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# Lighting for Music

Seth Jackson

## Lighting for Music

Gear and fancy equipment are NOT the answer

Being the technician and “all-around-everything-technical” person in a church can sometimes be a frustrating endeavor. You see all of the TV shows and read about all of the concerts and start to wonder how in the world YOU are supposed to deliver a product that answers the horrible statement from your leadership that begins with, “I saw this really cool thing on TV last night”.

The answer is that you can deliver, sort of. While your Sunday morning may not look like the Rolling Stones, it can still have style, impact, and be visually effective, no matter what your equipment list. You just need a few basic principles, a lot of imagination, and the heart to see it through.

### EVERYTHING looks like a concert these days

The concert lighting style has been copied into television shows, Broadway, and our Sunday mornings. It has a definitive look and feel, and what was once the outlaw has become the industry standard.

#### *Where did it all start, and how did we get here?*

Concert lighting began as an art form of its own in the early 1970s. Let's take a look back at how this style of smoke, beams, intensive color, and hard cueing evolved from the theatrical elegance to the down and dirty rock show.

- Yesterday's roadies, today's innovators
- Follow the money
- That infamous bull ring in Barcelona
- It's all about speed, price, and availability

#### *What are the key elements of lighting for music?*

You may think this section should be a list of all sorts of automated lighting and other expensive gear. Actually, you don't need any of that. We've gotten too gear dependent and its time to look at lighting in its purest and most artistic sense.

- Color balance and choices
- Angles of interest
- Movement through the material
- Be bold
- Smoke 'em if you got 'em

*When do I hit that button?!*

The key to lighting for music is in the development of the cue structure of a song. You need to take advantage of the moments in the song that provide the most dynamic visual impact. We'll take an example of a fully-produced concert segment from a recent project I completed, and then re-create it with the same cueing structure using what is available to us here.

*Imperial March (An Empire is Forged) from Star Wars: A Musical Journey*

- Narration Q
- Fade out
- Intro
- "Theme" begins
- Break
- Transition to slower section
- Vader voice
- Build up to main theme
- Theme begins
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Theme build
- Drop to lower theme
- "NO!!!"
- Final hit
- Fade out

# Lighting For Music

It doesn't take a lot of equipment to do it right

*Seth Jackson*

Seth Jackson is the 2007 and 2008 Parnelli Award winner for set designer of the year for his work on Toby Keith with his design partner, Liz O'Keefe. He is also a four time lighting designer of the year nominee for his work on Toby Keith, Barry Manilow, and Hilary Duff. He has also designed productions for David Cook, Carrie Underwood, Melissa Etheridge, Don Henley, American Idols Tour, and most recently is the associate creative director and co-production designer for Star Wars: A Musical Journey, which begins a three-year world tour in September.

## Session Goals

- Separate the need for equipment from the ability to present a quality visual experience.
  - Define the "concert" look and how to achieve it
  - Place the current trends of lighting for music into perspective both historically and throughout the industry.
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## Video Ideas

1. Pink Floyd, PULSE
  2. Peter Gabriel, Secret World
  3. Melissa Etheridge, Live and Alone
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## Books and Resources

### *Books*

Concert Lighting, Jim Moody.  
A Method for Lighting the Stage, Stanley McCandless  
Stage Lighting, Parker and Smith

### *Websites*

[www.plsn.com](http://www.plsn.com)  
[www.plsnbookshelf.com](http://www.plsnbookshelf.com)