were highly efficient, ensuring smooth execution of every setup. Their professionalism and attention to detail played a significant role in overcoming any potential obstacles that may have arisen. Overall, the seamless coordination and support from our suppliers contributed to a successful and hassle-free lighting design process for the tour."



Photo Credit: Gorkey Patwal

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"The primary goal was to ensure that the lighting design complemented the performance, guiding the audience through a journey of emotions and musical themes. Dimmer-based fixtures such as Fresnels, Par 16s, and Par CP62s were selected for their ability to create subtle silhouettes and low backlighting, establishing a captivating visual narrative that evolved with the music."

Naveen also affirms, "We rehearsed the lighting choreography with the artist before every show during soundcheck. This allowed us to fine-tune the lighting cues and ensure they were synchronized perfectly with the performance. Rehearsing during soundcheck provided an opportunity for the artist and me to collaborate closely and make any necessary adjustments to achieve the desired visual impact. Overall, this rehearsal process helped ensure a seamless and polished lighting performance throughout the tour."

The Lighting Setup:

Elaborating on the lighting setup for the Tour, Naveen reveals how he bypassed the conventional process, "For this tour, I departed from the conventional lighting setup by incorporating vintage dimmer-based fixtures like **Fresnels, Par 16s, and Par CP62s**. This choice aimed to preserve a warm tone while introducing subtle hues through washes and spots, enhancing the visual experience for both the artist and the audience."

Naveen continues, "During the show, the lights primarily featured transient effects rather than moving cues. The emphasis was on maintaining a static lighting setup to support the performance, with occasional subtle dimmer effects incorporated for certain upbeat tracks. This approach ensured a cohesive visual experience that complemented the music without distracting from the artists on stage."

With regards to the lighting inventory used and the configurations created with the inventory for the tour, the Floor Package was positioned in a semi-circular arrangement behind the band. The package featured:

- 20 X ARRI Junior 650W Fresnels with barn doors.
- 12 x ARRI Junior on C stands, which were strategically placed at variable heights ranging from 1.5m to 3.5m. These lights offered flexibility in illuminating different areas of the stage and these fixtures provided versatile lighting with adjustable focus, contributing to a classic yet dynamic ambiance.
- 8 x ARRI Junior on floor stands. These lights were placed on the floor using stands, which filled in gaps within the semicircle, ensuring uniform illumination across the stage.
- 8 X Washes, which were used to further complement the lighting setup and maintain consistency in brightness.

The Fly Package comprised a linear rig with 3 X LX's (2 overhead and 1 FOH), featuring:

- 12 X Moving Head Spots, which offered precise lighting control and added depth and dimension to the stage.
- 12 X Washes, which were used to bathe the stage in soft, atmospheric lighting, creating mood and ambiance.
- 14 X CP 62s with Lee Gel Paper 202 fixtures, which provided additional colour options, allowing for creative expression and visual variety.

The Par 16s on floor stands were positioned strategically as key lights. These fixtures provided essential front fill for each musician, ensuring optimal visibility and enhancing their presence on stage.

Naveen further adds that there was equipment variation, which means that



Photo Credit: Rithwik AR

while the make and model of lighting equipment varied from city to city, the selection predominantly comprised top-line brands such as **Claypaky**, **Acme**, and **Martin**, ensuring consistent quality and performance across the tour. For Mumbai, the inventory included **Claypaky Sinfonya** and **Mini B Washes** while the rest of the gear was from **ARRI**. For Delhi, the inventory comprised of **Martin MH7 Spots** and **MAC Aura XB Washes**, while the rest of the gear was from **ARRI** and **ETC Lighting**. For Pune, the inventory included **Acme Xperior Hybrid** and **Martin MAC Aura XB**, while the rest of the gear was from **ARRI** and **ETC Lighting**. For Hyderabad, the inventory featured **Lightsky Aurora Moving Heads** and **Lightsky TX 1920 HC**, while the rest of the gear was from **ARRI** and **ETC Lighting**. For Bangalore, the inventory comprised of **Lightsky Lunar BSW** and **MAC Aura XB Wash**, while the rest of the gear was from **ARRI** and **ETC Lighting**. The entire tour was meticulously pre-visualized and operated using a **grandMA3 desk**, enabling seamless execution and precise control over the

lighting effects.

Naveen comments, "Overall, this innovative blend of vintage and modern lighting elements, coupled with meticulous planning and execution, aimed to elevate Anoushka Shankar's performance while creating an immersive and unforgettable experience for the audience."

Delving behind the reason of choosing the above-mentioned inventory, Naveen elucidates, "The inventory selection for the tour was driven by the desire to create a visual narrative that seamlessly flowed across transitions, generating anticipation and enhancing the overall experience."

Naveen adds, "The primary goal was to ensure that the lighting design complemented the performance, guiding the audience through a journey of emotions and musical themes. Dimmer-based fixtures such as Fresnels, Par 16s, and Par CP62s were selected for their ability to create subtle silhouettes and low backlighting, establishing a captivating visual narrative that evolved with the music. By incorporating dimmer-based fixtures, the design aimed to build anticipation and intrigue the audience during transitions. These fixtures allowed for precise control over light intensity, enabling the creation of dramatic silhouettes and subtle lighting effects that heightened the audience's anticipation for what was to come next. The moving head spots served as effective static lights, highlighting key moments and performers on stage with precision. Washes, on the other hand, added depth and dimension to the stage, infusing the performance with the

required hues and atmospheric effects that complemented the music."

The Experience:

Recalling his experience as a lighting designer for the Anoushka Shankar Tour's India leg, Naveen concludes on a happy note, "Designing the lights for Anoushka Shankar's tour was a fantastic experience for me. This was the second time Ground Control had the opportunity to execute her tour, and I must say, each year brings new levels of excitement and satisfaction. Collaborating with Anoushka Shankar and her team to create the perfect lighting atmosphere for her performances was incredibly rewarding. Seeing the culmination of our efforts come to life on stage and witnessing the audience's response made it all worth it. Overall, it was a memorable and fulfilling experience, and I look forward to more opportunities to contribute to such incredible musical journeys in the future."

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