

The Rocky Horror Puppet Show

By Bobby Harrell

What do you get when you cross Muppets, giant puppets and the musical that has the largest cult-following at the midnight movies? You get Collin County Community College's production of "*The Rocky Horror Puppet Show*". Yes...puppet show. Now this is no ordinary puppet show. The Muppet-style puppets were the hecklers (a roll traditionally filled by the movie going audience) while certain characters took on an "other-worldly" feel by incorporating body parts as puppets.

The director, Brad Baker, says "*Rocky Horror is, at its essence, the story of young innocents who enter a demented world and emerged changed by the experience. We chose to extend the world of transvestitism to a world that featured transvestite puppets (hand-operated cloth puppets, stick puppets, marionettes, rag puppets and large-scale Bun-Raku puppets).*"

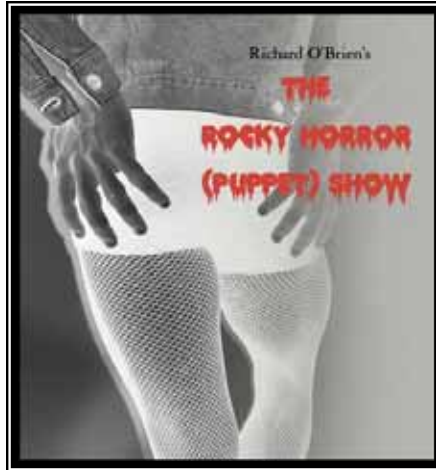
Rocky himself, was an 11 foot tall puppet that was controlled by 5 puppeteers. In addition to that, there were several life sized marionettes that were controlled by puppeteers from catwalks above the stage for additional onlookers and "chorus" members.



Faculty designer, Craig Erickson, usually designs the set and lighting for most shows. This time, he asked me to light the show and teach the process of designing a musical on their Strand 520i console while I was there. This would function as a very detailed master class over 2 weeks of production. Here's what Craig had to say about the desk.

"The 520 with its user friendly syntax and macro capabilities made the programming and cueing process for Rocky Horror fast and efficient and

provided us with many creative options. One of the things that really made this board fast was the ability for our operator to configure many aspects of the console in a way that made sense to him."



Craig is talking about the flexible and editable ATC Page. We needed to setup the console to talk about that but first; here is the equipment available for the production.

Shop Order

The house equipment inventory that they have is quite impressive.
12 - VL1000TS, 3 - VL2201 Spots,

2 - VL2412 Washes, 1 - Catalyst Media Pro Server, 8 - Advanced Lighting Live LED 100 fixtures, 4 - GAM SX4 Gobo Changers, 2 - GAM Twin Spin 2s, 2 - GAM Film/FX loops, 1 - GAM Scene Machine, 14 - Wybron Forerunner Scrollers, 2 - Strong Super Troopers and 250 conventional fixtures with Strand CD80 dimmer racks.

Control was on a Strand 520i console with a Wacom 12" x 12" macro tablet for moving light programming, an iPaq wireless focus remote and xConnect software for remote video.

**"The Strand 520i was a fantastic tool to control the variety of moving fixtures as well as the digital media used in the show."
Tom Hull**

Console Setup

First, the fixture library...

[MORE](Notes Display)(Load File)(Fixture Library). Console syntax is represented with [Display Keys] and (Soft Keys).

When using multiple types of fixtures, I often adjust the fixtures from the library to make them more compatible with each other. For example, if the VL1000 gobo wheel is assigned to attribute 9 (RGobo) and the VL2201's gobo wheel is assigned to attribute 8 (Gobo), I change the VL1000s attribute to match the other fixture. This allows me to configure the desk to only worry about one attribute (8) for the gobo wheel of two different fixtures. I then follow this logic throughout for any additional attributes that co-

exist on multiple fixtures. Anyone needing to know how to edit the fixture library should view the tutorial on automated luminaires that is on the Strand website at www.strandlighting.com Go to Support and Tutorials.

