

# Lighting & Sound international

July-August 2006

entertainment, presentation, communication

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## Wireless DMX Shoot-Out

Technical Focus puts six systems to the test

## Eurovision 2006, Athens

Bigger, bolder, brasher than ever before!

## Elton John On Tour

L&SI catches up with Sir Elton's latest production

## ABTT Show & TEA Conference

News from the show floor and a report from the Theatre Engineering & Architecture Conference

### PLUS!

- Tungsten Wash shoot-out at the ROH
- Tony Andrews interviewed
- The PLASA Show gears up for action
- Imagination: set for expansion
- ETC unveils its new London HQ
- LD Howell Binkley in Profile
- Back to School at the Guildhall
- The Who & The Zutons
- *Recollected Works* with Ian Dow

## Cascade

## Art & Culture at Alnwick Gardens

# Classic Gear: CM Lodestar Self-Climbing Chain Hoist

Rob Halliday takes a nostalgic but instructive look back at the tools that have shaped the industry . . .

Often, it's the simplest ideas that are the best. Usually it's also the simplest ideas that are the hardest to come by. Too obvious for some, not obvious enough for others, and so overlooked until one person has a moment of clarity.

Like: why haul the heavy hoist all the way into the roof when you could leave it at ground level and just pull the chain up? Then have the hoist haul itself, and the load - truss, lights, speakers, all of the paraphernalia of modern performance - up the chain. Makes no difference to the hoist. Makes a lot of difference to the riggers . . .

We take this for granted, now. As countless chain hoists munch their way through miles of chain, ingesting, pulling, spitting out the other side, on performances of all styles all over the world, we no longer even think about it. But it wasn't always thus. Chain hoists used to live in the roof. Look at the first brochure for the classic electric chain hoist, the CM Lodestar, and you will find no mention of inverted use - though the product itself appears remarkably unchanged through its 50-plus year history.

So who had that flash of inspiration? Well, this industry of ours is very poor at keeping its own history - we prefer to look on to the next day, the new gig. But opinion seems to be that it was Bill McManus who started with this approach; though sadly no longer with us, in interview he talked of being the first to fly lights and sound for arena



The CM Lodestar, c. 1955.  
(photo: LTM)

shows, starting with Jethro Tull in the late sixties or early seventies. The ice shows which were sweeping the US in the early seventies were also early adopters of the approach.

At the time, this was revolutionary. It freed the design of rock and roll shows from what could be supported from the ground. It freed performances of all types from being stuck in conventional performance spaces. It freed the rest of the lighting and sound industries to improve because it made anything possible.

And though it has competitors, the CM Lodestar is the chain hoist that has seen it all. The unit offered a good ratio of weight to strength. More importantly, it used grease instead of oil for lubrication, and the familiar curved edges allowed the chain to flow in and out easily, even when used inverted. The Lodestar was the rigger's choice over heavier units from other manufacturers.

They continue to do their job in much the same way today - uncomplainingly. Sure, you can now get fancy variable-speed hoists with multiple deads and computer control. But most of the time, on most of the jobs, you don't need that. You need a hoist that is simple, rugged and, above all, reliable. The Lodestar ticks all of those boxes.

We rely on them so much we no longer even notice them, the growl as they work, the ka-chunk of a bump up or a bump down. But, arguably, they have made our industry what it is today.

You can find the original CM Lodestar brochure at:  
>>> [www.liftturnmove.co.uk](http://www.liftturnmove.co.uk)

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