

# The Accidental Lighting Designer

**L**loyd Albuquerque is a reputed name in the Indian pro lighting industry. A lighting designer who can visualize all client briefings in a spectrum of colours. In this interview, Albuquerque sits down with the team of *PALM Magazine* and shares his insights into the growth of the lighting market in the country, and how his own journey reflects the growth.

Lloyd Albuquerque didn't plan to be a lighting designer.

"It was a mistake," said Albuquerque. "I was a DJ in school. I was interested in sound. My brother worked with **Roger Drego**. In those days, Drego's company was looking for someone who could handle a small job, a guy who could work for them just once a week. Drego asked my brother if I can help him with sound recording at a studio. This is where it all started - my journey as a freelance 'sound guy' at the recording studio."

He continues, "One afternoon, during a time when there were hardly any shows; Ronnie the manager who supervised the lighting department asked me if I was free to lend him a helping hand

*In Conversation with  
Lloyd Albuquerque,  
Lighting Designer,  
LGL Designs*

*What makes a lighting designer a lighting designer? Lloyd Albuquerque, in a tête-à-tête with PALM Magazine, reveals his foray and plans as the go-to "light guy" in the pro lighting industry; the current boom in the Indian pro lighting market, and how education can help bridge the gap between the rise in demand and untapped potential in the current market.*



on gig. I agreed. To this day, I remember how I enjoyed working on that gig. The next morning, Drego called me to his office, and asked me if I had fun working on the gig the day before, and I said, "Yes!" He then asked me to choose between sound or lights, because, in his words, I 'can't do both. Do one and excel in one'. Because of my ego, and because Drego was a sound guy, I told him I will do lights. I started from scratch. I didn't even know how to roll a cable. But I learnt on the job. This one auditorium St Andrews I worked for was like a window into the world of theatre for me. I saw designers come in and ply their craft. But in four years, I learnt, and I found myself heading the lighting department. I did lighting design for shows like Stardust Awards, Zee Cine Awards, Shiamak Davar et al. As I continued working more and more, people involved in this business started to

realize that I knew what I am doing, interpreting their thoughts even before they could express what they wanted.”

## Major Milestones as a Lighting Designer

Albuquerque recounts the three major milestones in his career as a lighting designer. “One major milestone in my life was that I recently became a ‘masterji’, a teacher. This is one of the finest things I have ever done in my life. It gives me joy.

It’s fascinating to see my students become self-aware and innovative at the same time. Another milestone in my life came to me when I decided to push away from work that did not satisfy me. When I got into the lighting design business, I made money. I didn’t know at that time what a lighting designer should make. There was no concept of a lighting designer. But today, when I realize that a particular segment of a job isn’t for me, I say No to it. That opened up new pathways for me.”

Albuquerque further adds, “The third milestone I recollect was getting my occupation changed from ‘Light Technician’ to ‘Lighting Designer’ on my Form 16. I fought with my manager over this. As I said earlier, there was no concept of a lighting designer back in those days. We would service the lights, pack the truss, put up the lights, programme the show, and then pack up. If I was doing all this and more, I wanted my designation to change!”

## Key Qualities of an Aspiring Lighting Designer

Lloyd Albuquerque shares a few key traits that every aspiring lighting designer must inculcate. He says, “First of all, YOU decide. You decide what you want to do and how much of it you want to do. Because the Indian scenario is so different compared to an overseas one. Here, in a week, I will probably do four or five shows. Abroad, a lighting designer works on four or five shows in a year, and even that is too many for the designer, considering the scale of the projects at hand. There are lighting designers who only do theatre. There are lighting designers who only cover dance, or designers who only focus on fashion, or film and TV shows, or bands or live events. These are niche professionals. I do not belong to that niche. I do not belong to that differentiation. I am lucky to do everything.

So, a lighting designer in India needs to be very versatile, needs to have a thick skin, be ready to work odd hours, and always willing to learn. Every great lighting designer I have met is very weird, almost downright quirky in the way he/she breaks things down.”

