



*“ . . . guaranteed to drown the best dialogue.”*

a check was achieved by switching off circuit by circuit. Coloured battens were very primitive lamps dipped in various coloured concoctions that soon burnt off.

My first experience of the modern colour change was at a North London theatre—I think it was the Dalston. Three battens—white, red and blue—were attached back-to-back like a three-pointed star and the centre shaft ran into sockets in the fly rail. The battens were linked by a bicycle chain affair and on to a winch and when a colour change was needed, the whole thing revolved so that as one batten faded out the other came in. Following the introduction of Front-of-House arcs (and the early ones were really not much good, hardly reaching the stage) the next step was Circle Spots followed by Automatic Change. Now we have Arenas, 2-kW Mirrors, and all kinds of lamps to satisfy the producer and confuse the Stage Manager’s lighting plot.

In some cases Circle Spots meant scraping Footlights. I remember the late Julian Wylie, and he was one of the best lighting men of his day, saying to me when he came to produce a pantomime at the London Hippodrome and found the floats had gone, “ You can’t light an exterior set without floats,

a breaker’s yard and bought up about 20 old headlamps. We cut the backs out and put in a lamp, fixed them to poles and these were the forerunners of the booms of today. Unfortunately the fire authorities frowned on the use of the inflammable American cloth and it was taboo, so we substituted black Italian, but the reflection was not nearly so good. However, we kept both drops on the grid and, if the fireman was around when the scene came on, then the effect suffered because we used the Italian, at other times we used the original.

Dimmers were not by any means standard equipment and



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