

IN THIS ISSUE:

**On Tour: Mike & The Mechanics**  
Live at the York Barbican

**Technical: Ayrton's MagicPanel FX**  
Multifunctional eye-candy

**A History of Festival Sound, pt1**  
LSi's Tech Trail continues

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# The Tempest

Theatrical sorcery from the RSC

SHOW REVIEW: ISE, AMSTERDAM • HAWTHORN HITS A MILESTONE • THE ASD'S WINTER SCHOOL  
SENNHEISER'S NEW DIGITAL 6000 • TENORS OF ROCK, LAS VEGAS • AVOLITES IN PROFILE  
VIDEO DESIGNER NINA DUNN • EARLY STAGERS • LD TOM CAMPBELL - AND MUCH MORE ...





# classic gear

KK Wheel | Rob Halliday ...



You might have noticed that there are some quite obvious classics that haven't (yet) featured in *Classic Gear*.

Usually, that's because there's some key piece of information that I haven't found. So, who was the first to use truss (it was the 60s, no-one quite seems to remember)? Or, why is the gobo called the gobo (so many theories, so few definitive answers!)? There's a list of these little mysteries just waiting to be solved; most come from the pre-internet era, so even the mighty Google has no idea.

Sometimes, though, an answer just pops up from somewhere completely unexpected, and one more of these mysteries is solved. That is the case right now with the KK Wheel.

If you know what that is, it marks you out as being of a certain era - my generation, or one or two just before. It would appear in the 'effect' section of rental catalogues, an intriguing name attracting the eye. You might spot some in action on real shows, mounted to the front of the spotlights of the day; a Patt 23 for a smaller show, more commonly a Sil 30 - something about the Silhouette's optics suited it. It was nothing complicated: a disc about the same size as the colour wheels of the day, punched with variously sized holes, driven by a small motor, mounted to a frame so that the whole thing could slot into the lantern's colour runners and the disc could rotate through the front of the beam. Through this simple means, it gave life to otherwise static gobos, conjuring fire, or water, or the movement of light through trees. It animated lighting, in an era before moving lights - before video.

The basic idea wasn't new - Strand had 'flicker' and 'rainbow' wheels, manually operated and with different patterns to their breakup, back in their 1925 catalogue. And



it would evolve over the years: the standard KK Wheel had a slightly rough-and-ready, 'theatrical' feel to it. The motor was a mains-powered motor; it ran at one speed; you took what you could get. DHA ultimately renamed it the Animation Disc, different patterns available for different effects, with a low-voltage motor, variable speed controllers or even, through DMX, the ability to control the speed from the lighting desk.

To many of 'that' era, the refined version would still just be called the KK Wheel - even when no-one any longer remembered where

that peculiar name had actually come from.

It was the *Minuette* (see *Classic Gear* September 2016) that threw up the answer. CCT's Don Hindle described how the company took its name from its the first initials of its founders, Colin Phillips, Colin Turner and Terry Fitzgerald. He described how Phillips, who ran his own advertising agency and who had already designed Dolby's famous 'Double D' logo, designed the elegant CCT Logo. He talked about how the company was set up originally to rent lighting equipment to theatres and amateur companies across south London. And he mentioned that once the business was up and running, they brought in someone to run it day-to-day: Keith Kennedy - who, in addition to his management duties, would invent new products for his customers to rent, such as a disc of metal with holes punched in it. He seems to have followed CCT house style and named it

from his initials - the KK Effect, or KK Wheel.

So that's that one cleared up. Maybe its time to have another go at the origins of 'gobo' ...

KK Projected Animation Effect - Yours For £2.20/week (in 1975!) ☒

➤ [www.theatre crafts.com/archive/album-viewer.php?id=43&page=1&type=a](http://www.theatre crafts.com/archive/album-viewer.php?id=43&page=1&type=a)

Rob has been working in and writing about lighting for more than 25 years, on shows around the world. He wonders if this makes him a classic... or just old!



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