

## labors of love

**GAME FACE:**  
Lighting vet Jim  
Moody shines at  
*Jeopardy!* and *Wheel*.

# The Light Touch



**The current flashy (and cash-y) prime-time game shows owe much of their success to *Jeopardy!* and *Wheel of Fortune*, the genre's two 800-pound gorillas.** One of the bright constants on these legendary shows is lighting director and designer Jim Moody. In a city where everyone wants to be a part of just one hit show, Moody, twice nominated for Emmys, has managed to be an integral part of three.

"It was never my intention to work in the game show world," says Moody. "My background was primarily in concert lighting where one of my lengthier engagements was at the Hollywood Palladium, working shows for the likes of the Rolling Stones and Rod Stewart. Then one day, just like the opening to Marlo Thomas's old show, *That Girl*, someone pointed to me and said, 'We want that guy!'"

Despite a less-than-wonderful portrayal of Dan Enright in the movie *Quiz Show*, Moody speaks proudly of his work for, and tutelage under, the controversial game show legend. "I had the pleasure of working with Dan for several years, mostly for the Spanish market," he says. "One of the most important things he taught me was to make sure that the viewers see the contestants' eyes. All of their concentra-

tion, and thus the drama, is right there. Dan knew more about game shows than just about anybody."

In recent years, Moody has been given the task of bringing *Wheel*, *Jeopardy!* and *Rock & Roll Jeopardy!* to cities from coast to coast. "The road shows really keep me on my toes. It wouldn't be fun to do the show exactly as we do it back home at the studio. We always try to incorporate a different edge, depending on which city we're in. In Boston we were at the Wang Center for the Performing Arts. It's a grand old building with a lot of character that we wanted to show. At the NAB convention in the New Orleans Superdome, the roof from which we suspend our lights is 280 feet above the stage. In Waikiki we did the show on the beach. In Dallas the sunset at the Starlight Theater presents some tricky challenges because it's an indoor-outdoor venue."

Prior to joining the Columbia TriStar Television shows, Moody spent ten years on *Entertainment Tonight*. "I'm grateful for having the chance to be a part of such successful shows," he says. "But there were also a lot of less-than-stellar projects, so I guess you kiss a lot of frogs along the way."

Warts and all, Moody says he enjoys the challenges presented by lower-profile projects. "I get a big kick when I'm told that the only lighting equipment available is in the bottom bay of the truck. Given these resources, what can I make out of this pile of clay? Art directors do it. Writers do it with the blank page. And we do it with lighting."

With all of the hoopla surrounding prime-time game shows like *Greed* and *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire*, Moody is quick to quote Enright, saying, "It's important to maintain the integrity of the game."

"*Jeopardy!* is a dignified game," Moody goes on, "and [host] Alex [Trebek] is our professor. It wouldn't make sense to light it like the prime-time shows, as fun as that might be. I have a little more leeway with *Wheel*, but you don't want to tamper too much with a winning formula. The game itself was, is, and will always be king."

—Daniel Guss