

Retro lights

Also very much in on the 'trend for vintage' are GTC sponsors Shift 4, who not only offer an interesting range of vintage lenses, but have also put together a fun collection of vintage lights for use as in-shot practicals.

Vintage lights

Shift 4's 'Vintage Lighting: 20th Century Classics' collection includes carefully restored and refurbished original fittings, such as Strand Electric Patt stage lamps and genuine Furse Spotlights, supplemented with a few modern designer fittings, some of these more quirky in design, such as a lamp in the shape of an old bellows stills camera.

This collection was put together after talking to clients about their requirements, as Shift 4 Managing Director Alex Trezies explains: "We purchased our collection of vintage lights to facilitate the requirements of a selection of creative DoPs who discussed with us their desire to have good-looking lighting in shot to add pictorial interest and to help them achieve particular vintage, urban looks. We wanted to be able to deliver what a few specific clients were looking for. All of our vintage lights are aesthetically pleasing but also functional."

Shift 4 now offers 11 different models in their vintage collection, the most frequently hired of which is the Strand Electric Patt 123 (commonly known as a 'Rocket' for its classic vintage rocket shape and polished chrome finish).

DoPs and production companies hire the lights either as a one-off or as part of larger camera and lighting kits. The lamps are mainly being used on music videos, promos and for stylised pieces, but have also been used on period dramas. Essentially these are in-shot set dressing practicals rather than main lighting sources although all are supplied with a 2700K bulb and chrome/wooden tripod.

Since most of the lights are genuinely antique, they are quite fragile, so need to be handled appropriately. Whenever they are sent out they are carefully packaged in tubes or boxes. While the vintage lights are never going to become a main business line, as word spreads, they are becoming more and more popular as a niche hire and the range is likely to expand as Shift 4 comes across and acquires more unusual, hard-to-find items.

Vintage lenses

Meanwhile, as seen in the preceding One Stop Films article, the trend for vintage lenses is already well established. Shift 4 is also involved in this market and can currently offer: Canon FD primes, Zeiss Super Speed Mark III primes, Cooke Speed Panchro Series II and III, and an extended set of Canon K35 Primes.

Shift 4 finds these lenses are mainly hired out for high-end work such as features and commercials requiring a stylised look. Their oldest lenses are K35s, manufactured in the 70s, once owned by DoP Alwin H Kuchle (*Sunshine*, *Hanna*, *Steve Jobs*). The SuperSpeeds are particularly popular as they're fast, providing a shallow depth of field and high quality in low-light conditions.



Shift 4's Strand Electric Patt 123 Stage Light or 'Rocket': the most frequently hired lamp in the collection

Retro lights at home

Also on the vintage lighting theme, GTC member Dave Rimmington has lovingly restored a retro light fitting for his home – here's how.



Before and after: Strand Electric Patt 123 before restoration and after, mounted on wooden Miller tripod

Visit any high-street furniture store and you'll find lots of accessories to make your home look like a film studio: fake clapperboards, mirrors surrounded by bulbs like those in makeup rooms and 'film lights' on wooden tripods.

Recently my wife and I were in one of these stores and she said she'd like one of these lamps. I also liked the idea of a piece of film/TV memorabilia but was conscious I'd always view one of these furniture store lights as 'not the real thing'. A quick browse on eBay revealed lots of old (unrestored) tungsten theatre lights. The model I decided on was the Strand Patt 123 which, although it was manufactured from the 50s to the 80s, has a lovely art deco design. It was also one of the first lights I ever used to light a show, while at school, so it had nostalgic memories too.

When it arrived the 500W lamp had broken in transit, but I wanted to replace this anyway as it was a tad bright and warm for a domestic environment. Most people undertaking similar projects change the lamp-holder to accommodate a smaller lamp as the existing fitting isn't common but I was reluctant to do this as I wanted to preserve the integrity of the fixture as much as possible and also to have the option of using it

'in-vision' with a 500W lamp if a scene required it. Fortunately, more research revealed that the running lights on merchant ships use lamps with the same base but only rated at 60W. A local electrical specialist was able to source one for me and, with a dimmer plug, it's now possible to run it at about 20% and get a nice amber glow behind the lens.

One compromise I was happy to make was to have the fixture polished to the bare silver metal as the original gun-metal grey was a bit dreary for a family home.

Next was the question of what to mount it on and this is the second compromise I was happy to make. I had an old wooden Miller tripod, which had seen occasional use but had been tucked away in the shed for a while. I knew this was unlikely to be used again even though the fluid head is remarkably smooth, so a quick trip to the local ironmongers meant I was able to mount the light on a genuine piece of TV memorabilia.

It's very satisfying to have created something that is not only eye-catching but also has a direct connection to past experiences.

Summarising the trend for vintage glass, Alex Trezies says: "Vast advances in technology in recent years mean that digital cameras now produce a very clean image. To counteract this, vintage lenses are chosen to offer texture, character and depth to the images and to return character to the picture quality." Notably, Cooke Optics has recently announced that in response to the ongoing high demand for their vintage Speed Panchro lenses from the 1920s to 1960s, they are rehousing their Panchro Classics using the original design but with PL mounts for modern cameras. Shift 4 has a set of these on order, due to arrive in mid-2017.



Fact File

GTC sponsor Shift 4 is a facilities hire company, supplying cameras, camera accessories, lenses, lighting, grip and sound equipment to commercials, drama, broadcast TV and corporate productions. It also offers a crewing service and manages an extensive portfolio of freelancers.

See more: www.shift-4.com



Left to right: Shift 4's Nautical Searchlight; Open Face Light; Strand Electric Patt 23 Stage Light; Furse Oval Spotlight