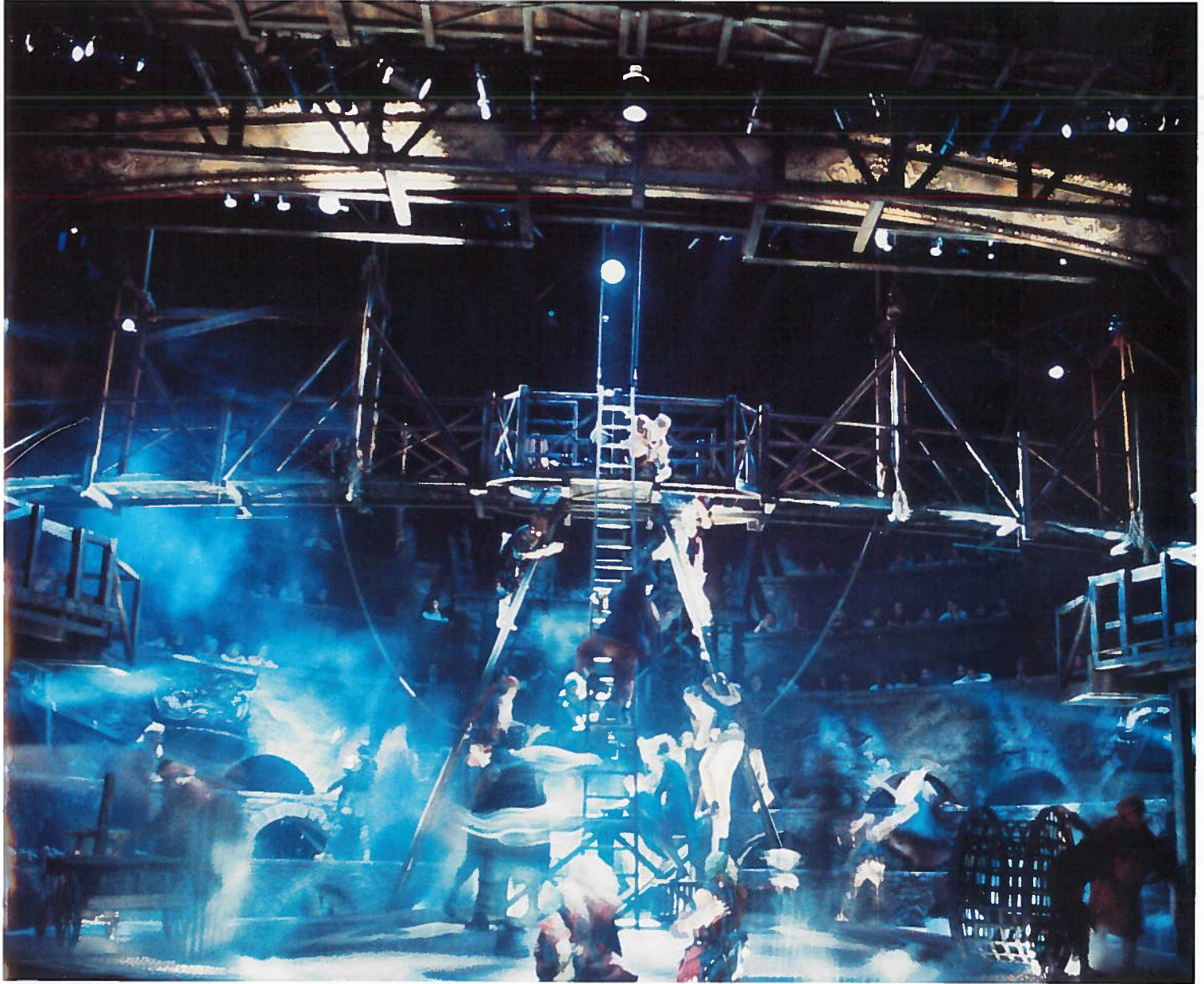


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- Second Coming: Robert Halliday behind the scenes at Jesus Christ Superstar
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- Profile: Theatre Projects on the eve of their 40th anniversary
- The Quest for Surround Sound
- Britpoppers Shed 7 live at London's Forum
- Limerick by night: how the young Irish are being entertained

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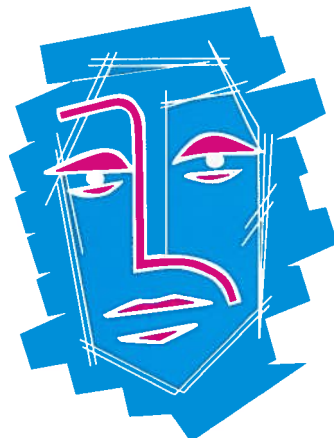
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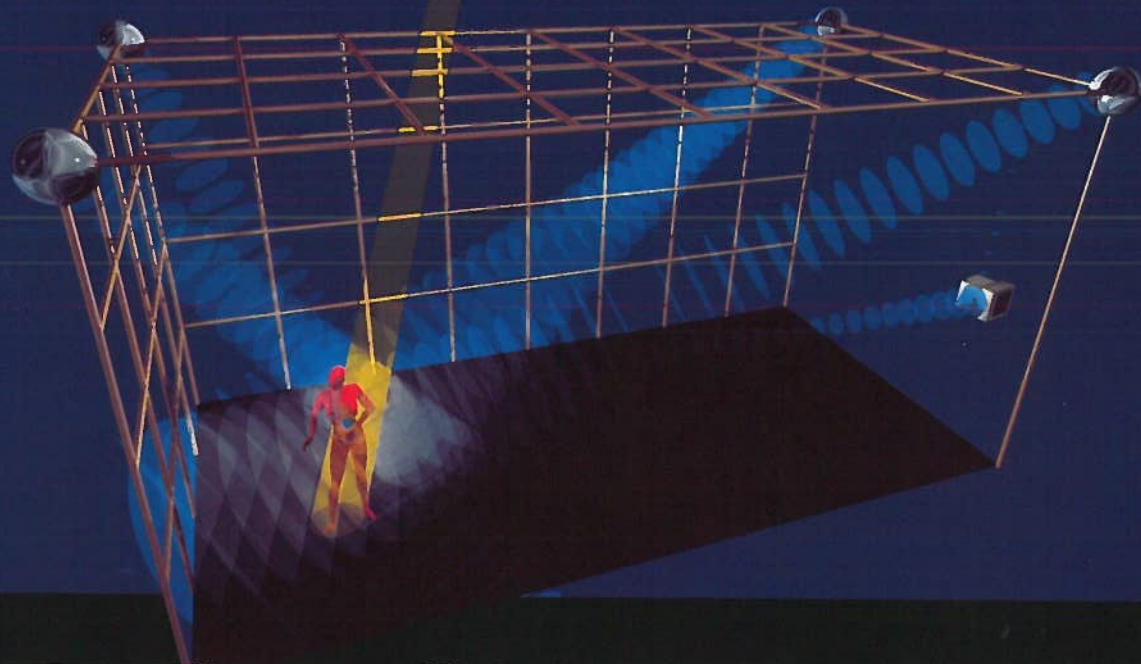
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It's a fair cop. We changed the spots on the Dalmatian (by computer - we didn't paint her, if you're worried). But the image demonstrates two important things. First, you can have the colour you want, where you want it. And, secondly, technology and colour really must go hand in hand.

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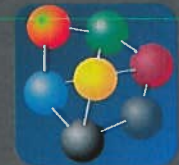
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LIGHTING+ SOUND International

JANUARY 1997

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The views expressed in Lighting and Sound International are not necessarily those of the editor or the Professional Lighting and Sound Association

ABC
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BUSINESS PRESS

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New Year Resolutions

1997 looks set to continue the trend established by recent years. The recession in the late eighties/early nineties is now a distant memory and there has been a notable business upturn in the last few years, evidenced not only by the increasing numbers joining the industry, who, in turn, are looking to trade associations such as PLASA to add a formal footnote, but by more active participation across all facets of the entertainment sector.

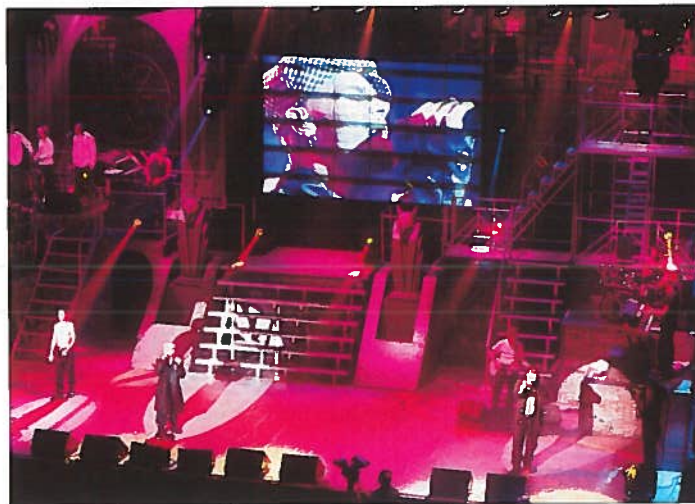
The industry has certainly matured, and there are signs of a greater acceptance of, and willingness to work with, the issue of Standards. In most cases, a progressive unity has replaced the sink or swim attitude.

In the UK, the Lottery has done much to boost spending in the arts sector and the economy is currently quite strong, though in Europe the wrangles over a common currency continue to add an unsettling undercurrent. With plans for the Millennium now shifting up a gear and with expectations for further growth, 1997 should continue the upward trend.

Strand Relocate North

Following our interview last month with Jim Ryan, the new managing director of Strand Lighting, L+SI has received further news on plans for the company's future.

In what some will regard as a surprise move, Strand is proposing to consolidate its operation on a single UK site in order to address the issues of customer service and internal communications. The closure of the Isleworth site by the end of 1997 will trigger the relocation of all current activities (excluding the engineering service) to Kirkcaldy in Scotland, which will be expanded to include purpose-built R&D and customer service facilities.



East 17

L+SI Exclusive: Teenage hysteria greeted East 17's recent outing at Brighton Centre and L+SI was there, not only to add its own voice to the chorus of screaming and whistling, but to see how the latest developments in video technology have aided E17's extensive *Insomniac* tour which took in most of the key UK arenas during its run in December.
Full report next issue.

New Year Honours

Several leading names in our industry were singled out for New Year Honours in recognition of their contribution to arts and entertainment.

Sir Andrew Lloyd Webber, who perhaps has done more than anyone to make London's West End the international capital of the musical, was granted a life peerage, whilst Britain's most regularly performed living playwright Alan Ayckbourn received the Knights Bachelor honour.

Paul McCartney, former Beatle and a driving force behind the Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts, also becomes a Knight Bachelor, whilst a knighthood goes to Richard Eyre, artistic director of the Royal National Theatre.

Terrorists Thwarted at Heathrow Airport

It can now be revealed that a bombing attempt by unknown terrorists was foiled at London's Heathrow airport late last year, when security police destroyed an entire set of highly explosive ETC AutoCAD drawings!

The incident, which has been hushed up by authorities, began when a mysterious package was left unclaimed at Heathrow. Alerted to its presence by a conscientious baggage handler, airport security quickly moved into action. Following standard procedures, bomb squad personnel removed the B-size package to a secure area where it was safely detonated with no injuries reported. Anonymous sources report that the parcel contained drawings of 'theatrical dimming equipment'. Commenting on the episode, ETC Ltd's Nick Gill observed that: "This gives a whole new meaning to 'exploding drawings'."

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Firework Flair

Le Maitre Fireworks enjoyed a very busy end to 1996 with a number of television appearances and special events.

In November, Carlton Television approached Le Maitre's Karen Haddon and asked if she would be able to demonstrate, on the London Tonight programme, the type of device responsible for the tragic death of a member of the public that month. She was able to show the difference between BS 7114 approved devices and a category 4 device, which should never be used by a member of the public.

The Birmingham Christmas lights were switched on to the accompaniment of a Le Maitre firework display. Televised by Blue Peter and Ozone, the event was also covered by the team from How Do They Do That?

Finally, to celebrate BBC Television's Children In Need appeal, a Le Maitre display was fired from the roof of BBC Television Centre in Wood Lane (pictured right).



Rigging Company Heads for the Summit

Summit Steel have won the contract to provide 36 hoists and a computerised control system for the Phil Collins world tour starting in February. This will be used to control a large articulated scenic trussing system over the main stage area.

Having started in early 1994, providing a system on Pink Floyd's The Division Bell tour, Summit Steel's stock of rigging gear is based exclusively around CM Lodestar. The company's recent work roster includes rigging for the PA and video at the large outdoor Oasis shows at Loch Lomond, Knebworth and Cork. They have also supplied hoists and control with Blackout on their recent product launches at Alexandra Palace and London Arena. Currently they are servicing tours by Chris de Burgh, The Cure, Pearl Jam, Jamiroquai, Jackson Browne, Squeeze and Heathcliff, as well as supplying an identical system for Gloria Estefan's European tour.



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Futurist Branches Out to London

Futurist Light & Sound International have recently opened a new office in London to provide a Special Project Division for the design and organisation of all major projects throughout the world.

Situated in Kensington, the new office will offer customers a complete turnkey operation providing the supply of generic and intelligent lighting, full design and production management service, programming of intelligent equipment and a full installation service.

Meanwhile, Futurist's Dewsbury HQ has recently supplied and installed the very latest lighting equipment to upgrade a number of regional theatres in the North West of England.

The Abraham Moss Centre in Crumpsall, Manchester, provides an integral sports and leisure facility. One of the most popular elements of the Centre is the theatre, as it runs local and regional productions throughout the year. As part of a recent upgrade to the theatre, Futurist supplied a comprehensive range of Strand equipment to create a new lighting design.

Futurist has also supplied equipment to two theatres in Lancashire, Colne Municipal and Ingleton Community. With National Lottery funding, the theatres have been upgraded and modernised to enhance stage performances and in turn, improve facilities for the audience. These are the first of several such Lottery-funded installations for Futurist.

The company has also recently formed new dealerships with some of the industry's leading manufacturers including CCT, Teatro, Le Maitre, Jem, CEEP, ETC and Total Fabrications.

Gearhouse Achieve Record Profits

Gearhouse Group plc, the parent company of Presentation Services Ltd, has announced record pre-tax profits up 59% to £2.7 million.

Gearhouse have also announced the acquisition of DPL (Europe) and DPL Broadcast Hire for £5.8 million. DPL (Europe) was incorporated in 1984 and sells new and used professional commercial video equipment, and DPL Broadcast Hire was incorporated in 1993 to continue a business, started in 1991 by DPL (Europe), in the hire of professional video and camera equipment.

These acquisitions follow on from the purchase of Lighting Unlimited, based in Johannesburg and Cape Town, who provide lighting, staging and auxiliary power for music and sporting events in South Africa.

Stop Press

ESTA (Entertainment Services & Technology Association) in New York has announced that it has been formally accredited to ANSI, the American National Standards Institute (more information next issue).

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GPA in Front Line

Orpington-based PA company GPA are making a major challenge for the rental premiership following the acquisition of a top flight sound system from Marquee Audio. The system comprises a 48-channel Yamaha PM3500 for front-of-house mixing duty, and a Soundcraft SM24 for monitor mixing, along with QSC Powerlight amps to drive the company's recently acquired Turbosound Floodlight system.

Some 16 stacks of Floodlight, with Turbosound TFM 350 wedges, have just returned from the Leftfield tour, on which GPA were the audio production company, while other recent work includes sound production for World Dance, the TT Races and the Kiss main stage at the Notting Hill Carnival.

JVH Becomes Wytec

In late November last year, Dutch company Jac van Ham Light, Sound & Vision B.V. was the subject of a management buy-out in which former managing director Ben Weijters purchased all the company's assets and with these established a new company trading as Wytec B.V.

The name change was essential as Jac van Ham Light, Sound & Vision was just a small sector in the Jac van Ham Group. As Wytec B.V., the company will continue to distribute the range of products formerly held by Jac van Ham. Ongoing projects include the supply of lighting to a new discotheque in Tunisia.

Clay Paky in 'In'



One of Copenhagen's newest and largest discotheques is using a range of Clay Paky projection effects to heighten the atmosphere of its interior.

The club, called 'In', situated in the pedestrianised centre of the city, has two dance floors, surrounded by five separate themed bars. Large horizontal drapes are suspended above each of the dancefloors, taking on the appearance of richly-coloured and changing skies throughout the evening. This effect is produced by 12 Golden Scan HPE projectors positioned above the drapes.

