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Continued from March 2010 CTI Newsletter

What's It Like For An American To Live And Work In London For A Year?

We sent our Adam Klein to London to run our office there for a year. We asked him to describe his experience there in this interview.

CTI: It isn't often that an American in show business gets asked to spend a year in London. How and why did you make the decision to go?

Adam Klein: Our City Theatrical London office was in need of a interim Sales Manager. I was approached by CTI to see if I would be interested in a short term assignment as the European Sales Manager. After a five minute conversation with my wife, we agreed it was indeed a rare opportunity and we agreed to make the move to London.

CTI: What did your immediate and extended family think about you leaving the U.S.?

Adam Klein: Everyone thought it was a great opportunity. They were happy to know that it wasn't going to be for a long time. Some of them were very excited about the chance to visit us while we were away. My sister was the most excited because she got to rent our apartment in New York from us!

CTI: Is business conducted differently in England and Europe than in the U.S.?

Adam Klein: Most definitely. We have a more formal, but upfront way of doing business. If a U.S. customer doesn't like us or our products, they will tell us. In Europe everyone is more cordial and welcoming. Sometimes it is hard to know if they are just being nice or if they are eager to work with you. In the states, when you visit a customer, it is usually right down to business. In Europe, you are always welcomed with a cup of coffee or tea, and then it is down to business!

CTI: How are the lighting shops different there than in the U.S.?

Adam Klein: From what I have seen, a rental shop is a rental shop is a rental shop. Space is always at a premium, the demo room is always filled with gear from yesterday's demo. Nobody has enough space should all of their gear return on the same day. It was actually very reassuring to visit all of these shops and see how similar they are to the U.S. shops.

CTI: Where did you live in London?

Adam Klein: I live in Raynes Park. It is the next town out from Wimbledon where the famous tennis tournament is.

CTI: What was the neighborhood like and how was your commute?

Adam Klein: While Raynes Park is in London proper, it has a very suburban feel. We live in a typical row house with a small garden (yard) in the back. Our house is only 1.5 miles from where the City Theatrical office is. Most days I can ride my bike to the office in about five minutes. We don't have a car in London, and have become very proficient with public transport.

CTI: You were alone in the City Theatrical office a lot. Was it hard without friends and colleagues around?

Adam Klein: I spent a lot of time out of the office meeting with clients and customers. It was actually really nice to be out on the road meeting new people. When I was in the office, I would keep in constant contact with the U.S. factory. We made great use of Skype and video cameras. It really felt like I was part of the office.

CTI: Did you get a chance to do much traveling in Europe?

Adam Klein: I tried to take advantage of being in Europe as much as possible. I visited trade shows in Helsinki, Frankfurt, Berlin, and Rotterdam. Working a trade show rarely gives you enough time to see a city properly. I also got to take vacations to Paris and Barcelona. I wish I had more time to visit other areas, particularly in the south of Europe. I guess I will just have to come back and visit again!

CTI: What did your wife and daughter think about their year in England?

Adam Klein: Both Jennette and Emma had a great time. They were on a mission this summer to visit all of the playgrounds in our borough in London. I think they ended up getting to just half of them. Our daughter, Emma enrolled in pre-school this winter. Amazingly, after only three weeks, she had a British accent! Jennette has had a great time here as well. She was able to do some work for some U.S. lighting design firms.

CTI: Do you have any advice for anyone who might be in your position someday?

Adam Klein: I would totally recommend that if anyone was offered an opportunity like this that they should take advantage of it. I spent a semester abroad in college. It was a great experience, but because I was with all of my classmates, I saw it through the perspective of a group of Americans. This time I was on my own and saw how Europeans viewed Americans. My whole world view was expanded. In America, we can get everything we need from within our country, and rarely have to deal with another country. In Europe there are so many different countries and cultures. They are all so close together too. To me, it feels like there is a great acceptance and understanding of these differences in Europe. Throughout my time here I have had experiences like this. I would never have had this or been able to expand my world view without living here.



Adam, Emma, and Jennette in Barcelona



Adam and Emma on the Tower Bridge



Emma models a Stacker