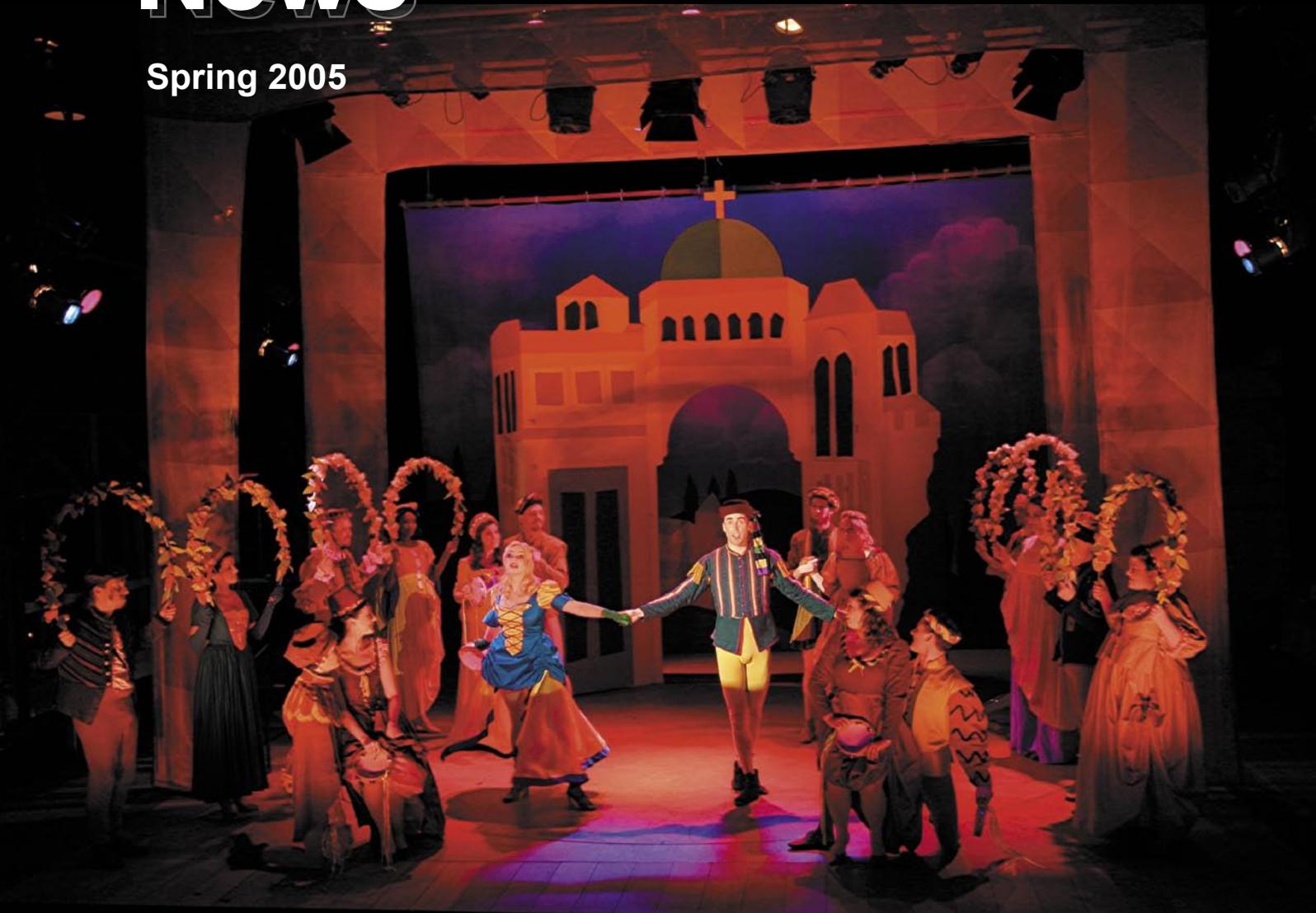


STRAND

News

Spring 2005



INSIDE THIS ISSUE

*500 Series - Ten Years On
Console Programming Tips
Lamda - 40 years of training
Democracy
Dongguan Arts Center
West End Show Update*

WYSIWYG

*New DMX Merge Controller
New Digital Dimmers
Quartzcolor Product Highlight
Grand Hyatt Erawan, Bangkok
Strand People*

500-series - Ten Years On!

by Rob Halliday

By the time you read this, it will be almost exactly ten years since I programmed my first show on a Strand 500-series console - or, to be precise, a 400-series since the console was actually an early-model 430 complete with the original purple buttons.

It is already more than a decade since I first looked at the console - the article about the West End production of Oliver!

in the January 1995 issue of Lighting+Sound International magazine mentions the console but dismisses it for being not quite ready yet (-it later took over control of that production, and went on to control the show on tour in the UK, Australia and the USA).

It's almost exactly a decade since I first got shown the console in depth, while the Old Vic theatre in London evaluated it. They rejected it - none of us quite yet understanding that the hardware was really just buttons, and the power of a console was the software which was relatively easy to change when it didn't quite do what we wanted. Provided we grumbled enough!

The first real show was the UK tour of Blood Brothers, lit by Joe Atkins. The rig was six Vari-Lite VL6s, some scrollers and some conventional lights - not enough 'toys' to warrant taking two desks on the road. The 430 was part of some haggling over getting the rig to match the budget: Stage Electrics in Bristol wanted to try this new desk out on a real show, and would do us a good deal if we were prepared to be the guinea pigs.

We weren't really bothered what we used, and decided to give it a go: it would do the show, and it had one compelling advantage over other options - it could output the D54 protocol that many British theatres still required to control their front-of-house dimmers as well as the DMX that we needed for the touring dimmers, scrollers and moving lights.

