

LIGHTING

DIMENSIONS




OLYMPIC GOLD The Sydney Skyline Spectacular

JOHN RAYMENT ON THE CEREMONIES ▶ CITY LIVE: A NIGHTCLUB SENSATION ▶ MYTHOLOGIA: TALES OF GLORY

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LEARNING AND THE DISCIPLINE OF DIVERSITY

Periodically, LD runs articles from designers and manufacturers about topics of interest to the lighting community. This month, designer Greg Scott (featured in November 2000's "Cirque du Microsoft" article) discusses the importance of ongoing education in illumination.

A theatre student recently contacted me at the behest of a former college professor. The student was looking for some thoughts and encouragement regarding his future in the world of lighting design. I told him that the most important thing was to never stop learning: The more you learn, the more opportunities will present themselves to you. I have enjoyed lighting many different productions, including theatre, dance, opera, TV, concerts, corporate theatre, and trade shows. The best aspects in each arena can be applied to other forms of production lighting to the benefit of your overall design. There are many more elements to the equation, but the attitude of learning keeps the

lighting design. It hadn't occurred to me that every city in the US had many other idealistic young designers like myself fighting for the same opportunity in a world of established LDs. I remained committed, going out of my way on each production to try something new and different. Most importantly, I stayed involved, always learning, striving to be in the right place at the right time.

Experience and Other Disciplines

Learning other lighting disciplines such as theatre, television, concerts, and dance can be very helpful. Scenic design has been another important study. Not only is it helpful in working with other scenic designers, but also when I design a set I have ultimate control over lighting it. Production design is very seasonal, so having a diverse background helps to keep bread on the table.

Networking is also important. "Face time" with people in the industry keeps you in the

College provided me with a good foundation in the arts, as well as teaching me commitment and resourcefulness. That is not to say, however, that college is necessary for learning or creativity. The attitude of wanting to learn is essential to greater success whether in university or the school of life. I have worked with some designers who felt they knew all they needed to know and stopped learning. They had become stale, even stuck. The challenge and thrill is to break the boundaries, always looking for the next lesson that will sharpen the mind and keep you on the edge.

Don't get frustrated or discouraged if you seem to be spinning your wheels. Persistence will eventually pay off. Experience will help you use the resources you obtain. Eventually your attitude of learning will be the glue to hold it all together, so long as your expectations are realistic. If you are serious about lighting you should know that there will be some sacrifices. Expect long hours and failures. Relationships



Simply brilliant.

mind's door open when opportunity knocks.

As a university student, I was persistent with my advisors, who in turn allowed me to tailor my own curriculum. In this way, my knowledge deepened beyond what the theatre department could provide. I took many classes: art, music, physics, TV production, directing, and scenic design. I received independent study credits through my employment at a professional events arena and a performing arts center on campus. As I worked, I never missed an opportunity to learn from LDs who were out in the "real world."

After graduation, I followed my collection of business cards to various lighting companies that were touring rock and roll. After spending time as a "shop rat," my experience finally put me on tour in the mid-1980s. It was hard work, and I often found myself saying, "I went to college for this?" It was discouraging to learn that my degree was not a golden ticket into

minds of those hiring. Try going to industry-specific trade shows like LDI or USITT. Be persistent and don't be afraid to keep calling. Remember, if you don't call them, someone else will. Stay informed by keeping up with current lighting trends through industry magazines as well as the Internet.

and "having a life" often suffer at the hands of success. If need be, consider moving into an area where opportunity is more plentiful. It is hard to progress in areas where community theatre or local productions are the only opportunities at hand.

The Skinny

Success is hard to see sometimes, but the good of that creative moment far outweighs what I sometimes call "the hate." For many production disasters, it feels best to go out the door and never look back. However, something can always be learned, even in the worst situations. I am still learning, especially from my mistakes. Success is what you do with those mistakes. You can either fall from defeat or pick up the pieces and try again, having learned what not to do the next time.

Lessons can also be learned from other designers: Learn from their successes as well as their failures. I learned a great deal from the designers I have been privileged to work with. One told me, "There is no such thing as an original idea. It is what you do with those ideas that is the difference between a good and a bad design." Teach what you know, and learn what you don't. Lastly, have fun. When you stop having fun you should reevaluate what you are doing—and perhaps redefine your meaning of success.