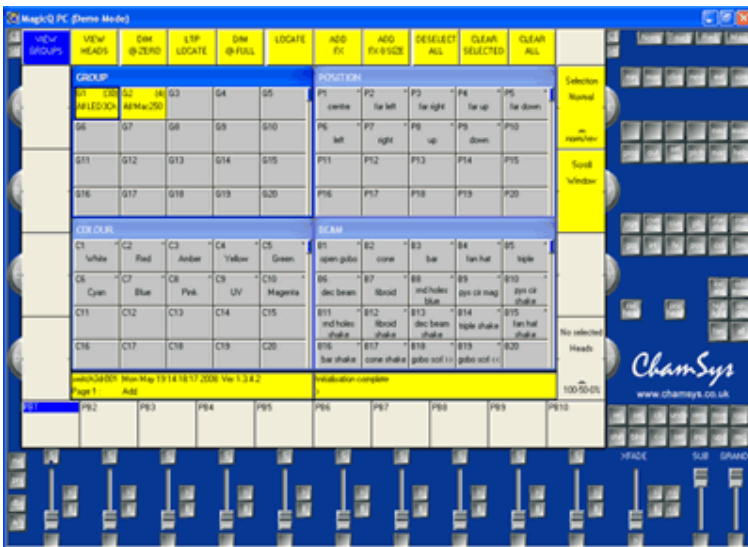


On Stage Lighting

Beginner's Guide to the MagicQ on PC

<http://www.onstagelighting.co.uk>

A sightseeing tour rather than a how-to, this guide looks at the interface and concepts of the Cham Sys lighting control. It is the first introduction and part of the popular series of Cham Sys MagicQ tutorials from [On Stage Lighting](http://www.onstagelighting.co.uk).



A note about the MagicQ:

On Stage Lighting often recommends the use of the Cham Sys MagicQ to people looking for a cheap PC DMX lighting controller and apprentice programmers interested in moving light control training. Although I do have a passing connection with Cham Sys, my enthusiasm comes from the fact that I think that the MagicQ is a good lighting desk. The PC software is also freely available, cheap to cheap to use with a DMX USB device and is a good desk to learn. Disclaimer over.

Although the user interface (UI) on PC can seem a bit at odds with genuine PC based lighting control, it's a real lighting console that shares many concepts and workflows with other consoles. The Grand MA and Whole Hog III desks are, at the time of writing, popular moving light consoles. Learning the MagicQ is time well spent when want to learn these other desks.

Get The MagicQ PC Software

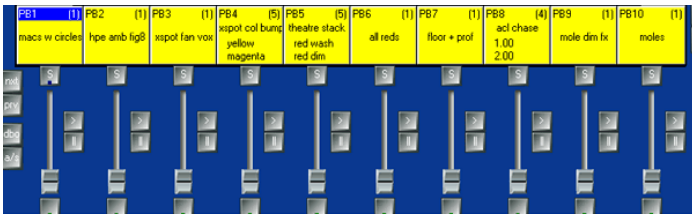
The PC version software is available from <http://www.chamsys.co.uk> for PC , Mac and Linux.

To look around the different areas of the MagicQ PC software it's a good idea to load up one

of the demo shows available with the download. This gives you instant “stuff to look at” without having to patch up, record looks etc.

If you don't already have a demo show running, you can hit the SETUP button followed by the Load Show softkey at the top of the screen. Confirm the overwrite and select demo.shw Once the show has loaded, you can close the Setup window using the CLOSE hardbutton or get a different view by holding your PC Ctrl key and selecting a view button, such as Palettes, in the top right hand corner of the main screen.

Desk Playback



Let's start with the playback side of the MagicQ, a pretty important part of any lighting console. Most large consoles provide a range of playback options to suit different shows and the MagicQ is no exception.

- The 10 Playback faders can hold cue stacks, chases, effects or be used as scene “submasters”. Each playback has a Go and Pause button and can be connected to the Main Go button, to enable theatre stack style playback. Raising the fader can also make the cue “GO”.
- The “S” button is used for storing and selecting on that playback and the 10 playbacks are expanded by using a familiar page system that holds playbacks over on changing pages.
- Playback outputting is organised in a number of ways : Tracking, Non-Tracking and Normal are some of the global options. Normal mode is a good starting point.

So, the faders can trigger moving lights, fade intensities or can be set to control speeds of chases and effects. The range of playback options available mean that you can choose how you record and play your show whether it's a theatre play, a club or a concert. When first learning moving light control on MagicQ PC, it is good start with a simple system such as recording each look onto a playback fader or running a single cue stack.