To combine with these effects, 20 Combi-colour units are positioned around the venue, while the centrepiece effect, an Astroraggi Power, showers 101 continuously moving beams of light down on the dancefloor.

The whole system is powered by a Pulsar Masterpiece and the installation was carried out by Danish company Highlight, Clay Paky and Pulsar's distributor in Denmark.

PSL Barcos on Tour



Boyzone have just completed a sell-out arena tour with a spectacular stage set topped off by specially designed video reinforcement from PSL.

The tour (pictured here at Wembley Arena) featured the first use, anywhere in the world, of the new Barco 9100s. Two of the 9100s were used on the flanking 20ft x 15ft front projection screens, which featured a mixture of cameras and VT, while three 8100 graphic projectors were rear projecting onto 12ft x 9ft screens, flown in on a specially constructed frame.

PSL used five Ikegami HC 390 cameras - two hand-held, three on tripods in the pit. A portable projection unit received the signals from the cameras and in turn relayed them to the projectors. The company also featured two 'Lipstick' cameras and a Dataton computer controlled system, which was deployed to switch eight inputs to the five destination screens. Other equipment fielded by PSL included Betacam SP machines and a For A vision mixer, on which the show was mixed by video director Chris Hillson. Finally, eight different slides were projected during the set, using a manual slide change, via a 5k ETC projector.

Celestion at Wembley

The highlight of this year's National Music Show at Wembley Conference Centre was a charity concert tribute to the late blues guitar legend Rory Gallagher, as part of Fender's 50th anniversary celebrations. This was one of many concerts staged in the main hall over the three-day event. Lending support was Celestion displaying its strengths as a pro sound reinforcement manufacturer, with its CX Series PA system delivering a clean, powerful sound.

Flying above stage were four CX 1220 cabinets, each loaded with a 1" compression driver and cast-framed 12" speaker. A further two 1220s were positioned as front stage fills. The main front-of-house PA system comprised each side of 10 CX 1522 2 x 15" bi-amped mid/high cabinets and 10 CX 1542 15" direct radiating sub-basses.

With so many artistes to mix at his 40-channel Soundcraft 8000 console, FOH engineer Lez Patterson, of rental firm Q Audio, was having a tough time. Two new prototype CX subs were also loaded in and positioned at the front of the stage, however, Patterson could not find any use for them on the night. "There was enough bass rolling around in the room without them," Patterson commented. He added that he finds Crown Macrotech amps work best with the Celestion system. "MA 2400s on the CX boxes are wonderful. This was the third time I've used the CX system and despite the hall being hard to work in, with lots of reflective surfaces, I think we achieved a nice sound, and much of that has to do with the direct radiating boxes. Because the CX is vocally voiced, it's easy to get a great vocal sound."

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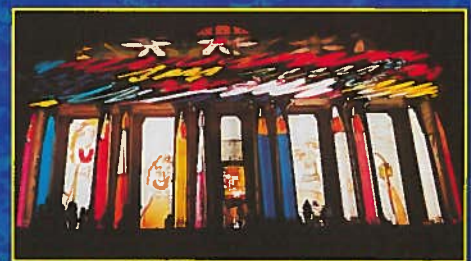
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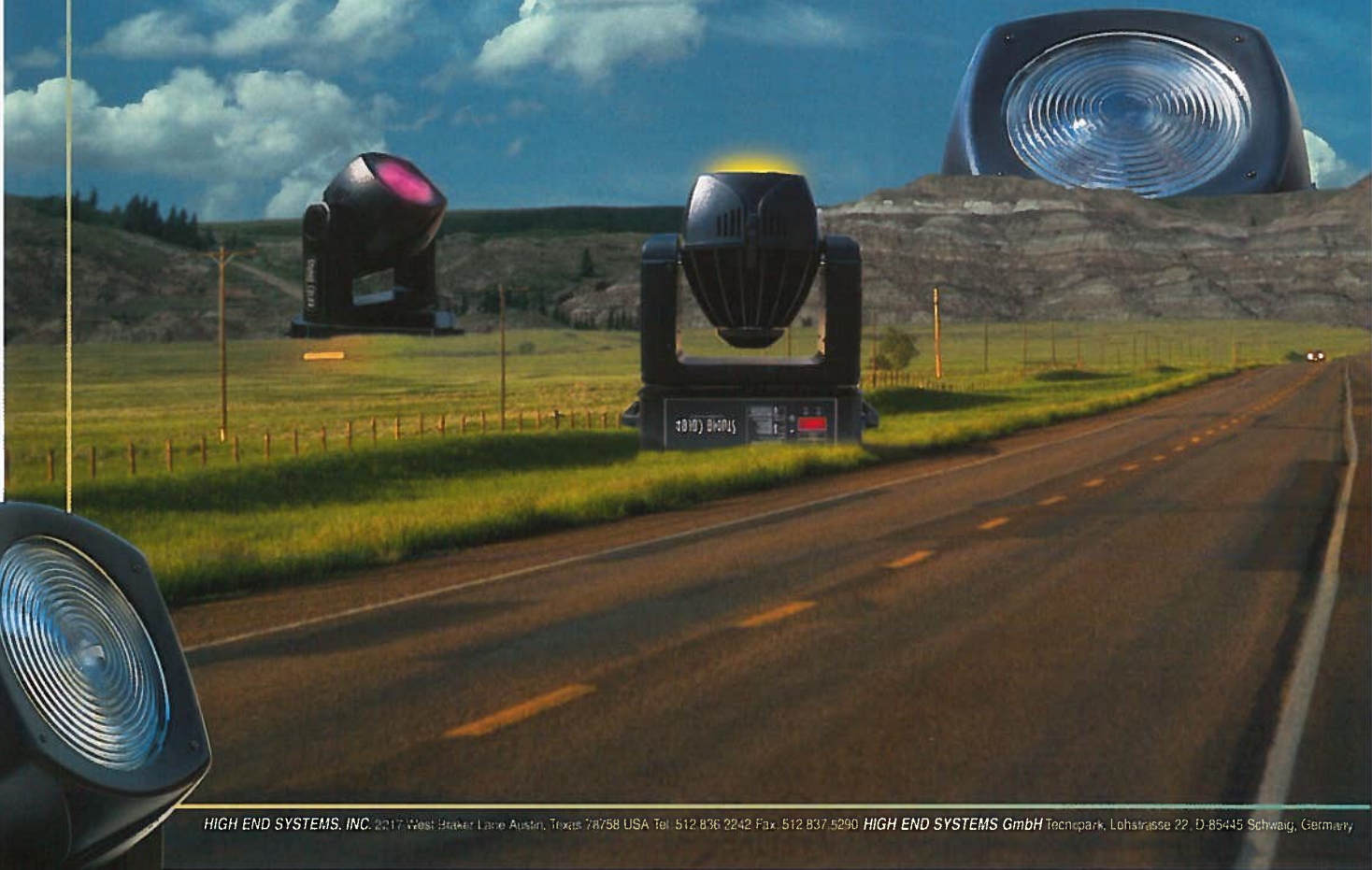
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Martin Demo

A series of demonstrations were recently held at Martin Professional's UK headquarters in conjunction with one of their Global Network Partners - The Moving Light Company. A wide selection of people were invited and over 60 attended, including many LDs, specifiers and STLD members.

A 10-minute lightshow gave Martin the chance to show off a comprehensive range of theatre, disco and rock and roll lighting, including some of the company's newest high performance products. The Mac 1200 is one of the most powerful driven-yoke automated luminaires on the market with full colour mixing and precise high resolution movement, whilst the recently launched Imagescan, a 200W MSD projector, allows users to project their own images. Also present from JEM was the first smoke machine to be manufactured in Denmark since the acquisition of JEM by Martin eight months ago - the Hydrosonic 2000, incorporating JEM's HOT Technology.

The lightshow was followed by a hands-on session where Rob Halliday, moving light programmer on West End production *Jesus Christ Superstar* (see feature this issue), demonstrated programming using a Strand console. Following the specification of a Martin Professional PAL for *Martin Guerre*, The Moving Light Company, a subsidiary of the White Light Group, have bought a stock of the units and have invested in a number of Martin Imagescans. They have also recently taken delivery of their first Pro 1220 CYMR units. The company became a Martin global partner for the PAL 1200 following Martin's recent move into high-performance lighting products.



Above, the illuminated backdrop used for the demonstration and below, The Moving Light Company's Bryan Raven (left) with Rob Halliday and The Royal Court Theatre's Liz Poulter (left) and Jo Town.



Cadac Goes Solo

Clive Green & Co, the UK-based manufacturer of Cadac desks, has announced its intention to establish its own sales facilities in the US market, in early 1997. In line with this move, the company has already appointed Jon Weston as their US operational and technical support engineer.

The new arrangement highlights the successful relationship between Clive Green & Co and its previous sole distributor - ProMix Inc of New York. Both companies have agreed that the breadth of market interest in Cadac's mixers make it appropriate for Cadac to be represented directly.

Clive Green told L+S: "We feel the time is right for Cadac to establish a presence in its own right. By doing this we believe that we can take a more proactive stance towards North America and provide more direct support."

Technical Workshops

Lightfactor and Light Processor are planning further technical workshops. The first will run in Liverpool from January 22nd-24th, whilst a second series will take place from February 11th-13th in London. Training will be available on a number of different products, including the Studio Color and Cyberlight fixtures, Light Processor QCommander and High End Status Cue consoles.

Those interested in attending should contact Lightfactor on 0181-575 5566.

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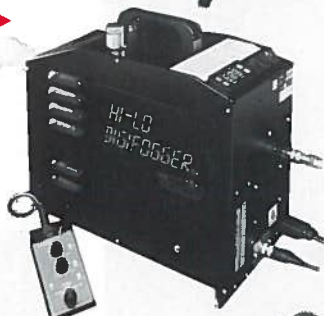
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VPLT Seminars

A recent three-day seminar held by the VPLT in Hanover, Germany, attracted 120 attendees interested in the training and vocational qualification activities offered by the association.

Over the three days, 19 speakers covered a number of topics across lighting, sound and event technology ranging from rigging to digital audio signal transmission. In addition, Beyerdynamic, Sennheiser, d&b Audiotechnik, RST and Vari-Lite Germany held separate product workshops.

The VPLT intends to extend its training and vocational qualification activities throughout 1997 and January will see a joint Chamber of Commerce/VPLT course followed by a series of induction seminars at Frankfurt (February 26th - March 2nd).

Blitz in Glasgow

Blitz Vision, the video and audio visual hire specialists, have opened a new regional hire facility in Glasgow. This new facility will be managed by Brian Mingay who is well known in the region as a specialist in AV and display technology. He will be supported by Irene Matheson in the Glasgow office and a team of technicians and will be equipped to supply the rental needs of local production companies, exhibitors and conference organisers. Stock will include the latest videowall cubes and monitors, data and video projectors, AV, sound and staging.

The operation is the first major announcement by the Blitz team since its acquisition by Visual Action Holdings in June and is currently combining operations with Samuelson Communications.

Fantasy Room Equipped



The Dance Aid Trust, who over the last 10 years have been raising money through club events around the country for children's organisations, recently donated music equipment to a new 'fantasy playroom' on the children's ward at the Eastbourne District General Hospital.

The playroom, sponsored by the Starlight Foundation, features a Clarke & Smith Schools Audio Centre with twin cassette, radio and CD along with two cassette players with the facility to use five headsets. Yamaha equipment includes 10 recorders, nine headsets, a keyboard, a drum machine, power packs and a percussion set for up to 25 children which were all supplied by Music Village. Trojan (pictured above with children at the hospital and donated equipment), star of television's Gladiators, officially opened the room.

An identical package has also been donated to the children's hospital in Derby.

'Guinness Gig Rig'



Lighting designer Phay McMahon in control.

Guinness recently staged an official launch for their latest record book at Regents Park Zoo in London. To provide a bit of razzmatazz, the 'Guinness Gig Rig', a 45ft purpose-built show trailer, was brought over from its base in Dublin. This vehicle has been featured in L+SI before back in 1992, but this is the first time it has performed in England. The fact that Guinness can keep this vehicle busy for eight months of the year in Southern Ireland, a nation of just 3.5 million, begs the question: Why aren't there fleets in the UK?

The vehicle boasts a comprehensive lighting and sound system (LSD and Total Fabrication lighting with EV MT2 speakers; control is by Jands Event and Crest Century 24 channel TC consoles) all built in, and with a generator beneath the trailer, is totally self-contained. For the Zoo event the stage was used to parade a representative selection of world record holders and was hosted by Chris Akabusi who ran us through the bean eating champ, England's tallest man, two Gurning champions, and the world's most pierced man!

Steve Moles

SOL Raises Profile

The SOL trade show formula is now well established offering the industry a rare opportunity to get together on a regional basis. Four SOL shows are scheduled to take place during March and April visiting Southampton, Bristol, Cambridge and Nottingham, with a two further shows pencilled in for later in the year at Newport and Birmingham. For further details contact Entex on (0973) 122484.

An Apology from James Brooks-Ward!

Members of PLASA have made quiet complaint in the past about the differing moods of P&O Events PLASA show director, James Brooks-Ward.

Some have found their way to L+SI's editor and PLASA's chief executive John Offord, who had always been somewhat surprised by this reaction to James' normally equable demeanour, and was soon to find the reason. Adrian Offord, son of our editor, was recently working with the lighting crew at the Horse of the Year Show at Olympia prior to Christmas. He duly reported to dad that he'd seen James on a certain day. "Did he say hello?" questioned JO, obviously checking on James' affability. "No, he just walked past, offering the merest of bemused smiles."

When summoned the next day to explain, James said: "That was obviously my brother!"

Editor's note: James has a twin brother Simon, often seen doing the rounds, so if you get the odd look or forgetful treatment, it probably isn't James at all.

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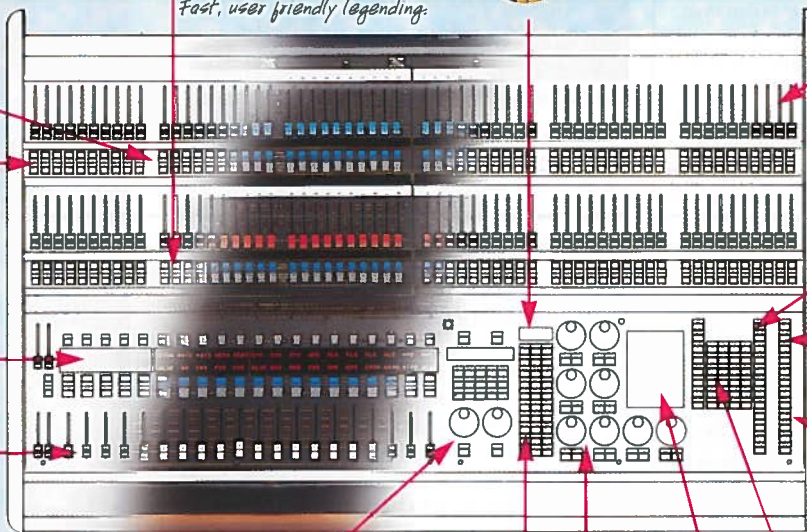
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Worlds Apart Capital Start



The Wavefront 8 Compact made its European touring debut with Worlds Apart via Capital Sound Hire, who had the full arena system in action when the band played the huge Paris Zenith recently (pictured above).

But it was at Wembley Arena, the week before, that the full system was flown for the first time - not for a rock concert, but with the Benny Hinn Mission of Mercy Crusade, where Mick Nash De Villiers was on hand to monitor the special MAN flying bar he has designed for fast rigging/derigging of the W8C.

For Worlds Apart, the PA flies four cabs per side on a Man flying frame, which are dead hanging off the ground-supported box lighting truss. All the other boxes are ground-stacked (a full arena system would see everything flown independently, with the bass ground-stacked). Side fills are provided by W8Cs and W8Ss and floor monitors are the compact LE350s.

Glantre Opens US Operation

As touched on briefly in our piece on Carnival Destiny last month, Glantre has opened a US operation at Fort Lauderdale offering fast access to the cruise line ports of Miami, Port Everglades, Port Canaveral and Tampa. The move will allow Glantre to provide its clients with full support and service back-up facilities. Glantre's technical director Vic Dobbs has transferred from the UK to manage the office, which was officially opened for business on 1st January this year.

The new office is located at 3100 South Andrews Avenue, Fort Lauderdale, Florida 33316, telephone (954) 760 4455.

