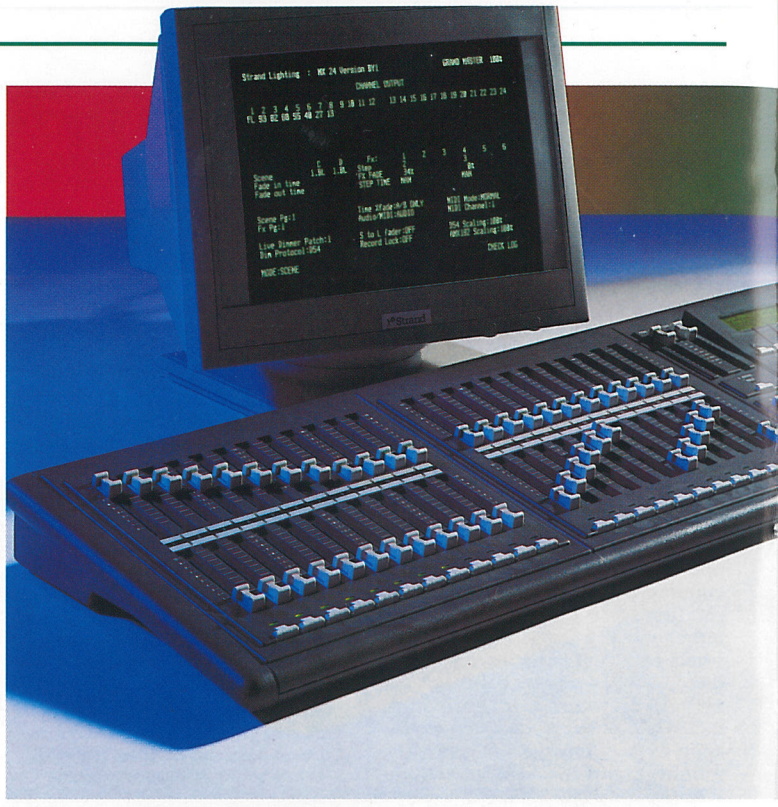
In general, the style of the lighting console used for any production depends on the number of channels it is controlling. As we shall see later, the number of channels doesn't necessarily relate to the number of dimmers used. In small scale applications of 12, 24 or 48 channels, is typical to use a two preset manual console, connected to the same number of dimmers - a console with one channel fader dedicated to adjusting the level of each dimmer. However, as the size of the lighting installation increases, and as we move into the domain of the memory console, there can be a point where several dimmers are used for one purpose (controlling a single cyclorama colour for example), and controlling each dimmer individually is wasteful. In this case a series of dimmers is controlled by a single dimmer. This process is called 'patching' and if the dimmers are pre-set to one channel so that they are different relative levels to one another, it is called 'proportional patching'.

is effectively a master control for an individual preset, so that an MX 12 has 12 submasters, there's 24 on the MX 24 and 48 on the MX 48. To add to the flexibility of this, there are 6 selections of submaster scenes (they are called 'pages') for each console, so even quite a complex show with up to 192 unique lighting states (MX 48 x 6 pages) can be performed by using each submaster in turn, and switching to the next page when the last submaster in the sequence is reached.

Recording each lighting scene couldn't be easier. By simply switching the MX into 'record' mode, the top preset row of channel faders is used to set the channel levels, and when the scene is complete, one of the submaster flash buttons is pressed. This action records the current lighting state into a submaster, whereupon the next scene is set up, and recorded on another submaster. Even when the MX is set to its 'scene' mode (using the bottom preset faders as submasters) the top preset can actively adjust individual channel levels.



MX Lighting Console.

THE X-RATED MEMORY CONSOLES: MX, GSX, LBX

BEGINNING WITH THE MX RANGE...

On the ladder of capacity and sophistication, beginning with the two preset LX desks, the MX is a few rungs upwards. The MX range (or Mantrix MX as it is known in North America), which comprises 12, 24 and 48 channel versions, is a natural progression from the manual to the memory console. MX combines the simplicity of a two-preset manual console with the sophistication of a concert lighting control desk. Setting up the lighting levels is identical to using a manual desk, and the MX can be used exclusively as a manual desk for very simple shows. But if the lighting demands some speedy fades, or sophisticated effects, then the MX comes into its own.

The software of the MX can re-configure the two presets of channel faders so that one preset operates as a series of submaster faders. This feature is common on larger concert lighting consoles where complete lighting states are automatically loaded onto submasters to be available to fade up or be flashed on and off as required. Each submaster

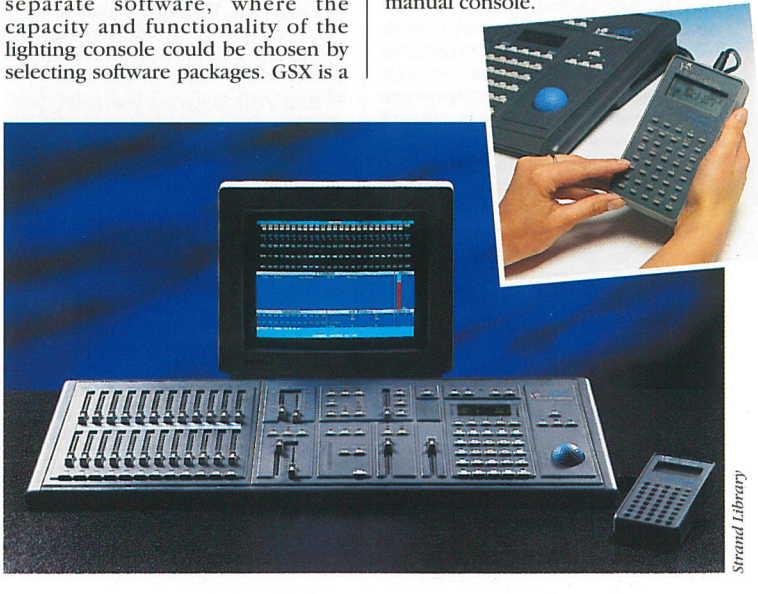
This is not the end of the story for the MX. The lighting states may also be re-played on a conventional cross-fade playback, fading each scene in sequence without using the submasters. Also there are effects. Special effects are automated sequences which can flash selected channels up and down, creating repetitive lighting changes which would be difficult to perform consistently by hand. For example, the effect of neon signs flashing in Times Square, or flashes of lightning can be programmed into the MX for use anywhere in the show.

The MX is also an excellent teaching tool. Students can learn the basics of lighting control by using the two preset manual faders, and then progress to the memory section, including the concept of patching dimmers to channels (MX can use its control channels for up to 512 dimmers) and recording a sequence of lighting cues. MX is equipped for MIDI as well, and this provides a useful link to other lighting consoles, as well as sound synthesisers and sequencers.

GSX Lighting Console.

THE LINK TO THE FUTURE

Moving upwards into the area of full memory systems, we encounter the GSX and LBX. GSX launched the idea of PC-style hardware and separate software, where the capacity and functionality of the lighting console could be chosen by selecting software packages. GSX is a small, compact memory console with 24 dedicated submasters. The LBX, its stablemate, is another hybrid console; this time combining the memory capabilities of the GSX with the 'hands-on' flexibility of a manual console.



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