

The patented dipless crossfade circuitry takes care of that! However the only thing I would suggest at this stage of TEMPUS's development is not to take too seriously the automatic timings between 5 seconds and around twenty. It isn't very accurate at this level. It did a 10 second cue in six! It would be better to do those sort of cues by hand. But the little timer really comes into its own on longer cues. I'm sure many of us have had to do long cues on these tiny boards with their miniscule sliders. It's no fun trying to get a smooth and slow crossfade out of a fader that only has a track of a few millimetres long. Now with TEMPUS you can forget that problem and put it onto the timer.

The control desk is very handsome with a red face panel, white sliders for preset one and grey for preset two. The sliders all have a high quality carbon track potentiometer with integral slot closure which keeps the conductivity in and liquids and dust out. The very tough surround is coloured black. Inside, each block of six control channels has self-mastering circuitry with the integrated control signal outputs going to a 2m-long flexible cable terminated by a robust, metalclad 8 pole plug with mechanical latch. (Yes! It really is a very tough and good control connection system they have on TEMPUS as opposed to that very poor one on the MINI 2).

If your funds are limited you could purchase initially say a twelve-way desk. Then as funds become available you could buy additional twelve-way modules called TEMPUS 12X desks. These have channel controllers only. So you can add these twelve-way units to your original desk and keep the whole lot on one set of masters only. This is the same as the Electrosonic LINKIT system.

Each compact dimmer pack, with integral carrying handles contains either 6 x 10amp or 3 x 5kw Thyristor dimmers. (It's interesting how STRAND say 6 x 10amp dimmers rather than giving a specific wattage maximum. Does this mean that these dimmers will take a loading of 2.5kw without taking the fuse?) The pair of Thyristors for each dimmer are mounted on generous heat sinks and are surge and continuously rated for the maximum load. Each dimmer has fairly substantial filtering considering its size; including a radio frequency filter on either side of the dimmer. The recessed front panel has twin output sockets for each 10amp dimmer channel or a 32amp 2-pole and earth socket for each 5kw dimmer. The front panel also has a power supply indicator and a very useful earth continuity lamp, also an 8-pole socket for the control cable. The recess in the right hand side of the pack houses the mains cable grip and also a row of HRC fuse links, each one with a neon indicator to show its status. The dimmer rack, like the control desk is both very tough and smart. Even the red paintwork looks as if it will survive many lorry trips. One problem though, is that STRAND recommend that you only stack the dimmers two high, which means that a touring show in a date with limited wing space may take up a lot of room.

There it is then! On first sighting it seems a very clever little system and well designed too.

ADRIAN DIGHTAM

Bespoke Lighting from the Standing Rig

GRAHAM WALNE

The pages of a technical publication may not be the place one would normally expect to find reference to our current economic climate, but our world is a precarious one and our field the likeliest area for the accountant's scrutiny. Technical endeavours rely for their success on vast amounts of time, manpower and capital equipment. It is important now as never before that we ensure maximum effect is achieved with minimum effort. It is high time it became fashionable to complete a task ahead of schedule, to buy or hire all one's needs and still have money left over.

The lighting field is a great consumer of money and in the last edition of 'Cue', Adrian Dightam highlighted the pressure being exerted on us by manufacturers anxious to capitalise on the memory control's tendency for built-in obsolescence. Let us remind them that we are merely a part of the package that the audience has come to see; we are not an audio-visual spectacular. Let the competition result in simpler, safer, cooler, cheaper, lighter and brighter equipment. Let us ensure that management can fill the seats by affording good managers, good publicity, good actors and good plays. The latest systems are redundant if no one comes to see their work.

Above all, let us ensure that our time and money are spent effectively. It is to this end that this article is directed. The golden rule must at all times be to remember the audience, to try and see the results our work will have on them. Maybe a painted moulding will look just as good as a real one, maybe there need not be real silk or real leather either. Or maybe we need not re-rig our lights for every production. Maybe we could achieve a standing rig that would save production time and money. The familiarity would save lighting time.

About 200 of the 300 shows I have lit were presented either at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art in the sixties, or at the Royal Academy of Music in the seventies. In both establishments I evolved a standing rig out of necessity – in both places technical staff, budget and time were either minimal or non-existent, but we still had to produce professional shows on a weekly basis.

At first glance both RADA and RAM appear to have fairly set productions but this is not so – it is true that one presents straight drama and the other opera but visiting directors (and designers in the case of RAM) ensure that there is always a new challenge. Both are proscenium oriented, RADA at 24' with a full fly tower, RAM at 36' with a half tower. The rig at RADA has changed considerably since I was there from an LC with 58's and 53's to an MMS and just about every luminaire there is. The Royal Academy of Music's rig is new and all Rank, controlled by a Duet.

A standing rig is nothing new of course but it does appear to have come into disrepute.

To a certain extent this is understandable – no one wants a restriction placed upon their creativity but such a system affords more time to devote to other areas. Several directors at RAM have expressed great reluctance in accepting what appears to be a pre-packed lighting design, created before models and score were ever seen. Later they are usually grateful for the extra stage time a standing rig affords, time that can be used for rehearsal not rigging. A standing rig reflects the tastes of its designer – not just the productions it caters for. I like sharp highlights so my rigs always possess a lot of backlight and crosslight – useful anyway in opera which is most of my work now. Other features are colour washes. From an early stage of my career I found the problem of too few lanterns somewhat solved by using a fairly light colouring of acting light combined with a wash of a suitable colour, usually darker and provided by two fresnels FOH. This can be backed up by other fresnels in different key colours – the main area pairs still providing the key and the moulding. Generally the washes are confined to a warm colour and a cool colour and I especially like the blending this technique provides; it picks out relevant colours of set and costume and hence the mood can easily be changed merely by the use of one or two channels, leaving the basic actor keys fairly untouched. This can simplify lighting tremendously. I am a great user of crosslight – especially in the vital downstage strip and I am always disappointed when the set either obscures the position or is too light to take the continued beam. I was introduced to crosslight twenty-five years ago in one of the hardest working standing rigs ever – that of the London Palladium. Here a total of 32 pageants were assembled onto 8 ladders which in turn were suspended on tracks – moved freely in between numbers or scenes. Each ladder thus had 4 pageants, usually in different basic colours and hence the whole stage could easily be crosslit in any colour. I copied this technique at RADA by building ladders of 2K fresnels hung on tracks and up/down bars and again at RAM using T64's.

The FOH is usually fairly static and in my time at RADA served the apron – now part of the scenic area of the main stage. This meant it could be focussed into areas and left virtually untouched from show to show – just a tidy and a recolour. I extended this at RAM to cover the whole stage and this has paid off since about two-thirds of their productions have limited set and rely heavily on lighting with no time at all for focus – just come in at 10.00 a.m., switch on, plot and dress at 2.00 p.m. An echo of my childhood Palladium days when weekly variety meant 10.00 a.m., band call for a 2.30 matinee.

Both the RADA and RAM possessed full wrap around cycs and the high cost of colour now has tended to demand that a good choice stays at RAM for a long time – there