Much of what we now have in the desk, the functions that make it quick, versatile and powerful, didn't exist then - looking back at this early software is quite a dramatic experience for those who've evolved with it over the years since it's difficult to realise quite how much it has changed!

Indeed, our first technical support phone call to Strand's Bill Richards was "how do we turn the lights out when we go to dinner?" "Run cue 0," he confidently replied. We'd tried that, it didn't work. He was disbelieving... until an hour later when he walked through the door, sat down at the console and tried it for himself...

That bug got fixed quite quickly, establishing the pattern that's existed ever since. Strand became good at listening. Best of all, the software team led by Richard Lawrence became adept at listening to user feedback but



"If this sounds like a glowing report - well, it is. I am a satisfied user!" Rob Halliday

now squeezed into eleven, effortlessly handled by ShowNet.

In the UK, the most remarkable part of the 500-series' success is that it has become the closest the UK has ever come to having a standard control system across its theatres: on a number of recent tours there has almost been no need to tour a console as part of the production, instead just taking a disk to load into the local console. Operators know how they work, making it easy to bring staff into shows. And the family, from baby 300 to fully loaded 550, all cross-compatible, mean that they're seen everywhere from colleges and fringe theatres to some of the biggest productions around the world.

Ten years on, the hardware is familiar and comfortable to use. The displays, which some might consider dated with their character-based format, offer the advantage of being lightning fast. There are no delays. The software lets programmers and lighting designers achieve what they need to achieve quickly and, above all, reliably - with extra tools such as the xConnect dongle offering even more possibilities by integrating new technologies such as WiFi wireless networking into the lighting world. And we've always been able to load old shows, however much the software changed - it has given us constant improvement but with a bedrock of consistency.

If this sounds like a glowing report - well, it is. I am a satisfied user. For ten years now, the console has evolved when I've needed it to evolve, improved regularly, and let me do my job whether that be taking lighting designer's requests and turning them into reality, or taking my own ideas and bringing them to life on the stage.

It's been a great trip, and as the consoles continue to evolve, it's not over yet....

then, rather than implementing a command to exactly satisfy a particular demand, inventing something that did that - but was versatile enough to do much more besides. All while retaining displays, commands and setups that made the console familiar to a generation of users familiar with Strand's older consoles. (Occasionally, equal numbers would ask for opposite things... those cases result in new setup options, such as the infamous 'preview follows live').

The console coped just fine with Blood Brothers. In the time since, it's coped with an enormous range of shows of all types and sizes, always seeming to gain new capabilities or new features just in time. For Martin Guerre in 1996, a big rig (with sixteen bit control of pan and tilt!) meant packing two whole streams of DMX - it felt like such a lot then!

We also decided to have two programmers on two consoles, one running conventional lights, one moving lights. With the show plotted we fed the DMX from one console into the other and snapshotted the data in, leaving the show running happily on one console. Then the programming features got better, so that on the UK tour of Les Misérables a year later and Oliver! a year after that it was easy enough for one programmer to deal with everything.

The installation at San Francisco Opera and big installations for Cirque du Soleil in Las Vegas, provoked the development of features like AutoMoveWhileDark and the multi-user operation of consoles across the ShowNet network - so that when the rigs got bigger again, as they had by the time of The Witches of Eastwick in 2000, we could just plug in a second console for a second programmer and have two people working on one big rig separately or, more usefully, sharing the work as needed, then just unplug the second console for show running.

A year later and more new features (particularly 'magic update') let one programmer and one console replace an Obsession, an Artisan, a Mac, a PC and a MIDI computer linking them all together on the UK tour of Miss Saigon ! At the Prince Edward Theatre, where two universes of DMX felt like so much so long ago, Mary Poppins is



San Francisco Opera House, one of the first 500 Series consoles installations



Designer remote USB drive



Selected Show History Across the World Strand 300-, 400- and 500- Series Consoles

Blood Brothers, Oliver!, Martin Guerre, Jesus Christ Superstar, Les Misérables, Hey Mr Producer, Oklahoma!, Swan Lake, Cinderella, Play Without Words, Nutcracker!, Lenny, Tess, Putting It Together, The Witches of Eastwick, Spend Spend Spend, My Fair Lady, Cat on a Hot Tin Roof, Miss Saigon, Ragtime, The Master Builder, Anything Goes, Carmen, Chitty Chitty Bang Bang, Jerry Springer: The Opera, The Woman in White, Jailhouse Rock, Saturday Night Fever, Tell

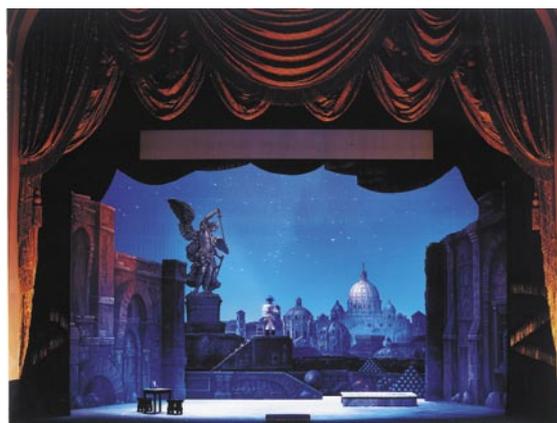


Théâtre des Champs Elysées,
Opéra de Monaco, Chicago
(Casino de Paris), Esplanade
Theatres on the Bay, Kimmel
Center for the Arts,
Vienna Opera House, The
Toronto Opera House, St

Lawrence Centre for the Arts, Paramount
Pictures, Sony
Studios, Culver
Studios, Fox
Studios, ABC



Me On A Sunday, Mary Poppins, Billy Elliot, The Phantom of the Opera, Mamma Mia.



