



Strand Lighting

LIGHTS! NEWS

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The late 60's and early 70's saw an explosion of small commercial production houses in Los Angeles. Television had arrived and was maturing into a most powerful sales medium. This created a whole new outlet for aspiring cameramen. These hopeful young people, unable to enter the industry through the craft unions, had endured frustration and disappointment for years. Now since the commercial producers were not signatories to union contracts, an opportunity to break into the industry was afforded to quite a few, one of those was Allen Daviau.

Allen Daviau describes himself as an "L.A. Kid" who grew up next to Hollywood. It was a Hollywood coming to terms with colour TV. As early as the age of 12 he knew he wanted to be a cinematographer. He was fascinated by TV and in his teens would gate-crash television studios, just for a chance to see somebody light a show. One of his early mentors was a Lighting Engineer called Del Jacks. He was then lighting The Lux Theater and The Dinah Shore Show. This was the era of live television, almost unknown today outside of sports and news.

Del allowed Allen to follow him around, watching him light. Meanwhile, at school, he was getting experience in theatre lighting, learning how to light drama, but he was set on the motion picture business. He hung around the major studios, and remembers watching much of the production of the Brando western, "One-Eyed Jacks" in 1961. It was being photographed by Charles Lang, a cinematographer who would go on to garner 17 academy nominations. For Allen it was an incredible learning experience, not just for the lighting but to see how a production centered around the cinematographer. Lang had three decades of quality work behind him including "Farewell to Arms", "Ace in the Hole", "The Big Heat", and "The Rainmaker". He was generous with his advice. Allen now had no doubt about his future career.

Los Angeles was an exciting place to be. The new wave, Fellini, Bergman and the like were arriving. The research and the history of the cinema was close at hand, readily available to the student.

The early commercial work was invaluable. Older generations of cinematographers had learned and honed their skills on the massive sound

The local boy who made good

LIGHTS! went to Hollywood to talk with a man who is passionate about what he does. Over the past eleven years he has photographed a succession of motion pictures that have been artistically acclaimed, and commercially successful. "E.T.", "Empire of the Sun", "Avalon", "Bugsy", "Fearless", and "The Colour Purple", are just a few screen hits for which the credit as Director of Photography has gone to Allen Daviau ASC. He talked to Brian Hartley about his passion for making movies.



award for "Bugsy". Does the lack of an Oscar on his mantel shelf bother him? Says Allen, "No, I consider myself so lucky to be playing this game, in this league, at this level. I am particularly honored to be recognised by my peers(ASC) and to know that Freddie Young and Jack Cardiff were on the British jury."

Allen Daviau enjoys making period films, particularly the 40's and 50's. He relishes the challenge of conveying to the cinema-goer the sense of period without overdoing it. So many tend to bludgeon the audience with endless references to the period, and hide everything from the present day. Colleague Conrad Hall calls these "long-overcoat" films! For Allen the preference is to suggest the period, and not overpower the audience. In two of his films this technique has paid off handsomely. The Shanghai of the late thirties and the Los Angeles of the forties are prime examples. In "Empire of the Sun" the modern Shanghai was cloaked in smoke. A major problem was repainting the Chinese characters on the buildings from the style of the 80's to that of the 30's. It was successful, judging by the reactions of elderly Chinese wandering through the set.

A pivotal scene in "Bugsy" took place in the Los Angeles stockyards, a gangland execution at night. As the camera was about roll a freight train whistle howled in the night, the director decided to roll. Although the train that crossed the background was a diesel of the 90's, steam, smoke and rain disguised it, it could have been a freight

stages of Hollywood. Very few had worked on a practical location. But commercials required shooting in houses, stores, and on exterior locations. It was a new way of doing things, ideal for the TV movies that were to come. Budgets were generous, and the work gave the opportunity to experiment. After the success of "E.T." a colleague suggested Allen had shot his last commercial. Not so, Says Allen "Shooting commercials gives you the opportunity to work regularly, then choose the motion pictures you want to shoot, they also allow you to keep a crew together". For Allen there has been much success in the anonymous world of commercials, as well as in the high profile motion picture field. He has worked three times with Spielberg. He has been nominated five times for an Oscar, but to date the statuette has eluded him. He received a British "Oscar" for "Empire of the Sun", and the American Society of Cinematographers

train from any era.