Club Culture

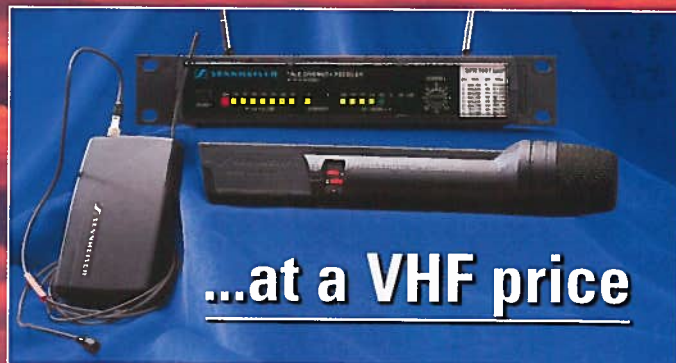
Marquee Audio have joined forces with Peter Kellet's PKA to carry out several new club and bar installations in London.

The Mess in Battersea is a Bass tied house which now has a punchy music system courtesy of six PKA P250 speakers and a JBL 4745A 2 x 15in, driven by two Yamaha P3500s, with a BSS FDS-360 crossover. Meanwhile, the Dogstar, situated on Brixton's 'front line', according to Peter Kellet, operates on three floors. One of the largest pubs in London, the equipment was part supplied by Marquee and part by PKA, who installed the kit using 1500m of speaker cable to allow the system to be patched in different ways. Used in the venue are six RCF monitor 8s and 16 PKA S250s, with eight of their 750W subs (S750s). Six Yamaha P3500 and three P1500s were supplied by Marquee, along with two BSS Audio FDS-360 crossovers and a Formula Sound AVC2, with four Technics SL1210 turntables fitted with Stanton AL500s.

Marquee also combined with PKA to supply RCF and PKA speakers to two venues in London's Greek Street - The Ricki Tik and The Broadwalk - while Kellet has been fitting out the biggest venue of the lot, The Hibernian in Fulham Broadway, which has just reopened as the Leopard Lounge. The installation features 25k of sound (eight Turbosound TMS-3s plus tweeter, and eight PKA 750S subs), driven by six Yamaha P3500s and controlled by BSS Omnidrives, which were supplied by Marquee Audio. A further six of PKA's P250s can be found in the bar. The massive dance club, which holds well over 1000 people opened in mid-December.

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Millennium Exhibition Plans For Greenwich



Image copyright Hayes Davidson

Like the Festival of Britain in 1951, and the Great Exhibition a century before, the Greenwich Millennium exhibition showcase is a chance for Britain to reinforce its presence as a major player in the world.

The events for the year 2000 are to be no exception. The cost of the Greenwich celebrations alone have been variously forecast from £350 million to £700 million. The only real surety is that the intention for Britain's Millennium celebration is that it should be, according to Barry Hartop, the former Millennium Exhibition chief executive "the biggest and best event in the world. . . an event that will capture the nation's imagination in the same way as Euro 96 - but on a massive scale."

The Greenwich dome will be 320m in diameter and 50m in height at the centre-point, making the circumference one kilometre. The dome is expected to be the largest building of its type in the world. With a ground floor area of over 80,000m, it will be twice the size of the Georgia Dome in Atlanta, which currently holds the record. The facts are staggering: the Dome will have the capacity to hold 13 Albert Halls or 3,300 double decker buses and its theme will focus on 12 time zones to be designed by Imagination of London. Though the Dome is intended to be the centre-piece of the celebrations, activities will extend across the country where the Millennium

Commission is committed to spending over £1 billion to help fund nationwide projects.

The plans have attracted some controversy, mainly on the funding side. Unlike the 1851 Great Exhibition, the event will not be funded by the aristocracy and it is the government that will pick up the bill - a move already causing political waves. As noted, Barry Hartop, head of the private company set up to control the business plan for the project, has resigned and small businesses are proving reluctant to commit in the face of so few guarantees about the cost and scale of the project. For the same reason, Labour will not allow the scheme to be underwritten by the government until a firm limit has been set.

As no-one is willing to take responsibility for funding the Millennium project the issues are becoming blurred around the edges? And what will become of the site once the millennium has passed? Permission has been granted by Greenwich Council for the site to be for temporary exhibition use only and no firm plans for the future have been put forward. The Greenwich Dome could suffer the same fate as Crystal Palace and become a faint memory as only the debts remain.

The only present certainty is that, whatever form the celebrations take, the entertainment technology industry should be one of the beneficiaries.

EAW Provide the Punch at the Satellite Club

For a sound to take them into the New Year and through to the Millennium, Mooncat Productions chose EAW speakers for the sound renovation at The Satellite Club in Vauxhall, London. The sound system concept was initially proposed by London-based Most Technical, though the final specification for the systems was generated by CVA Ltd, which also handled the installation. Further audio consultations was provided by Peter Kenny of Lighting Technology Projects, who supplied the loudspeakers, Dave Parry of Most Technical and Richard Rowley of EAW.

The club has four feature rooms each with their own distinct identity and so the sound criteria for each is equally individual and largely based on room size and style of music. The spacious and modern Riverside Bar with its stunning views over the River Thames lends the club a cosmopolitan air. However, the large windows, which make a feature of the club's surroundings, also create a major sound problem and this was addressed by the specification of EAW LA Series LA325 full range speakers, accompanied by LA118 subwoofers.

The largest room in the club, known simply as the Main Room, boasts eight EAW MH 662 mid/high modules and eight EAW BH852 bass horn speakers, whilst neatly concealed under the DJ booth are 12 SB1000s. Meanwhile, in the smaller dance areas - the Chill Out Room and the Garage Room - full range installation systems were used to achieve maximum output. Four EAW DS123 full-range systems, filled out by EAW SB250 subwoofers pumped out jazzy tunes and funky R'n'B in the Chill Out room, whilst four way system touring speakers, EAW KF650s and four SB1000s, were powerful enough to create a frenetic atmosphere in the Garage.

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DDA Assembly Line Set for Kidderminster

The entire production of DDA consoles recently transferred from Hounslow to the Kidderminster headquarters of parent company Mark IV Pro Audio Group. Now produced using the same purpose designed assembly procedures enjoyed by the Midas and Klark Teknik lines, DDA also comes under the company's stringent BS ISO 9002 quality control system. The move follows the relocation of other key DDA departments, sales having moved to Kidderminster in October 1995, and technical services, including the help desk, at the beginning of 1996.

Noel's House Party Breaks New Ground



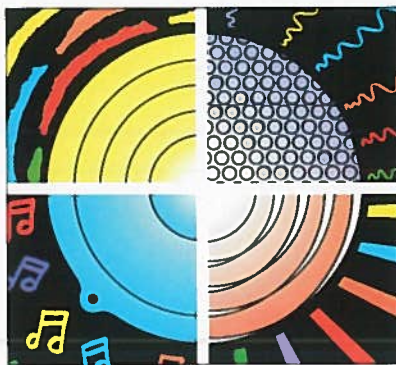
Triple E's Friction Drive, which was launched in the UK at PLASA 96, is being used in the new BBC TV series of Noel's House Party.

In the 'Black Hole' segment of the show, celebrities are pushed into a pitch black space and have to find their way out. The production team wanted to track the celebrity with a hidden camera but wasn't sure how this would work because the path of the maze follows several tight, 670mm radius curves.

The solution was Triple E's Friction Drive, designed by the company specifically to navigate radii as small as 500mm. A no-light camera is mounted on the Friction Drive and Unirail is used for the 20 metre track. The maze is lit by infra-red lamps so the celebrity can be followed as they struggle through cobwebs and around obstacles. The drive is positioned by means of on-board sensors which detect travel limits and is remotely controlled via a small joystick.

Triple E also supplied Unitrack to carry the remotely-controlled shower head which tracks across the members of the audience, spraying them with water.

Internet News



Just before Christmas, PLASA's Web site was enhanced by the addition of a new geographical listing of all the Association's 430 member companies, in the UK and worldwide. Users of the site can now search for PLASA member companies either alphabetically, or by area. The addition of this facility comes in response to an increasing number of enquiries reaching the PLASA office for member companies serving their particular area. Another new facility on the site is a feedback link, through which users can submit their comments and suggestions on the site direct to the PLASA office.

Companies on the Net increase daily. Australian pro audio equipment manufacturer ARX Systems have arrived on the World Wide Web. Their new Web site (www.arx.com.au) features full product details, user manuals, application notes, product reviews, a factory tour, contacts and other general audio information.

Other companies recently arrived on the Web include Francis Searchlights (www.francis.co.uk), Optikinetics (www.optikinetics.com), Citronic (ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/citronic) and Stage Electrics (www.stage-electrics.demon.co.uk).

Ryger Electronics, manufacturer of effects lighting and control systems, have made substantial additions to their Web pages. There are now 50 pages of information including product details, personnel pictures and contacts. See them on www.capethorn.co.uk/ryger/.

Launch of ROH Development Appeal

At the Gold & Silver Gala in mid December, Vivien Duffield, chairman of the Royal Opera House Trust and Development Appeal, announced the target of the fundraising effort for the Royal Opera House Development.

The target of £100 million will more than match the Lottery grant of £55million through the Arts Council of England awarded in July 1995, with a further grant of £23.5 million subject to fulfilment of certain conditions. The £100 million target will enable the ROH to complete the £214 million project and to retain ownership of a significant part of the retail development on site, thus providing an income stream to underpin long-term revenue and fund certain initiatives.

The project remains on schedule with closure programmed for mid-July 1997 and re-opening for December 1999. Following the demolition of the Russell Street properties and the first stage of foundation-laying for the new buildings to the south of the theatre and the new Royal Ballet building, the focus of the project team is now turning more to the manufacture and construction activities with the trade contractor design work increasing as packages are let.

BSS Joins the Chicago Blues Legends

BSS Audio had a major presence at the opening of the fourth and largest in the growing Stateside chain of House of Blues clubs, started by Hard Rock Cafe founder, Isaac Tigrett.

The location was Chicago and the opening night saw legendary studio band, the Memphis Horns, treat the club and its 2,000 guests to a memorable inauguration, with Steve Cropper, Duck Dunn and Paul Shaffer joined on stage by Albert Collins.

But behind the scenes it was also a BSS Audio show, since the main club sound system, serving the second-floor ballroom and its two levels of balconies and boxes, is completely managed by the Omnidrive system controller, specified by Boston-based nightclub design consultants Moonlighting Inc, who have designed and installed the sound systems for all four House of Blues so far. In addition, four BSS DPR-404 quad compressor/de-essers and four DPR-504 quad noise gates are integrated into the FOH system with one of each incorporated into the stage monitoring system, along with six BSS FCS-360 30-band dual-channel graphic equalisers.

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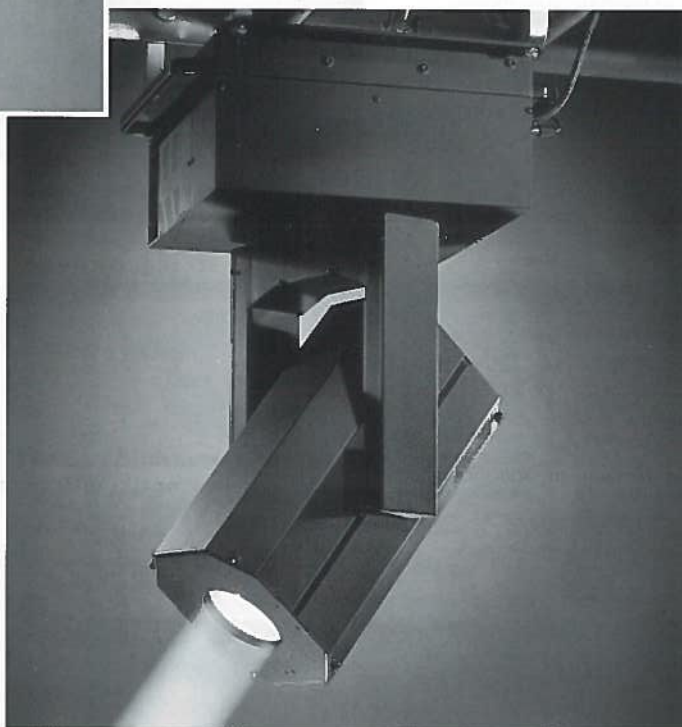
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- Control Signal: DMX 512/12 Channel



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Wholehog Live

The Clothes Show Live at the NEC last year was the UK debut of the two latest enhancements for Flying Pig Systems' Wholehog II console, the Effects Engine and Wing.

The Effects Engine menu gives one-button access to effects such as circles, fly-aways, rainbows, shutter-chases and the ballyhoo. It uses mathematical waveforms (tables) to manipulate fixture parameters in the programmer. By adjusting the rate, size and offset of each parameter's table, complex and dynamic looks can be created and viewed in real-time and stored as a single cue.

The Wing is a hardware extension of the console's playback facilities. An additional 16 fader masters and 18 faderless masters bring the total to 42 - all with LCDs for legending. The unit is aimed at those who require more playback locations to run 'horizontal' or unpredictable shows.

Lighting for the Loyds Fashion Theatre was supplied by Meteorlites with the usual team of Richard Knight and Stan Snape at the controls with a Hog each. The system consisted of 96 VL5s, 38 Cyberlights, and 36 Color Faders cunningly rigged on 10 motorised pods to create a splendid rig reveal. With only a day to programme, it was clear that the power of the Effects Engine and playback flexibility of the Wing helped ensure another spectacular success for the Clothes Show Live team.



Above, part of the Dalmation set at the Clothes Show Live and below, Richard Knight at the controls of a Wholehog II.



The Christmas Effect

Rotating gobos, pulse boards, strobe lights, flickering candles and even a flashing red nose are all part of the magic that The Lighting Department has put into Christmas windows this year!

Harvey Nichols' London store went for an operatic theme and TLD's Richard Rafter specified numerous effects, including a slow strobe, pulsing lights and ultra violet. A feeling of movement is provided by a rotating effects gobo on an ETC Source Four spot. The company also supplied a candle-lit theme for Harvey Nichols' Leeds store.

The grotesque figures which characterise Liberty's windows have been eerily lit using metal halide lanterns with dichroics to provide strong, clean colours. The Lighting Department used these clear colours to add to the festive atmosphere. Meanwhile, the lighting of the Snowman, for Hamley's toy store in Regent Street needed to echo the style of the video and Rafter put in new lighting track to use low voltage 'budgies' plus dichroics. The lighting in most of the windows in London utilises low voltage Selecon Accent spots and Selecon luminaires.

Showtec Shuffle

Cologne-based Showtec GmbH have recently updated their telephone and fax numbers. The company can now be telephoned on +49 221 595 3070 or faxed on +49 221 595 4579. The company's address remains the same.

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Gershwin Celebrations



The first Hughes JVC ILA-M 460S projector in the UK was bought by broadcast hire specialists Anna Valley in Andover. The 6000 lumen output 460 large screen projector is the new flagship of the Hughes JVC range. Its first application was at the Royal Albert Hall for the star-studded celebration of Ira Gershwin's birth in 1896. Performers from the world of theatre, pop and opera - including West End star Ruthie Henshaw - gave their services to help raise funds for the MENCAP charity.

Shooting Partners of Teddington, the event's project management company, used Anna Valley's 460 at the Albert Hall to throw images of Ira Gershwin onto a 20 x 15ft screen during the narrated part of the show. Capital FM, who booked the Albert Hall the day before for their annual SLAMA (Dr Fox's Surgery Listeners' Annual Music Awards) awards, were also persuaded to use the 460s to screen video footage of their nominees and performing artistes live at the show.

Drama School

Marquee Audio joined forces recently with Manchester-based Keylight to carry out a sound and lighting installation at Buile Hill High School in Salford. Both the theatre and drama studio have been fully installed under the command of a master control room.

Funding for the Drama Studio came from the Sports and Arts Foundation, where a percentage of the £50,000 allocated was earmarked for new technology. This was followed by a £100,000 lottery grant which went into converting the school hall into a theatre. Keylight were responsible for installing all the multicore sound cabling, leaving Marquee to deal with the terminations and commission the system.

Keylight were asked to provide lighting and sound, and invited Marquee Audio to contract the latter. In the Drama Studio, Marquee supplied a Soundcraft K1 16-channel mixing desk and two Electrovoice Sx200s, powered by a Yamaha P1500 amplifier. Multicores were run from front to back to allow the mixing desk to be controlled either from the sound room or the studio floor.