War Memorial Opera House, San Francisco

Royal National
Theatre London,

Royal Shakespeare Company UK, English
National Opera London, Glyndebourne
Opera UK, Royal Opera House Linbury Studio
UK, Royal Court London, Royal Exchange
Manchester, Cirque du Soleil Las Vegas, Walt
Disney Concert Centre LA, Los Angeles Music
Center, San Francisco Opera, Sydney Opera
House Australia, Victoria Arts Centre Australia,
Sydney Olympics 2000, Birmingham Royal
Ballet, Paris Expo, Opéra de Lyon,

Television, NBC Television, CBS
Television, Hong Kong Academy for
the Arts, Windows on the World,
Aardman Studios, Sky Television,
Vienna Opera House, The New Bolshoi,
LAMBDA, National Theatre School of

Canada, Place des Arts, University of North
Carolina, University of Maryland

Tours and Productions World-wide



Sydney Opera House, Australia

LAMDA: Forty Years of Technical Training

This year marks the fortieth anniversary of the Stage Management and Technical Theatre Course offered by LAMDA, the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art.

The course's creation followed the construction of LAMDA's new theatre in 1963. Now called the MacOwan Theatre after the college's then-principal, Michael MacOwan, the theatre offered - and continues to offer - a flexible, versatile performance space with enough technical facilities to provide great learning possibilities without it becoming too overwhelming to mount a show.

MacOwan, however, realised that the college's existing technical course was unable to cope with the demands of the new building. He also realised the need to provide expert training for future technical theatre professionals, particularly as technology - new dimming systems, memory lighting control and more - moved into the performing arts.

MacOwan therefore turned to the leading set of technical theatre practitioners in the UK at the time, lighting designer Richard Pilbrow and his multi-faceted company Theatre Projects, then expanding from being a supplier of lighting equipment and lighting design services into a full-service technical supplier (lighting, sound, audio-visual and production) as well as a theatre consultancy working on projects such as Britain's new National Theatre complex.

Richard had already experienced one stage management course, having been a student at the Central School of Speech and Drama. "I had been very disappointed. In my view, the stage management students were there to set up for rehearsals and to sweep the stage afterwards - serfs!



Kiss Me Kate, LAMDA's 2005 musical, MacOwan Theatre

"When Michael MacOwan came to us, I was enthusiastic to help. We had recently started the Theatre Projects Trust, initially to present regional theatre companies in the West End, and this was the ideal vehicle to organise our end of the enterprise. We supplied the services of my mentor from theatre producer HM Tenants, Robert Stanton, as 'headmaster' - he wrote the syllabus and ran the course for 25 years, setting its standards for quality, professionalism and integrity."

Many of the staff from Theatre Projects also lectured at the college over the years, including sound designers David Collison,



Kiss Me Kate, LAMDA's 2005 musical, MacOwan Theatre, showing use of Strand lanterns through the ages (including Pageants, Acting Areas, Patt 23s and Patt 264s) to evoke the lighting of the show's period

Tony Horder and Roger Norwood and lighting designers Robert Ornbø, Bob Bryan and Brian Benn; the course also included visits to West End shows in production, equipment manufacturers and more.

Today, the course continues to thrive under the leadership of Course Director Mark Shayle and his team, which includes technical



LAMDA student Kate Myran at the 520 console in the MacOwan Theatre

director John Mackinnon, workshop supervisor Dave Elliott, stage management tutors Sarah Ripley and Vicky Ravenhall and sound tutors Steve Seymour and, from the original TP team, Roger Norwood, all industry professionals who continue to bring practical 'real world' experience to the course to back up the theory. Over the two-year course, students get to experience every part of the process of getting a show on, including stage management, prop sourcing and making, stage craft, technical drawing, scene painting, set design, model making, first aid, health and safety and theatre sound and stage lighting and electrics, both through lectures and hands-on experience. In their second year, students get to work in 'head of department' roles in the college's public productions, with the design, lighting design and sound design elements of some shows provided by students and on others by professionals working with the students.

The lighting element of the course is taught by senior lighting tutor Paul Rowland and his deputy Geraint Pughe. Teaching takes place in the MacOwan Theatre, which has a relatively comprehensive rig that includes Strand lanterns from the classic Patt 23, Patt 743 and Patt 243 through to the more modern SL range and Pirouette automated lanterns, as well as conventional and moving lights from a range of other manufacturers. Control is by Strand

- 102 way of dimming (a mixture of JTM, Permus and Mini Two) in the dimmer room, with a 520 console the most recent replacement for a lighting control system that was originally a Strand SP three-preset manual desk. The 520 reflects its position as the most popular lighting console around theatres in the UK at the moment: as with the choice of lanterns, the aim is to make students familiar with equipment they'll actually meet in the real world.

Following the principals established in the early days, Shayle and his team also work hard to avoid the course becoming too insular, regularly bringing in outside speakers on a range of subjects to ensure that the students have access to up-to-the-minute information, experiences and technical knowledge while also getting them out of the building to work experience with lighting practitioners and lighting supply companies.

The result - from first hand experience, having lit LAMDA's annual musical for the last three years - is students who are keen, enthusiastic and ready to get the show on - but, most importantly, ready to do so with willing



smiles, finding fun along the way and musical, MacOwan Theatre feeling able to ask questions when they hit problems. The tutors are supportive without becoming controlling, and the MacOwan Theatre is just the right size. Good work results, and good people result from that - the college's records suggest that all of its technical students who actively seek work find employment within a few weeks of graduation.