Allen has a thing about "perfect lighting". He likes to quote British cameraman Geoffrey Unsworth who said, "Light the set until it is perfect, turn out two lights, and shoot." Allen calls a perfect set polite lighting and he too will rough it up a little before he rolls.

Although he has never shot anything major in black and white Allen has a great regard for the medium. He likes the way it can be manipulated in drama. He enjoys the way huge exteriors could be shot on stage. How you could shoot "day for night". And he has a great respect for those cinematographers who spent a lifetime learning to interpret the world of colour in black and white. He also understands how they felt when suddenly being told, "...now you can shoot in color". Allen remembers early colour. He calls it pretty, and talks at length of the incredible developments over the past 30 years. The achievements of Italian cinematographer Vittorio Stararo and many others have been instrumental in taking the use of colour to new heights. For Allen both mediums have their gratification. But it took the success of "Schindler's List" to bring back black and white photography to two generations of moviegoers. In fact all three American networks passed on the film, because it was in black and white. As a result of the big screen success it seems unlikely that such a thing will occur again.

Allen enjoys working with stage actors. He finds they come to film well aware of how the lighting will aid their performance. It brings back memories of high school theatricals. Applause on cue meant the lighting was right.

This affinity to stage actors is just another reminder of part of Allen's heritage, and he admits to a desire to light a stage drama.

His other ambition is of course related to the 40's and 50's. He would like to shoot a movie that deals with the early days of live television, when things were done in real time. For him it would be a labour of love. Allen would give anything to take the technology of the 90's, and use it as a cameraman of the 40's would have used it. But such projects are on hold.

Earlier this year Allen completed Michael Crichton's "Congo". Then there were summer commercials to shoot. Allen Daviau is a busy man. Is he happy? You can bet on it! ■

Fred Bentham remembers

Oliver! thirty five years ago

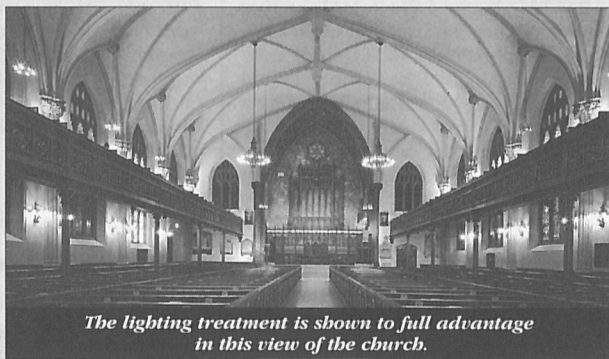
Where to find a contemporary account of the original production of Lionel Bart's OLIVER? That was easy; turn to Strand's TABS No. 18 issue 2, September 1960 and there are three illustrated articles on Designing, Lighting and Seeing OLIVER. The first two were by Sean Kenny and John Wyckham respectively, who had done just that, and the third by a keen member of audience, not unknown to some of our readers. I cannot do better than quote some of those K. R. Ackerman words:

"This production I have seen in a good many years of regular theatre going. Most impressive of all was the ingenuity of the set which, by rearrangement of a small number of basic structures, most aptly portrayed a bewildering number of different settings with a remarkable rendering, not of the actuality of the scenes, but of their atmosphere. What was most refreshing too was the structural and apparent permanence of these settings. The action was able to take place freely on different planes and linking stairs without the audience having to undergo the trauma of concern for the safety of the cast. It is, therefore, not surprising to learn that Mr Kenny is an architect." - "The lighting changes were innumerable but always subtle, and I marvel at the dexterity of the operator who controlled the lighting without faltering on a two-preset control desk without piston ('memory') action." Ken Ackerman at BBC TV was of course, even in those distant days, used to much more advanced controls from Strand!

