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plasma media



classic gear

CCT Minuette | by Rob Halliday . . .



In my mind, CCT's tiny Minuette family of lighting fixtures - principally the narrow and wide zoom profiles, the Fresnel and the Pebble Convex - are classics because of their remarkable combination of compact size and great performance. They were - still are - the perfect light for small theatres; the tiny Minuettes always seemed able to vanish from view, yet still packed a useful punch even hidden away in tight spaces on bigger shows.

Plus despite feeling light to handle, they always had an air of ruggedness to them. Turns out, they should also be deemed classics because of the innovative way they were made.

The follow-up to the product that made CCT's name - the Silhouette zoom profile - Minuette came from a chance discovery by Sil designer and CCT R&D director Bob Diechen of a 500W tungsten-halogen bulb, the M40, in Thorn's lamp catalogue. It was rugged, bright and, crucially, tiny. Diechen realised they could do something with it, and set out to design a new, compact fixture around it.

Building that design was made possible by CCT's early investment in computer aided design and manufacture. Also by the cunning way CCT's John Schwiller devised of using their computerised punch press to make tiny, precisely positioned, carefully controlled holes in flat sheets of aluminium - perforations defining and tracing out the edges of components, a bit like a lighting Airfix kit. The components went through CCT's in-house paint booth flat in their sheet, then were popped out and assembled into a light. Different sized perforations gave components that could be folded to shape by hand - portions of the rectangular light were assembled like this then just screwed together. The result was stronger and lighter than welding or rivetting. It was inspired - and



won CCT an award for 'Most Innovative Use of Production Automation.' A bonus: it let Minuette kits ship flat-packed to other countries for final assembly, usefully ducking under import tariffs.

Thorn delayed releasing a theatre version of the lamp, which gave CCT's team a year to complete the range and refine the design - in particular, working with the British Optical Lens Company to create a production version of the gentle soft-edged lens Schwiller had first

made by holding a piece of patterned glass behind a standard plano-convex lens. The resulting Pebble Convex Minuette was a wonderful light, soft edged like, but less flary than, a Fresnel and with a wider beam range as a bonus.

A last minute issue came when Thorn finally announced the price of the lamp: £16. A lot when the rest of the fixture would cost just £25. CCT's Don Hindle talked them down to £9, and the Minuette range debuted in 1978. Very quickly, Minuettes were everywhere, growing brighter four years later when CCT noticed Thorn offering a 650W variant of the lamp and John Schwiller revised the Minuette's ventilation to accommodate it. Minuette even expanded into display lighting as the Helios range.

Many tried building similar lights, but no-one ever quite matched Minuette's combination of size, power and precision. You just had to learn the two Minuette knacks: getting the barndoors and colour frame into the Fresnel/PC, and getting the cunning slotted shutters in and out of the profiles.

You still find them everywhere, and if you want to - and you might well want to - you can still buy them, special order only but definitely still available.

CCT Minuette at Theatrecrafts:

▶ [//plasa.me/fnxms](https://plasa.me/fnxms)

And new:

▶ [//plasa.me/yw25z](https://plasa.me/yw25z)

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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