To mark its anniversary, LAMDA held a 'one performance only' informal session with Richard Pilbrow during the afternoon of March 24th. To an audience of students, Theatre Projects veterans and other industry professionals, Richard talked about his work and career - with many stories along the way. A fascinating afternoon for all fortunate enough to have been able to attend.



Richard Pilbrow with LAMDA's Stage Management and Technical Theatre students

Console Programming Tips

by Rob Halliday

The Shift Key

The main functions of Strand's lighting consoles are obvious and easy to find - just look at the legends on the keys to see what they do. Beyond that there are the functions accessed using the console's softkeys - less 'at-a-glance' obvious, but presented to you when you need them.

And then there's the SHIFT key. Combine it with many other keys on the console and you get access to more useful functions, some shortcuts to commands that could be accessed in other ways, some functions not available in any other way. If you've used the console for any length of time you've probably stumbled across some of these operations, but there are almost always new ones still waiting to be discovered....

Note that the shift key is called 'Shift' on 400- and 500-series consoles, but carries the Strand logo on 300-series consoles. If you need to access the shift function from a QWERTY keyboard (when using a 510 console or an off-line editor, for example) note that it is the keyboard's 's' key, not its shift key. On an off-line editor you'll find that the 's' key toggles shift mode on and off rather than having to hold it down while you press a second key.

Here we go, then, by keypad (note that this is as on 500-series consoles; the position of keys on 300-series consoles varies slightly):

The Numeric Keypad

Shift with the number keys 1-9 will run macro 1-9. This provides a really quick way of accessing macros that you use very frequently, and in particular macros that you frequently use as part of command line sequences - for example, my macro 1 is always '@ ATTSONLY .', which unblocks just the attributes of specified lights in preview mode, while macro 2 is '@ ATTSONLY LIVE', which, when you're in preview, pulls the attributes for specified lights from live into the previewed cue, so giving a really quick way of pre-setting lights. You can find out more about Macros in the September 2003 Strand News.

Shift-USER provides access to another macro, the SUSR macro.

Shift-0 puts the console into 'cursor lock' mode. The 4, 5, 6 and 8 keys can then be used as cursor arrow keys wherever you'd normally use the trackball to move around the console - for example, to navigate between setup options. This is particularly useful for 300-series consoles that don't have a trackball attached (or to get to the option to turn the trackball on!). If you find that you can't select channels on a console, the first thing to check is that you haven't accidentally engaged cursor-lock mode (shift-0 again or switching to any other display mode, such as preview, will cancel cursor-lock mode).

Shift-CUE/GROUP/SUB/FX provide an alternative way of typing UPDATE CUE/GROUP/SUB/FX. This can be particularly useful on 300-series consoles where these keys are positioned directly above the Shift key.

You can find out more about Update in the March 2003 Strand News.

Shift-THRU is an alternative way of typing THRU ON, which normally appears as a softkey. THRU ON lets you select only lights that are on in a specified range: [1] {THRUON} [10] [@] [50]

The Record Keypad

shift-RECORD gives REC-SUB - ie. it will record the current output state but ignoring any submasters that up (and also any effects that are running); this mainly useful for 300-series consoles that don't have a REC-SUB key.

shift-HOLD gives UNHOLD, which releases held channels. If you have multiple channels held you can either specify what to unhold: [channel list]shift-[HOLD], or press shift-[HOLD] twice to unhold everything.

shift-QONLY/TRACK gives TRACKBACK, which will track changes backwards through a show in the same way that tracking normally tracks changes forward through a show. There was more about Trackback in the Summer 2004 issue of Strand News.

The Softkeys

Shift-FLASH gives FLASHDOWN, which will pull the selected channel down to zero instead of flashing it up to full, a useful way of identifying a light in a bright state.

Shift-THRUON gives THRUON; this functions like thru-on but will only select channels that are currently shown on screen. This is particularly useful when using the COMPACT, AUTO or DISPLAY GROUP display formats: if channels 5 and 10 were visible on screen (even if not on), then going [5] [THRU] [10] [@] [50] would set all the channels between 5 and 10 to 50, whereas going [5] shift-{THRUON} [10] [@] [50] would just set 5 and 10 to 50.

Shift-SOFTBLOCK gives UNBLOCK, which will unblock (remove redundant commands - shown as 'white' levels) from a specified cue or range of cues. On 300 and 520 consoles you have to use the [RECMODE] key to access the SOFTBLOCK softkey, which normally appears on the centre display of 530/550 consoles.

would select any lights between 1 and 10 that were on then set them to 50. You can also type [THRU] [ON] if you prefer.

Shift-ON give OFF. This can be used to switch lights off ([1] shift-[ON]). It can also be used to provide a THRU OFF command, which gives the inverse function to THRU ON - selecting lights in a range that aren't on: [1] {THRU} shift-[ON] [10] [@] [50]. Note that for setting lights to FULL, typing [1] [10] [50] is sometimes quicker than typing [1] [10] [50] [FULL]. THRU, THRUON and THRUOFF can be combined with the CHANSTEP, ODD and EVEN commands (which appear by default as macros SP2, SP3 and SP4 keys - shift plus P2, P3 and P4 - but can be moved to any other macro key) to create complex channel selections very easily.

Shift-REMDIM provides 'REMDIM-SUB'; where [1] [REMDIM] would put channel 1 on and switch all other lights off (remdim stands for 'remainder dim'), REMDIM-SUB will switch on the specified channel but also leave up anything that is up on a submaster (though INDEPENDENT and EXCLUSIVE subs are always ignored by the REMDIM command in any case). Note also that [REMDIM] [REMDIM] will provide a blackout, and shift-[REMDIM] shift-[REMDIM] will lost everything apart from any subs that are up.

