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Lighting&Sound international

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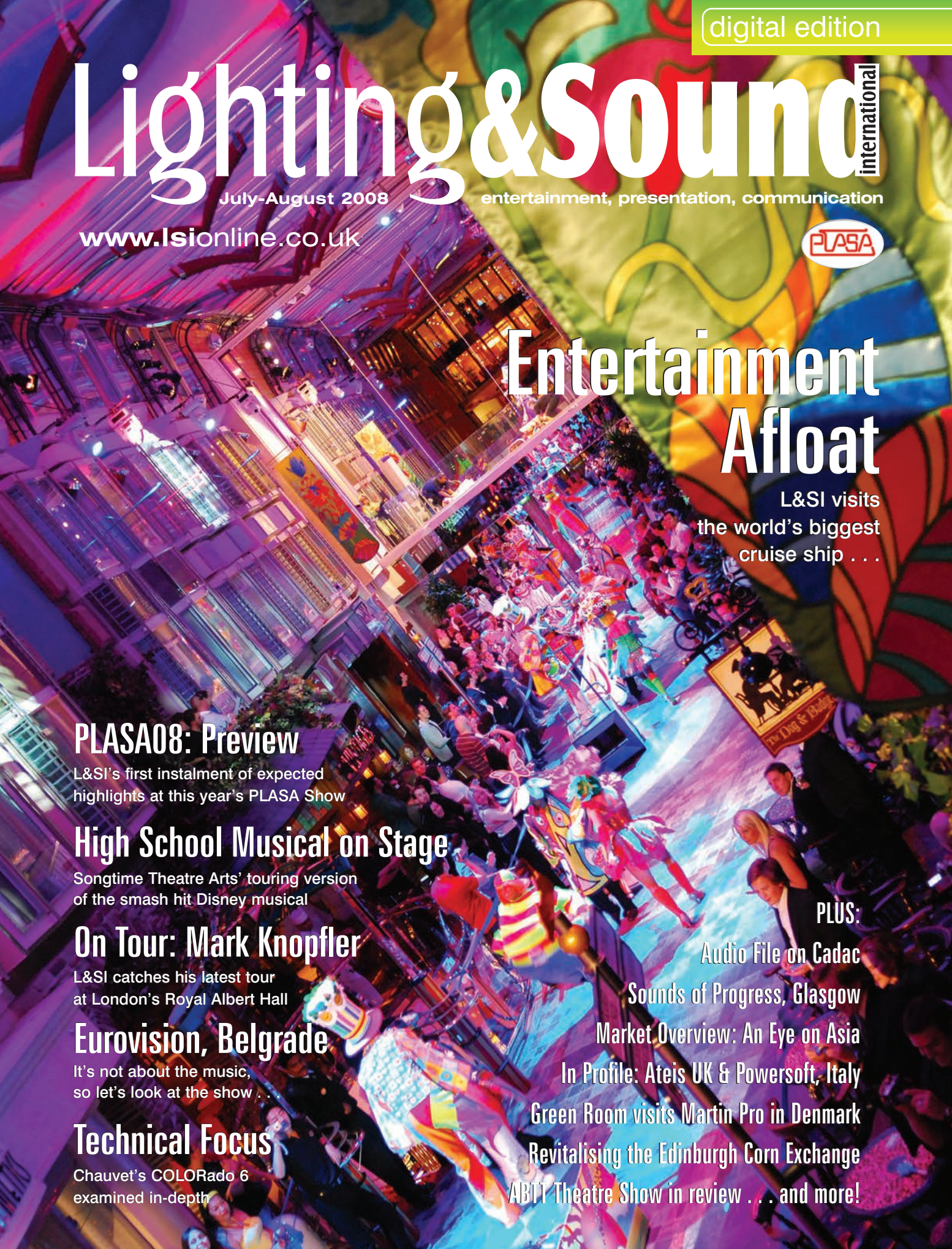


Entertainment Afloat

L&SI visits the world's biggest cruise ship . . .