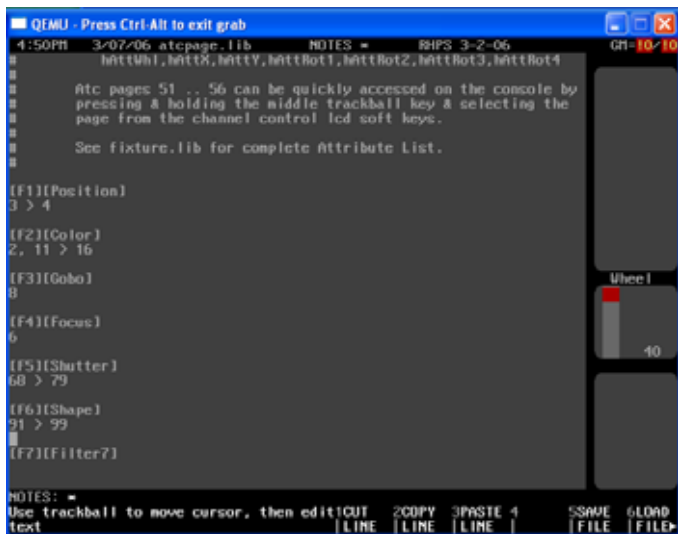
Once the fixture library was set and the fixtures were patched, I moved on to the ATC Page. This is where attribute filters, display order and encoder assignments are made.

[MORE](Notes Display)(Load File)(ATC Page).

The first section is the attribute filters.

Attribute filters allow you to filter out all but the assigned attributes. Below you see the filters set here. Filter 1 is for Position and filters out all but 3 (Pan) and 4 (Tilt). The filters appear on the soft keys when the @ATT key is pressed. These filters are used for programming preset focus groups. Typical syntax for recording channels 1 thru 6's position information to group 101 would be...

1 THRU 6 RECORD GROUP 101 @ATT (Position) TEXT DC ENTER

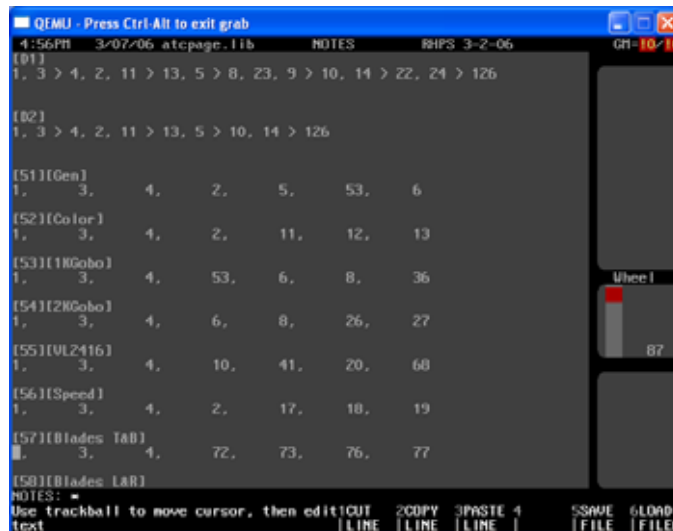


ATC Page: Attribute Filters

The second section is the display order. Here you can list the attributes numerically that will display in the order that makes sense to you. Under D1 (Display 1) just text in the attributes in the order that you want to display. For example, 1, 3, 4, 2, 11>13. This will set the order for 1 (intensity), 3 (pan), 4 (tilt), 2 (color wheel), 11>13 (cyan, magenta and yellow). After that, just type 5 > 126. 5 is the first attribute not specified while 126 is the last available attribute. Once here, just press (Save File). The software will do the math for you and fix the entry line. Now go to the LIVE screen. In fact, press LIVE twice to refresh the moving light screen and you'll see your new attribute order. Press LAST SCREEN to go back to

the ATC Page and continue fine tuning your preferred order. That's all there is to it!

You'll notice there is a setup for D2. This is display 2 and it's for the second user. This was my xConnect setup. This means that the designer can have a different display order than the programmer. Just set it up any way you want and use xConnect in Login mode...not Monitor mode.



ATC Page: Display Order and Encoder Assignments

The last section in the ATC Page is the encoder assignment. Each two line grouping is an ATC map that assigns the attributes listed to the console's devices. There are 7 entries of numerical data that correspond to the 6 hardware items on the desk. The first attribute (1 – Intensity) is assigned to the intensity wheel, the second and third attributes (3 – Pan and 4 – Tilt) to the trackball, then the next 4 attributes are assigned to the encoder wheels from top (white) to bottom (purple). Just edit and change the attribute number assignment as well as the labeling as you need.