Shift-NEXT and Shift-LAST: when used to select a cue or a group, these select the next available whole number regardless of whether it exists or not. So [CUE] [1] shift-[NEXT] will select cue 2 even if there is no cue 2 in the show. This makes it easy to write a macro that automatically records the next cue or group: just make a group at the highest number you want to use (say group 500), then write a macro such as: [GROUP][500][LAST]shift-[NEXT][RECORD]. Note that next and last are also useful for selecting channels: [201] [+][NEXT] is quicker than typing [201] [+][202] !

Shift++ and Shift-- are alternative ways of typing NEXT and LAST.

Shift-@ gives @RANGE. This allows you to set a range of levels across a range of lights in one command: [1][THRU][10]shift-[@][10][THRU][50]. It's also useful with attributes, to create fans or rainbows: [1.11][THRU][10.11]shift-[@][10][THRU][90].

Shift-@ATT (@ATT is labelled ATTRIB on 300-series consoles) gives ATTRIB SELECT, an alternative way of typing attribute numbers. For example, [1.3][@][50] and [1]shift-[@ATT][3][@][50] have the same effect. But ATTRIB SELECT is useful where you want a macro to select a particular attribute across a range of lights - ie where you'd type [1.3] [THRU] [10.3] you could write a macro that went shift-[@ATT][3]

Shift-CLR has two functions; if you've started typing a command, CLR will clear one character at a time, while Shift-CLR will clear the whole command line (though it is possible to reverse this behaviour by editing a console's 220node.cfg configuration file). If you press Shift-CLR on an empty command line, any channels that you've previously selected - ie. channels shown in red (on a main console) or green (on a remote console) will go back to being 'unselected'. This is important when using the UPDATE command since UPDATE will only store selected channels - so you could bring up the houselights, press shift-CLR, then modify your cue, then go [UPDATE][*]; your changes would be stored into the cue, but the houselights wouldn't.

Shift-* repeats the last command you typed (in command-line mode you have to press * twice, once to recall the old command, once to actually repeat it).

Console Programming Tips (continued)

The Display Mode Keypad

Shift-LIVE steps through the various playback displays that are available - playbacks only, playback+FX, playback+subs etc. This is exactly the same as going into SETUP and altering the Live Screen Layout setting.

Shift-LASTSCREEN will swap the display on the console's two monitors, saving you the trouble of reaching around the back of the console and swapping the two video cables over.

Shift-PAGEDOWN and Shift-PAGEUP will take you to the first or last screenful of channels if your show has more channels than will fit on one screen. This also allows you to write macros to pick particular pages of channels.

Shift-GROUP alters the way that preset groups are displayed on the channel screen. Normally in TRACKER PRESET display mode, the console shows reference group names when attributes are set to reference groups. Pressing shift-[GROUP] once puts the console into 'Preset Display' mode, showing the group number and its name. Pressing shift-[GROUP] again puts it into 'Control' mode, showing the group name and the actual values the attributes are set to. shift-[GROUP] again returns to normal. There was more about reference groups in the June 2003 issue of Strand News.

shift-MORE: in a multi-console system, this allows you to 'spy' on other users! It will change your monitors to show what they're seeing on their monitors, stepping through one console (or user connected using a laptop with Strand's xConnect dongle) at a time. Be sure to set back to your display before continuing to work, though, otherwise you'll wonder why none of your commands are appearing on-screen!

shift-HELP locks the console surface - none of the keys or faders will do anything, which can be useful if your console is at the back of the auditorium and accessible to inquisitive audience members pre-show, or you're using a remote console and don't want anyone interfering with the main console. A word of warning: check that submaster faders haven't been moved before you unlock the console (shift-HELP again), otherwise you'll be surprised by what happens the next time you move the fader...

The Trackball

In PREVIEW modes, holding down SHIFT and moving the trackball sideways will 'unlock' the cursor, allowing you to move it sideways to alter time, delay, text and other information fields. In off-line editors the cursor isn't locked in this way, and if you prefer this behaviour you can set your console to behave the same way provided you accept the risk that you might accidentally alter other bits of information when trying to move around using the trackball and level wheel. Go to the 220node.cfg file ([MORE] {NOTES DISPLAY} {LOAD FILE} {CONF FILES}{NET CONFIG}) then scroll down and alter the 'field_lock_mode' setting.

The trackball's behaviour is also affected by the three keys above the trackball: hold down the centre key and move the trackball and you get 'high gear' - fast movement on pan and tilt; the same applies to any of the rotary encoders. Hold down the centre key and one or other of the outer two keys will lock out pan and/or tilt movement from trackball control.

Submaster Keys

The submaster 'bump' buttons can also be used to run macros if the sub's Bump mode is set to 'Mac'; I use the sub-bump buttons as macros to select gobos and colours in moving lights. When set to 'Mac' mode, a bump button will run macro 100+the sub number - ie. bump button 1 will run macro 101. But shift works here as well - shift-bump will run macro 300+the sub number - ie. shift-bump1 will run macro 301 (the gap of 200 is because 300-series consoles can have up to 192 submasters).

If the sub bump buttons are not set to 'Macro' mode or to 'Off', shift-sub bump provides a quick way of previewing the contents of a submaster, jumping straight to the preview screen for that sub.

It doesn't involve Shift, but there's another useful trick involving sub bump buttons: when set to any mode other than 'Macro' or 'Off' they can also be used to quickly store looks onto one or more subs: try [CUE] [1] [THRU] [6] [sub-bump-1] to see what happens!

