



Designer Q&A: Jeff Croiter on *Freestyle Love Supreme*

Ever wonder what it's like to design the lighting for a show that changes every night? We talked to lighting designer [Jeff Croiter](#) to learn more about his work for [Freestyle Love Supreme](#), which re-opened at the Booth Theatre in New York City on October 19, 2021, and will continue after its Broadway run until January 2, 2022 as a national tour. Here's what we learned about his experience.

Q&A:

City Theatrical (CTI): What was your design process like for the re-opening of *Freestyle Love Supreme* on Broadway, as your sixth time designing the show?

Jeff Croiter (JC): We decided early on that we would start over for the show's reopening on Broadway, with either a new design or something that varied greatly from where it had been. We ultimately opted for a total redo. The last time we were at the Booth Theatre, the set design was specific to the theatre itself. The concept took the architecture of the Booth and extended it onto the stage. The onstage walls were made of a transparent Lexan material, so they could take on a different kind of life than flat walls, and look dynamic and perhaps magical. The stage was a giant light box that lit up and changed colors in a cool and fun way.

This time around, we're back at the Booth, but we know the show will have another life soon after Broadway, since the national tour starts right away. Thus, the idea of creating a set design based on the Booth Theatre didn't make sense, as it wouldn't look like any of the theatres the show will be in going forward. That's why we started over. I believe the design is more specific to the show, and can work anywhere, in any theatre, across the world.

CTI: How would you describe your new design concept?

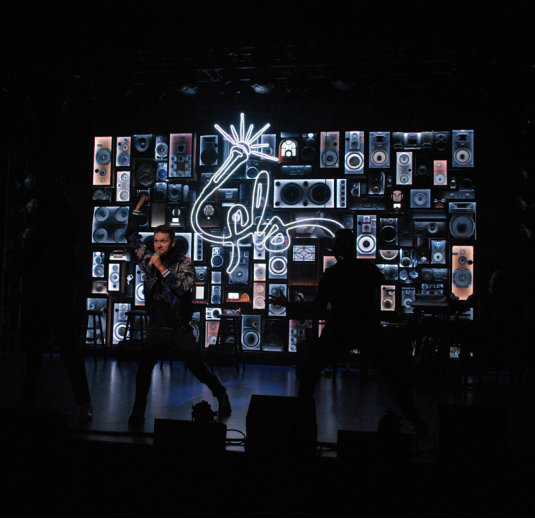
JC: There is a wall behind the stage that contains 140 speakers and amplifiers that is about 14 feet high and 20+ feet wide, with each unit individually lit with 129 points of individual control. Behind the wall there is a white cyc. The lighting rig, even though it is sitting on a Broadway stage for several months, is built to tour. It is a more concert-oriented light plot than previous iterations. Everything is exposed, the overhead truss and truss legs included. The concept, or approach to the lighting, is similar but we are now able to push things further than we have done before. More vibrant colors, more texture... and with a seemingly endless amount of options for how to shape the space and create mood and atmosphere using light. The content of the show is different every night, but for certain songs, where they stand and the counts they have are pretty much set. From a lighting perspective, the majority of the show is the same every night, but there are sections that really do look different, reflecting what is happening on stage at any given time.

Andrew Garvis, who runs the show every night, makes these decisions on the fly. He can draw from a toolbox of pre-programmed location looks, like lighting for a subway platform, or city streets, or walking in a park. There are about 100 to choose from - some are more fantastical, Avant Garde, etc. He can (and does) also go beyond those looks, changing color and mood as needed. If something is more exciting, he can make the lighting more exciting as well. It truly is never the same show twice, as the direction the show takes is built from the audience. The audience tells the performers what to do, and what to talk about. There are some popular topics that come up every night, but the performers always try to do something different.

CTI: How did you use QolorFLEX® NuNeon™ for this show?

JC: We used [QolorFLEX NuNeon](#) to create the large "FLS" sign that is mounted directly in front of





the back wall, behind the performers on stage. We wanted a bright neon sign that could change color, and be able to tour with the show. QolorFLEX NuNeon gives us what we wanted and needed – something bright, and colorful, with the flexibility and durability to last through our upcoming tour. We can have the sign stand out, or recede, based on similar or contrasting light color of the back wall. It is super bright, and really pops when we want it to. It gives us many layers of options.

The sign was built by [Hudson Scenic Studio](#), and it is installed incredibly well. They used six reels of the QolorFLEX NuNeon, RGB tape, and dimming control with [QolorFLEX 5x8A Dimmers](#). City Theatrical [custom](#) cut the QolorFLEX NuNeon reels to measurements provided by Dave Rosenfeld at Hudson. To go behind the wall and see how Hudson made it is amazing... just the wiring behind the sign is truly a work of art.

After all the iterations of the show, we will have two signs going on tour: the FLS sign that we first built for earlier productions, which will sit in the lobby of the theatre, and the larger sign we made for Broadway.

CTI: Is there a part of the design concept that links all of the iterations of *Freestyle Love Supreme* together?

JC: There are a few. The one thing that stands out, that has truly been the only consistent idea, is that we don't really use the theatre's house lights. Instead, we have about 80 lights that are pointed all over the theatre to accent the walls and change color. When you walk into a space, it doesn't look like the lighting for a normal Broadway theatre – it's about setting a unique environment, combined with the music playing, that feels like "Club Broadway", or "Club *Freestyle Love Supreme*". We try to transform the entire theatre to match the show. We started doing this at [Ars Nova](#) at Greenwich House in downtown New York, where the show kicked off the theatre's opening. We also extended this idea to the Ars Nova lobby and theatre exterior and those items remained after. They are still installed there.

CTI: Tell us more about your lighting design at *Ars Nova* – if we stop by now, what can we expect to see?

JC: *Freestyle Love Supreme* was the first show at the new Ars Nova theatre at Greenwich House downtown, so we wanted the entire theatre to have the exciting look of the show. We used 16 reels of [QolorFLEX LED Tape](#) in the giant arched windows outside the theatre, in all of the alcoves, and as back lighting to accent all of the architectural details. Each window, five in total, uses wireless DMX data using [SHoW Baby](#) devices. Pretty much every part of the theatre can light up. Once it's all lit, between the lights on the walls and the architectural accents, it's almost enough that you wouldn't have to turn on the house lights at all.

CTI: What has being part of the reopening of *Freestyle Love Supreme* on Broadway meant to you?

JC: After the uncertainty of the last year and a half, it has been a treat to work on the new design for *Freestyle Love Supreme*. The show is back on Broadway with a brand new look. It's an approach that allows for even more exciting and dynamic cueing than we had last time, with a seemingly endless amount of options for how to shape the space and create mood and atmosphere using light. Working with Beowulf Boritt, the show's Scenic Designer, and Thomas Kail, the show's Co-Founder, Director, and Producer, and the entire FLS team again has been incredible. I hope people come out and enjoy the show.

Credits:

For more about *Freestyle Love Supreme*, visit: <https://freestylelovesupreme.com/>

For more about Lighting Designer Jeff Croiter, visit: <https://www.jeffcroiter.com/>

For more about Scenic Designer and Photographer Beowulf Boritt, visit: <https://www.beowulfborittdesign.com/>

For more about Hudson Scenic Studio, visit: <https://www.hudsonscenic.com/>

For more about Ars Nova, visit: <https://arsnovanyc.com/>

For more about QolorFLEX LED Tapes and QolorFLEX NuNeon, visit: <https://citytheatrical.com/qolorflex>

Photos by [Beowulf Boritt](#)

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