## Addressing the Lack of Talent Pool through Formal Education

Lloyd Albuquerque laments the lack of skilled lighting designers in India. He says, “The only reason there is a lack of talented lighting designers in this country is because there is no formal education! I got into lighting design by accident. There is no dearth of talent. It’s just that the right people are not picking up the profession.”

Talking about how the pro lighting industry in India is addressing the untapped potential in the world of lighting, Albuquerque responds, “The industry is trying to give more education to professionals involved in the field in terms of how to put up a truss, how to rig up a light, how to deal with power. These days, the shows are getting bigger, and as a result, the number of mistakes made by professionals in this field are also getting bigger – because no one taught anyone the right way to do things. That’s why trusses are falling, and people are dying. We are not ready for this. People aren’t qualified or trained to touch high-end equipment. For instance, take a worker, who is wearing a harness and putting up a truss – if he doesn’t know how to work the harness on, he’ll fall. If he’s taught how to put up a truss without the harness, and you suddenly put on more safety equipment on his body, then he must not only do his job but also keep thinking about utilizing the harness.”

He adds, “There’s also no time nowadays. We get the venues to set up the night before. The lighting designers and technicians are now travelling from show to show without a break. The equipment reaches the site without getting checked or serviced. The equipment coming in is also substandard. If I ask for a **PROLYTE** truss that is rated, that can take about 100 kilos at point load during this time of the year, I am not sure I am receiving just that from the vendor as I don’t know if its checked or serviced before it gets to me.”

## Lighting Design in India v/s Lighting Design Overseas

Albuquerque also deep dives into several ways in which the pro lighting industry functions differently in international countries in comparison to India. He elucidates, “The big difference between lighting design overseas vis-à-vis India is that when you hire a well reputed lighting designer abroad, they know what they want, they know what the client wants from them, and things are generally well-planned. In India, the raw material gets supplied to us at the last minute. There’s rarely time

for the set designer to render the set, for me as a lighting designer to see the set design, the size and elevation of the set, and block the inventory. The bigger difference in lighting design overseas versus in the home country is that overseas, once the lighting design is complete, and the clients wants to change even the smallest of things, he/she will literally have to beg for that change. That is not the case here.”

He adds, “Overseas, for stage lighting, there’s a designer for the stage design, there’s a designer for the lights, there’s an operator, and then there’s someone who will run the show. If it’s a tour, there are probably two or more sets of hands for all these roles.”

## The Significance of a Reliable Lighting Console

Lloyd Albuquerque’s reputation in the lighting industry relies heavily on the fact that he doesn’t compromise on his lighting equipment, especially the lighting console. He affirms, “Instead of the lights, I mainly stress on the lighting control, i.e. the lighting console. I always push for original consoles. The leading ones in the country are **MA Lighting** and **Avolites**. These brands have adapted in a way

**“When I went to PALM Expo, I was looking for a replacement for a particular lighting product. I found two options that worked better than I expected. Now I know that for my next Fashion Week, with these alternatives, my generators will be down by 1/3rd of the normal usage, because I am getting the same quality, or even better, by using lesser power. We do have innovation here, and lighting designers have to push it. We are driving it.”**

that every lighting fixture can be controlled from that desk no matter what make or model. I have invested in lighting consoles, so I own **MA3**, **MA2**, **Avolites**, and **Chamsys**. These consoles are my tools. If I can create anything out there, from here, imagine how important is this! If the lighting fixtures fail, you can replace them. But if the console fails, its game is over.”

However, no compromise doesn’t equate stubbornness. Albuquerque is understanding of the fact that clients and vendors come with their own budget restrictions. He corroborates this by stating, “But it’s also a game of numbers for the vendors. If my lighting vendor invests 1 crore, he’ll get 40 lakhs in return. If he must buy a branded product, like something from **Claypaky** or a **Martin** for instance, it will cost him 3x more. Is he going to get the rental price for buying an equipment that costly? If he buys a Chinese brand, he’ll get 10 such fixtures and spares in the same price. So, I understand where these vendors are coming from.”