Backup Commands

If you have main and backup consoles, you'll be familiar with the 'M GIVE SYNC' command, which copies the state of the main console to the backup console then synchronises the two for tracking backup operation.

Shift-MGIVESYNC gives the command QUICKSYNC. This attempts to synchronise the main and backup consoles without copying the show from main to backup. In general this is not recommended! However, it can be useful if you've had to break sync for any reason, want to re-establish sync and are absolutely sure that you haven't changed the show in any way in either console while the two have been out of sync with each other.

Macro Keys

The shift key effectively doubles the number of macro keys you have: pressing P1 runs macro P1; pressing shift-P1 runs macro SP1 and so on. I tend to use shift-macros for striking/dousing/resetting moving lights, using the shift as a 'safety' to reduce the risk of accidentally dousing a light mid-show.

Effects Keypad

If you're running multiple effects, the [FXSEL] key allows you to move down through effects to either stop or pause them (using FXSTOP or FXPAUSE), to run them manually (using FXSTEP) or to over-ride their settings (using FXDIR or FXTIME then the rate wheel or softkeys; once you've found settings you like you can permanently update the effect using [UPDATE] [TIME] [FX] [number] [*]).

Shift-FXSEL will move up through effects instead of down.

Playbacks

Shift-GOx1 gives GOx2.

Shift-LOAD gives the command RELOAD, which re-loads the next cue into the playback (if you're in cue 1 and cue 2 is next, this is directly equivalent to typing [CUE] [2] [LOAD], or [LOAD] [CUE] [2] [*] in command line mode). This is useful, particularly when running the console in tracking mode. For example, if you're running cues and have manually changed the level of a channel, the channel will stay at that level until a cue tells it to go to a different level. If you RELOAD, then run the next cue the channel will return to its plotted level. Alternatively if you're in cue 10 and, in preview, made a change to cue 1 that tracked through the show, just pressing 'GO' into cue 11 wouldn't bring up the 'new' version of cue 11 incorporating that tracked change; pressing RELOAD then GO would.

And... that's about it. Hope they're of some help!

New Shows Under Strand Control

Strand consoles have been busy in London's West End and on tour around the UK, being chosen to control a number of new shows as well as continuing on long runs with others.

On the road, Strand consoles can be found running productions of Rebecca, lit by Howard Harrison and Jekyll & Hyde lit by Neil Austin, both supplied by PRG London, Fame lit by Graham McLusky, Journey's End lit by Jason Taylor and Saturday Night Fever, supplied by Stage Electrics, and The King and I, lit by Peter Mumford, The Play What I Wrote lit by Tim Mitchell, Dracula and An Inspector Calls both lit by Rick Fisher, Insignificance lit by Neil Austin and Highland Fling, the latest ballet from director Matthew Bourne, lit by Paule Constable, all these supplied by White Light.



Dracula lit by Rick Fisher

Strand consoles can also be found running other Bourne productions including Swan Lake, Play Without Words and Nutcracker on tour around the world. Also still on tour are Sleeping Beauty On Ice, Singalonga Abba, Scooby Doo, Astronaut and Miss Saigon, where a Strand 520i controls the entire lighting rig and the Catalyst digital media server used to create the show's famous helicopter sequence.

In the West End, Strand will be control of the two new musicals of the Spring season. Billy Elliot is a musical adaptation of the smash-hit film, being brought to the stage by the team behind the film - director Stephen Daldry and writer Lee Hall - along with composer Elton John.



Rebecca lit by Howard Harrison

Daldry has re-united the production team behind his acclaimed An Inspector Calls, designer Ian MacNeil and lighting designer Rick Fisher; Fisher is again collaborating with programmer Vic Smerdon with whom he worked on Jerry Springer: The Opera. The Far Pavilions, adapted from the novel by M. M. Kaye, is being directed by Gale Edwards and designed by Lez Brotherston with lighting by Peter Mumford; Steve Parkinson will program the show. These new shows will join other long-running musicals using Strand consoles, including The Woman in White, The Phantom of the Opera, Les Misérables, Jailhouse Rock, Saturday Night Fever, Fame and Chitty Chitty Bang Bang.

Strand consoles are also be running drama in the West End, with productions including Don Carlos, lit by Paule Constable, Blithe Spirit, lit by Peter Mumford, Whose Life Is It Anyway, lit by Paul Pyant, Man and Boy at the Duchess, lit by Mick Hughes, and A Life In The Theatre, lit by Neil Austin as well as shows at the National Theatre, the Royal Shakespeare Company, English National Opera and many others.

Finally, January's announcement of the nominees for this year's Olivier Awards, presented to the best new shows to open in the West End during the year, revealed that Strand consoles ran all four shows nominated in the best lighting category - Mary Poppins (lighting by Howard Harrison), Festen (lighting by Jean Kalman), All's Well That Ends Well (lighting by Paul Pyant) and the winner, His Dark Materials at the National Theatre, lit by Paule Constable.

Congratulations to Paule, the other lighting nominees and all involved with all of the nominated productions.



Highland Fling lit by Paule Constable

Grand Hyatt Erawan, Bangkok

by Phil O'Donnell

Strand Lighting Asia, together with our distributor in Thailand, Vichai Trading (1983) Co., Ltd, have recently completed an integrated installation of lighting, audio and AV at "The Residence", a newly renovated area within the renowned 5 star Grand Hyatt Erawan Hotel in Bangkok.

Designed by David Singer of tonychi and associates in New York, these elegant meeting and presentation areas represent the utmost in technical facilities, style and comfort for the hotel's meeting clients.

The Residence, Bangkok's first residential style event facility has been recently introduced to the Grand Hyatt Erawan Bangkok, accommodating up to 500 persons.