For flexibility, Marquee also supplied a portable system comprising a small 12-channel rack-mount Spirit Folio, with Denon DRW-580 cassette deck and DCD-625 CD player in the rack.

Keylight installed a 72-circuit lighting grid and 36 channels of Anytronic digital dimming, all under the master command of an Avolites Pearl, which runs the lighting in both spaces. Drama Studio luminaires comprise 30 Selecon Acclaim PCs, fitted with barndoors and six Selecon Medium Zoom profiles. Continuing the principle



Buile Hill High School Drama Studio.

of flexibility, Keylight also supplied a Zero 88 Level 18, 18-channel, 2-preset desk, enabling an alternative means of lighting control downstairs.

The second phase was the theatre where Marquee Audio installed two JBL 1330 speakers, a Yamaha P3500 amp with two Yamaha YS12ME wedge monitors and a Yamaha P1500 powering the foldback, with the sound multicores run back to the control room, where the sound is mixed from the same Soundcraft K1. Microphones comprise four PCC 160 PZMs and four EV ND257 hand-helds on Beyer boom stands.

Common to both spaces is an Ampetronic ILD9 induction loop system for the hard of hearing - supplied by Marquee Audio, while Keylight installed a Metro Audio communications system.

To light the theatre, Keylight have installed 60 circuits amounting from five lighting bars - two at front-of-house and three on stage. These terminate in a 60-way patch panel. Theatre luminaires consist of 18 Selecon PCs, 12 Selecon Acclaim Profiles, nine Selecon Acclaim 500W floods and 10 Total Fabrication Par 64s.

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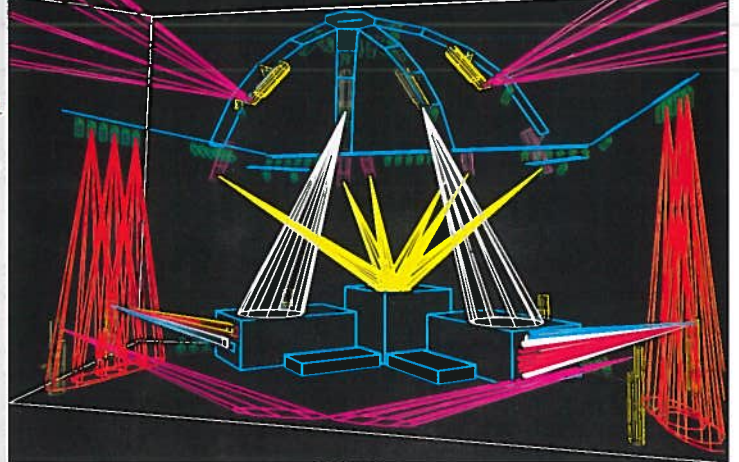

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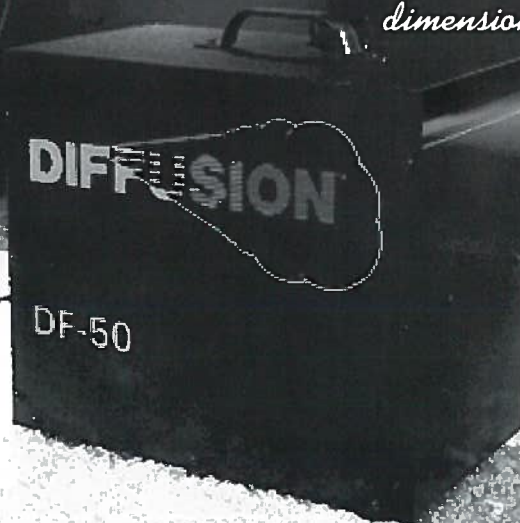
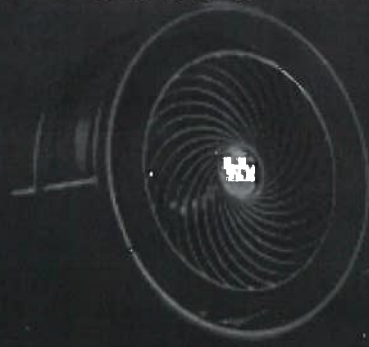


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Avolites Go To The Theatre



Icebreaker at the Queen Elizabeth Hall on the South Bank.

photo : Shane Walter

The attributes of Avolites consoles have long been popular with lighting designers and operators in touring and event situations, but their multi-purpose capabilities also make them suited for theatrical style shows.

Avo Pearls are running the lighting at Hyde Clarendon College and the Arden School of Theatre in Manchester. The latter is part of the Manchester College of Arts and Technology that offers degree courses in Theatre Technology and Acting, running in conjunction with Manchester's Royal Exchange Theatre.

An Avolites Pearl was also chosen by lighting designer Ivan Morandi to light the recent Icebreaker show at the Queen Elizabeth Hall on the South Bank. Icebreaker is a multi-media concept uniting punk, rock, jazz, contemporary classical and dance music into a compelling high-energy show.

Morandi is an experienced Avo user, but this was the first time he had run a show from a Pearl, although he was able to take advantage of the WYSIWYG facilities at Avolites to pre-programme the necessary planned lighting elements of his show. The lighting rig for Icebreaker was supplied by CPL/Vari-Lite Europe and included VL5s, VL6s, 40 pars, 20 Leko profiles, 20 floodlights and the majority of the QEH house rig.

Systems Training

PLASA members Cheltenham Stage Services are presenting another Systems Training Course at the Cheltenham & Gloucester College of Higher Education on Saturday 25th January, 1997.

The day will offer delegates the chance to attend four practical and/or theoretical seminars from a choice of 14. These consist of seven 'basic' level courses, aimed at those operating PA systems on a small scale and seven 'advanced' courses for those who already have some experience. The seminars will be led by specialists in their fields and there will also be a number of representatives from major PA suppliers in attendance. Cheltenham also plan to run lighting and video seminars, along with three other new seminars established for the last training course.

Further details are available from Cheltenham Stage Services, telephone (01242) 244978.

'Chess' in Oslo

For the second time this year, Cheshire-based MAC are installing a £750,000 sound system in the Spektrum Arena, Oslo, for eight performances of the musical Chess. The sound system for the show was designed by MAC's Clement Rawling and features 32 Sennheiser radio mics with MKE2 boom microphones. A Midas 80 channel XL200 mixing console with extender provides the 90 channels required for the production, whilst the Meyer speaker system utilises UPM2, UPA1, MSL3, MSL4 and 650-R2 cabinets with a total power capability from QSC and Amcron amplifiers of 30,000W.

Tarm & VW

German laser specialist Tarm Showlaser GmbH were recently commissioned to provide a spectacular laser show for the launch of the new generation of Volkswagen Passat, on the waterfront at Cannes in Southern France.

More than 1,000 VW dealers witnessed the show, which included the huge laser-generated Passats floating in the air, VW logos appearing in the sky and the legend 'Passat' rotating above the yachts in Cannes harbour. The images were projected onto two 26m (85ft) high water screens utilising a total of 70,000 litres of water per minute, forced through two narrow slots and propelled into the air.

Generating the effects were two high-power argon/krypton laser systems, which were situated on a floating platform anchored just a few metres off-shore. The show was designed and controlled by Ralf Lottig, head of Tarm Showlaser, and performed a total of 12 times over the two weeks of the VW presentation.

A Case of Vertigo

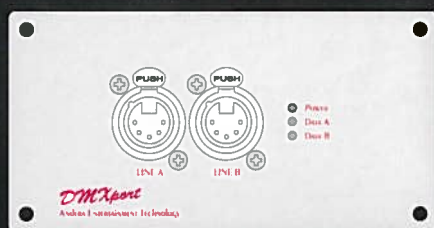
A frenetic festive season for Vertigo Rigging has included work on the usual diverse selection of jobs and situations.

In the theatre, Vertigo's international projects have ranged from rigging Chekov's *The Cherry Orchard* at The Albery Theatre, London, to the Arabian Music Awards at the National Theatre in Abu Dhabi, UAE. Meanwhile, the *Miss Saigon* show has opened in Holland to rave reviews, and back in the West End, Vertigo have won the coveted contract to rig Disney's *Beauty and The Beast* show. The fit up commences at The Dominion in the New Year and the production sees Vertigo again working with Terry Murphy Scenery and Delstar. The pre-production work includes maintenance and revamping of the five ton stage lift which will be carried out by Delstar while Vertigo undertake the process of lifting and balancing the machinery.

More theatrical activity for Vertigo has included the rigging and installation of a false ceiling at The Duke of York's Theatre for The Royal Court Theatre that takes up residence for two years while their building undergoes extensive refurbishment.

Other recent contracts include the Virgin 'Big Bash' at The Riverside Studios, Hammersmith, for the launch of V2, Richard Branson's new record label and the completion of large-scale projection installations for Blink TV in Sheffield, Birmingham and Newcastle arenas.

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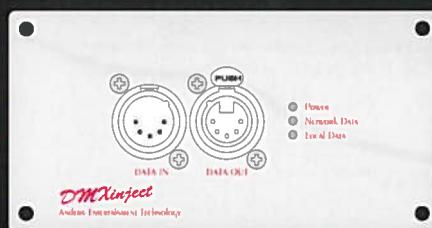


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the DMX connectors to eliminate control problems, we made each unit separately DMX addressable to ease setup, and insisted that if the units temporarily lost power during a show, they would remember where they were without going through that embarrassing calibration sequence when power is restored. Servicing was a design priority too, the complete colour changer can be stripped in under a minute with the removal of just 4 screws.

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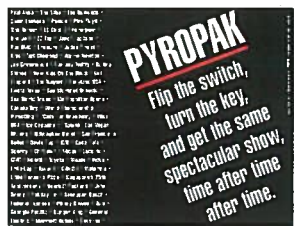
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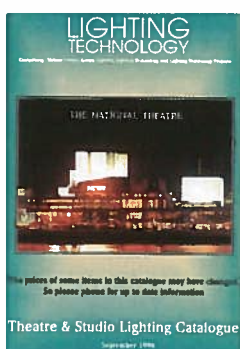
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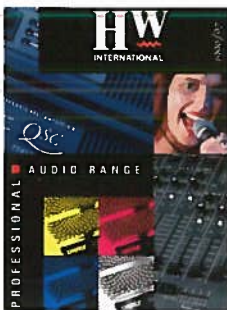


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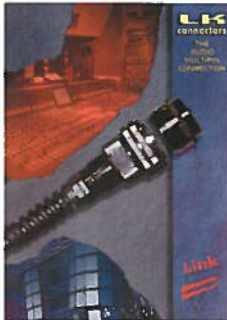
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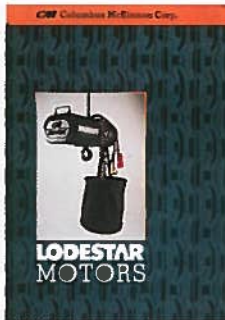
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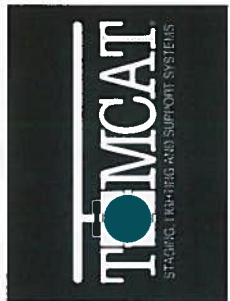
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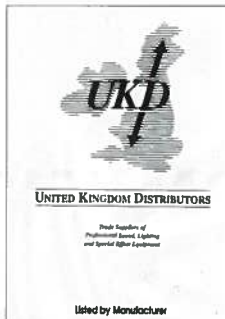
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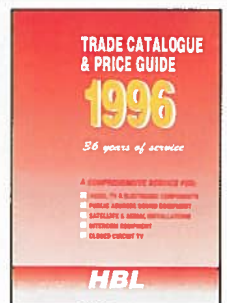
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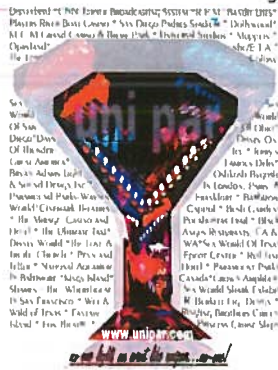


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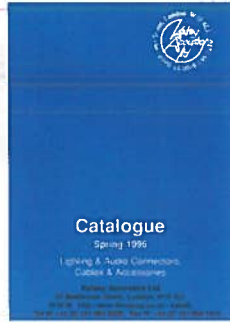
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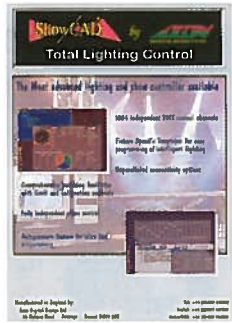
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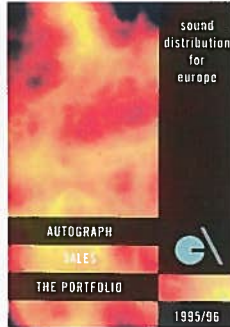


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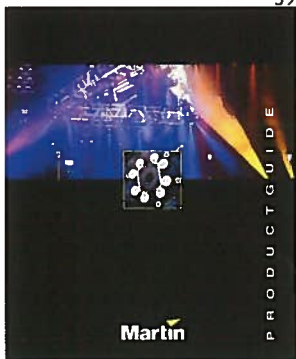
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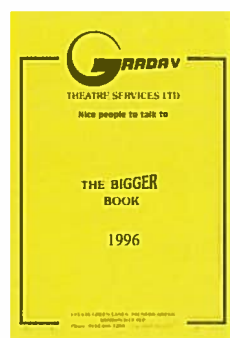
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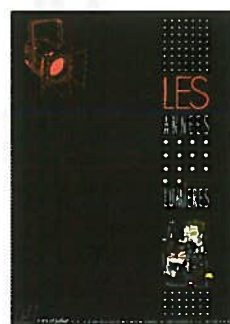
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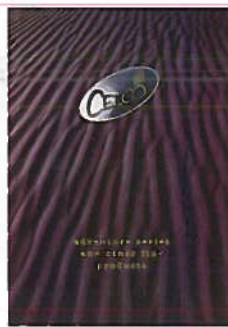
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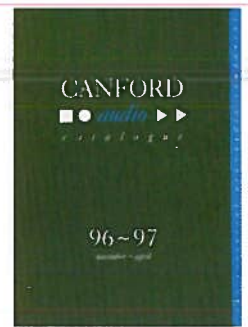
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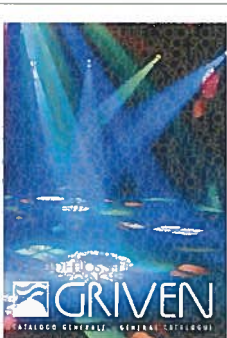
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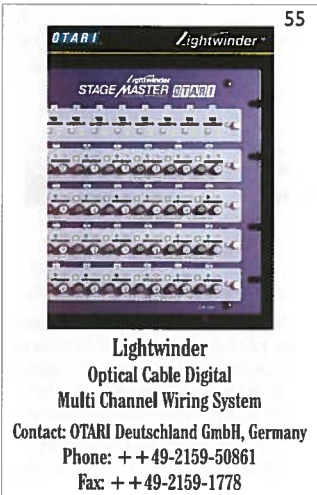
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The tri-folds contain description and pertinent data on our Ellipsoids, Shakespeare Ellipsoids, Follow Spots, Borderlights, Fresnels, Film and Video Fresnels & Open Face Units.

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DHA History

DHA Design Services have recently commissioned their design for the Natural History Museum's Earth Galleries Atrium. The main lightsources on the Globe and the Atrium space are a combination of AR500, Franz Sill and ETC Source 4 luminaires, rigged at high level within a concealed walkway that features a custom lighting louvre allowing additional units to be rigged.



The Globe itself contains a mixture of cold cathode (Syrett Neon), CCT Floodlights and ETC Source 4s, whilst the 44 specimen cases on the side walls are lit with a custom fibre optic system from Reflection Lighting.

The entire system is controlled by a Strand Premier with LD90 racks. DHA were also responsible (under a separate contract) for the lighting scheme for 'The Power Within' gallery, designed by Event Communications.

Industry People in New Year Moves

Victor Gotesman is to join Theatre Projects Consultants, Inc as president and chief executive. He has led a distinguished career as a programmer and chief executive of performing arts centres. **William Warfel**, previously a senior partner of Systems Design Associates Inc, has also joined TPC as a senior associate of the company.

