

LIGHT & SOUND INTERNATIONAL • JANUARY 2018  
ENTERTAINMENT • PRESENTATION • INSTALLATION

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The logo for Light & Sound International (LSI) is displayed in a white circle. It consists of the letters 'LSI' in a bold, sans-serif font. The 'L' and 'S' are black, while the 'I' is white with a red square at its top right corner.

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DIGITAL  
EDITION

# Marilyn Manson

## Heaven Upside Down



SHOW PREVIEW: ISE, AMSTERDAM • DOUGHTY: ENGINEERING SUCCESS  
AUDIO OVERHAUL FOR ICC • THE BFI'S POP-UP PICTURE HOUSE • FUTURE TECH  
ILLUMINATING THE GENERALI TOWER • IN PROFILE: TSL'S SAM TAMPLIN • AND MUCH MORE ...

plasma media



# classic gear

Le Maitre Pyroflash | by Rob Halliday . . .



With Christmas only just gone by as I file this copy, the

inspiration for this month's column will probably be clear: *oh yes, it was* panto - that most traditional of British entertainment. Nestled away at the front of many a panto stage were the small round shapes of Le Maitre Pyroflash cartridges, a product now so comfortably familiar we've perhaps all forgotten what a game changer it was when it first appeared back in 1977.

Until then, if you wanted a flash or a bang onstage, you had to take matters into your own hands, a bit of flash powder spooned on the top of a fuse wire, the wire perhaps nicked so it would melt in just the right place. Le Maitre's joint MD Rick Wilson remembers roadies pouring flash powder into guttering laid across the front of the stage then setting it off with their Zippo lighter . . .

At one gig a friend of his, Martin Blake, wondered aloud if there should be a better way of doing this. A few months later, Blake appeared with a solution, virtually the Pyroflash system we know today: the round plastic Pyroflash cartridge containing the flash powder, sealed with a paper cover on top and with two metal pins protruding from the base - the Flash Pod base, into which you pushed the cartridge. And the mains-powered Pyroflash controller: two switched low-voltage firing circuits, a safety keyswitch, and a 'fire' button. Connecting the base to the controller were three-pin Bulgin cables chosen to reduce the chance of accidental cross-connection with anything else.

Blake was, however, distraught; the fireworks company he'd offered his creation to had just told him thanks, but they were now going to make their own version. Fortunately, Blake had patented the key parts of the system, so he, with the backing of



Wilson and Harold Berlinski, a local businessman who recognised how clever the invention was, created Le Maitre.

The pyrotechnic content was originally handled by the Reverend Ronald Lancaster, a chemistry teacher at Kimbolton School and founder of Kimbolton Fireworks. Other fireworks manufacturers later took over, but since supplying Le Maitre was

never their top priority, manufacture was brought in-house at Le Maitre's Croydon base in south London as the 5 November commemorations approached. The injection-moulded cartridges were made by a small local manufacturer Blake had found - Arthur Ball in nearby South Norwood. Though Ball has long since passed away, the same company still makes the cartridges for Le Maitre today.

The original two effects were the 'theatrical flash' - a little flash with a lot of smoke, and the more spectacular 'silver star', a sparkling flash accompanied by a crackling sound. Coloured smoke, coloured fire and maroons followed, and today the range includes many more effects besides.

Today, Pyroflash is found everywhere from school plays (what can be a better introduction to the joys of working backstage than pressing a big red 'fire' button to make an explosion!), to the biggest stages of the world. It's brilliantly intuitive to use, yet has always promoted safe operation: surely, everyone knows to take the key with them when changing the pyro. It has

been in production now, continuously and remarkably unchanged, for 40 years. A true living classic. ☒

**Le Maitre Pyroflash:**

➤ [www.lemaitretld.com/products/pyrotechnics/pyroflash/](http://www.lemaitretld.com/products/pyrotechnics/pyroflash/)

From the archive:

➤ [//plasa.me/lsimarch1986](http://plasa.me/lsimarch1986)

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!



## AORUN ULTRA-BRIGHT BEAM FIXTURE

- 2.3° BEAM ANGLE
- 8 & 16 FACET PRISM (COMBINABLE)
- 3 ANIMATION EFFECTS
- 169MM WIDE LENS FOR BIG MID-AIR EFFECTS
- FOLDABLE QUICK TRIGGER CLAMPS ATTACHED

Aorun, an ultra-bright beam fixture which combines high output, fast movements and an extensive feature package. The fixture utilises a 330W HRI light source which produces heavy mid-air effects through the special designed 169mm lens.

The fixture has an eight and sixteen facet prism on-board. These prisms can be combined for even wider effects. Additionally, the gobo wheel offers three animation ranges, creating unique beam effects. A softening frost completes the effect package of the Aorun.

