



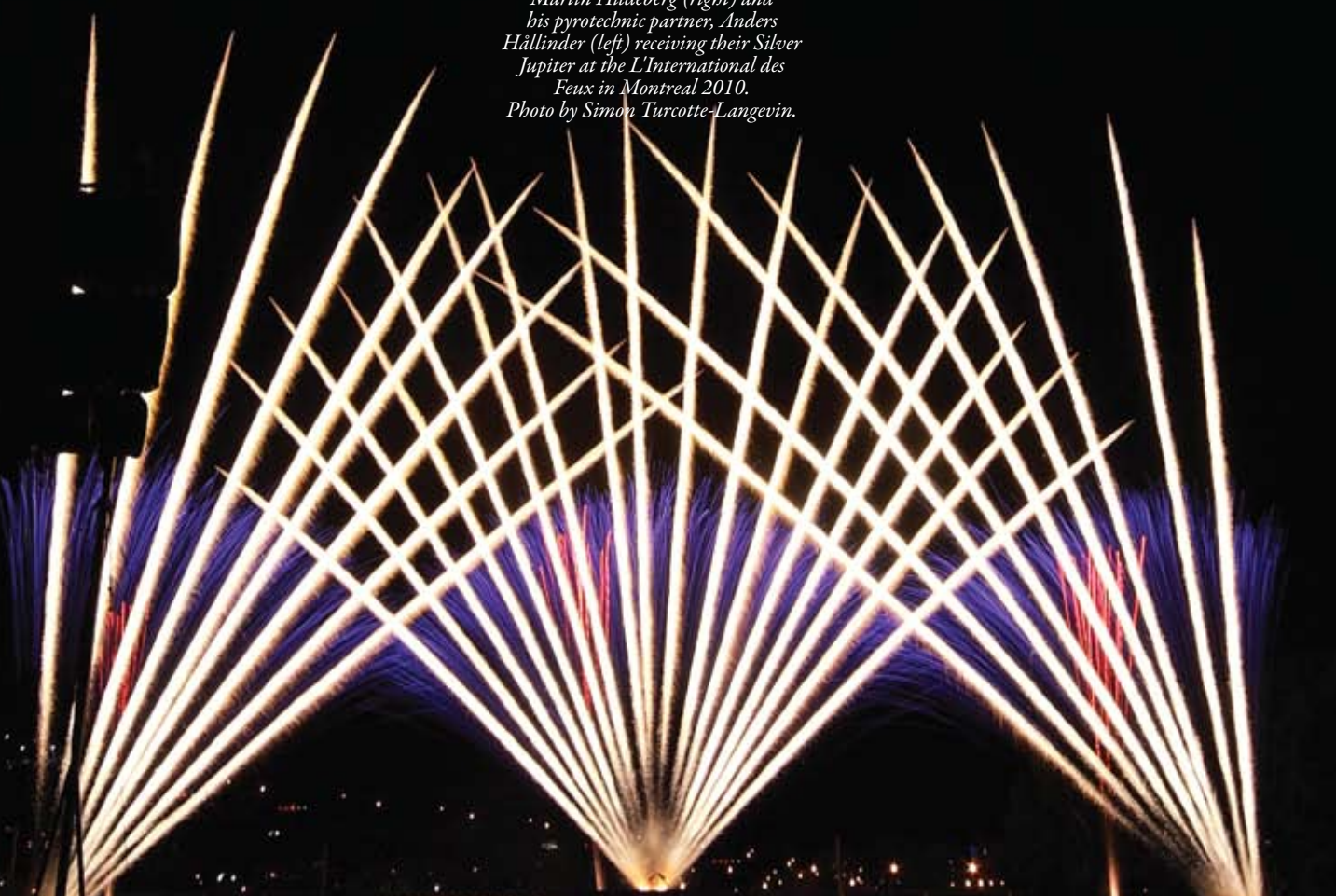
[www.fyrverkerifabriken.se](http://www.fyrverkerifabriken.se)

**M**artin Hildeberg is the Choreographer for Göteborgs FyrverkeriFabrik (GFF) in Sweden. Sweden has a population of 9.3 million people and is approximately 158,663 sq. miles in size—slightly larger than the state of California. GFF was formed by Martin Hildeberg and Anders Hällinder in 1994. Since participating in their first international pyromusical competition in



*Martin Hildeberg (right) and his pyrotechnic partner, Anders Hällinder (left) receiving their Silver Jupiter at the L'International des Feux in Montreal 2010.  
Photo by Simon Turcotte-Langevin.*

2001 in Knokke-Heist, Belgium and winning it, they have participated in many other renowned International Fireworks Competitions such as Hannover, Montreal, Tarragona, and Pyronale. They now boast 21 Gold Medals from 30 Swedish and International competitions! This year, GFF received the Silver Jupiter from L'International des Feux, Loto-Québec, Montréal and 1st Prize in the International Fireworks Competition in Hannover, Germany.



