

up the **truss**

with **Tim Roberts**



A brief shudder of glee runs through the staff here at Truss Towers as a fax emerges from the machine, bringing with it the unmistakable whiff of disaster. Sadly, the author of this particular missive is very anxious that their name is not publicly connected with the events recounted; and that any employers, sponsors, agents, Public Authorities, companies or others howsoever or by whomsoever connected implicated or insinuated whether individually severally or jointly are not mentioned or even hinted at howsoever etc, etc. There are severe legal and financial implications after all. So, it is with extreme regret that I'm unable to name this month's *Truss* winner, although their moniker will be appearing on a special edition *MagLite* very soon. Anyway, you don't need to trouble yourself with details like who and where – just read on and thank your lucky stars it wasn't you...

The Great Corporate Event was to be put under way with the best *Son et Lumière*, fireworks and champagne that money could buy. Unfortunately for the crew this meant a 5am get-in followed by an overnight focus, then show day followed by another all-nighter that involved coiling enough cable to encompass the globe. Cable that had been lying in a marinade of mud, rust and sea water on a rotting pontoon floating in a dockyard.

Due to tidal movement it was impossible to wheel equipment off the pontoon until 7.30am the next day, so flight cases were being lifted off by some very disenchanted cranes drivers, whose tempers and tolerance wore ever thinner as the dawn chorus came on. Our hero could barely bring him or herself to look as cases of expensive Texan hardware were swung about over the murky depths with increasing abandon. As the crane drivers became more and more frustrated they began to ignore shouts from the crew, and went for things as soon as they looked like they were ready to be lifted. Something just had to go wrong.

The last item was a barrel full of generator fuel; as it was hoisted the second hook from the crane caught the safety barrier of the pontoon and ripped it right off. It plunged directly into the soup, and was followed, slowly but inexorably, by a long section of rather expensive trussing. There was a ghastly silence from the crew as the waters parted and this impromptu and distinctly-unseaworthy vessel was launched. Groans of despair turned to gasps of amazement when the bloody thing floated, and remained sufficiently buoyant to be hauled back aboard with the aid of some snap braces. Whether due to the density of pollutants in the dock or the stinginess of the fabricators with their alloy, the Floating Truss of the Blessed Virgin remains a mystery to this day...

Fornicating

As recompense for this punishing schedule (metallic miracles notwithstanding) our hero was given the task of rigging for The Party, the schedule for which look remarkably good: Day 1 – load a small amount of gear into a marquee; drink a lot; sleep. Day 2 – fiddle about with said gear for a while; carry on drinking; sleep. Day 3 – Lunchtime gig; load-out; go home.

Easy.

Even the weather was kind. No torrential rain, no hurricanes, no leaking tents.

So lovely, in fact, that millions upon millions of crane fly larvae, lying dormant in the marquee field, decided that this was the weekend to emerge, shag like fury, lay their eggs and die.

They were everywhere; in your face, in your hair.

You put down a cable and it's covered with mounds of rutting, biting insects. The man from the council came down and decided they weren't a health hazard, but sent a giant sweeper down to help clear the bodies from the carpet. It came as a blessed relief when the generator finally broke down and everyone could go home for the night.

The next morning the tent was surrounded by an 8" deep moat of post-coital corpses, while inside the air was a vibrating miasma of fornicating flies. Quite clearly even a corporate food & booze junket couldn't be held in these conditions, so the side walls of the tent were lifted in an attempt to flush the little sods out.

Despite these extreme conditions the satellite TV people insisted in setting up their transmission lines in a corner of the tent. Still, on the bright side, no tent walling meant less lighting to install. So, after another day of trawling through a giant insect orgy the tent was packed up and everyone went back to the hotel to contemplate the life cycle of invertebrates.

Breakfast was interrupted by an urgent (but

in the blissful light of *Truss* hindsight, perfectly predictable) alarm call from the site: "Err...the tent's blown in half!"

Overnight, a Force 8 wind had whipped up from nowhere and turned the venue inside out. The Production Manager, who witnessed the event, had dashed out and promptly received a broken collarbone from the swinging Production Office door!

In the early morning lighting gear was gingerly removed from the mass of flapping tarpaulin and shagging insects. Despite cancellation of the gig everyone had to stay on hand to provide power to the TV people in their satellite van. The marquee company were called and told the good news, but by the time they arrived it was too close to transmission time to remove the critical ISDN cables. These tiny wires had somehow remained intact, despite being completely entwined in the mess of fabric and steel. As all looked on even they began to disappear beneath the new day's dawning of fornicating flies...

Toodle pip!

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