

AT ANY GIVEN TIME, LONDON'S WEST END 'THEATRELAND' IS HOME TO A HOST OF DAZZLING PRODUCTIONS FEATURING THE TOP NAMES OF THE PROFESSION. STRAND LIGHTING IS THERE WHEN...

THE LIGHTS GO UP IN LONDON

Question: What do Jerry Hall, Tom Conti, Michael Gambon, Jim Davidson and the cast of *Miss Saigon* have in common - apart from being performers?

Answer: They have all recently been 'lit' by Strand Lighting controls at theatres in the West End.

What makes the story all the more remarkable is that their performances are illuminated by Strand equipment as a matter of policy by Stoll Moss Theatres, who control several major theatres in central London — 12 of them to be precise.

Strand's continuing favour with Stoll Moss has recently resulted in a Galaxy 3 system being installed at the London Palladium, where it will be used to control lighting of, amongst other things, this year's Royal Variety performance.

LOYALTY

But it is not just loyalty and sentiment that has made Strand a favourite with Stoll Moss and its technical director, Cyril Griffiths, over the years. Much of the day-to-day responsibility for the chain of theatres (which apart from the Palladium includes such well-known venues as the Theatre Royal, Victoria Palace, Her Majesty's, the Globe, the Lyric, the Queens, the Garrick, the Royalty, the Duchess, the Apollo and the Cambridge) has now fallen on the shoulders of Cyril's assistant, Julian Rees.

He explained, 'One of the main reasons we have always gone for Strand is that we know their products are good for 20 years or more. As a commercial company, we want a product which is going to serve us for a long time and we want a good back-up service.'

'In the case of the Galaxy 3, we knew it was what we wanted for the Palladium and we were prepared to wait for Strand to develop it.'

At the moment, the Palladium is



Photo: Retna Pictures

■ **Jerry Hall** — recently under Strand lights at *The Lyric Theatre* in Bus Stop.

being run as a variety 'house' and has recently been temporary home to American comic Jackie Mason. 'Variety', as the name implies, means that the lighting needs can change many times during the course of a working week. A flexible lighting control system is vital.

VARIETY

Julian added, 'The nature of the Palladium means that we have a variety of spectacular musicals, Sunday concerts and a great deal of television work.'

'When we have the television people in, we can convert the Galaxy 3 into a Studio Galaxy with ease. It also has the effects panel, which is good for the Sunday concerts.'

'The fact that we have always had Strand equipment meant that we were able to couple the Galaxy to the existing dimmers.'

Stoll Moss employ their own Works Department, a mobile team who are permanently on call to go where necessary throughout the West End empire. This means that the company takes care of all its own installation work and repairs to lighting equipment.

At the Palladium itself, the lighting team comprises a chief and six staff. Before the Galaxy was installed, lighting control had been by means of a 'special' designed for the theatre by Strand Lighting. The 288 dimmers are mainly TM's 5 and 10K's installed in the 1960's ('and still working well — they are superb').

'House' stocks of luminaires include Strand Cadenzas, Cantatas, and 'possibly the largest stock of Pattern 49a's in the West End.'

As Julian Rees says: 'We have never been slow to embrace new technology but at the same time we would not consider investing in anything where the teething troubles had not been overcome. When we spend money on new equipment we want to be satisfied that it will last us a very long time to come.'



Photo: Frank Grainger

■ **Julian Rees** with the Palladium's Galaxy 3.