### **How did you get started in pyrotechnics?**

**Martin:** I started as a hobbyist in a University fireworks club back in 1986.

### **Are fireworks popular in Sweden?**

**M:** Fireworks displays are popular, but not as common as in Southern Europe, unfortunately. New Years Eve is the big day of the year. Smaller fireworks holidays are Easter and “Valborg” on April 30th. August is a busy month, too, with many festivals, etc. Consumer fireworks can be sold all year round but are mainly available during the fireworks holidays.

### **What is the main business of GFF?**

**M:** Our main business is fireworks displays. We also import display goods from Europe and China and sell some wholesale.

### **Your first competition was in Knokke-Heist, Belgium.**

#### **What do you remember most about that?**

**M:** We were worried about the practice of burying mortars in the sand at the beach, as we had never worked that way. But it worked out fine and we had a very nice experience doing that show. Having won that competition, it was our “ticket” into many other competitions afterwards.

### **Which of your competition shows are you most proud of and why?**

**M:** This year’s shows in Montreal and Hannover were nice. I think we had a good concept in Montreal with the DJ theme, based on my old DJ days. I am also proud to have developed our style of stadium pyromusical shows.

### **If you could choose, where in the world would you want to put on a fireworks show?**

**M:** I would like to shoot shows for some of the world’s most demanding fireworks audiences, such as in Valencia (Spain) or in Japan.

### **What is the best part about fireworks?**

**M:** Aside from my passion for the actual fireworks, I would say the best thing is to travel and meet people around the world.

### **What is the downside of the fireworks business?**

**M:** Long de-rigs in the middle of the night can be tedious, but that is nothing serious, of course. The risk of accidents is the worst.

### **What do you think makes a good fireworks choreographer?**

**M:** A good choreographer needs imagination and a thorough knowledge of his products. They also need an ambition to





Setting up in the Herrenhausen Garden in Hannover, Germany during the 20th International Fireworks Competition in 2010

always improve and try new things. You cannot be the best if you think you are already the best!

**Do you have any tips for aspiring fireworks show designers?**

**M:** Today it's easier to get into fireworks design compared to when I started. The web, with all video material and choreography software can be a kick-start into the principles of show design. But don't forget the practical parts—you have to know your products and equipment!

**What mistakes do you think are often made by choreographers?**

**M:** Well, maybe the tendency to make shows repetitive, both in the choice of effects and the way of shooting. Choosing

**Have you ever had an embarrassing moment in any of your shows? What's the worst thing that's ever happened during one of your shows?**

**M:** Many years ago I had to borrow matches from a person among the spectators. We had nothing to light our port fires with! We've never had any big failures so far—*knock on wood!*

**Who do you admire in the world of pyrotechnics?**

**M:** I admire the skilled craftsmen who make wonderful new effects in shells, such as in Malta and Japan. I have also learned a lot over the years from Ricardo Caballer, who taught me how to do a good show without music.

**What firing system do you use?**

**M:** PyroDigital

varied music for your pyromusicals is a matter of taste, but it's also more important than some people think.

**How many shows do you design a year? Which are your most important shows?**

**M:** I focus on pyromusicals, competition shows and a few other big shows. That can be around 20 shows a year. I have many other duties in addition to show design! My assistant designer Susanne designs our other shows. Some important regular shows are the Gothia Cup opening, the Speedway Grand Prix shows, Liseberg Amusement Park and big New Year shows in Stockholm and Gothenburg.