The hotel also provides comprehensive videoconferencing and audio-visual facilities.

Strand and Vichai Trading have a long association with the Hyatt Erawan, going back to 1990 when the hotel was built, involving numerous large Premiere System installations for the lobby, restaurants, ballroom and other public areas.

The reliability and performance of the Strand systems and the Vichai after sales service over the years led the hotel to request the same supplier team for their exciting new "Residences" project.



Unique Hospitality Area, Grand Hyatt Erawan, Bangkok



Meeting Room, Grand Hyatt Erawan, Bangkok



Meeting Room, Grand Hyatt Erawan, Bangkok

Strand Asia Wins Dongguan Arts Center Project



Strand Lighting Asia is pleased to announce that they have won a contract to supply a complete lighting and control system for the new Dongguan Opera House in China. The stunning new performing arts complex in Dongguan was designed by Canadian architect Carlos Ott whose

be configured to meet the needs of a wide range of performances.

Strand is supplying 21 Dimmer racks to the project with a mix of dimmer module types including 64 3kW and 5kW Sinewave dimmers. There are nearly 1800 dimmers in the system.

projects have included the Bastille Opera House in Paris and the Canadian Broadcasting Center in Toronto.

The facility with an estimated cost of RMB 450 million is located on a 40,000 square meter site that houses two theaters. The main theater is a 1600 seat Opera House and also includes a 400 seat Experimental theater. The Experimental Theater features a fully flexible seating and staging system that can

The dimmer racks feature redundant tracking back up processors and are connected via Ethernet to the control console. Strand 550i and 530i Consoles provide control for the project which also features network DMX data distribution and WYSIWYG visualization software.

Installation begins in March and is scheduled for completion in May of this year.

Democracy

by Bobby Harrell

When Democracy was set to come to Broadway from the West End, Dan Walker (Associate Lighting Designer) and Brian McGarity (Production Electrician) were chosen to spearhead the project for British Lighting Designer, Mark Henderson. I was chosen to be the Moving Light Programmer.



The preset look for Democracy on Broadway

The show has 14 VL5s, 3 VL6Cs, 2 VL1000Ts, 1 DHA YoYo, 1 EFX2 with a small conventional rig (by Broadway standards) controlled by a Strand 550 console, 1 SN100 for designer video and a 300 series desk as a redundant main for backup.

GeniusPro to LightPalette Conversion

The show disk arrived having been programmed in GeniusPro mode of the console software. Since many British lighting designers prefer to work this way (with tracking turned off) this meant that all levels in all cues had hard values. I prefer to work in LightPalette mode where I can have the option of tracking... especially with automated fixtures. So, with the approval of Mark Henderson, I converted the show file over to LightPalette.

The first step is to have the console in GeniusPro mode, turn tracking on and rerecord all cues to be move fades. (A move fade is a cue that only affects the channels that are recorded into the cue) Remember, since all cues have all hard values, I just continued in cue sequence from the first cue through to the last cue and no values were changed (tracked) into the next cue.

Rerecording causes the desk to recalculate the correct state of each cue as it converts it to a tracking cue. Then you set the desk into LightPalette mode and you're off and running! You can use macros to simplify the process.

The automated fixture package wasn't the same in New York so the next step was converting London's Mac 500s to VL6cs. (The VL5s were the same and the VL1000s were new to the Broadway production.) This is simply done by unpatching the Macs and repatching VL6cs to the same channels. All consistent attributes will retain all values from the show data. Remember that this is not deleting channels. Deleting channels will get rid of all show data. Not what I was looking to do. At this point I'm ready to focus and then program. Dan Walker and I focused the moving lights based on focus paperwork that Mark had sent to Dan from the London production. Once that was complete and I had setup my color and gobo groups, we were ready for production.

xConnect

Designer remote video was covered with 2 monitors and an SN100. Mark liked to keep that on a standard channel screen showing all channels in the show and the cue list. Mark had no more than 150 lights but some of the channels were all the way up in the 800s so deleting unnecessary channels was a great way to get all channels down to a single screen.

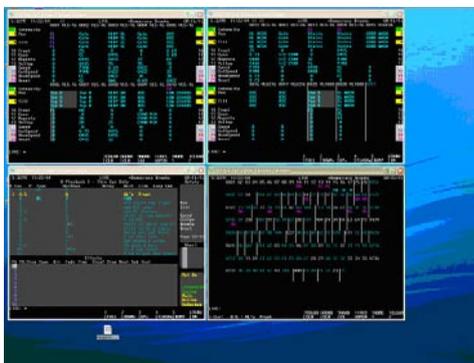
I would use xConnect, log in as User 2, to give myself 3 screens where the two channel screens would always show the entire moving light rig.



Democracy programming: Strand 550 and a Windows XP laptop using xConnect for additional screens.

Let's look a little closer at the content of the xConnect screens shown above.

The laptop screen below shows the four screens that were typically used for programming support during rehearsals.



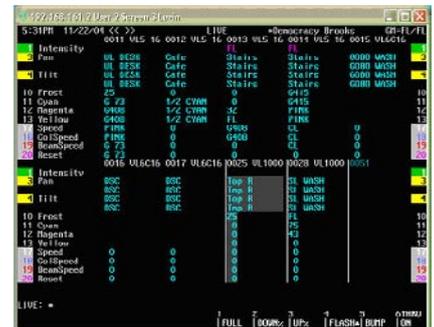
Laptop screenshot of the xConnect layout used during rehearsals of Democracy

The first screen is showing the first 10 moving lights. These are channels 1 through 10. Using Tracker Preset, all group referenced values show the group label info.



xConnect showing automated fixtures using Tracker Preset

The second screen shows the rest of the automated fixtures in the rig thus getting all my fixtures up at once. These are channels 11 through 17, 25 and 28.



xConnect showing the remaining fixtures on the second channel screens.