Strand 520i with a Wacom Macro Tablet for programming.

I always start with ATC Maps 51 thru 56. These will show up on the softkeys when the center teal key is pressed and held. Just hold it down and then select the proper softkey. Any ATC Maps that you don't need just delete.

Catalyst Programming

Integrating Catalyst into this show was a snap. The director, Brad Baker, wanted slides and videos shown on screens left and right of the proscenium arch as well as a live camera feed showing the Narrator who was portrayed as our current president, George W Bush sitting in the oval office. Tom Hull, staff assistant technical director, configured Catalyst for the show and said,

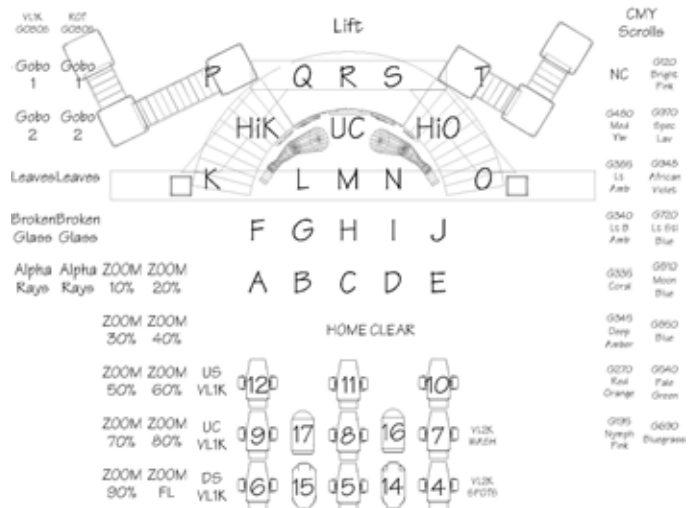
"The Strand 520i was a fantastic tool to control the variety of moving fixtures as well as the digital media used in the show. We controlled the Catalyst system via the Strand desk and it helped make programming the Catalyst a breeze. In an educational environment, it is helpful to have tools that students can quickly pick up and work with. In using a Wacom macro tablet, wireless remotes, and digital technology, my student programmer could pick up and retain the information quickly and efficiently. This show was a large undertaking with lots of visual and digital media coming together. The Strand desk took all of that information and gave us a fantastic outcome."

We used 3 layers of control for this. Layer 1 controlled all slides, videos and the live camera feed, layer 2 was a duplicate for cross fading abilities while layer 3 displayed a mask that shaped the projection screen by rounding off the corners. The mask layer was always on where the other layers would only be on when the projectors needed to display content. It was setup as a moving light of 40 attributes where each layer was a different moving light channel. We also setup 2 ATC encoder maps to assign the often used attributes to the encoders as well as included those attributes in the D1 and D2 display orders. After that, its cueing just like a moving light. Pan and tilt for position, set the right folder and file to display the proper image, even set the correct "Playmode" so that the video can play audio that went from the Audio Out on the Mac to the audio desk.



Macro Tablet

The macro tablet enabled me to communicate easily and quickly with the student master electrician / programmer, Chris Mears. We structured the tablet with the fixtures, a focus map, gobo palettes, color palettes and any shortcuts that we needed.



Automated Luminaire Tablet Layout created with AutoCAD

All the macro table does is reference preset focus groups. The tablet connects through the serial port on the desk. Go to the SETUP screen to configure. Under the Console area, pick the tablet size, (I used

a Wacom Intous2 12x12 so set the macro tablet to be INTOUS A4 OS) next set the resolution of the button size. (I use LOW resolution because the macros are about the same size as the console buttons). Make sure the Net Node is LOCAL, and the port is set to the proper serial port (COM1 or COM2). Then go to Macro Display. With your AutoCAD drawing on the tablet, just press the macro button that you want to program, the macro will be

automatically created. Just type the syntax for the macro and press MACRO MACRO to finish or better yet, just press the next macro button that you want to program with the pen and continue. Strand has the macro tablet layouts for you to start with so that they line up with the tablet properly. Some are in AutoCAD form and some are even in Word for easier editing! Go to Strand's website for the templates.

www.strandlighting.com

Happy Programming!