Following a reorganisation in the parent Helvar-Merca Group, Electrosonic Ltd's managing director **Philip Aminoff** has been appointed chief executive of the whole Helvar Electrosonic Group, whilst Electrosonic's chairman, **Robert Simpson**, has been appointed to the main Helvar Electrosonic Board. There are also four new appointments to the Board of Electrosonic. **Kevin Murphy**, currently general manager of the Systems Division, becomes sales director. **Kevin Madeja**, currently manager of the Video Products Division, becomes overall products director, and **Keith Dale**, currently manager of the Celco Division, becomes marketing director (see Profile page this issue), **Adrian Quick** has joined as finance director.

Tom Swartz has been named president of Rosco Canada. He succeeds **Peter Edwards**, who is retiring after 13 years of service. Swartz headed Omega Lighting Services and has served as lighting designer and DOP on numerous productions. Peter Edwards was the founding president of Rosco Canada. He also came to the company from the television industry, where he won two Emmy Awards for lighting design.

Total Fabrications has appointed **Peter Hind** as their structural engineer. Hind is a fully qualified chartered engineer and will work on technical aspects of the operation.

Owl Video Systems has appointed **David Nibbs** as national sales manager where he will be responsible for expanding the existing sales base.

There have been a number of recent new additions to the ETC UK team. **Peter Wilms** is now the main technician responsible for technical work on-site. **Beth Hayward** joins in administration, whilst **Arvind Khehar** will carry out all accounting activities. **Esther Kooistra** is leaving ETC UK to return to Holland.

To handle the anticipated growth in its MI and pro audio distribution businesses, Shuttlesound has created **Graham Allen** director of sales, and **Bill Woods** director of communications. Allen remains as managing director of PAG Direct, while Woods will still be the company's Rane specialist.

Due to a restructuring of the Fane R&D department, the company have appointed **Clive West** and **Jason Baird**. West, formerly of Precision Devices, joins as technical manager whilst Baird, previously with Wharfedale, is the new acoustic engineer.

Futurist Light and Sound has recently appointed **Dan Cox** as project manager for the company. In this role he will be responsible for overseeing all major projects.

AC Lighting have appointed **Jonathan Walters**, formerly of Futurist, who joins them as their northern sales executive to generate business for their exclusive product range in the north.

BSS Audio have recruited freelance sound engineer **Rik Kirby** as sales engineer. Kirby has worked with several PA rental companies, notably Villa Audio.

Dave King has left Allen & Heath to set up his own consultancy business.

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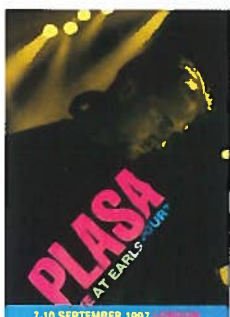


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I realise I have made more than the average number of tactical errors these last few months though perhaps I can be forgiven for not clocking the fact that a New Year is upon us. Christmas arrives sooner each year and this one was no exception. I should have tried to place at least one decent order with a hire company that does good diaries (or so my political adviser in Wiltshire tells me) but it now seems I have got to go out and buy one from the leftovers in the shops. This rather begs the question of whether or not I will have any dates to write in it, especially as at least one paragraph of this column last year nearly lost me a job. Funny, because most people complain if they don't get an honourable mention.

Yes, maybe I should pursue the idea of devising my own New Years Honours List, although it will probably never get past the Legal Department.

- B.E.B. (British Empire Building) to Strand Lighting for inventing a new board game.

- Order of the Garter to Mike Lingard. He's not done anything special, but will enjoy wearing it.

- Order of the Thistle to John Fyffe for dealing with prickly situations every day.

- O.S.M. (Order of the Stretch Merc') to Brian Pearce. (It's so long he can work two studios at once).

- C.G.G.A. (Capital Group Gourmet Award) for their own canteen.

So what other tactics did I get wrong? I guess that the freelancer's stock reply (yes) to any job offer is at the heart of many an unhappy day. Maybe adopting my own New Year's resolutions will lead to a more tranquil life in 1997.

- Don't accept a job when they say the

budget is 'very tight on this one'.

Translated, this means that the lighting man gets £200 and the talent £5,000 each (which is a lot for bare-faced cheek).

- Don't revolve the lamp in a Par can without wearing rubber. Failure to do so can result in an Afro hairstyle. Comply and you will quickly make new friends.

- Never hang anything on a pole cat without sticking a couple of big screw eyes in the wall first. You can tell a really green lighting director by observing his choice of pole cats: the furry ones are, if anything, less reliable than the aluminium ones.

- Never climb up a tallescope. They are designed strictly for decorative purposes and can be discreetly placed in the back of most shots with perhaps a splash of colour to pick out the more interesting features.

- Join a professional association. I recommend the 'I've pinched my finger in a Manfrotto stand club'. However, it's always difficult to find an existing member to sign your application because they all have painful blood blisters on their forefingers and can't hold a pen.

Now, dear reader, it has to be told (Watty's Lemon of the Year Award) that there is still a studio in London using spring pantographs, an invention of the Devil. Most of you will know the scenario, but for those that don't, these devices were invented by some 'expert' who thought particular lamps lived on particular hoists and never changed.

They are sprung to go up and down and stay put at any height with a particular weight of lamp (some hope). If the LD has the temerity to want a 2k where currently resides a pup, it goes like this: haul the lamp down to the floor until the springs creak in protest (they are 2" wide

clock-type springs, two or four of them). Now it's pin out, safety bond off and undo the locking screw. In the hands of the uninitiated, the thing goes off like a Saturn Rocket but with much better acceleration at take off. Now follows the only possible bonus: as it ploughs into the steel work, it sends a shock wave of about five on the Richter scale to the offices above (the chief engineer turns to his secretary and asks: 'Are they doing something in the studio today?') He would prefer it if they weren't, as productions always cause trouble. On dark days all that beautifully designed gear causes no trouble at all - it's only when a crew try to operate it that the rot sets in.

Anyway, what you should have done is to get the heaviest spark in your crew to hang on to the pantograph before you unload it. Once you have been to the store, found a working 2k with at least three doors and some tape covering the nicks in its cable, you can put it on the panto' and he can let go and try to get the circulation going in his fingers again - this is very necessary as he now has to thread his arm up between the scissors of the pantograph and engage one finger in the eyelet on the already taut spring and heave it down onto the next latch point to give the thing more lift.

He removes his arm with relief, gives the lamp a shove and up it goes. We all heave a sigh of relief: if the spring had broken it would have been like an angry snake with an arm in its cage. As we watch, the lamp, roughly in line with the plan first described by Sir Isaac Newton, descends to the floor, albeit gently.

The spark must now wrestle with more snakes, but this time standing atop some steps until a sort of balance is achieved. I say 'sort of' because we all know that the elasticity of springs isn't linear, but the inventor of the spring panto' didn't. Never mind, with a tallescope and some sash it's a perfectly good suspension unit. You've only got to do it 30 times or so on a simple rig and this particular studio is centrally placed between several good Accident and Emergency departments.

Game two involves the outlets on dangling rubber cables, which were numbered some time ago with an old felt tip on frayed camera tape. Not to worry, the board (sorry control system) has a sequential flash programme which runs round every circuit in sequence and all you have to do is tap your foot and count until the required lamp flashes 64, 65, 66 gotcha (or was it 68?). Quite straightforward really.

Thought for the month: does a hand-operated lamp become a pole-operated lamp when in a Warsaw studio?



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SECOND COMING

Rob Halliday (part of the technical team) provides an inside view on the resurrection of Andrew Lloyd-Webber's Jesus Christ Superstar at the new Lyceum

They might almost have been made for each other. Both stars of their time, acclaimed for their long-lasting brilliance through many different incarnations. Both long-neglected. And both now triumphantly re-vamped and revitalised for the nineties and beyond.

And they suit each other so well: the Lyceum Theatre, a gorgeous, wide-arched, clear-sightlined, 2000-plus seat theatre just right for large-scale musicals. And *Jesus Christ Superstar*, the show that set the British musical bandwagon rolling at the start of the seventies. The Lyceum's history is much longer, though for the past decade that history has looked highly precarious. It is thanks to the protectiveness of The Theatres Trust and the commercial muscle of Apollo Leisure that this beautiful theatre has now not only been returned to active duty in the West End, but has had its staging facilities brought up to scratch to boot.

The two stories met in the first week of October, when the main fit-up for the new production of *Superstar* started in the newly refurbished theatre. The new production surprised some. It is, after all, not much more than a decade since the original London production at the Palace Theatre ended its record-breaking eight year run, and other versions of the show have been seen in touring productions and concerts ever since. The success of the recent *Joseph* revival perhaps gave a clue that there was still a demand for the older shows, and the film of *Evita* is keeping the Tim Rice and Andrew Lloyd Webber names out in the public's eye. But the final 'excuse', if one was needed, is that it is the twenty-fifth anniversary of the show's first stage production. And Andrew Lloyd Webber through his Really Useful Theatre Company saw that as an opportunity to, finally, give the public a version of the show that presented it in the way he saw it.

This is his production: *Superstar* as drama; the 'opera' part of the 'rock opera'. To realise his vision, he took two tried and trusted collaborators who are highly experienced in both the drama and musical worlds: set designer John Napier and lighting designer David Hersey. To direct, he selected Gale Edwards, whose production of *Aspects of Love* (L+SI, April 1993) had already impressed him enough for it to be brought from Australia to form the UK tour. She was paired with choreographer Aletta Collins, formerly of London Contemporary Dance and now running her own dance company. This just left the all-important role of sound designer; all of Lloyd Webber's recent shows have had Martin Levan in charge of this area. With Levan in America working on Lloyd Webber's new show, *Whistle Down The Wind*, the role fell to Richard Ryan, a former Levan assistant who earlier in the year designed the new production of *By Jeeves*.

The challenge the team faced was to present a new production of an established classic in a



Steve Balsamo takes the title role in *Jesus Christ Superstar*.

"The only surprise is that there are no hard-edge automated units in the rig. But we didn't miss them. Can we have a bright, hard-edged, tungsten moving light for theatre, someone?"

'straight' style, and to do so on a schedule and budget that were (by the standards of recent shows) relatively restrained. The praise heaped on the production by the national press suggest that they have succeeded . . .

DESIGN

When first viewing John Napier's set model, many would have assumed that the design was for a grand opera; the formal circular amphitheatre, with a round playing area backed by several levels of curved seating topped by a pile of rubble certainly owed nothing to the flashing disco floors of earlier versions. The triumph of the design is the way that Napier has linked his set to the theatre, binding the Lyceum's history in to make it part of the show.

The main playing area is a dome formed from three concentric circles. Those familiar with Napier's earlier work might have expected all manner of revolves but, while these featured in earlier discussions, the only 'trick' is that the central section can drop down to form a two-metre deep hole, or lift to form a two-metre high platform, or, by lifting just an outer section, form a 'cage' centre-stage.

Viewed from above, the stage resembles a Roman shield, fitting in well with the Romanesque-style outfits with which Napier and associate costume designer Sue Willmington have dressed the show's many soldiers. This whole section of stage breaks through the Lyceum's proscenium arch, thrusting out into the stalls where the seating was re-raked and re-arranged to allow the best view of this set.

Centrally located behind the main stage is a big entrance, above which is a platform used in several numbers, and then two ladders leading up to a further platform, and then up to a heap

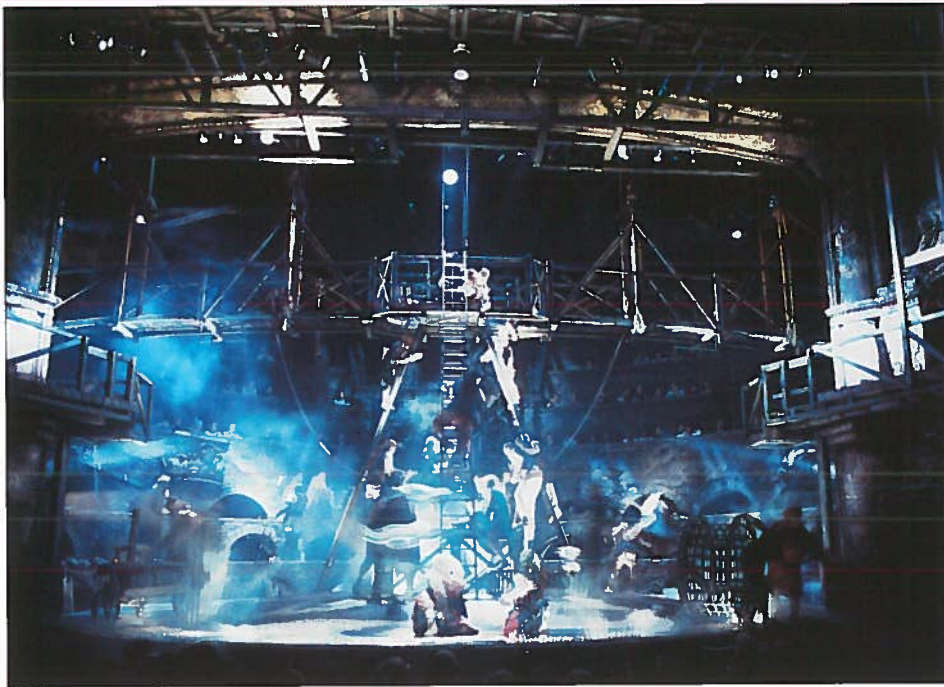
of rubble. Curving around from either side of these are two steps with arches cut into the front of them, and above those are three levels of 'tribune' seating which are also then topped with rubble. The front of these seating units contains a hint - moulded box fronts reminiscent of the theatre's own - that the set is intended to be a relic, 'found' during the restoration of the Lyceum.

This theme is continued above the stage and out into the auditorium: the area from the pros out to the second box has been painted in a brown textured colour rather than the bright red of the main auditorium, and the boxes have been partly covered by large wooden frames supporting walkways that allow the cast to break through the proscenium arch and out into the auditorium, in a manner reminiscent of Napier's earlier work on the RSC's *Nicholas Nickleby*. The feel of these structures is then continued in the walkways suspended high above the auditorium; these never actually become part of the action, but do provide walk-on access for focusing most of the front-of-house lighting, as well as a home for the central followspot. All the bridgework appears to be held up by rope (they are all safely supported by steel wire run back to steel joists supported from points above the ceiling, the installation being carried out by Colin Raby and his team from Unusual Rigging - the steel wires were then wrapped with hemp to give the required appearance), and the result is that it feels as if the audience has stumbled across an archaeological dig.

The set has two other moving elements. One is a staircase that can slide out from under the central platform to allow Pontius Pilate to march from this area down to the stage and back again. The other is a flying bridge, used for the first appearance of the priests and to create the interior of the Temple of Thieves. The show is relatively technology-light, however; while the bridge is automated, using Stage Technologies' Counterweight Assist motor system, it is controlled from one of their hand-held controllers rather than from an automation desk. The central staircase is just run from a winch, and the Delstar-created lift is hydraulically powered, controlled by an operator in the basement using two levers.

Three final 'tricks' round off the set's capabilities. A second Stage Technologies' pendant controller drives a rope, used for a spectacular entrance by Judas in the *Superstar* number. And then there are the elements: fire and water. A ring of 12 gas jets on the centre ring of the set, with a further two on the platform, create six-inch high flames during Kind Herod's song and, after the crucifixion, real water falls upon Jesus' body.

Both systems were designed and installed by Howard Eaton Lighting Ltd, who seem to be making something of a name for themselves in this kind of work. Rumours that the water was installed in case the gas went wrong were consistently denied! The simple-looking set



Above and facing page, various scenes from Jesus Christ Superstar - a production that works because it dares to take the material seriously - and succeeds.

actually belies the amount of work required to get it into the theatre. The on-stage seating presented the main problem, since the stage required additional reinforcement to take the weight and provision also had to be made for heating, secondary lighting and both entrances and emergency exits as in any other part of the auditorium.

Because the main fit-up schedule was quite tight, and because the theatre was already a building site, Really Useful's technical manager, Martin Heap, and the show's production manager, Richard Bullimore, were able to start work on the seating unit early, with extra steelwork being installed in the basement and the seating levels being constructed and then tied in to the air-conditioning and sprinkler systems as they were installed in the theatre.

Though this time-saving did get the show ahead of schedule, it also added an extra complication to the rest of the fit-up since the structure effectively blocked off the dock door; the rest of the scenery either had to be squeezed through a narrow gap or winched over the top . . .