Visually that 1960 production really was sensational. Set as it was behind the 31ft pros. of the New (now Albery) Theatre, it was the minimal masking that opened up the stage to the brick backwall on which was painted the backcloth. And here we come to the Bentham musing prompted by this distant but vivid memory. Surely this was when it became 'fashionable' not to make such a fuss masking the stage lighting. Up to that time we had only been used to seeing the lantern on an occasional open stage. Our 'official' initiation in London having been the Mermaid, one year earlier. Elsewhere rigorous masking was the rule, even for any spots out-front. Indeed in the mid-1930s when circle-front FOH spots began to become common, they went into housings painted to look as if they were part of the balconies. Since then new or refurbished theatres, have tried to provide decent concealment covers and slots FOH, but sure enough they are soon joined by brethren exposing themselves here, there and anywhere they can cling to. Incidentally, the first show to get a complete pro-frame of spots (by Strand, of course) was another Bart/Kenny musical (lit by Richard Pilbrow) - BLITZ!

What of the brand new production of OLIVER at the London Palladium which prompted this particular Bentham trip to the past? This time the pros opening is 47ft wide instead of 31ft and it is a Cameron Mackintosh production. ■

Village Church in the heart of New York City



The lighting treatment is shown to full advantage in this view of the church.

Presbyterians in New York's Greenwich Village really see the light, thanks to architect Eric Hilton and lighting designer Don Wilson. They have integrated an artificial lighting system with other renovations in the sanctuary of First Presbyterian Church in New York City. The new system provides an even quality of light while allowing different atmospheres for morning worship, candlelight services, and afternoon concerts. It even gives the illusion of sunlight through Tiffany windows, long darkened by encroaching high-rises.

The project was the final stage of a three-year restoration campaign in which the church's belltower was repaired, the Tiffany windows refurbished, and the sanctuary's lighting and sound system overhauled. Hilton, a long-time

member of the over 600-member congregation, had been active in the restoration campaign and eagerly undertook the lighting project.

"We wanted to enhance the ambient light while maintaining the integrity of the original design statements," he commented. First the walls and vaulted ceilings were painted in lighter colours, then a combination of unobtrusive sidelighting, uplighting, and accent lighting, in some instances mounted in screened-off locations, was used. A multi-scene preset control system was installed to make it easy to select the appropriate atmosphere.

The church was founded in 1716. It experienced a controversial and violent history from the early days of ministering to Scots and Irish immigrants. During the Revolutionary War the church was used by the Redcoats as a barracks and a stable. It was rendered useless when the British

burned New York. A post-revolutionary building was lost to fire in 1812. It was replaced, only to perish in the Great Fire of 1835. The present building was dedicated in 1846, to begin a tumultuous history, the stuff of which TV mini-series are made. A time of dissension, controversy, extreme loyalty and tolerance, from which to-day's congregation looks back, with some pride and a real sense of history.

To-day an annual budget in excess of a million dollars supports various missions, among them a church for former convicts that does prison outreach, a homeless shelter, a nursing home, and an AIDS hospice. The church runs a nursery school on-site and provides space for a school for autistic children and such varied groups as the Village Light Opera Group, Habitat for Humanity, A.A., and Human Services Workshop. ■

The Strand Lighting Premiere system controls the sanctuary, chancel, and the exterior lighting. The sanctuary and the chancel areas each have eight presets. The presets are programmed with combination slider preset panels at the rear of the church. Each door entry has an eight preset remote station. These entry stations are programmed with macro functions to activate presets in both the sanctuary and the chancel.

The chancel control has a local manual override to allow the Choir Master to exercise personal control during rehearsals or musical programs. Upon completion of these events lighting levels are returned to control of the sanctuary. In addition to all these functions there is a portable Command Station for programming the time clock, and for control during services when necessary.

The outdoor lighting and the Church entrance lighting are controlled by both a photocell and the internal astronomical time clock. The photocell decides the light-level during the day, establishing a "bright" day or "cloudy" day level. The clock takes control at dusk to bring lights to a night-time preset level, and at midnight to a late night "security level" preset. In the morning outdoor lighting control is returned to the photocell. ■