



Photo: Harmer PR



Photo: Harmer PR



Photo: Harmer PR



Showlight: Lighting the way in Glasgow

Showlight 2009 was an inspiring melting pot of talent and ideas in which lighting professionals presented their views and work to delegates from across the entertainment lighting industry.

Sarah Rushton-Read reports from Glasgow . . .

Above: The inimitable John Watt entertains delegates in his own unique style; while Ian Dow (middle) and Bernie Davis (right) restore some decorum.

Facing page: The Showlight Committee take to the stage; Beijing Olympics LD Paul Collison (bottom right); a Showlight panel (bottom left) of Rick Fisher, Jim Bornhorst, Roberto Schaefer and Bill Klages.

Scotland - Chaired by Ian Dow and hosted by the BBC at Pacific Quay, Glasgow - the BBC's first HD TV studio, post-production facility and the first European broadcast centre capable of handling HD from end to end - this quadrennial event allows lighting experts from all disciplines to learn, network and exchange opinion with one another in a relaxed and informal environment.

The focus of the show - if you'll excuse the pun - was on the creative process and the challenges lighting designers face when developing and realising a lighting concept, in whatever context.

An eclectic range of speakers highlighted some of the fascinating similarities and differences between the numerous lighting disciplines of today including theatre, music, festivals, TV, film, corporate and events through to environmental and architectural lighting - both inside and out.

Papers - none more than 30 minutes long - expertly explored the creative vision, challenges, restrictions and surprises lighting projects can engender, and speakers stressed the high levels of invention, human endeavor and dedicated teamwork it takes to realise a successful lighting project.

Speakers included Paul Collison - responsible for the programming and television lighting for the spectacular Beijing Olympics Opening Ceremony; Jim Tetlow - lighting designer for the US Presidential Debates and consultant for events surrounding Barack Obama's Inauguration; Roberto Schaefer ASC - most recently DoP on *Quantum of Solace*, and Bernie Davis, who described the highs and lows of lighting the Royal Variety Show in just three days. Tanya Burns of Imagination portrayed her journey from YTS trainee to working on worldwide lighting commissions, and lighting designer Paul Pyant explained the challenges he faced when creating the atmospheric lighting for the stage production of *Lord of the Rings*.

However, one of the major highlights for me was the engaging presentation by Angus Farquhar on Lighting the Storr on the Isle of Sky. Farquhar's project sensitively illustrated many of the universal issues that lighting professionals face on different scales; environmentally, creatively, logistically, technically and even personally - whilst emphasising the talent for resourcefulness required to realise an artistic vision within the confines of a strict brief. Most importantly, the project established that less is most definitely more in the right hands.

Every paper struck a chord, simply because each was delivered by a passionate professional who cares deeply about what he or she does. The break between the sessions bore this out as an enthusiastic buzz of chatter filled the exhibition areas, no doubt helped along at lunchtime by the flow of wine, kindly sponsored by Lee Filters.

Refreshingly - unlike most trade events where the spotlight, invariably and unavoidably tends to shine on products and technology - Showlight centres its attention firmly on the creative solution; technology is treated simply as the tool with which to achieve it.

Showlight also continues to nurture its connection with students from an assortment of entertainment design and technical courses. Every exhibitor is obliged to sponsor a student who then helps to build and man the stand. In return, the student is given an allowance and can attend all the presentations and social events. Those I spoke to reported that they were thrilled to have this networking opportunity and found it a very positive, educational and useful experience.

Showlight's former chairman, the inimitable John Watt, returned to present a unique prequel to the scheduled Green Panel discussion - a demonstration of his sustainable dimming system, which comprised a curious combination of carbon neutral and recycled objects.



Showlight Committee . . .

Jessica Allan, John Allen, Sheila Bartholomew, Rudi Benz, Joe Breslin, Jane Cockburn, Bernie Davis, Rick Dines, Ian Dow - chairman, Rick Fisher, Derek Gilbert, Lesley Harmer, Jim McNamee, Ivan Myles, Mary Pope, Roger Simonsz, David Taylor, Chris Watts, Mark White.

Showlight Sponsors . . .

Main Sponsor: Martin Professional

Gold Sponsors: De Sisti SPA, ELP, Glasgow City Council, LSI Projects Ltd, Lighting&Sound International, XL Video.

Silver Sponsors: Harmer PR, Lee Filters, MA Lighting.

Other Sponsors: ALD, ARRI (USA), BBC Scotland, Carallon, ESTA, ETC Europe, Henley Theatre Services, Northern Light, PLASA, Rosco, RSAMD, STLD.

With the aid of a picnic hamper, a jug of red wine (actually coloured salt water), a knife and fork, a table lamp and some power, he introduced his new silent and cool-running dimmer. He then wheeled out a scaled-up version, comprising a small garden shed, which opened to reveal a toilet, a caged canary and a protracted risk assessment written on a roll of toilet paper. This upscale dimmer managed to control a 2k fresnel with a twist of a handle! I can only assume that this design alludes to the days when technicians were sometimes required to pee into a tank in saline dimmer installations to keep them working!

Another marvellous comic interlude came on the last day from an equally natural performer, Bill Klages, who regaled delegates with hilarious, irreverent stories from his long and triumphant TV lighting career - sadly too many to cover here.

Of course, it's not all work. Delegates also benefit from an imaginative programme of

outings. Organised by John Allen of Northern Light, destinations included whiskey distilleries, the Phillips lighting factory, Glasgow Royal Concert Hall, The Theatre Royal and The Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama (RSAMD) plus several other cultural trips. Allen also very capably planned the Sunday evening dinners hosted around Glasgow by manufacturers and service suppliers for attending delegates.

The penultimate day concluded with the social and fun-packed conference dinner - this year held at Glasgow's impressive Old Fruitmarket, now an extremely versatile venue. The tradition of seat-swapping after each course was, as always, great fun and talk was so animated it was difficult to silence people for the speeches.

Having said that, the closing speech from CEO of main sponsor Martin Professional, Christian Engsted, offered a surprisingly candid view of the financial and business state of the lighting industry. Delegates applauded his honesty.

So, I hear you say, if Showlight's so good, why only every four years? I asked the same, until I realise that the show demands considerable organisation by big-hearted volunteers from the professional lighting world who have very demanding jobs already. The show also relies on substantial private sponsorship (see panel) from companies like this year's main sponsor, Martin Professional. There's no doubt that Showlight is a key event in the lighting industry's calendar. A four-year gap does at least allow speakers to plan the event into busy schedules, to give delegates a rare opportunity to hear papers from the illuminati of the lighting world in one place, over three extremely enjoyable and enlightening days.



SHOWLIGHT
www.showlight.org

View more pictures from Showlight online:
www.lsonline.co.uk/Jun09



SOON LIGHTING CONTROL WILL BE CLEAR CUT

NEW.lsclighting.com