PLASA08: Preview

L&SI's first instalment of expected highlights at this year's PLASA Show

High School Musical on Stage

Songtime Theatre Arts' touring version of the smash hit Disney musical

On Tour: Mark Knopfler

L&SI catches his latest tour at London's Royal Albert Hall

Eurovision, Belgrade

It's not about the music, so let's look at the show . . .

Technical Focus

Chauvet's COLORado 6 examined in-depth

PLUS:

Audio File on Cadac

Sounds of Progress, Glasgow

Market Overview: An Eye on Asia

In Profile: Ateis UK & Powersoft, Italy

Green Room visits Martin Pro in Denmark

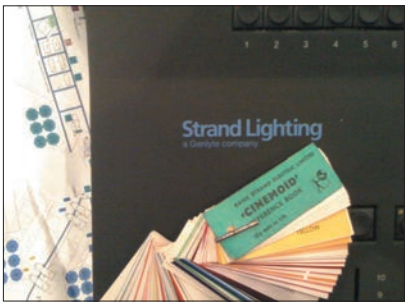
Revitalising the Edinburgh Corn Exchange

ABTT Theatre Show in review . . . and more!

Classic Gear: Cinemoid

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

There's a lesson in this month's tale: if you ever start a product line identified by numbers, leave gaps - the range will expand! Plastic colour offers a particular case study . . .



Colour for entertainment lighting has been created in countless ways through the years - from coloured water to coloured glass, each with their own particular problems! Gelatin filters - coloured dyes added to boiled animal remains then poured into thin sheets - were the standard of the early years of electric lighting. Gel worked and was relatively inexpensive, but had problems: moisture in the air affected it (too dry, the gel became brittle; too wet, sticky), and as lights got brighter and focusable spotlights appeared, gel - quite literally - could no longer stand the heat . . . The name stuck, though!

In the UK, a tougher alternative came from Strand Electric: Cinemoid, introduced in the late 1930s. A dyed cellulose-acetate material, it was made for Strand by British Celanese, subsequently part of Courtaulds, at the Spondon Works in Derby; a block of colour would be made then sliced up into 0.01inch thick sheets. Cinemoid was more expensive than gelatine, but it was less fragile, available in a wider range of colours, relatively consistent - and self-extinguishing: if it caught light it would generate a gas which put the flame out.

When introduced, the range started at number 1 Yellow, no 2 Light Amber through to 6 Red then on through pinks, blues - including 17 Steel Blue (a colour many lighting designers still strive to find a true replacement for) greens, a continuous range of numbers married with to-the-point names. Maybe Strand really did think the world would never need more colours than that. But lighting designers made more by mixing and matching, then demanded single-sheet replacements. With nowhere to slip in new colours, they just got added to the end: 32 Medium Blue, 33 Deep Amber . . . 78 colours by 1980, though the number was down to just 29 (including, belatedly, some 'A' colours!) by the late eighties, Cinemoid soldiering on as the budget colour choice.

Ultimately, it was rendered obsolete by the same advances that had let it beat gelatine: brighter, hotter lights, particularly tungsten-halogen spotlights, were too much for it, and the newer surface-coated polyester colour from Lee, or deep-dyed polyester and body-coloured polycarbonate products from Rosco, took over. But for familiarity's sake, Lee took Strand's numbers and just added 100 - which is why to this day 106 Primary Red is so closely followed by 115 Peacock Blue . . .

Cinemoid still lurks in the depths of some colour stores. It is immediately recognisable to the touch - thicker, less flexible, more solid, brittler than any current plastic colour. It won't last in front of any recent lighting equipment: think of it as vintage lighting and use it with equipment of the period, like the venerable Patt 23. If you're really in lighting archaeology mode, look out for the colours that have no real modern equivalent.

Besides, it's perhaps a good thing that Cinemoid didn't live in to the next generation of lighting technology: the thought of someone trying to load it into scrollers is quite frightening . . .