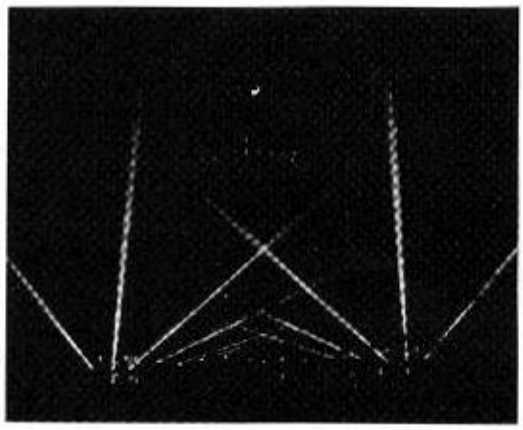
Lasers . . . Continued from page 7

point and spreads out in a circular pattern to encompass the subject with a laser "force field". This effect, when turned horizontal, generates a tunnel. Incredible effects are then attained by placing both subject and camera within this tunnel.

With atmospheric effects, it is usually best to add a small amount of fog or smoke into the air for better effect visibility.

Graphics

Not only do lasers offer complex atmospherics they make splendid graphics as well. Take a small flashlight, and quickly wave it around in a circular pattern, noticing how it glows and blurs in the dark. Now you've got an idea how laser graphics are made, except that the beam is moving so fast that the images, logos and character animations appear to be static.



The computer generated graphics can be projected onto surfaces of virtually any proportion or composition, and are field selectable as to size. Graphics can be made up of many different colors, or just one. These kinetic graphic "modules" can even be synchronized to multi-image and talent.

Fiber Optics

Attached to products, people and staging, these flexible, neon-like strands of fiber can extend for hundreds of feet. Fiber optic cable, ranging in size from 1mm to 3mm, can glow brightly with any color you desire, and can change to another at any time. Additionally, many different sets of fibers can be sequenced individually, thus colorfully creating immense possibilities.

Business Theatre

Lasers have found an impressive place in the corporate meeting environment. Lasers can be used as a hub for an entire meeting, projecting names, product outlines and sales figures with larger-than-life brilliance. An outline of a new product may be drawn in laser light, and then "filled in" by a slide or video projection. Beams flashing throughout the theatre add to the excitement of the occasion, leaving the audience breathless.

Technical Considerations

The cost of laser effects is usually dependent upon the size and duration of the project. Costs include system rental and projection crew, plus expenses for out-of-town assignments. The brighter the projections must be, the larger the laser must be. More projections and effects require greater system complexity. As graphic modules become longer, so does the amount of preproduction time by the supplier. The supplier should be able to offer creative assistance in the utilization of lasers, and do so in a reliable, professional fashion.

When taking laser out of the sound stage and into a public venue, there are federal regulations which must be adhered to. Special notifications are required, as are special operating procedures and equipment. Competent suppliers will adhere to these regulations, and will file all of the necessary paperwork for you.

Conclusion

This article is intended to provide the reader with a basic understanding of lasers in general. It by no means discusses all of the possibilities, which are virtually limitless. What you do with lasers is limited only to your imagination (and budget).

Lasers do more than fill huge stadiums with dazzling beams of light in tune to a rock & roll band. They allow you to create grand and stylish spectaculars with custom-tailored precision. Lasers do not replace current media: they are a media in and on themselves, and can often coexist with other effects and projections. When you want something new and exciting, remember the almost unlimited possibilities, adaptable effects, and powerful appeal you can only obtain through lasers. ♦