

SHOWLIGHT 89

A font of information

BY BONNIE S. SCHWARTZ

Many interesting papers—and one or two not so interesting ones—were presented at the quadrennial Showlight 89 conference, which was held 15 - 17 May at the Hilversum NOB studios just outside of Amsterdam. The event attracted a broad range of lighting professionals across many disciplines, including theatre, film, and a smattering of architecture types.

More than 200 people attended the conference. Overall, the colloquium was extremely well organized, the facility was well set up, and the program offered plenty of distractions from the arduous—though often enlightening—agenda of speeches, of which there were close to 30.

Standout presentations included Max Keller's "How Bright is Cold?"; Christoph Rudolf's "The Application of Entertainment Lighting Techniques in the World of Architecture"; John Henshall's "Wrecktech Lighting (An Alternative Approach)"; and Joe Tawil's historically oriented "The Development of the Moving Light."

In "How Bright is Cold?" Max Keller, lighting director with the *Kammerspiele* in Munich, weaved much of his enthusiasm and knowledge into a talk about artificial daylight sources and the effects that can be achieved with them. He discussed the colour spectrum and the Kelvin scale, ways of using diffusion materials and colour filters, and the particularities of various luminaires to convey the many possibilities available to creative lighting professionals in search of ambitious effects.

Christoph Rudolf, head of communications at Erco Lighting, traced the genesis of architectural lighting from the development of the electric lamp onward, linking architectural styles with styles of architectural lighting. After treating his rapt audience with stunning visuals of such structures as Mies van der Rohe's Seagram Building, Le Corbusier's Villa Savoy, and I.M. Pei's new addition to the Louvre, Rudolf concluded with the following obscure quote to shock conference participants into acknowledging ties to their collective past: "The difficulty lies in

distributing the light in such a manner that certain parts appear particularly bright, whilst others are subtly lit and others again are in complete shadow. Just as a painter works with blended tones and shadow in his picture, so the lighting engineer should learn to adopt these lighting techniques.' The words of a contemporary lighting designer?" asked Rudolf. "No, not at all. These are the words of Jean-Georges Noverre, a ballet master, born in the mid-1700s. No doubt architectural lighting has quite a long tradition."

John Henshall, a freelance television

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lighting director based in the UK and a former BBC lighting director, regaled his audience with very amusing stories. He showed images of how he creatively and successfully operated within an extremely tight budget on an award-winning youth program in Great Britain called Network 7, shot in an abandoned banana warehouse in the Docklands section of London. The lighting plan was as innovative as the show's format. Using mostly found materials (i.e., cheap) instead of conventional lighting instruments, Henshall came up with equipment such as Sunbeds (comprised of nine two-meter fluorescent tubes), Dustbins (literally a 1K wide-angle PAR-64 light set into a trash can), and airport runway lights mounted on motorized scissor trucks to make them into readily mobile lights, able to turn in any direction immediately. Henshall also came up with Ballistas, Shollies (softlights set into movable shopping trollies), antique Lighthouses (circa 1862, fit with 20w, 12v headlight lamps), old naval signalling lamps, Archies (a 500w industrial flood light made from motorcycle parts), and Malcolms (also made from motorcycle parts but sunk into a shopping

trolley). "This is an alternative approach to lighting," Henshall said. "It will amuse you but make you think. It will perhaps inspire you to more adventurous design."

Joe Tawil of The Great American Market gave an interesting overview of the development of the moving light, starting with Jules Fisher's 1960 Fisher Light, one of the first automated luminaires, according to Tawil. He discussed the design and cost problems inherent in the development of automated lighting systems. "A revolution in the concert industry has changed the way people think of lighting," Tawil said, pointing to how, in rock concerts, the lighting is almost as much of the show as the performer—a relatively recent concept. Tawil's prediction for the future: a moving light on a rolling cart grid—perhaps not too different from John Henshall's Malcolms?

Outside of the main studio where the papers were given (beautifully lit and well designed by in-house NOB designers), another studio housed small exhibit stands and a central bar where conference attendees could take their tea and talk to vendors. Included on the roster of exhibitors were Arri (GB) Ltd., CCT Theatre Lighting, DeSisti Lighting, DHA Lighting Ltd., Erco Lighting, Flashlight, GTE Sylvania, Lee Colortran Ltd., Le Maitre Fireworks Ltd., Optikinetics Ltd., Osram, Philips Nederland, Roscolab, Strand Lighting, Siemens Nederland, Telestage Associates, Thorn EMI, Vari-Lite Europe, and Rolight, all in modest nine square meter booths.

Among the most interesting new products displayed at the informal exhibit: Rolight's Masterlite® System, an attachment for PAR-64 units which, when the lamp is replaced with the Masterlite lens system, changes the light beam into a concentrated beam projectable in nine different colours and controlled by any control desk for X-Y movement and colour changing; the unofficial launching of AVAB's Expert control board; and another preview, the Gordon Pearlman/ Joe Tawil Panache V control desk.