

LIGHTING CIRCUIT

by W. G. Crisp

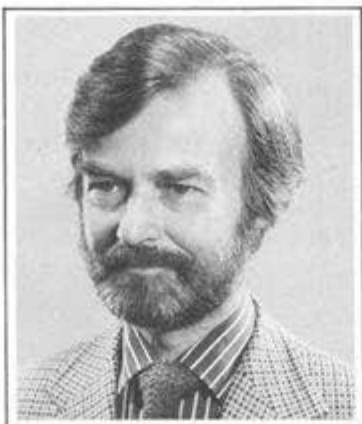
ONE way of finding your way around London, so they say, is to become a cab driver, another is to tag along with Mark Blaker, Salesman-cum-Driver of the Donmar travelling lighting shop for Strand theatre luminaires, portable kits, stands and spares. A new venture, fast settling into a pattern of trading which may well be taken up elsewhere in the country.

Leaving Brentford a short time back bound for central London, via the back turnings because the traffic was held up on the A4, allowed me a glimpse of 'The Hollywood Greats'. In West London? But of course when it's the name of a pub.

First stop was a courtesy call on LAMDA Theatre (London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art) in the Earls Court area, an independent drama school founded, surprisingly, way back in 1861. The existing experimental theatre opened in 1963, enables plays to be presented in several forms — proscenium, in the round, open stage or arena staging. Calling on LAMDA was for me an opportunity to renew contact with Steve Hocking the Stage Director — we last met when Strand photographed the Duet memory control lighting system installed there. His hospitality and that of the Chief Electrician, Iain Dall, was as warm as ever — coffee was offered and accepted, having arrived in a cup the size of a small pudding basin, quality matching quantity. Regrettably I had to turn down an invitation to stay for the matinee of Frank Loesser and Abe Burrows' "HOW TO SUCCEED IN BUSINESS WITHOUT REALLY TRYING". A pity, I might have become an overnight success.

From W.8 it's only a short ride to Marylebone N.W.8 and the Inner London Education Authority's Cockpit Theatre/Arts Workshop, for an appointment with Mike Roberts, Stage Manager and John Gibbon, Chief Electrician. The complex, for such it is, is part teachers' centre, youth centre, complementary education centre, 'animateurs' workshop and a public theatre.

In the flexible studio theatre where productions can be staged 'thrust' or 'endstage' or 'in the round' there is a fair mix of lanterns and a Strand AMC



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lighting control. Following a demonstration by Mark Blaker of a trio of lanterns a need was established for two out of three of these which hopefully in due course will enhance the Strand orientated lighting rig.

By 1.30 p.m. it was time for refreshments, and a short walk beside the Regent Canal brought us to 'The Crown', a mid-Victorian pub, also a free house, which for the benefit of our overseas readers only means a pub not tied to a brewery: a magnificent establishment also known as Crocker's Folly (that's the legend on the attractive barmaids' T-shirts). Crocker was the name of the man who had it built thinking that it would be adjacent to the new main line station which in the event was sited a mile away and is now known as Marylebone Station — hence Crocker's Folly. (If he had read *The Times* of his day perhaps he would have been better informed! Editor.) I am indebted, for this snippet of local history, to Mike Roberts who hopes that one day he will be able to take a peek at the rather splendid public rooms which it is rumoured are upstairs, but which are now closed to the public.

At this juncture I parted company with the mobile shop although Mark Blaker continued his travels to the Ambassadors and Prince Edward theatres and quite likely one or two calls after that.

An interesting, and certainly a different way of spending the middle hours of a day, possibly to be repeated at a later date and of which perhaps more anon. ●

The "Mobile Lighting Shop" in action.



STRAND ENTER A NEW MARKET

by The Editor

DOES it sound immodest of me to claim that Strand know more about dimmers and dimming than anyone else in the world? Well, perhaps just a little! Nevertheless, we have decided to use the technical design skills of the engineering team, from whose loins sprang both from the sophistication of Galaxy and the simplicity of Tempus, to design a whole new range of dimmers and controls for the non-theatre world of lighting.

