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How I Invented the Image Multiplexer

By Lori Friedlander

The Image Multiplexer came about when a client asked me if it was possible to create a kaleidoscope effect with light. I told him I'd see what I could come up with and began experimenting with front surface mirrors, which didn't work at all, and then eventually thought of prisms. I made a few prototypes, and for the actual event used Image Multiplexers and gobo rotators with matched gobos rotating in opposition, which gave a pretty good kaleidoscope imitation. After the event I began experimenting with other uses for the Image Multiplexer.

The venue where I work brought in pianist Phillip Aaberg for a concert, and there was a particular song of his that seemed especially suited to an effect. The song was originally written for the film "The Story of Naomi Uemura", which is about a man who climbs and is lost on Mount McKinley, and I began experimenting with a snow effect for the cyc. Mr. Aaberg was absolutely thrilled with the outcome. He told me that the effect was so lovely to watch that he couldn't look at it while he was playing because he'd forget what he was doing! You can see the effect on the Image Multiplexer web site. And I love the fact that it was created using 1 Source Four, 1 gobo rotator (with gobo), some gel scraps and an Image Multiplexer. Simple can be better!

I have also used the Image Multiplexer to create a completely patterned cyc using two fixtures. I like the fact that I can make composite gels from gel scraps to create a multicolored, multi patterned effect with only two fixtures, where before I was using six fixtures and the color was not as good. While you do lose some intensity because the image is spread out, with the typical black scrim and cyc setup this is generally not an issue. And if your stage has more depth than mine has you could do it with one fixture!

After having all this fun with my lighting accessory, I thought that perhaps other people might enjoy it. I sent a description of it to City Theatrical and Gary Fails asked me to bring one in for a demo. Gary and the people at City Theatrical were the first Lighting Industry people to see it, and we spent a wonderful afternoon playing with the Image Multiplexer and discussing its possibilities. The people at City Theatrical came up with the idea of having a round edge for the frame, so that if requested a motor could be added that would allow the Image Multiplexer to spin; useful if your gobo isn't designed to be rotated 360 degrees. City Theatrical decided to manufacture and distribute it, which they were completely equipped to do, and it was introduced as a new product at LDI 2000 in Las Vegas, where it won the ESTA Product of the Year Award!

Today, City Theatrical handles all the business of manufacturing and distributing the Image Multiplexer both nationally and internationally. I am able to go out every once in a while and give demonstrations and workshops. It is very gratifying to see other people, from high schoolers to industry professionals, play with the Image Multiplexer and create their own effects. One of the assignments I give in my lighting classes is to create an effect using an Image Multiplexer, and it is amazing to see what people come up with. The Image Multiplexer is a very interactive, hands-on lighting accessory and I enjoy the fact that it gets people to play with light.

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The Image Multiplexer uses an array of prisms to expand a projected image six times.



Image of snow in motion



A full stage cyc of flowers created by the Image Multiplexer



Lori and Gary accept the ESTA Widget of the Year Award at LDI 2000.