

Designed by Sohail Mansuri, the Bismil Ki Mehfil Tour featured a 15-metre-wide structure rigged at 12 points, brought to life with advanced tools like Claypaky Tamboras, GobelinTulle, Vectorworks, Depence R4, and more



THE SPARK IGNITED: PASSION, PRECISION AND INDIA'S LIGHTING FRONTIER

Sohail Mansuri on Previsualisation, Immersive Shows, and the Road Ahead

*The professional lighting market in India is poised to make strides, in tandem with India's booming live events sector. On the cusp of this evolution, stand India's lighting professionals, whose experimentation, expertise and creativity prove vital for the next phase; international recognition. In an exclusive conversation, PALM Expo Magazine sits down with **Sohail Mansuri**, one of India's leading lighting designers, to discuss the tech redefining the field, from pioneering previsualisation studios to intelligent follow-spot systems.*



Sohail Mansuri has designed some of India's largest productions,

According to a 2024 report by **PwC India**, the live events and production technology sector in India is projected to grow at over **11% CAGR** through 2028, fuelled by a surge in artist tours, IP-driven festivals, and an escalating demand for immersive audiovisual experiences. Few professionals are more attuned to this momentum

than **Sohail Mansuri**, whose lighting designs have illuminated stages across more than 20 countries. His collaborations read like a who's who of the music world, **Salim-Sulaiman, Badshah, Sunidhi Chauhan, Vishal Mishra, Sid Sriram, DJ Chetas** among them. Making him the natural choice to illuminate where India's live production industry is headed next.

Rewriting Rules

Opening the conversation on automation, Mansuri notes a decisive shift in the industry: "We've started accommodating automation in our designs. We use kinetic technologies from **Kinesys System Elevation Hoists** and **Movecat** systems for our lighting rigs." These systems enable fluid movement and dynamic rigging, elevating show design to new heights.

Mansuri lauds intelligent tracking systems for their efficiency. "I prefer **Zac-track** and **Robe RoboSpot** for their intelligent follow-spot solutions. I love it when things move automatically. I'm a gadget freak, anything with parts that can be controlled excites me. That mindset, I believe, is an asset in this line of work," he explains.

Wireless control and remote access to the systems are fast becoming a more and more crucial element in the lighting design. LDs and operators need more mobility, flexibility and freedom to streamline their workflows and easily access the functionalities they need.

Systems like the **GrandMA3** provide operation via tablets and phones with a direct access to all console features. Mansuri has fully integrated this workflow into his studio. It allows his team to move freely during rehearsals and setups, something he believes is crucial for refining cues on the fly.

Battery-powered and RF operated fixtures such as the **Astera Titan Tubes** and **Xylo Bands** are also gaining popularity, thanks to their wireless DMX support and quick setup advantages. "They're ideal for outdoor shows and tight turnarounds," notes Mansuri, who sees these technologies becoming standard across productions.

India Levels Up

Globally, pixel mapping, micro-LED panels, and dynamic content playback through media servers are making shows more immersive than ever. Mansuri believes India has what it takes to compete with international standards, stating, "India is stepping up to meet international standards. I already have access to fixtures like the **GLP JDC2**, which is a hybrid strobe with DG effects and 12 control segments, and the **Martin MAC Aura Raven XIP**, featuring 234 individually controllable LEDs positioned behind the front lens to create an enhanced pixelated aura backlight."

These high-spec fixtures are making their way into Indian productions, and Sohail is eager to use them more widely. "These are among my favourite fixtures. I'd love to incorporate them into more of our upcoming shows."

Rising to the Moment

Mansuri lifted the curtain on a recent triumph, one that dazzled audiences but was not without its trials, none other than the lighting design for India's leading Sufi sensation, **Bismil ki Mehfil's** tour. "This was a very unique project," he begins. "We had a big circular structure that had to be mounted and rigged. It had a 15-metre diameter truss. This circular structure was lifted at a 50-degree incline using twelve rigging points. The structure weighed about 2.9 tonnes. Distributing that load safely was of paramount importance," he reveals.

The lighting rig featured **Claypaky Tambora** pixel-controlled curtain lights and **Claypaky Sharp X Frames** as hybrid moving heads for dynamic linear effects. Mesh LED screens and **ECO2JET** jets added depth and texture. Surrounding the audience, a 360° laser show with **12 X 40 W RGB Kvant lasers** created an immersive lighting experience. For a next-level visual experience, holographic 3D projections were layered onto **GobelinTulle** scrim cloth. The

Mansuri's studio pioneers previz technology in India, offering artists a 360-degree, immersive preview of their concert experience



entire design was on **Vectorworks**, and the programming pipeline ran on **Depence R4 by Synchronorm**. Two **GrandMA3** full-size consoles handled the lighting control, with **Resolume** for video playback, **Aran** for SFX, **Beyond** for lasers, and several other tools ensuring tightly integrated show control.

Designing Tomorrow, Today

"One of the most important technologies we use is called **previz**," Mansuri explains. "I own a lighting studio in India, possibly the first of its kind, where we previsualise entire concert production and experience." With connected lighting consoles and programming systems, they deliver complete show planning ahead of time.

Mansuri's studio employs virtual reality headsets, allowing artists and directors to experience their shows from a virtual venue, providing a 360-degree perspective. "We show the artist what the audience will see. The moment they put on the VR glasses, they're transported right into the heart of the design. From there, we build the experience together. It's this level of care, intention, and tech-driven immersion that makes our previz meetings far more impactful. Though previsualisation is still rare in India, other studios and designers are following suit."

Next Steps and the Way Forward

As India's live entertainment ecosystem rapidly expands, the appetite for intelligent, immersive lighting design is growing just as fast. With experimental professionals like Sohail Mansuri embracing technologies like previsualisation, automation, wireless control, and intelligent tracking, the future of lighting in India looks bright.

Mansuri also leaves a word of encouragement for the next wave of designers: "You have an obligation to double your efforts, stay curious, stay inquisitive. The onus is on us to ensure that India graduates to the next level, on the global stage. The tech is there, the talent is there, the demand is there, all that remains is for us to execute this."

His optimism is grounded in experience, and his passion is matched by a deep technical understanding. If the future of Indian lighting design had a name, it would be innovation, and Sohail Mansuri is already sketching out its blueprints.