## Are Indian Manufacturers Stepping Up to The Demand For Good Lighting Equipment?

According to Lloyd Albuquerque, India is now witnessing a rise in the production of the home crop in the pro lighting industry, even when the manufacturing is inspired by the trending international products in lighting. He states, “When you talk about Indian manufacturers, it’s always an impression of what is currently running. It’s good that inspired manufacturing is happening in India, because now I have options. For example, LED Blinders - the original came in, and then there was this

Indian company that started making copies of that. But now, this Indian company's LED Blinders are everywhere. The price point is good, and I can see that light in every theatre now. It's not extraordinary, but it gets the job done."

Albuquerque further elaborates about how India-based expos and exhibitions are filling the demand for homegrown replacements of international brands, "When I went to PALM Expo, I was looking for a replacement for a particular lighting product. I found two options that worked better than I expected. Now I know that for my next Fashion Week, with these alternatives, my generators will down by 1/3rd of the normal usage, because I am getting the same quality, or even better, by using lesser power. We do have innovation here, and lighting designers have to push it. In fact, we are driving it."

Albuquerque also contemplates that the rise in Indian manufacturing of pro lighting products will eventually deplete the vendors' reliance on cheaper, copied Chinese products and ensure that the quality of the equipment used for a variety of venues do not deteriorate in the longer run. He shares, "The Indian manufacturing of pro lighting equipment will result in the decline in demand for the Chinese counterparts. It's all for the better. Let's face it, every time we bought something Chinese, with vendors spending their hard-earned money and time on it, and put it up on a project, we found that 50% of the lights are not working, something is damaged, or something burned out. In that case, what can the vendor do? He bought one batch of lights, and they worked well. So, he buys another batch of lights. But when you put these two batches next to each other, they are totally different in function! They are already paid for. But if these batches are manufactured here, the chances of this error happening are next to zero."

## Evaluating The Indian Pro Lighting Market

Even when it is quite difficult to put an exact numeric value to the Indian pro lighting industry, Lloyd Albuquerque is of the opinion that different categories of the market drive the revenue differently. He explains, "There are different categories in the Indian pro lighting market. In the wedding market, for instance, there are not a lot of branded products in terms of lighting. But when it comes to live events, there is a presence of branded products in the lighting segment. Within these categories, there are subcategories. I am all for mid-level shows because that's where

the revenue generation happens. 20 or 30 such shows happen in a month, and they generate actual income for everyone involved, because the equipment quality needs are good, and the setup doesn't take time. Then you have the low-level shows. If the rental cost for a LED Bar is 750 rupees or 500 rupees, the vendor sources it for 100 rupees, while the retail cost of the LED is 3000 rupees!"

Albuquerque reflects on the pro lighting market's current state in India, and he is optimistic for the present and the future, "It's going crazy! I have never been so busy!"

The famed lighting designer also accounts for the segment that is witnessing the biggest growth in terms of demand for pro lighting equipment. He replies, "The growth is on the gold. For example the demand for product launches. It started with shatter glass and moving sets, and now, it has all become aerial. We now have aerial light drones, motorized curtains, hydraulic lifts, and more. The demand for a different experience drove the technology further. For instance, from holographic image projection to laser projection, lighting in the corporate sector is only getting bigger and better."

## The Biggest Trend Dominating the Lighting Industry

Albuquerque expands on the trends that are gaining momentum in the pro lighting industry. He expounds, "When it comes to lighting, we are on the verge of a massive revolution. We are now gaining recognition and respect as Lighting Designers. We even have awards for lighting now. International pro lighting companies are now offering trainings. There are now opportunities to learn and create a skillset for the technicians. We are creating jobs. We have got international support. We are now pushing ourselves and the market more, doing many, many things in Lighting Design."

Albuquerque concludes with the biggest key trend that is set to bring lighting, audio, and AV under one roof for a smooth, seamless experience. He summarizes, "I see a lot of synergy in lighting, audio, and AV. The lighting consoles are now talking to sound, so I can play sound from my console, I can trigger trussing motor systems, I can work on video and software like Resolume, I can work on pyros, and establish madrix control from my light consoles. I have worked on and working on several time-coded light shows. We are now doing virtual shows too. For me, synergy is the key."