Once past this obstacle, the set went up remarkably quickly. The entire stalls area was covered with a scaffolding platform to provide a flat surface on which to assemble the two side structures and then the overhead walkways prior to winching them into position. In just a few days production rigger Colin Raby and production carpenters Colin LeGendre and Dominic Addy and their teams had the side structures up and the main catwalks hanging at ground level, ready for production electrician Gerry Amies and his team of Jonathan Badger, Greg Hamlin and show electricians Steve Reeve and Rodney Icton to fit the lighting bars, attached by custom brackets to Unistrut points designed in and installed at the scenery workshops of Terry Murphy Scenery and Met Scene.

At the same time, production carpenter Micky Murray was starting to install the stage floor. To accommodate Napier's round acting area, and to leave space underneath for the lift mechanism and the lighting equipment

required to light up through the floor, the Lyceum's stage and orchestra pit area had been left as more-or-less a hole, with no stage surface installed over the large pit/substage area - Apollo were planning to include a motorised orchestra pit, but this remains a project for the future. The Superstar stage thus stands, for the most part, on its own legs on the basement floor; the front section is then supported by the frontmost section of the stalls floor, necessitating some careful alignment most of which took place while crawling around under the stalls scaffolding.

Above the stage, Unusual Rigging were responsible for designing and installing the complete flying system, an 80-way, single-purchase counterweight system fabricated off-site and then just bolted together like a giant meccano set. To satisfy the building's owners, one Unusual team had to finish the installation, before another started adapting it to suit the show, diverting sets to feed the flown bridge, lighting bars and the various 'man drop' ropes, as well as hanging motors for lifting scenery over the set and hoisting the three on-stage followspot platforms and the projection platform into position. This summed up probably the greatest problem of the fit-up: the building wasn't finished, hadn't been handed over to Apollo from building contractors Wilmott Dixon, and was therefore still technically a building site.

Despite these complications, the set was finished on-time, though it then of course became subject to endless tinkering by the director and designer; scenic painters Liz and Chris Clark were kept busy gently shifting the colours of the tribune seating and rubble areas right up until the opening night!

LIGHTING

David Hersey and associate Jenny Kagan began designing the Superstar rig during dull moments in the technicals of *Martin Guerre*, and the two shows are clearly related in their use of equipment. The Source 4 profile satisfied every demand thrown at it on the earlier show, and the 160 profiles forming the majority of the rig were therefore supplied by ETC - a mixture

of 10, 19 and 26 degree units, with rig suppliers White Light receiving every unit in one shipment.

But the rig isn't really that big - especially considering that the show is in-the-round and therefore needs to be lit from behind to deal with the on-stage audience. The lighting had to cover not just the stage, but also the upstage platforms, rubble and the auditorium walkways - as well as lighting up through the floor from below the stage. While the Source 4s provide general area lighting and gobo washes, the overhead rig also contains around 70 Par cans, many topped with Rainbow scrollers, providing backlight and low sidelight from underneath the auditorium walkways; a dozen 2.5k Alto PCs, again topped with Rainbows, giving coverage around the outer 'ring' of the set; and two Rainbow'ed 5k Fresnels giving the usual Hersey three-quarter backlight to the acting area. All of the overhead rig can be reached (though sometimes with a bit of a stretch!) from the flown bridge, the projection truss or the side catwalks - which is fortunate since there is neither a tallescope nor a Genie lift in the building, and using either on the domed stage floor would be extremely unpleasant! Offstage, each of the four arches in the curved steps were backed by booms containing Source 4 Pars, the units chosen for their brightness, even beam quality and compact dimensions in already narrow and crowded wings.

The rig then continued understage. Hersey and Kagan had three types of floor to deal with; the outer ring with its peppering of holes, the grilles in the outer ring, and the grille-like floor of the central lift. After experimenting with sections of the floor, they elected to use PCs for the floor and R&V 500W beamlights for the grilles. The problem then became keeping the lamps a constant throw from the floor so that the resulting 'fingers' of light were consistent around the ring. And this was complicated by the desire to top the PCs with scrollers to allow colour variations during the show. With the chosen 2.5k Alto PCs, space became a problem in the downstage area where the stage sat on the stalls floor and there wasn't enough clearance to point an Alto straight up. In addition, everyone was worried that if the lamps were pointed straight up, the resulting heat would destroy the scrolls very quickly.

The solution was created by Dave Isherwood and Bryan Raven of White Light, who suggested that, as the old showbiz saying goes, it could all be done with mirrors: by having the lamp horizontal and then placing a mirror at 45 degrees to the lens, the light could fit into the narrow downstage space, some of the heat would be kept away from the scroll and the light could still shine up through the floor.

After some experimentation, White Light had metal frames created that bolt to the lamp's trunion arm, then hold mirrors made from plastic heatshrink mirror material attached to wooden frames. The lamps and frames were then rigged from a custom-rolled curved bar that matched the curve of the set, and each mirror was topped with a domed plastic roof to deflect the worst of the rubbish swept through the holes in the stage. The same solution was applied to the lights rigged inside the central lift. Here the tolerances were even tighter; Cadenza PCs were used instead of Altos, and six of the new AC Chroma-Q scrollers were used because they are shorter than Rainbows, and so

just fitted between the base of the unit and the heat-proof glass installed to keep the water from the rain effect away from the lights. Another 500W beamlight had been specified for the centre of the lift; when it didn't fit, Jonathan Badger took a minimalist approach, stripping the mirror, bulb and transformer from the housing and just installing those!

With a long run anticipated, and mindful of the gas installation also taking place under the stage, Amies opted for a 'permanent' trunking installation substage, using custom trunking and armoured multicore runs supplied by HELL. The same approach was taken with the lighting on the front of house bridges, where both mains and data cabling are neatly installed out of harm's way. The substage lights run from two temporary 24-way LD90 dimmer racks installed on the basement. The rest of the rig is controlled from the building's comprehensive new dimmer and facility-panel installation for which Stage Electrics were responsible.

There are four elements to the rig. The show has six Robert Juliat spots, 2.5k Aramis units front and back, and then four 1.2k Korrigans on the diagonals. The front spots sit in the FOH scenic catwalks, while the on-stage three each have wooden platforms, again suspended from 'fake' rope and so adding to the overall feel of the set. These spots really are superb, tight enough to be capable of pinspotting a wrist-watch and then following it around the stage, and as bright as you'd need. A seventh Juliat, this time a 2.5k D'Artagnan, is used as the 'God' light, giving a bright, clear, white shaft of light to the central lift (through a trap door in the flown bridge, which also sits above the lift) for Jesus' big solo number and during the crucifixion; it offers a quality of light that no other profile we've seen could match.

The second element is the projection, provided by two Pani 4k HMLs complete with grey-scale dimmer shutters and 15-slide random-access slide changers from Production Arts Europe. These, again, are a follow-on from their success on *Guerre*, where they allowed Hersey to experiment with different slides in different scenes very quickly. A similar usage had been planned here, adding texture to the stage floor by diverting the beams downwards from an overhead projection bridge using Pani's beam divertor mirrors, but it never really found favour with the director or the designer. What they did like, though, was the look of the crisp, single-source backlight the projector's generated. So Hersey and Kagan proceeded to make masks to allow the light to be cut to different sections of the set generating full-stage backlights that give clear, precise shadows, or isolating the different rings without any of the spill that attempting the same thing with a collection of conventional lamps would lead to.

Thirdly - and a late addition to the rig - was the 70kW Lightning Strike strobe. The first time Jesus' death was rehearsed, it became abundantly clear that 'something' was needed to define the moment, and however we played with the rest of the rig we couldn't make that 'something'. Hersey had seen the strobe at the PLASA show, and White Light were able to get one to the Lyceum for a trial. It has stayed there ever since, running from the extra touring rack supply in the dimmer room that everyone had assumed would not be used for the run of the show! The effect still didn't quite work, though,



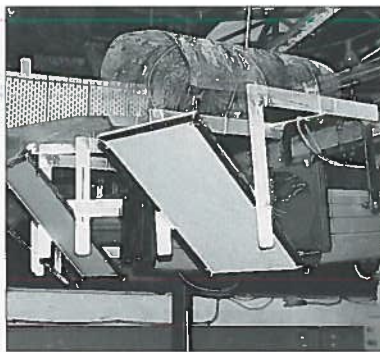
until an alternative triggering box arrived from Los Angeles that enabled it to give a slightly longer continuous 'pulse', finally allowing it to match the musical chord played at that moment. It's not a cheap effect (with a usage of just five seconds per show, Richard Bullimore spent a dull moment working out the hire price per second instead of per week), but it gave that moment in the production a lift that it had been lacking.

The final element involves the moving lights and it is this which, to some extent, has kept the rest of the rig so small. David Hersey is a big fan of the R&V 500W beamlight as a 'special' light to highlight moments of the stage; the lamp has featured in many of his shows, both in the rig and as followspots. The problem has always been having enough of the lamps to be able to cover every special moment. The solution to that problem first arrived on *Martin Guerre* - DHA's Digital Beamlight. There, for the first time, precise yet discrete, soft-edged light could be directed to any part of the stage. And





Sound operator David Ogilvy and sound number 2 Emma Watwood with the Cadac desks.



The beam divertor mirrors for the sub-stage Alto PCs devised by White Light.



Deputy electrician Rodney Icton at the Strand 550.

though the DBLs were, in retrospect, perhaps slightly underused on that show, they certainly proved their worth. 18 were specified for the Superstar rig, two on the mid-auditorium front-of-house bar, two per side on the auditorium catwalks, two on each perch boom and a further eight over the stage. This allowed practically any part of the stage to be lit from a variety of angles, and some combination of DBLs is now part of practically every cue in the show. Though one edict resulting from the 'drama' approach to the show was that no lights, apart from the followspots, should be seen moving, the beamlights are smooth enough that some subtle live moves have crept in without any grumbles.

To balance the DBL's tight beams, 10 Vari*Lite VL5Bs were rigged overhead, to provide more general wash lighting. As with *Guerre*, these were run from DMX but using Vari-Lite's new 16-bit DMX software, which does much to smooth their movement and improve positional accuracy. The combination of 5s and DBLs is a powerful one, and it is remarkable how quickly we all became blasé about the fact that we could quickly and accurately get light to any area needed. The only surprise, given the show's rock pedigree, is that there are no hard-edge automated units in the rig. But we didn't miss them and, besides, the harsh blue-white light from the HMI or MSR lamp fitted to practically every hard edged moving light would have been out of place here. Please can we have a bright, hard-edged, tungsten moving light for theatre, someone?

Control for the rig also repeated the system proved on *Guerre* - the Strand 550 range, with two desks used for plotting, one for the moving rig and one for the conventional rig, to allow us humans to keep up with the breakneck speed of the technical rehearsals. These were then merged down into one desk once the show was running, giving one operator complete control over every part of the rig. This desk is remarkable for the speed with which it allows even the most complex of plotting operations to be carried out. Though other rivals are now appearing, I don't think there's a another desk I'd like to use for a show like this. And with another big upgrade to the Tracker moving light software due in early 1997, that lead looks set to increase.

We did discover a powerful ally to the desk, though, in the shape of the WYSIWYG lighting visualisation software. This has quickly become established as a powerful way of pre-programming large rock and roll shows. It was used as a 'monitor' to the rig, running it in its 'blind' mode where it shows the position and colour of all the lamps, even when they are off. Used like this, it essentially replaces the desks'

numeric display screen for much of the time, as well as making it possible to get lights to roughly the right place before turning them on, and so minimising the distraction to the lighting designer plotting conventional lights, as well as to the rest of the creative team.

Control for the rig runs through two DMX lines from the control room above the upper circle to the DMX splitter panel in the dimmer room, and then to outlets on the facilities panels around the building. To ensure that the dimmers driving the VL5s were controlled from the same mux ring (and so, during plotting, the same desk) as the actual lights, some of the LD90 racks were fitted with dual-processor cards so that dimmers could be set to respond to the 'A' or 'B' ring as appropriate.

David Hersey has managed to light what has always been thought of as a 'rock' show as a theatre piece, and do it with considerable style and refinement. The lighting so precisely matched the composer's ambitions for the production that Lloyd Webber was heard heaping praise on Hersey in front of the cast at the end of one of the final rehearsals. As with *Guerre*, the show uses a fair amount of technology, but that technology has now reached a stage that it rarely hinders what a lighting designer is trying to achieve.

SOUND

And if any of us thought we had it tough on this show, it was nothing compared to the challenge facing the sound team. Where they told us 'drama', and gave us a 'drama' set and, for the most part, 'drama' staging, they told sound 'drama' and then presented them with a rock and roll band playing orchestrations that would be immediately familiar to anyone who knows the original concept recording of the show. And this in a building that was still unfinished (and so very hard to judge acoustically) even once the fit-up had started and with an audience at the back of the stage as well!

But sound designer Richard Ryan has already faced the in-the-round challenge this year, on Lloyd Webber's *By Jeeves* first in Scarborough and then in the West End. And he is very familiar with the composer's work, having worked with sound designer Martin Levan on shows such as *Joseph and Sunset* - and also with director Gale Edwards, having designed the sound for the UK *Aspects of Love* tour and last year's workshop production of *Whistle Down The Wind*, which Edwards directed. To form his team, Ryan brought in assistant sound designer Brian Beasley and production sound engineer Mike Walker, who, in turn, brought in sound engineers Nic Chua, Eddie Teo, Daren Hirst and Paul Spedding.

From the make-up of the band - three

keyboards, flute, sax, horn, trumpet, trombone and bass trombone, guitar, bass guitar, drums and percussion, Ryan knew that a very 'solid' sound would be called for, and so he elected for a conventional, boxed loudspeaker rather than the boxless Tannoy drivers that Martin Levan has made familiar on Lloyd Webber shows. Experience with, and a preference for, the EAW range meant that the rig is largely composed of EAW speakers; front-of-house there are 10 KF3001 units on the booms at stalls and circle level, and on the overhead bridges feeding to the upper circle. Four more of these units, two on a flown lighting bar and two attached to the back of the pros arch, serve as the main system for the on-stage audience. The FOH audience then has a comprehensive delay system of 34 EAW JF50 speakers feeding the back of the stalls and the first circle; some of these units are also hidden in the front of the stage to provide fill for the front few rows of the stalls audience.

The auditorium then has a surround system of 44 JF60 speakers, used to pull vocals, music and effects out and around the audience. And there is also a selection of sub-bass units - six EAW SB 120Is, 10 Bose 302s and two Bose 502s, used to add weight to the score and also for effects - some of the units are hidden at the back of the auditorium to ensure that the effects really can come from any direction! The entire rig is driven by Yamaha amplification, 59 H5000s running at quite high levels.

With the band not in a pit, but instead hidden behind the first platform, upstage and above the acting area, Ryan had to decide how much to try to tie the band's sound to this position. Since they were originally meant to be seen throughout the show, two three-way KF6501 speakers were hidden in this area of the set to allow the band sound to be 'pulled back' to this position, and this is still present in the mix even though the band were subsequently hidden from view (apart from a fleeting appearance at the start of the overture).

The things that worried Ryan most were the problem of getting enough level from head-mounted radio mics with speakers firing backwards across the acting area as well as forwards from it, and the possibility that the cast might be asked to appear anywhere in the auditorium, making it hard to guarantee that they would hear enough from the orchestra to pick up their cues. The level problem could have been solved by using hand-held microphones - indeed, the original London production used wired microphones, and the blocking is reputed to have been more about not tripping over cables than any real choreographic art - but the creative team did not want that kind of 'rock show' feel here. They

were prepared to discuss head-mounted boom mics, increasingly seen in the rock and roll world, but last minute changes of heart led to the decision to try head-mounted capsules and, though Mike Walker describes the resulting levels as being "right on the edge", the show has been made to work with these mics.

To tackle the hearing problem, Ryan decided to try another rock and roll device: Garwood's in-ear monitoring system. This had a knock-on effect in other areas, since each in-ear monitor knocks out several of the precious frequencies usually saved for radio microphones so, rather than offer it as a universal solution, the team kept it in-hand for solving specific problems for specific actors. In the end, only Zubin Varla, playing Judas, makes use of it - perhaps unsurprising considering he sings from many different places including, at one point, hanging from a rope 30 feet up in the air.

Since the number of in-ear units has been reduced, the number of radio microphones has been increased, and there are now 40 Sennheiser SK50 transmitters and 40 EM1046 receivers on the show, allowing each of the cast to wear a microphone, Judas and Jesus to each wear two, and still leave two spares. The microphones used are a mixture of MKE2, ECM77, B&K and COS11 capsules, and the sound support team of Emma Watwood and Jo Wredde are doing wacky things with blu-tak and plastic bags to minimise the problems of sweat getting into the heads and connectors.