Programming

The MagicQ uses a programmer based recording system. Values are entered into the programmer, over-riding current output values, and are dumped into their destination playback. The contents of the Programmer are wiped using the CLR button (hiding down on the right in the standard PC view) and a new look is built. For more information see our article on [using programmer based controllers](#).

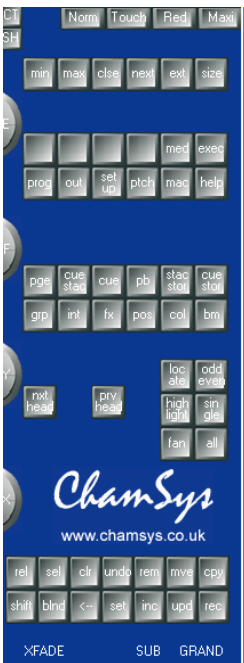
The Main Screen



The MagicQ desk uses a **colour touchscreen** with additional hardware buttons, patched to contextual **softbutton control**. The MagicQ PC screen replicates the touchscreen minus the hard buttons round the screen area. The large yellow squares around the edge provide softbuttons that change as you enter different screens. The screen layouts are customisable and provide the **flexible interface** for the console.

- The top softbuttons relate to the current window.
- The bottom softbuttons show the names of scenes stored on the playback faders plus other Playback information.
- The softbuttons on either side of the “screen” label the encoders (wheels) used for moving light control. They also provide toggles for encoder functions – for example the Dimmer wheel: it’s softbutton toggles 0%, 50% and Full. These softbuttons are divided by a tiny dash that splits the toggle into a Up/Down selector for multiple option lists.
- On the MagicQ PC, the encoders are marked by small semicircular icons around the main screen. These can be used to click the encoder values up and down but are the weakest point of the PC only interface. I’m surprised that Cham Sys haven’t implemented mouse scroll wheel control for the virtual encoders (well, I can’t get it to work on my current version of the MagicQ PC.)
- At the bottom of the main screen, there is a small line of desk information including the command line, a method of entering data common to some other lighting consoles. This displays programming and other data as you enter it, as well as giving you useful prompts on what to do next.

Hardware Buttons



The hardware buttons on the MagicQ are **grouped according to function**. Here's a quick tour around the button groups, starting at the top right.

- Norm, Touch, Red, Maxi – These buttons don't exist on the real world console as they control the layout of the PC version. Normal looks most similar to the MagicQ100 with other layouts optimised for other uses including a tablet PC.
- Six buttons are provided to adjust the screen windows. Changing the size and position of different windows within the Main Screen, it is possible for the use to customise their programming environment. These can be saved for recall later – pressing CTRL on the PC turns the top screen softbuttons into selectors for the preset screen layouts such as Palettes, Output etc.
- The next group of 12 buttons bring up windows where you can view and change information such as Patch, Desk Setup etc.
- Up next we have 12 more window open buttons, these relate more closely to programming and can be used in command line syntax. For instance, hitting the Group button opens the group selection window while Group followed by 1 selects Group 1 ready for use.
- Prev Head, Next Head and the other buttons in this group relate to the selection of fixtures ready for control. Highlight and Locate plus other Odd/Even choices can be made [here](#).
- The final group are mainly recording and management buttons, with a few other functions thrown in. The two most important are REC for dumping information from the programmer to a destination and CLR, which empties the programmer. The Clear button displays a small red LED square when there is information in the programmer.

Selection Grids

BEAM (Mac500 49,50,51,52,53,54)										
B1	B2	B3	B4	B5	B6	B7	B8	B9	B10	B
open	triangle i	bar i	fan i	thin bars i	grid ball i	grid ball r	thin bars r	fan r	bar r	
B11	B12	B13	B14	B15	B16	B17	B18	B19	B20	B
triangle r	cone	dots	lotus	bricks	cloud	machine	bamboo	threads	pling	
B21	B22	B23	B24	B25	B26	B27	B28	B29	B30	B
pling shake	threads shake	bamboo shake	machine shake	cloud shake	bricks shake	lotus shake	dots shake	cone shake	Gobo 1	
B31	B32	B33	B34	B35	B36	B37	B38	B39	B40	B
Gobo 2	Gobo 3	Gobo 4	Pos 1 (Open)	Position 2	Position 3	Position 4	Position 5	Position 6	Position 7	
B41	B42	B43	B44	B45	B46	B47	B48	B49	B50	B
Position 8	open gobo	Fs Indexed	Fs Forward	Fs Reverse	Fs Scan	Fs Random	Fs Blink	TBC	Fs Continuous	
B51	B52	B53	B54	B55	B56	B57	B58	B59	B60	B
Ms Indexed	Ms Forward	Ms Reverse	Ms Scan	Ms Random	Ms Blink	Ms Continuous				
B61	B62	B63	B64	B65	B66	B67	B68	B69	B70	