**Which products can't you do without in your shows?**

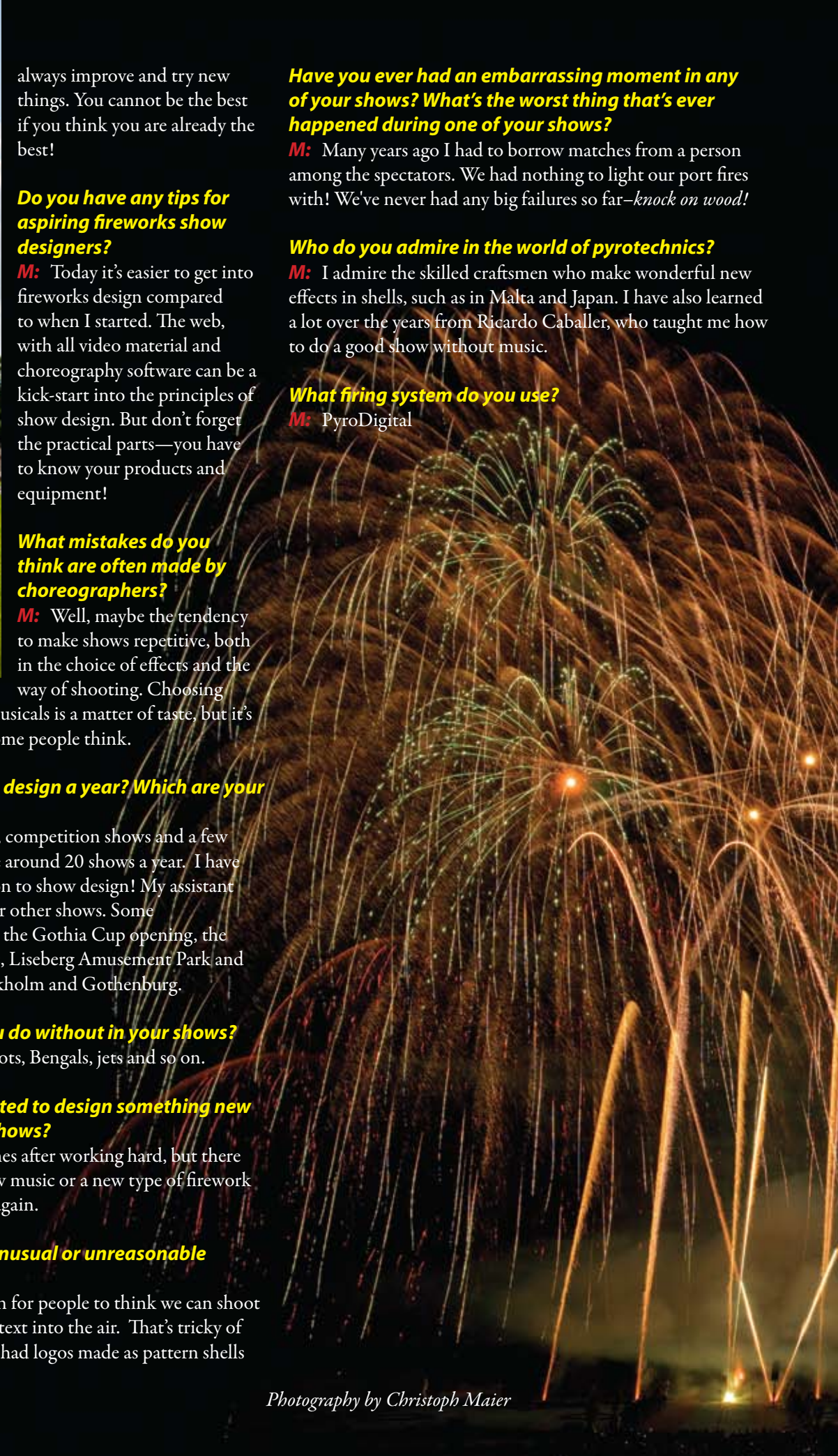
**M:** Small effects like one shots, Bengals, jets and so on.

**How do you keep motivated to design something new and unique for all your shows?**

**M:** I can get bored sometimes after working hard, but there is always some new idea, new music or a new type of firework that raises my interest level again.

**Have you ever had any unusual or unreasonable requests from clients?**

**M:** Well, it's not uncommon for people to think we can shoot their logos or long pieces of text into the air. That's tricky of course. A few times we have had logos made as pattern shells for our clients.



**We've gone from hand firing to sophisticated computer controlled firing systems, what do you think is next?**

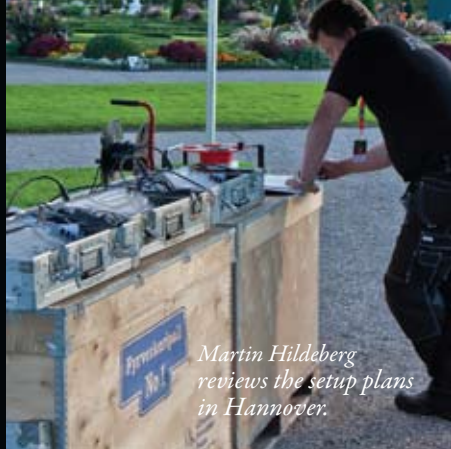
**M:** I would like a standard protocol for controlling fireworks as well as other media, such as lights, flames, waterscreens, etc.

**You are obviously a big fan of ABBA ...**

**M:** Well, I grew up with ABBA in the 1970's so I know their songs very well. Later I found that we were almost expected to use ABBA when shooting abroad, so we have often included an ABBA song here and there. It works quite well, depending on what theme you have for your show.

**What's up in 2011 for GFF?**

**M:** As the winner of 2010, we are scheduled to start off the competition in Hannover on May 14. We may also go to one other competition, which is not settled yet. There are also many exciting projects coming up in Sweden for next year. 🇸🇪



*Martin Hildeberg reviews the setup plans in Hannover.*

These 4 photos by Sierra@FEUERWERK.net



*Display fireworks for the 20th International Fireworks Competition.*



*More display fireworks for the competition in Hannover.*



*GFF crew setting up for their winning show in Hannover 2010*