Sound from the radio mics and the band runs up to the mixing position at the back of the stalls, where operator David Ogilvy oversees an 89-input desk made up of a 50-input (six motorised), 14 VCA, 14 sub-group Cadac J-type that deals with the radios, effects and final mix of the show, and a 39-input F-type that handles the band. The F-type is used because the band's monitor mixes are also sent from here, and the F-type's multiple outputs give the flexibility required. Racked beneath the desks is a variety of processing equipment, including Yamaha DEQ-5 digital graphic/delay units, Lexicon PCM80 and PCM90 digital effects units, Yamaha SPX1000 effects processors and YDP2006 parametric EQ/delay units, and a variety of Aphex compressor/limiter units. There is also a mini-monitoring system in the band area, with Formula Sound foldback mixers and a selection of Sennheiser headphones.

The result is a clean sound that lets the voices of the talented cast carry easily out into the auditorium with power and energy. It's not a subtle design - where a surround-sound effect kicks in, you know all about it, where the show gets loud, the sound gets loud. But in all of that, the words always come through - and in a production intent on telling the story, that is its triumph.

From a practical perspective, production engineer Mike Walker cites the biggest problem with getting the show on as being problems with the building being incomplete when work started. As a result, though the theatre is meant to contain a sound installation capable of coping with the large scale musicals that a 2000-seat theatre will inevitably attract, Walker and his team ended up installing a self-contained system for the show just so that



The new Lyceum which reopened in October 1996 - its original splendour now fully restored by the Apollo Leisure Group.

they could guarantee that it would work on time. The in-the-round staging, where the cast can be looking anywhere when singing, means that it is quite heavy on video, with three circle front monitors, two more just behind the proscenium arch, two more in the upstage entrance, and many more scattered around the wings. With the MD hidden at the back and unable to see the cast, video also runs the other way, and the circle front camera is remotely controllable so that it can (under the control of DSM Carolyn 'Nog' Wyld) close in on particular moments for the MD to see cue points.

The comms set-up is predominantly Clearcom, with soundproof Sennheiser headsets for the followspot operators to keep their sound 'exposure' within appropriate health and safety limits, and Motorola radios with headsets for the stage management team of Marianne Stratton, John Caswell ('the real JC', according to his first-night cards!) and Clive Mitchell-Harris - including one with just a small earpiece, worn on-stage as the crucifix is raised at the end of the show so that the cast can be told they can let go after it has been locked into position under the stage. All of the sound and communications equipment is supplied by TP Sound, with Dave Perry acting as project director and Mike Weaver handling the tricky juggling of radio frequencies.

PUTTING IT TOGETHER

This was no epic-length fit-up: Unusual Rigging started on 30th September, with the lighting rig going in a day later. The cast started rehearsing on stage three weeks later, and three weeks after that the show started a week of previews leading up to an opening on November 19th.

In visiting the site less than a month before the start of the fit-up, it seemed inconceivable that the show would open on time: the auditorium bare, unpainted, lit just by fluorescent worklight on stands, devoid of seats with many of the front-of-house staircases in a rather precarious state; the stage with a flying system going in but without a floor or any electrical facilities beyond a contractor mains. When we arrived to start the fit-up proper, seats had arrived and Stage Electrics' contracting team were on-site installing dimmers and facility panels. But the stalls were now covered in scaffolding, the walls were still unfinished, and the whole theatre was filthy.

One of the first things in was the batch of Source 4s. It has become traditional on shows like this, where the rig hangs inactive for several weeks, to wrap the lamps in bin bags to keep

the dust off them. Ever vigilant, White Light had picked up on this trend - and have started supplying rigs with lanterns sealed in clear plastic. Since the stalls were conveniently covered in scaffolding, the first area rigged was the lower circle front.

As the rest of the lighting rig and the first of the sound equipment started arriving, the main problem became waiting for other contractors to finish working in areas so that we couldn't be accused of slowing them down and so incurring extra costs for Apollo and working around problems caused by the real building differing from the plans. Mike Walker and his team encountered particular problems with this, particularly when the planned cable routes for the rear-circle surround speakers were found to be blocked by large concrete slabs. Even where equipment could be installed, it often couldn't be tested: the rig couldn't be flashed out, for example, because the dimmers were several weeks away from commissioning.

Two weeks in, and with the overhead and side walkways rigged, the stalls scaffolding was removed, allowing the theatre's intimate seating to be fully appreciated - it certainly doesn't feel like the 2000-seater it is. At this stage, David Hersey, Jenny Kagan and assistant Amanda Garrett started their move in. When the cast arrived on-stage, the technical period took a slightly unusual turn since we didn't just launch into frantic lighting over rehearsals. Instead, Edwards spent a week concentrating on adapting the rehearsal room staging to fit the theatre without worrying about lighting and sound at all, though this week did give us an opportunity to start experimenting with light, and sound the chance to start programming the desk with the appropriate combination of microphones for each scene. With a director and designer who often had clear ideas of what they wanted to see, work proceeded quickly, leading to the creation of around 250 lighting cues - which, in a show that runs for just 90 minutes, keeps the operator busy!

The previews were calm, simply allowing the production to be refined in the way that previews are always meant to, but rarely do. This is one advantage of working on a show that has already proved itself by running for eight years - you know that the material works, and so any problems must be with the production. Here the material is superbly presented by an excellent cast, free from 'stars' or egos.

The opening night was a real, good, old-fashioned triumph, with the audience spontaneously rising to their feet at the end to welcome *Superstar* back to London. The production works because it dares to take the material seriously - and succeeds.

Apollo Leisure said that with the Lyceum, they were trying to create a touring theatre in the centre of London, and that was the brief many of their contractors were working to. But the excellent reviews that have greeted this production means that its unlikely that any other shows will see the inside of this beautiful theatre for some time to come. And the composer-and-producer's delighted reaction to the production makes it seem likely that it will soon also be seen in other parts of the world... the resurrected *Superstar* lives on!

Photos: Wyatt Enever and Michael Le Poer Trench



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PLANET EUROPA

A Hong Kong-based design company have big plans for the Asian leisure market. Lee Baldock looks at Ho Chi Minh City's newest nightclub

The leisure industry has been one of the fastest growing industries in South East Asia in recent years, with China and Taiwan providing the main focus for development. As these countries become increasingly wealthy, so they develop an increasing appetite for Western-style leisure venues. Vietnam is now perceived to be the next place in South East Asia to undergo such a leisure boom. Ho Chi Minh City's newest club, Planet Europa, is the first step into this burgeoning market taken by Hong Kong-based Sixth Sense, a 13-strong, multi-disciplinary design team incorporating architects, graphic, lighting and retail designers, as well as multi-media and computer-generated imagery specialists, all carefully drawn together by British designer Nick Hamilton, the company's executive creative director.

Planet Europa, owned by Saigon Entertainments, is a relatively small club with a capacity of just 500, and was the first project undertaken by the company under the banner of Sixth Sense, a division of RMA Ltd of Hong Kong. Other projects since have included the KK Disco in Taipei (which makes Planet Europa appear something of a tiddler, being a 10,000 capacity venue and the second largest club in Asia), as well as similar projects in China and Hong Kong. The lighting designer for the project was Mark Leigh, who worked closely with senior interior designer Rob Horton on the creation of the club's striking interior. Mark Leigh explained the company's involvement in Planet Europa: "As Vietnam is an up and coming market, we were keen to establish ourselves within it. Business in Asia tends to be conducted on a 'who you know' rather than 'what you know' basis, so it is very important to establish a presence. For this reason, Planet Europa was a major stepping stone for us."

The club caters mainly for expatriate Singaporeans and Taiwanese, two sources of major financial investment in Vietnam. The concept of clubbing as we know it in Europe is still relatively new to Vietnam; the Western culture of late night clubbing and our various forms of dance music have yet to be grasped fully. Planet Europa opens at 6.30pm with a happy hour and the atmosphere picks up at round 8.30, with the lightshow commencing at 9.00. Although the club stays open until 2.00am, most of the Asian clubbers have gone home before midnight. Also, few Asians drink alcohol, so the clubs have to depend largely on the entrance fees to make their profits, but it will only be a matter of time before increasing Western influence takes effect.

The emphasis for the design of Planet Europa



Two views of the colourful interior of Planet Europa in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam.



is very much on providing a richly visual experience: every possible aspect, from the outside in, brings a flood of colour to the observer. The concrete exterior of the building is interlaced with fibre optic lamps amid deep colour washes, giving the effect of a starry vista

against a coloured, textured sky. The area inside the clear glass entrance doors provides a glimpse of a deep, dark blue environment, while the walls around the riveted stainless steel reception desk provide a surface for numerous gobo projections.

The lack of revenue from sales of alcoholic drink may explain the high level of sponsorship which features in Asian clubs. Nick Hamilton explains: "The main inspiration for the design was a kind of stars, galaxies and space exploration idea. This was our starting point largely as a result of the corporate sponsorship involvement within the club. In Asia it is very common for clubs to be sponsored by cigarette, beer or cognac brands, and Planet Europa is no exception, being sponsored by a B.A.T. cigarette brand called 555 which incorporates planetary and galactic themes in its own brand image. The challenge for us was to incorporate this image into the club without the use of

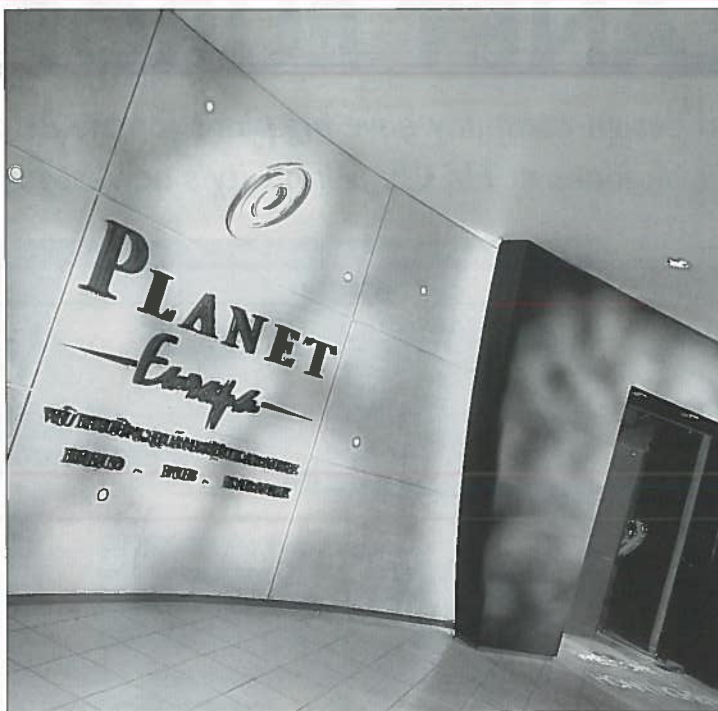
tacky neon signs and the like. The club, first and foremost, had to look like a sophisticated club environment, with the branding delivered subtly through the lighting and AV with the use of gobo images, video and 3D animations - all of which we are able to develop in-house."

On entering the club, you see before you a large oval bar, beyond which is the dancefloor. The ceiling is uplit with ultra-violet light, revealing another starry sky. At floor level, a UV strip and blue neon wash skirts the walls and the base of the oval bar, making the bar appear to hover a foot or so from the ground. (So, although the bar may not provide quite the draw that it would if it were in the UK, it does have a certain something about it.) Glass racks around the bar are constructed from stainless steel, and highlighted from above by a wash of blue neon, while around you, the line of blue-washed walls is broken by a red-washed feature section, while more gobo projections appear on the walls from a number of carefully-placed sources around the room.

Set into the oval bar is a large Toshiba projection screen television (61") and there are a number of other Toshiba monitors at various points around the club, all of which combine to create a powerful AV experience, displaying the range of custom-designed video images and computer-generated animations. As well as these video images and animations, all of the gobo projection images are entirely custom-made for Planet Europa, again designed by the company's creative team, which includes graphic design director Craig Bee, senior multi-media designer Steven Lau and senior graphic designer Justin Williams.

The circular dancefloor has raised seating providing views of the main stage area for live entertainment. There is a blue domed ceiling above, and the dance area is bordered by a low, curved steel wall, beyond which is a ring of perimeter seating. Seven projection screens cover the walls behind these seating areas and the rear of the main entertainments stage. Of course, the lighting rig here is the centre of attraction in Planet Europa. The rig is based primarily around Martin Professional effects, with three Roboscan Pro 1220s, and six each of the Pro 812 and Pro 518 scanners. Other Martin effects are the MSR 1200 centrepiece and four Pro 400 colour changers.

Control is through Martin's Pro 3032 software linked to a 108-channel Pulsar Masterpiece with SMPTE generator. The lighting units are positioned as unobtrusively as possible to give clear sight of the domed ceiling. Mark Leigh explained the choices of hardware: "Principally, Martin were used because of cost, sales support services in the region, the range of equipment available from a single source and the obvious technical capability. The control system needed to be relatively simple, as the Vietnamese technicians who will ultimately be operating it do not have extensive technical training. The 3032 is a relatively simple tool and the Masterpiece provides compact flexibility for the live sets. Nick and myself worked



with Ambrose Chua from Singapore-based Showtec to develop the sequences within the club, including all the SMPTE work."

Martin Professional manufactured the dichroic glass gobos through their Global Network, while the etched images were produced by DHA. Leigh commented: "We had

"In Asia it is very common for clubs to be sponsored by cigarette, beer or cognac brands, and Planet Europa is no exception, being sponsored by a B.A.T. cigarette brand called 555 . . ."

some problems with heat and some gobos cracking, but Martin have worked hard to resolve the problem and it has now been overcome. Dichroics were substituted in the 1220s and 518s, almost totally replacing the standard elements. We also completely replaced the images in the 512s courtesy of some very nifty etching by DHA who, as ever, delivered an excellent service."

Complementing the range of Martin fixtures are two of Clay Paky's Astroraggi Power centrepieces, and nine Frisby effects from



Nick Hamilton (left) and Mark Leigh of Sixth Sense, pictured on the PLASA stand at LDI Orlando in November 1996.

Griven, which produce finely-stripped beams of coloured light from an 800W source. Covering the stage are 32 Par cans and 38 30W pinspots from Kupo, who also made the two 15" mirror balls that grace the area. The rig also features a 1500W strobe from SGM Elettronica, a Black Light Gun 400 from Spotlight to pick out the UVs and two smoke machines, also from SGM.

To the left of the dancefloor is the KJ (Karaoke Jockey) booth, which is fronted with a wall of glass blocks that diffuse the light from the bank of TV monitors within, creating a soft, ambient glow which contrasts with the scanners and effects. The DJ booth to the rear of the dancefloor features a Rane MP24 mixer, the inevitable Denon DN2000F CD mixer, two Technics 1200 Mk2 decks and a Shure SM58 vocal mic. The live sound console is an Allen & Heath

GL3000, while the processing rack contains the likes of a Lexicon digital processor, a Digitech TSR24 effect unit and a Rane GE60 stereo equaliser. The sound system itself is based around a Nexo system, consisting of four PS15 two-way speakers, two LS1200 sub woofers and a PSTD processor. Amplification is through six Yamaha P3500 power amplifiers, whilst on-stage monitoring is through four Peavey 1545M monitor speakers with amplification from two Yamaha P2500 amplifiers.