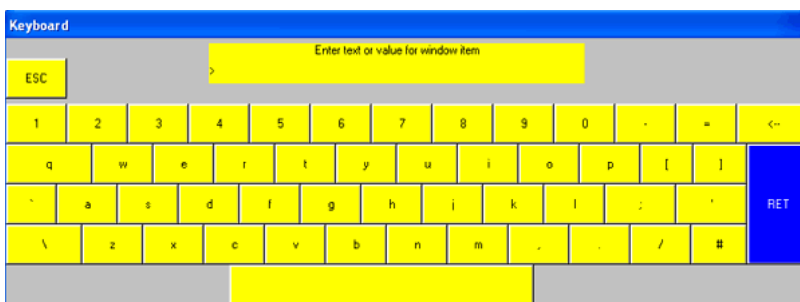
The MagicQ often displays selection grids on it's **main screen**. These squares are softbuttons that hold the button label and can be used for selection. The grids display Fixtures, Groups, Palettes and other selectable stuff. Using MagicQ PC without a touchscreen, the mouse is used to click on the square.

Spreadsheets

OUTPUTS											
Hd name	No	Int	Hd name	No	Int	Hd name	No	Int	Hd name	No	Int
front wash	1	0%	back wash	21	0%	mole 1a	41	0%	XSpot	61	0%
front wash	2	0%	back wash	22	0%	mole 1b	42	0%	XSpot	62	0%
front wash	3	0%	back wash	23	0%	mole 2a	43	0%			
front wash	4	0%	back wash	24	0%	mole 2b	44	0%			
front wash	5	0%	back wash	25	0%	mole 3a	45	0%			
front wash	6	0%	back wash	26	0%	mole 3b	46	0%			
front wash	7	0%	back wash	27	0%	mole 4a	47	0%			
front wash	8	0%	back wash	28	0%	mole 4b	48	0%			
front wash	9	0%	back wash	29	0%	Mac500	49	97%			
front wash	10	0%	back wash	30	0%	Mac500	50	97%			
front wash	11	0%	profile l	31	0%	Mac500	51	97%			

Using spreadsheet style layouts to display information, the MagicQ also allows you to change data via the spreadsheet. Selecting **multiple fields and entering new values** can help with patching, cue editing etc. and provides another powerful way of getting around.

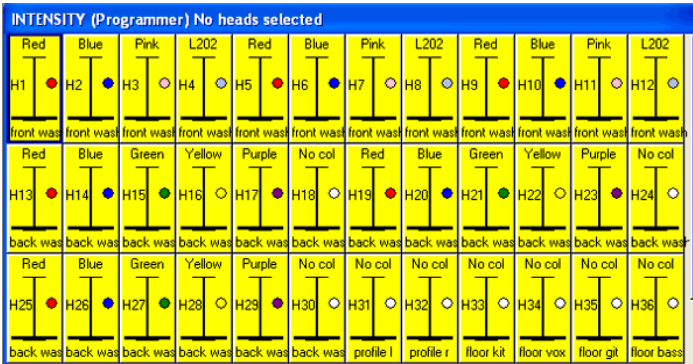
Text Input



Changing values and labelling is an important part of console housekeeping. On the PC, these can be entered **using the PC keyboard** but a "virtual" QWERTY or numeric keypad will pop up for text entry. It's worth knowing that some labelling jobs can be done quickly "on the fly" while

storing Groups, Palettes and Memories. It's also possible to adjust labels but pressing the SET hardbutton and selecting the window item to be changed.

The Intensity Window



The MagicQ has many similar windows that allow **selection and adjustment**. The exception, in looks at least, is the Intensity Window. Accessed using the INT hardbutton, the Intensity Window provides dimmer control of all patched fixtures and dimmers using virtual faders. On the PC you can use the mouse to select dimmer/fixture channels or fade them up and down using the sliders. With the Demo show loaded, you will notice that the **intensity faders are also named** and coloured up according to their gels – neat, huh?

Back on the Bus please

So, we've had a nose around the main interface of the MagicQ. While you have got the demo show loaded up, it's worth looking around the different screens and options and **press a few buttons** (let's face it – this is how most of us learn new software, anyway) .

Given a bit of a kick start from this tour, it should be fairly easy to find your way around . The next stage is learning how to use all these windows and softbuttons to create and run your show. There are further tutorials on using the MagicQ and many other stage lighting subjects at On Stage Lighting.

Rob Sayer - Editor, On Stage Lighting

<http://www.onstagelighting.co.uk>