

AN EVENT TO DYE FOR

If there can be said to be a major date in the UK pop music calendar then it is the Brit Awards – as famous for who doesn't turn up as who does. Pro learns how event photographer Stuart Morley of System Insight and his Mitsubishi dye-subbers met the challenge of covering the after-show party WORDS Gavin Stoker

IT MIGHT NOT BE THE TYPICAL digital output choice for photographers who need photo-quality output and portability – those requirements usually point towards an inkjet printer – but the dye-sublimation printer shouldn't be underestimated. At high-profile events, dye-subbers can be veritable lifesavers for event photographers who need to be both fleet of foot and rapid of print.

Boasting associations with both Mitsubishi and Nikon, Stuart Morley of

Southampton-based System Insight has been advising and supplying event photographers with dye-sub printer packages for the past five years. But two years ago he too was inspired to pick up a camera.

"Most people selling this type of equipment are just shifting boxes and don't really know how the thing works," Morley reasons, adding that his company, System Insight, now trains would-be event photographers into the bargain.

At the behest of sponsor Nokia, Morley's expertise enabled him to set up a system involving 12 wireless Nikons at last year's Brit Awards after-show party – the ambitious aim being that everyone at the event would go home with a pictorial souvenir. The bash, upstairs at Ears Court, was Valentines themed, as the show took place on 14 February. The set-up was complete with burlesque performers and dodgem cars.

"They wanted to have party photography; we had to produce a





Covering the Brits after-show party is no mean feat and it's a great testing ground for an event set-up. System Insight tested the mettle of its set-up – shooting on Nikon DSLRs, viewing and printing on Mitsubishi touch screens and dye-sub, and distributing 4000 images on the night – and it passed with flying colours.

photo print of each of the 4000 guests in under four hours," Morley recalls. "The images had to be back in their hands within minutes, so it was as much down to a streamlined workflow as the speed of the printer. Photographers tend to forget that even though they have a printer, they don't have everything they need for event photography."

The pictures from the Nikon DSLRs were sent back to three IT5000 Mitsubishi touch-screen systems linked up to dye-sub printers, part of Morley's magical 'fulfilment area', located behind Wizard of Oz-style drapes.

"Event photography is 20 per cent photography, 40 per cent workflow and 40 per cent sales and marketing – and as a testament to that, 10 of the photographers had never seen the cameras until an hour before the event," he reveals. "We're not doing wedding photography; it's almost as if someone is taking a picture on their mobile phone. I would have come up to you and your partner, taken your photo, given you a voucher, told you where the fulfilment

was. And two or three minutes later you could walk over and get your free print."

Facing the music

Morley reveals that before the Brits event he and his team wrote some special software governing the workflow, and packed enough materials to be able to generate up to 6000 dye-sub prints from the event. Images were also watermarked.

"That too was part of the workflow," he explains. "If you have thousands of photos of course it's otherwise difficult to locate the right ones. Printing it and sticking it in a mount is dead easy."

With booze flowing liberally at such events, you would imagine there were some unexpected hiccups to circumnavigate on the night, but Morley claims the evening passed "like a walk in the park."

"This is something we specialise in," he adds, "so, whether it's a small Masonic do for 80 people, or something for a thousand people, there's really no difference apart from the type of

workflow we might be using and how much time we've got with the guests; it's totally scaleable, if it's bigger you just throw more resources at it."

The event and dye-sub expert adds that the only thing he was relying on from the Brits venue was the power. "Yet all the systems were developed so that if we did lose power, we wouldn't lose an image. The thing about the Brit Awards was that it was mission critical – it had to work."

Morley notes that the touch-screen system Mitsubishi has developed is ideal for events, because it's so easy to use. "You find a lot of traditional photographers, when they go to an event will take Photoshop with them. That's the last thing you want to be taking. You get it right in-camera. At the Brits we did no post-production at all: off the camera, printed out, end of." ■

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