

Waiting for Gobos

Cantata shows its paces as an accurate and sharp focusing gobo projector at a fashion show.

"Peter Coleman here. We've got a job coming up that will interest you!"

This call, from the managing director of our Birmingham based distributors, Midland Theatre Services, was to tip us off that a large scale trade show for which they were hiring the lighting rig, was scheduled to use a real array of Cantata and Harmony projected gobos.

Held late last summer, the show was for the 'Next' chain of shops to introduce the autumn and winter fashion range they would be offering the women of Britain. A magnificent marquee was erected in

the grounds of a stately home in Leicestershire and groups of 'Next' managers and staff gathered on three successive evenings to enjoy dinner, participate in an awards ceremony and see a professionally produced show, by the 'Next' design department.

At the heart of the presentation decor were over 120 gobos that were used to set the three fashion themes — Italy, France and USA.

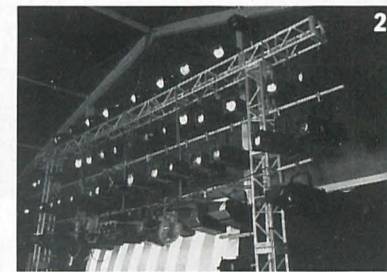
As a sidelight on the latter, Peter Coleman told us that achieving the effect the producer wanted for the US theme was the most exacting part of the set up. First Stars and Stripes appeared simply as an open black and white image, then came the red and then the blue. A moment's thought by anyone who has ever tackled gobo projec-

tion will give an idea of the accuracy of lantern setting necessary to superimpose three images exactly.

Control was by M24 and two M24 Effects plus a Lightboard M. Midland Theatre, as a matter of policy, supply a Line Volt Conditioner on all large scale hires on the principle that if you are certain of the quality of your electricity supply, you know you are starting off right whatever other snags may arise during a limited fit-up time.

In fact, starting promptly on Monday morning, sixteen tons of equipment worth £150,000 was rigged in four days with only one 'all nighter'. No prizes for guessing which night that was.

The rig included 51 Minims, 48 Harmony F's, 16 Prelude 28/40's, 48



1 On the Bridge, Peter Coleman, of Midland Theatre Services at the M24. Rick Boylan at the Lightboard M.

2 This gives some idea of the scale — 120 gobos were used during the half hour show.

A Brute in Bournemouth

The editor visits a fascinating project whose scope is no less than the forming of a complete history of stage and studio lighting.

David Sandham combines the roles of school master and theatre and studio lighting enthusiast, and is certainly not the subject of my title. While we are all enthusiasts (why else would I write and you read) Mr Sandham has embarked on a personal crusade in which members of his school have become involved. I suggest that his enthusiasm has been both the starter and the engine of this enterprise.

In October 1987, a YTS student rang David, knowing of his great interest, and reported that 'Some old theatre lights were going in a skip'. A rescue dash was mounted and the skip gave up no less than nine Swabe cyclorama lanterns. These were cylindrical units with 1kW GS lamps that flourished before the war and are now nearly extinct. The units rescued are, in fact, the only ones I have ever seen!

Feeling that such noble old performers should have a better fate than a skip, nine of David's pupils, fired by his interest, took on the lunch break task of complete refurbishment.

Then, as so often happens, the word began to spread, and news of redundant spots and floods came in ever increasing volume.

Now over five hundred lanterns await full restoration to their makers original specifications and a research project on lantern history is under way. The lanterns include: Strand Acting Area lanterns; Digby low intensity arc wing spotlights and vast 2kW fresnels with ventilation holes in the back modestly spelling out their manufacturer's initials.

In a store shed in the school's grounds lurk, among a tangled throng, a fifty year old bracket handle board, the Thyatron board from Manchester Opera House and — this really shook me — the Strand Lightboards from the National Theatre that I remember working so hard to sell in the early seventies.

During a visit by illustrious members of the ABTT many memories were revived and a few mysteries were solved.

Strand's Fred Bentham was asked why one type of relay was fitted with a beautiful Strand label reading, 'G.S. Type Relay.' "Easy," said Fred, "it meant Government Surplus!"

The hope is to have, eventually, a complete museum incorporating performance



areas, with working examples of every type of lantern and control that was of significance. The target date? At least five years from now.

In the meantime, interesting items for the collection can be pointed in the direction of David Sandham at St Peter's School, Southbourne, near Bournemouth. Collection can usually be arranged.

And the Bournemouth Brute? I did say that studio lanterns were included!

1 Part of the lantern collection awaiting refurbishment.

2 Was this one of ours? Fred Bentham looks doubtfully at someone's patch panel.

Redheads and Blondes Available for Home Videos

'Leisure Industry' has rather a feeling of something passive. But over the last few years the Do-It-Yourself amateur video market has doubled and re-doubled.

After the initial somewhat low key excitement of seeing themselves on television, most camcorder owners graduate to more ambitious productions, either documentary or drama. This is where professional style lighting plays its part.

Unlike the joys of the amateur stage, where many of the audience will never set foot in a professional theatre, everyone sees television regularly with its high production standards.

Now, thanks to the use of modern materials and large production volumes, certain professional TV lighting equipment is available at affordable prices.

The 'Redhead' is an 800 Watt variable beam floodlight. It is made from a high density heat resistant plastic and gives a brilliant white (3200L) light from a small and very portable unit.

The Iadi is a small flood suitable for general 'fill' lighting, ideal for general lighting of a scene whose emphasis can be provided by the Redhead. This is

available in various wattages from 300W to 1000W.

For a more ambitious production, perhaps by a local video society, the Blonde, a 2000 Watt variable beam flood — the big sister of the Redhead — gives power for lighting bigger sets.

A full range of stands, wire guards, gaffer grips, etc. is available and complete kits of portable video lighting equipment with a full range of accessories in a travelling case are offered.

Never think that daylight is enough. If ever you see a professional crew at work, even if it is a TV reporter speaking to camera, you will see that extra lighting, either to fill in the shadows if in sunlight, or to give a bright image on a dull day, is always used.

So Strand, the world's largest professional entertainment lighting company, now offers its equipment to the amateur in the newest branch of show business.

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