

# Lighting & Sound international

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entertainment, presentation, communication

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## Amy Winehouse

at the Manchester Academy

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L&SI looks in-depth at this popular lighting accessory



# Classic Gear: Patt 52/152/252 Effects Disc

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

Some technologies cling on much longer than would seem likely based on a description of them. A glass disc containing a photographic image of clouds, driven by an electrically-powered rubber wheel, turning in front of a hot tungsten-halogen lightbulb? Surely in these days of digital media, of convergence, Strand Electric's venerable effects disc should be long obsolete?

The round housing protecting the glass disc itself is familiar to anyone who's worked in theatre. Designed to allow the effect to move across the projector's lens - linear, rather than circular, movement - it has a turntable backplate allowing the angle of the effect to be altered, runners and a spring retaining clip for the interchangeable lens, colour frame and adjustable mask (why has no-one ever made a sensible version of this?); a diverter mirror can be attached to the lens if required. A rectangular housing on the effect's front holds an electric motor; changing the position of a drive wheel against a larger 'potter's wheel' providing speed and direction variation.

The glass image discs themselves are interchangeable. Each had a painted or photographic image, usually clouds or flames but with countless others from snow to skeletons - most made by Strand Electric's Frank Weston and Edward Biddle - available in Strand's glory days. In more recent years, DHA brought in a painter to create a new selection of clouds which were then rendered photographically onto the discs.

The effects disc design outlasted generations of projectors, from the original 1k Patt 52 and 152 through the familiar 2k Patt 252 then the more modern Cadenza and Toccata EPs. Even other manufacturers made projectors to suit the effects discs at times, though sadly not any more. In 1990 rental company White Light updated the effect itself with remote control of speed and direction while retaining the ability to use existing

discs and projectors, but their VSF90, and an alternative made by Stage Electrics, look much like the original.



From left: The Strand Patt 252 c/w effects disc; a Strand Cadenza with effects disc; the VSF90 on the 325LFX projector, manufactured for White Light by Robert Juliat.

You'll still find these effects in shows everywhere, from school plays looking for an easy effect, to blockbuster musicals; in the middle of the recent *Woman in White*, where all of the scenery was created by video projection, a bunch of these effects created beautiful, smooth moving (as long as they were well serviced and the drive wheels weren't sticking or slipping!), unpixelated clouds that were magical in a way the video just couldn't match; these clouds glide rather than step. The effect is particularly satisfying if the budget is available to use them en-masse.

In choosing these effects now the fear is that it's too much of a cliché, and surely too old-fashioned for a modern audience. But then, in the interval, an ordinary member of the public, someone who knows and cares nothing about lighting, comes up wide-eyed: "How on earth are you making those amazing clouds?"

Quite an achievement for a tool from the middle of the last century; a reminder that it's the result, rather than the technology, that matters.

>>> [www.strandarchive.co.uk/lanterns/patt52.html](http://www.strandarchive.co.uk/lanterns/patt52.html)

>>> [www.strandarchive.co.uk/lanterns/p252.html](http://www.strandarchive.co.uk/lanterns/p252.html)

>>> [www.whitelight.ltd.uk/vsfx](http://www.whitelight.ltd.uk/vsfx)

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