

# The Art of the Pyromusical

11 Seasons reporting on the Montréal  
International Pyromusical Competition

by

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*or*

*Pyromusicals 101*

# Introduction

- Development of the website
  - Compiling reports
  - Report audience
- The art of the Pyromusical
  - What is a pyromusical?
  - Technological evolution
  - Pyromusical Ingredients
  - Evolution of the pyromusical
- Video examples
- Future developments
- Conclusion

# Development of the Website

- Original USENET post June 15<sup>th</sup> 1993
  - Picked up by the NHPA
- PML also founded in 1993
  - Reports appeared in the PML
  - Converted to HTML by Mark Buda
- 1996 first website created
  - [www.grm94.polymtl.ca/~marriott/pyro.html](http://www.grm94.polymtl.ca/~marriott/pyro.html)
- 1996 press credentials granted
  - On-site reporting from La Ronde
- 2001 Permanent site registered
  - [www.montreal-fireworks.com](http://www.montreal-fireworks.com)

# Compiling reports

- A reporter's tools:
  - Small notebook
    - Fits in one hand
  - Propelling pencil
    - Pencil doesn't run in the rain
  - A practised eye
  - Patience!
    - The notes can be hard to read
- No electronic aids!
- No copies of any scripts!

# Report audience

- Designed for a technically informed audience
  - Need a knowledge of the different effects
  - Should be able to visualize a display based on the reports
  - Not too much critique
- Scarcity resource
  - Very little on-line information on pyromusicals
  - Good reference for choice of music
- Community's *eyes and ears*
  - For those who aren't fortunate enough to be there

# What is a Pyromusical?

- Not just “fireworks with music”
  - Shooting shells with background music a pyromusical does not make
- A genuine audio-visual artform
  - Sky is the canvas
- Similar “rules” as other audio-visual artforms
  - More on this in a moment

# Technological evolution

- Several elements came together to allow true pyromusicals
- Electrical firing
  - Removed limitations on physical layout
  - Allowed multiple simultaneous firings
  - Effectively increases the size of the canvas
  - Potential for precision
- Digital firing systems
  - Realization of electrical firing precision
  - Software allows complex choreography

# Pyromusical Ingredients

- Theme
  - What's the story?
- Flow
  - Synergy of the elements
  - Time for recuperation
- Emotion
  - A range is required, can't have excitement without contrast
- Coherence
  - Appropriate choice of colours and thematic elements, analogous to set design

# Evolution of the Pyromusical

- Technology
  - All winners in Montreal since 1999 have been digitally fired, bar 1
- Increase in cue counts
  - Winning displays used around 1500-2000 cues in the mid 1990s
  - Most displays in 2003 used at least 4000 cues
- More artistic design
  - Designers with background in the musical and/or visual arts

# Video Examples

- Example 1
  - IPON 1998 Silver Jupiter winner
  - Perfect synchronization
  - Choice of pyrotechnic material reflected the music
    - Size and colour mirrored the music
- Example 2
  - Pirotécnia Caballer 2000 Silver Jupiter winner
  - Serene and more synchronized than it might appear
  - Choice of colour keys into the music
- Example 3
  - IPON 2000
  - A finale but showed thematic control and recuperation

# Future Developments

- Greater precision
  - MagicFire electronic igniters further refine the temporal control
  - Has to be used very carefully though
  - “Too perfect” synchronization lacks soul
- Visualization tools
  - Allows ideas to be tried out before the expense of firing
  - Doesn't replace the designer's vision and imagination though

# Conclusions

- Have witnessed 101 pyromusicals in Montreal
- Website is one of the most popular fireworks sites on the web
- The only on-line resource for budding pyromusical designers
- A pyromusical is a true artform and deserves to be treated as such
- Technology has allowed the art to develop and continue its evolution into the future
- I still love a good finale!

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