The use of xConnect allowed me to always see the entire rig (automated and conventional) at a glance without having to disrupt the designer's remote video screen. When I needed to, I could just go into Preview using xConnect and look back and forth through the cue list effortlessly to see what needed editing, all the while remaining invisible to the design team.

After the second preview, I turned the desk over to Brian McGarity for the remainder of the preview period. Brian had never touched this console prior to this production and here is what he had to say...

"Watching over your shoulder, picking up tricks and short cuts, (and later having you looking over my shoulder), it soon became clear to me that the 550 had much more to offer than I had given it credit for. I know the lighting designer was most pleased."

Once the show was operational, the Strand 300 series desk was brought in to act as a redundant main for the backup system. The 300 desk has a smaller footprint and can handle a system of this size with ease. It also gives Brian the ability to control when the 550 is the main and when the 300 is the main.

Democracy is playing at the Brooks Atkinson theatre in New York and is on an open ended run.

New DMX Merge Controller

- ✓ User Definable DMX Merge with Pile on, HTP or back up options
- ✓ Front and rear panel DMX512 connectors on rackmount unit for added flexibility
- ✓ Available in 1U rackmount enclosure with universal 100-240 volt power supply
- ✓ PCB version for custom installations requires 9VDC supply for correct operation
- ✓ Simple Dipswitch Set up for operating modes and DMX offset settings
- ✓ DMX Offset allows users to shift second mux input addresses for a wide range of applications including mixing the input of two different types of control systems such as a main console and house light controls

Now you can merge two DMX512 sources to one output



65013 Rack Mount DMX Merge



Rackmount version features front and rear panel connectors

How to see our new products

1. Visit the Strand Lighting booth at these exhibitions around the world
 - ProLight & Sound*, Frankfurt, Germany, (April 6-9, 2005)
 - NAB*, Las Vegas, USA, (April 16-19, 2005)
 - AC North Trade Show*, Leeds, UK, (April 26-27, 2005)
 - ShowLight*, Munich, Germany, (May 21-24, 2005)
 - ShowTech*, Berlin, Germany, (June 1-3, 2005)
 - Broadcast Asia*, Singapore, (June 14-17, 2005)
 - ABTT*, London, UK, (June 15-16, 2005)
 - IBC*, Amsterdam, Netherlands, (September 9-13, 2005)
 - PLASA*, London, UK, (September 11-14, 2005)
 - LDI*, Orlando, USA, (November 11-13, 2005)
2. Contact your local Strand representative for a demonstration
3. Visit the Strand Lighting website:

www.strandlighting.com

Strand Welcomes Back Some Familiar Faces



Tim Burnham welcomes Sonny Sonnenfeld back to Strand

Strand Lighting welcomes back Sonny Sonnenfeld after a 20-year absence. Sonny joins as Commercial Consultant and New York Representative, serving the consultant, Broadway and dealer community.

Sonny originally joined Century Lighting (now Strand) in 1945, after serving throughout WW2 in the South Pacific. In 1961 he co-founded Lighting & Electronics, rejoining what had then become Strand Century between 1975-85.

Strand President Tim Burnham comments: "Sonny has forgotten more about this business than most of us will ever know, and his rejoining us speaks volumes for the direction Strand Lighting is taking. We're working very hard every day to satisfy our growing customer base, and now we're going to have to work twice as hard to satisfy Sonny!"

Peter Sherrington is returning to Strand UK this week after an 18 month leave while he worked on a charity funded project for disadvantaged children. David Catterall European Sales says "Peter comes back to us with a wealth of experience on Strand products, some great relationships and joins us at a very exciting time."

In Germany Walter Thomsen is also returning to Strand to manage our sales in Southern Germany. He will also be responsible for Austria and Switzerland. "Walter has recently worked as a lighting consultant and brings a great deal of lighting knowledge and practice to his new position. Both of these appointments follow on a year of growth for Strand and our whole team looks forward to working with them," David adds.



Peter Sherrington



Walter Thomsen

Exhibitions & Events

Visit the Strand Lighting booth at these exhibitions around the world and see what's new.

ProLight & Sound, Frankfurt, Germany
(April 6-9, 2005)

NAB, Las Vegas, USA
(April 16-19, 2005)

AC North Trade Show, Leeds, UK
(April 26-27, 2005)

ShowLight, Munich, Germany
(May 21-24, 2005)

ShowTech, Berlin, Germany
(June 1-3, 2005)

Broadcast Asia, Singapore
(June 14-17, 2005)

ABTT, London, UK
(June 15-16, 2005)

IBC, Amsterdam, Netherlands
(September 9-13, 2005)

PLASA, London, UK
(September 11-14, 2005)

LDI, Orlando, USA
(November 11-13, 2005)

Strand Academy training events take place throughout the world. Visit our website for further information or contact your local Strand representative for details.

www.strandlighting.com

Donna Appleton celebrates 25 years with Strand



Jim Ryan, Donna Appleton & Tim Burnham celebrate Donna's 25-year anniversary.

Donna Appleton recently celebrated 25 years with Strand Lighting. Donna's dedication and enthusiasm have played a great part in the development of the Strand Lighting Canada operation based in Toronto. We'd like to thank her for everything she's done.

Congratulations Donna!!

The Strand Newsletter is published electronically four times a year. If you received a copy of this newsletter from an associate and would like to receive a copy directly please email us at:

newsletter@strandlight.com