Because controlled lighting, be it in a shop or a hotel, a showroom or a hospital ward, improves the environment we have christened the new range of dimmers "ENVIRON". First of all, what kinds of lighting can ENVIRON units control?

The tungsten and cold cathode are handled by one circuit design, while special circuitry is used for fluorescent dimming. Incidentally, we claim that it is in fluorescent dimming that the ENVIRON range's performance is especially impressive. Remarkably low light levels can be held with remarkable steadiness. A classic test for a fluorescent dimmer is to direct one's vision about six inches above the tube being controlled — this will maximise any unsteadiness in the light. My rheumy old eyes were recently directed by our engineers to just such a test, and there glowed the tube with narry a flicker.

The ENVIRON units are made in Kirkcaldy alongside the standard theatre and TV range, and the very high manufacturing volume enables us to offer them at a fully competitive price, even though they are made to what our technical boys call a "rather tasty specification".

How are these dimmers controlled? There are a number of controllers offered as standard. There are single, double, or treble rotary black knobs set upon the rich gleam of anodised aluminium. There are faders, which by the smoothness of their sliding motion remind one of the editorial motor car. There are push buttons in a multitude of configurations and a rainbow of colour. For example blue buttons could control the pre-sets for the lighting of an hotel dining room, while the adjacent red buttons control the lighting of the bar opening therefrom. Or one area could be arranged to always have the same relationships to the other whatever light level was wanted — so that for example, the bar could always be more brightly lit than the dining room and thus offer a constant temptation. Or perhaps an industrial control room needs dimmers so that people within can watch VDU's comfortably, but so that an adjoining area where other staff may be, can always be at a lower light level so that there is the minimum of distraction. All these requirements ENVIRON can cater for.

Are the face plates to be inscribed to indicate the area to be controlled, or light level pre-selected? Nothing easier. Should the puritanism of aluminium be abandoned for the flamboyance of brass? The ENVIRON department will be happy to agree to this little touch of extravagance.

Does the electricity bill for your building increasingly upset you at quarterly intervals? Then have you considered taking a course of ENVIRON dimmers linked to the daylight available?

The lighting is controlled by light sensors linked to dimmers so that as the daylight fades, up come the electric lights — but not until the daylight fades, hence the savings.

To handle these products we have started a new operation — Rank Strand Commercial Lighting Division, based at Brentford, with products suitable for all world markets.

Electrical specification of ENVIRON

Two basic Environ units are offered for tungsten and cold cathode dimming 6 x 10A cabinets and 3 x 20A (or 25A in continental use) cabinets, while 3 x 16A are available for dimming fluorescent loads. Dimmers are installed in cabinets as required to meet specific installation needs.

The standard cabinets are 840mm high x 600mm wide x 240mm deep steel electrical contracting cabinets stove enamelled in two tone grey. They have lockable outer doors, louvred for ventilation, protecting the controls. Inside is a second panel carrying Reyrolle HRC dimmer input fuses and two per dimmer sub-circuit output MCB's, pre-set setting potentiometers and local control pre-set pushes are available where the units are to be used with pre-setting wall controllers. The second panel hinges outward for easy service access to the dimmer components which are mounted on a rear sub-plate. Contracting access is by a removable plate at the top of the cabinet for wiring to pressure pad terminals.

Individual unit dimmers for fluorescent and tungsten are also offered.

Environ dimmers are thyristor units fully protected by HRC fuses, filtered to BS 800. They are plug-replaceable and automatic compensation circuitry reduces adjustments to a minimum.

Where a fluorescent installation is to be controlled standard dimmable ballasts are required in the tube fittings and a 2 x 10A or 1 x 20A dimmer module is replaced by a 16A fluorescent dimmer and heater supply module.

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