

operate, and will be a godsend to those theatres out of the metropolis where dry-ice supply is difficult.

The news that Modelbox, the theatre CADD company, had been bought by

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White Light, has generally been received well by the industry, who acknowledge that the organizational and production skills associated with White Light will allow it to guide Modelbox towards the market it needs. Modelbox already has 100 theatres on file and is expanding this graphic database weekly. At the ABTT show their impressive demonstrations alongside the White Light lighting display gave a neat insight into the potential for computer-aided design development to lead the way into the production processes of the next century. An integrated design system that allows the scenic designer to share a digital drawing with the lighting (and sound) designer cannot help but lead to a more productive design environment.

Tim Burnham and Arri were preaching a similar gospel with their development of an AutoCad programmed for lighting designers that interfaces with their Imagine lighting control console. Burnham's system allows a lighting designer to develop a lighting design (perhaps on a background prepared by the set designer) on a conventional micro-computer. The design and all associated luminaire reference material is then downloaded into the lighting console, while a small, customized lighting plot is printed for the Arri digitizer tablet. Thus, without reference to the conventional keypad or fader wheels, a lighting designer can create the cues for the production by pointing with the digitizer stylus.

The system demonstrated on Arri's impressive stand at the center of the show allowed full and easy control of a bank of Clay Paky Golden Scan remote control luminaires without any manipulation of

the lighting console. One just pointed at the luminaire on the digitizer and then to the function required. This is the direction console manufacturers should be following, to free the designer and operator from the regimentation of the keypad and allow them to paint with light.

Smart control systems were on offer from previous multiple award-winner, Triple E. Having developed the excellent linear motor drive system (demonstrated in previous years by a captivating display as it trundled up and down in the show bar) Triple E showed a sophisticated drive control system as used in *Aspects of Love* which utilizes a computer-generated graphic display to allow for accurate monitoring and placement of a number of moving scenic elements (*Aspects* uses 11 linear motors and eight geared drives all controlled from the new software). Triple E also showed their famous pin hinge and their new versatile Unitruss scenic construction system.

A good sprinkling of new and useful products marked this year's show, and it was encouraging to see a healthy contingent of small firms standing alongside some of the biggest. Del Trew's Cyberdescence shared space with Lightworks and offered a hire service for Strand Lighting's PALS luminaires. A range of high light output data displays on this stand showed a rather dubious selection of erotic prints — but the concept of liquid crystal projection of computer generated images is an exciting one. The ubiquitous Philip Edwards represented his Derbyshire-based facilities company whilst Any Effects offered their comprehensive special effects service. The Association of Lighting Designers had perhaps the noisiest (from a visual point of view) stand in the exhibition.

Off-site CCT had hired the upstairs room of a nearby pub to offer a less-cramped exhibition of their spotlights (including the now fully-developed modular Silhouette profile luminaire), Furse Theatre products, and the ubiquitous Access lighting control desk. A lone Niethammer profile spotlight, the

Rolls Royce of stage lanterns, was also to be seen basking in the sunlight streaming into the pub. Also on display, but swamped with attention, was the new Panache V from The Great American Market and Gordon Pearlman. The Panache is designed for those situations where an Access is not enough. It can control up to 1,000 dimmers on up to 250 channels, and features 10 submasters, six of which overlap.

Back in the main exhibition space Northern Light showed their System 2000, a programmable working light control system that often forms the heart of their numerous and diverse arts installation projects. This system allows for easy selection of user addressed masters for Show, Get-In and Night working and performance lighting circuits in a high-quality integrated rack and panel that

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matches their superb stage management desks.

Perhaps the most subdued stand again this year was Teatro Srl, whose low-key approach to selling the extensive range of excellent luminaires did not stretch to switching any of them on. Still, they look almost as good as the light that comes out of the end.

A range of interesting and market-led products were on show at this year's ABTT show. It must be time, however, that a larger and more comfortable venue is found for this important exhibition. The British (and increasingly European) users who patronize this trade show have a good deal of money to spend on the right products. For manufacturers to come up with a supportive range of new products each year requires a forum for user-feedback that allows for relevant demonstration. A larger venue will hopefully allow such a forum next year.