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# Lighting for The X Factor Six Chair Challenge with Tom Sutherland



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This Sunday the six chair challenge returns to ITV's The X Factor, as the celebrity judges aim to whittle down their selection of contestants as we are within touching distance of the live shows.

Lighting Designer Tom Sutherland of DX7 Design, who designs the lighting set-up for the audition shows before handing over to Dave Davey for the live shows explained: "The six chair challenge was a new feature introduced last year to spice up the show, basically each judge has to narrow down numerous contestants by rewarding them with a place on one of the six seats which will carry them through to the next round. But, even if they've been given a seat, they can always be kicked off and replaced by somebody else, which makes a really intense and emotional atmosphere in the arena. When I design for this part of the show, I try to come up with something profound and dramatic, but also recognisable to the theme of The X Factor."

Tom began working on The X Factor six years ago, originally as a programmer and operator, before stepping up to design the audition rounds three years later. PRG United Kingdom Account Director Kelly Cornfield said “Tom’s a designer who always dreams big and wants to leave his mark on a show, he’s brilliant at having bold and ambitious ideas, but still keeping an element of realism and working within a budget. He’s a great guy and an absolute pleasure to work with.”

Tom continued: “We were going to stick with last year’s rig for this year’s show, but I was playing around in WYSIWYG one night and came up with a concept where all the lights were mounted on curved pipes and look as though they’re falling in on the stage. I showed the design to Dave Hallett, the X Factor Gaffer, and PRG’s Kelly Cornfield, who both saw it as a huge challenge, but together they made it possible. Dave said that he’s never done as many 3D drawings before as he did to calculate the curvature of the pipe, the guy worked so hard to realise my idea in little over a week. It’s easy for me to plot a bunch of lights on a computer, but it’s thanks to Dave and his fantastic crew this design came off.” When the team arrived on site it came down to programmer Nick Hansen to bring Tom’s vision to life which he easily accomplished, exceeding Tom’s expectations.

This year’s six chair challenge was shot in Wembley Arena in early September, aside from The X Factor, Tom has been working alongside PRG: Live in North America on another Simon Cowell TV show, La Banda Oficial, a show dedicated to the search for the next Latin American boy band.

Tom’s design for last year’s six chair challenge earned him a Knight of Illumination Awards nomination in the television category. The awards are announced Sunday evening at London’s Troxy venue. PRG would like to wish Tom the best of luck at the awards and are excited to see his design on television this weekend.

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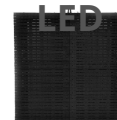
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