

New tungsten from Arri... True Blue (and if you start singing Madonna, find someone to slap you)

So I just finished a 4 camera sit com (and if you're from Atlanta, I bet you can narrow it down to one of two), and we had a pretty big tungsten order. To fill it, the rental house was forced to buy a bunch of new heads, which is how I ended up being able to get a good look at the new Tungsten lights from Arri, all a part of their True Blue line.

My experience was with the T2 (standard 2K), ST2 (Studio 2K) and the ST5 (Studio 5K). Let me say one thing up front: Arri makes good heads. I have seen how they stack up against other instruments of the same wattage, and they have a much higher intensity. They do a great job with their reflectors. I've always liked certain aspects of their tungsten line (except their 150s, but that's because I got a lot fewer dedo rentals after those came out). That being said, I'm going to review the lights from my 3rd Electric POV, because we're the ones that will be dealing with it more often than not. So here we go...

On the up side, the lighter weight was definitely a bonus. It was a nice change from having to hoist a bunch of Mole heads up and down a 12 step ladder. The lights had to hang for 5 weeks, so I liked the fact that they had the new tilt lock system. It worked like a champ, almost as good as the tilt lock on a 12 light Maxi (which is amazingly resilient to the point of being obnoxious at the end of the day when I'm trying to wrap). There was no cheating for tilting in that I had to break the bail to aim it. But that was good because once it was set, it stayed put, even after the grips beat the hell out of it while flagging it.

Luckily, we didn't set off the sprinklers, so I never did get to see the lamp's response to "a degree of... falling rain", but the heads sure do feel water tight. The literature also suggests that the heads are 25% cooler, but after a certain point, isn't 25% less burn still pretty painful? I mean, I had to apply the same kind of bandaid I usually do after brushing my arm against the head in an attempt to reach more than I'm supposed to. The top door was a nice addition. That is, until I broke it (more on that later). It was much better than what I'm used to with Arri, so it is a good thing. But that leads into what I didn't like about the heads.

First of all, the yoke moves. A lot. You can slide the yoke about a foot on the 2Ks; from right up against the front door to the very back. I can see what they were thinking because I bet it works like a champ with chimeras, but, quite frankly, it was a bit of a pain in the ass. Now, part of the reason was these heads were new out of the box, which means we had to put them together. So the yoke wasn't tight. Being ignorant of the new technology, we let it slide, and a couple of them did. We hung them on stirrups, tilted them down, and just about soiled ourselves as the head started sliding, looking like it was headed for the ground. Now, tightening them so they don't slide is simple; just used the star key that comes in the box with the head. But why does it have to be a star key? You know it's going to get lost. Had it been a Philips or flat head, no problem. So I imagine

that once these things are set, you better hope the people setting it have the same needs you do, because the odds are you're not going to have the tool to fix it.

On that note, let me mention the top door issue I had. Like a fool, I tried to open the top door by lifting and turning it (I thought that's how it was done- silly me). The top door popped off in my hand. The fix was easy; it's a spring, a washer, and a screw (same stupid star key as the yoke, by the way). But I was lucky because I broke it on a stage and the pieces were easy to find. I am willing to bet that if I had done the same thing on location at night, that would be a 3 eared head until replacement parts came in via USPS. So I wouldn't say that it's ideal. So close to a great thing, but just a small step away.

The last thing was the barn doors. These felt a lot stronger than Arri doors have in the past, which was a confidence booster. And they fit real easy in the ears of the head. My only (small) problem was how well they moved. We started having competitions to see who could spin the doors the most on the head (I don't remember the final number of rotations, but it was more than 3). Fun and games until I set the doors to hit a window and not the walls around it and noticed the next day that whatever slight vibrations had spun the doors enough for the window to no longer be highlighted, but to have a video slash going through them. Whoops. So there's too much action on the doors. Not a big problem, but something less than ideal.

And that's it. As a gaffer, would I order the new True Blue line on a job, knowing what the guys would have to deal with? Sure. Like I said; they're quality lights. But I would have to take them all aside and give them a heads up before we got deep into a night interior or stage work.

Here's the web site if you want to visit:

www.arri.com/prod/lighting/product_pages/true_blue_us/img/ARRI%20True%20Blue%20Brochure%20US.pdf

Good luck!

-Dave