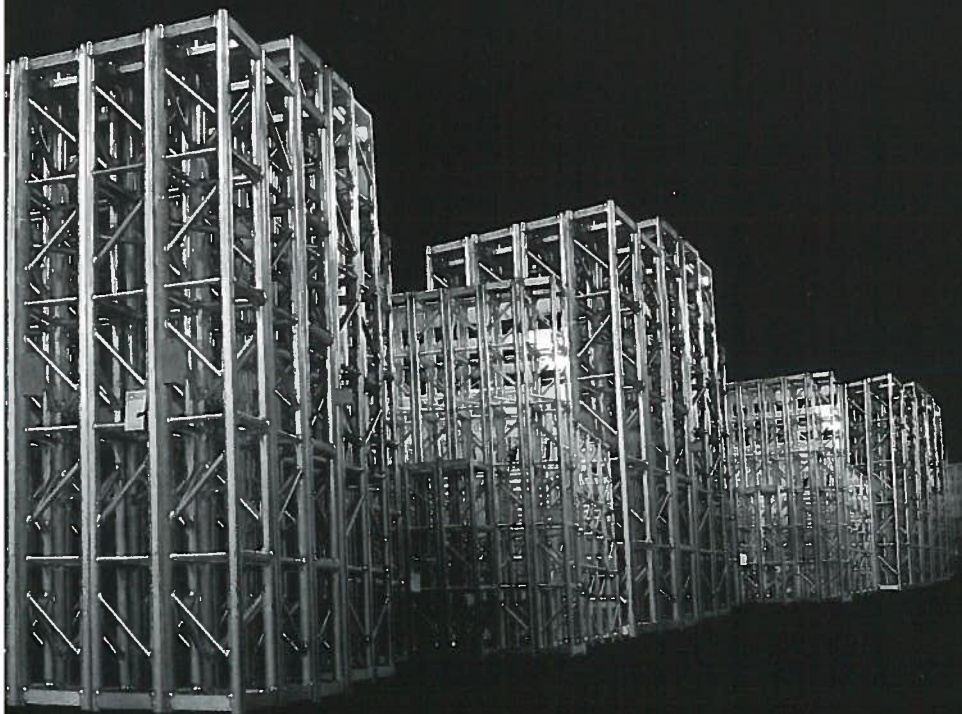
The team from Sixth Sense were chosen by Hamilton largely because of their combined skills and extensive experience of the Asian market, although interior designer Rob Horton was an exception, as Leigh explains: "Rob was brought in from the UK as senior designer to work specifically on this project alongside existing in-house designers. Asia is not an easy place to work and Rob adjusted well to the frustrations that you encounter over supply, delivery, manufacturing detail and the sheer pace of life. Planet Europa owes a great deal to his diligence, organisation and attention to detail."

The intelligent approach to the design of the club has enabled Sixth Sense to create an environment which is attractive to all parties: incorporating as it does the necessary advertising themes of the corporate sponsor in a way that maintains the respect of both the owners and the punters. As Leigh explains: "Traditionally there is a conflict of interests between the branding requirements of the sponsor and the wishes of the owners who often see this intervention as a negative influence on the ambience they wish to create. Our integrated approach has won praise from corporate sponsors and nightclub owners alike in Asia and Europe and already BAT 555 are looking to extend the concept across the region - Taiwan being an example."

A feature on the KK Disco in Taipei will appear in a future issue of L+SI.

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DEVELOPING PROJECTS

Theatre Projects, fast approaching its 40th anniversary, has undergone more than a few changes in recent years. Lee Baldock visited the company's base in Greenford, Middlesex, to catch up with the story

September 1997 will witness the 40th anniversary of the day when a young lighting designer by the name of Richard Pilbrow started his own company and called it Theatre Projects. Since then, the success of that company, and of the man who created it, has been outstanding. When L+SI covered the 35th anniversary of Theatre Projects back in November 1992, Pilbrow recalled: "It was hard to imagine why anybody would pay me to light a show. Why should they? The recipe was to rent out old, borrowed, begged or stolen lights and live off the proceeds. But times were obviously very ripe, for the plan worked."

It did indeed work, producing some of the world's most formidable theatre lighting talents in the process. Names such as David Hersey, Robert Ornbo, Bob Bryan, John B. Read, Nick Chelton, Howard Eldridge, Andrew Bridge, Benny Ball and the late Steve Kemp, all did their time with Richard Pilbrow at Theatre Projects. It was an exciting and innovative period for those involved, with Pilbrow actively encouraging young designers to take on new challenges. Early on, Pilbrow and Robert Ornbo began using the maxim, 'If we can get through the weekend, we can get through anything' - a necessary attitude, if Pilbrow's version of their methods is to be believed. He said of that time: "We constantly had to find new ways, because we didn't know what the old ones were!"

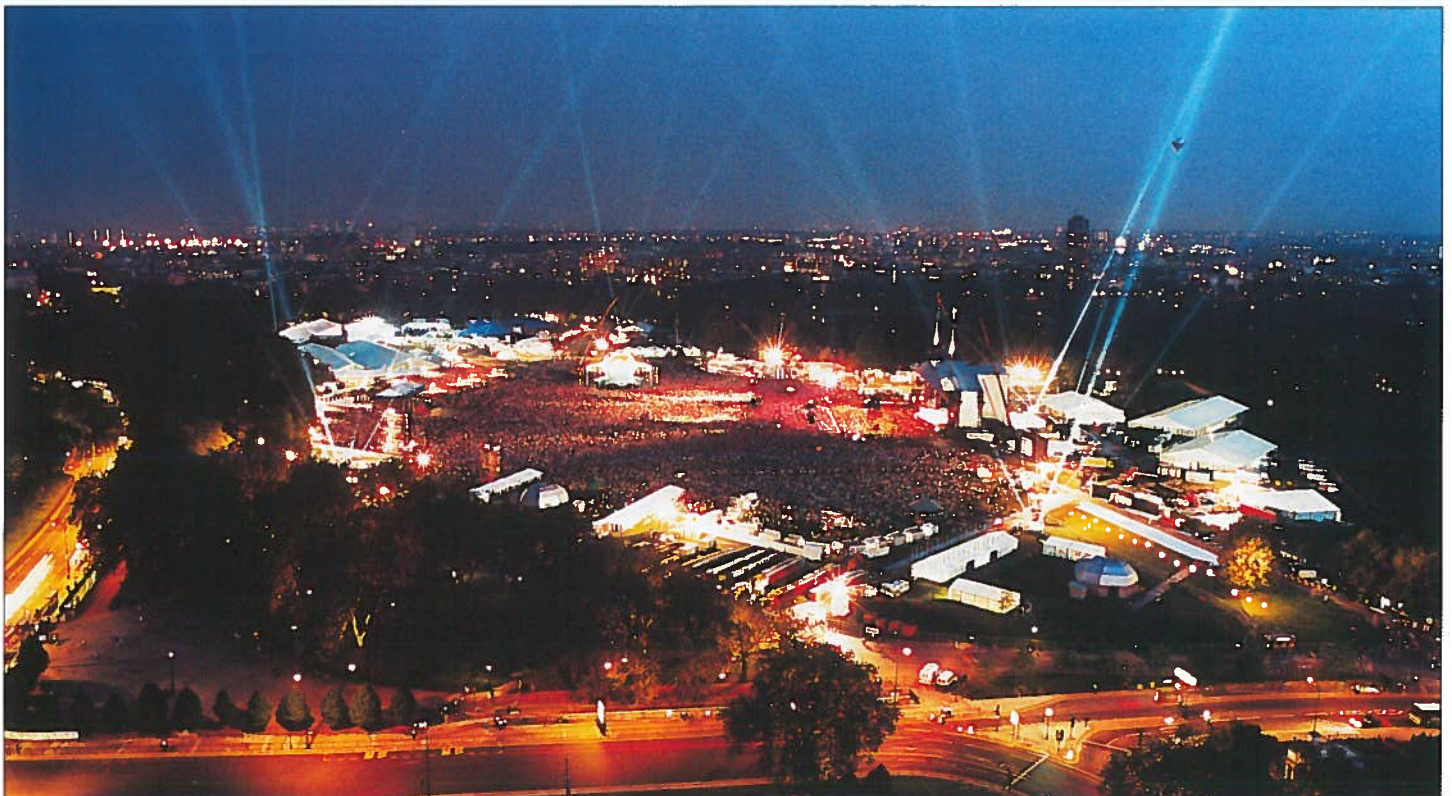
There is evidently a degree of modesty in Richard Pilbrow that may lead you to think that the success of the early Theatre Projects owed



Greenford: TP staff are joined by their allies from Vari-Lite Europe, Brilliant Stages and CPL.

more to luck than to judgement, with he and the other designers scraping through successive productions, managing time after time to pull the wool over the eyes of their clients. Of course, the truth is that Pilbrow and co were an extremely talented group of young designers who were always exploring, developing and expanding their art: this was what lay behind the establishment of Theatre Projects as the most respected design house in the business.

The advent of Theatre Projects Consultants (who split from Theatre Projects in 1984) was a natural progression for Richard Pilbrow, as his passion for theatre and his burgeoning experience of production techniques led his energies toward the overall design of the theatre space. He recognised how very poor were the designs of theatres built in the 1960s, because they prioritised sightline and acoustic 'efficiency' over the audience itself - sacrificing the 'feel' or 'intimacy' of the theatre experience.



London's VE Day celebration in May 1995 was an example of the one-off events which are a speciality for Theatre Projects. photo: Julian Calverley

The realisation that the Victorians knew what they were up to after all led TPC to concentrate on combining the attributes of the Victorian theatre (in Pilbrow's words, "human scale, three-dimensional, intimate") with the needs of modern production techniques and technology. Today, many highly successful theatres around the world have benefited from the applied expertise of TPC.

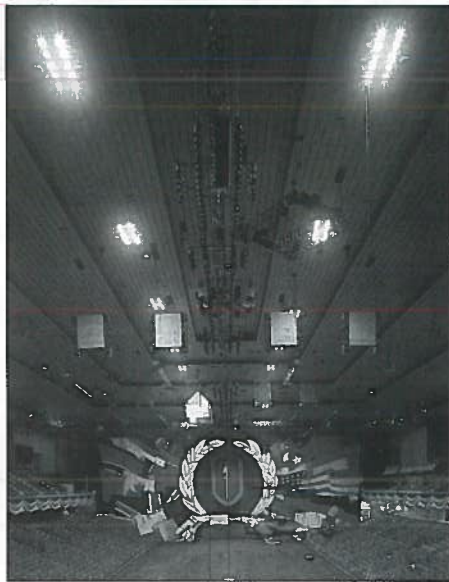
Since the article in 1992, there have been many developments in the story of Theatre Projects, although the success of the operation has continued unhindered. The company continues as a major player in the European rental market and still offers a first-class design service from its in-house team, the difference being that the company is now owned by their former stable-mate, the mighty Vari-Lite of Dallas, Texas.

So what brought about this structural metamorphosis? The cause was a souring relationship between the management of Eagle Trust, who owned Samuelson, and Vari-Lite's European operation, who were themselves 'owned' by Samuelson since 1986 under a 10-year franchise. As Vari-Lite sought ways to pull back their interests from Eagle Trust, the end of the 10-year franchise was drawing nearer. Eagle Trust wanted to renew the deal, VL didn't. The solution to the impasse was that VL would buy themselves back and in order to overcome the problem of what to do with the building, which also housed Samuelson's other irons in the fire, namely Theatre Projects and Brilliant Stages, VL's Rusty Brutsché agreed to take the lot. And there you have it, except that TP Sound, the other element in the equation, stayed on with Samuelson.

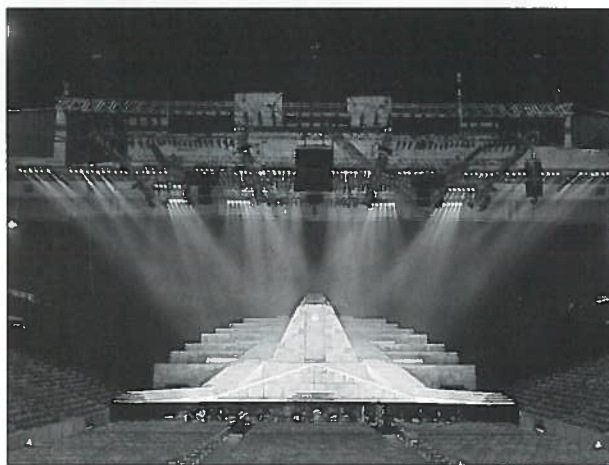
Meanwhile, Richard Pilbrow continues to keep himself busy with Theatre Projects Consultants, basing himself in the United States. He continues to be paid money for lighting shows (currently *Showboat* in Los Angeles), although the reasons for this are perhaps less of a mystery to him now than they were all those years ago. He has also written a new book on lighting design, which is due to be published in the very near future. But Pilbrow's association with Theatre Projects, it seems, will never be lost entirely.

Alan Thomson, now managing director of TP and Concert Production Lighting (CPL), explains that a great deal of confusion still exists about the links between Theatre Projects and Pilbrow's TPC. He says: "People still say to me 'give my regards to Richard', as if they think I work in the room next door - but there are no links."

None, at least, other than those explained by Brian Croft, who was general manager of TP in the early 80s, prior to Samuelson's involvement and is now managing director of Vari-Lite Europe. He explained: "The only links now are the personal friendship that we still have and the fact that Richard recognised, at a very early stage, the importance of moving lights in the theatre." This friendship between the men began many years ago. Croft and Pilbrow go back many years together, and Thomson had first worked with him in the early 1970s on a production of *Showboat*. That this relationship is sustained today was clearly evidenced by



Two shows from Theatre Projects' CV at Earl's Court, London. Above, the *Royal Tournament* and, below, *Aida*, 1991.



Richard Pilbrow's kind agreement to rise bright and early from his Los Angeles hotel bed and link up with us on a conference call on the day of my visit.

So now two men who do work virtually next door to each other at Greenford (at opposite ends of a large room, in fact) are Alan Thomson and Brian Croft. Their respective workforces are positioned in the expanse between their offices, divided by little more than an invisible frontier: TP to the right, VL to the left - surely a sign of a healthy alliance.

Thomson has 25 years' experience in the industry, particularly in lighting for the theatre. He joined Theatre Projects in 1985 as production co-ordinator and his progress through the ranks since then has been impressive, becoming general manager within 18 months, a director after five years and managing director after nine.

His staff includes customer operations manager Peter Marshall, who heads up a team of three, concentrating on the theatrical, industrial and event markets. Marshall has spent 15 years in lighting, and has toured the USA, Europe and Asia with a number of musical and dance productions. Carol Croft, who previously worked in the industrial and theatre markets for TP, now takes responsibility for the activities of CPL, the company's specialist music industry division, and has handled tours for Paul McCartney, Pink Floyd and the Stones. Head of theatre productions and lighting design

is Michael Odam (see L+SI In Profile, November 1996), whose lighting career has run through an impressive list of the world's most successful musical productions, including *Joseph, Les Mis, Phantom, My Fair Lady, Aspects of Love* and *Guys & Dolls*.

Incidentally, it is a company policy, and a fact for all of the above-mentioned staff members, including Thomson, that they have placed a foot on every rung of the ladder on the way to their current posts. As Thomson illustrates: "Everybody started on the road, or with coiling cables in warehouses, for instance. We're not interested in advertising in national newspapers for managers - our people come from within the industry."

Since the events of 1994, the signs seem to suggest that TP is enjoying being under the able leadership of Alan Thomson, and the stable wing of Vari-Lite. The company has continued to fulfil a very busy workload, consisting of a fairly even spread of live touring, theatre, special events and industrial projects. Alan

Thomson gave a quick run-down of some of the projects underway on the day we met: "Right now, we've got *Status Quo* and *The Cure* on tour in Europe, *Sunset Boulevard* at the Adelphi Theatre, London and at Wiesbaden in Germany, *Phantom of the Opera* at Basel in Switzerland, we've just done the Motor Show in Birmingham for Imagination, tonight we've got *Skytrackers* outside a Royal film performance and countless others things that I can't remember off the top of my head!"

The company's workload over the Christmas period included the supply of a temporary installation of over 700 conventional lights and 40 Vari*Lite's for the *Joy to the World* carol concert at the Royal Albert Hall, which was televised live by the BBC on Christmas Eve. The rig for this show, supplied for client Unusual Services, was installed and derigged by TP crews in the space of 48 hours. The lighting design for the show was the responsibility of none other than TP veteran Robert Ornbo (who is presumably still managing to get through the weekends). On the architectural side, St. Paul's Cathedral and the Canary Wharf Tower both utilised equipment supplied by TP over Christmas. Another name often associated with Theatre Projects is Durham Marengi, who designed the interior lighting at St. Paul's for the Imperial Cancer Research Fund Christmas Carol Service. Marengi's previous record with the company encompasses events such as Roger Waters' *The Wall* concert in Berlin in 1990 and the National Day Celebrations in Oman in 1995. In a separate festive project, the pyramid atop the Canary Wharf Tower turned Christmas Tree-esque, being bathed in green light courtesy of 400 Par cans, run from a Celco 30-way console.

Recent years have brought some changes to the market areas with which TP have been involved. There are now less of the larger industrial events, with the once spectacular, big-budget product launches giving way to more low-key practices, as Thomson explains: "A lot of the high-profile industrial work, with the choreographed shows and disappearing cars has been replaced by video presentations,

or perhaps live satellite broadcasts to dealers. That market has now moved over to the operators in those areas."

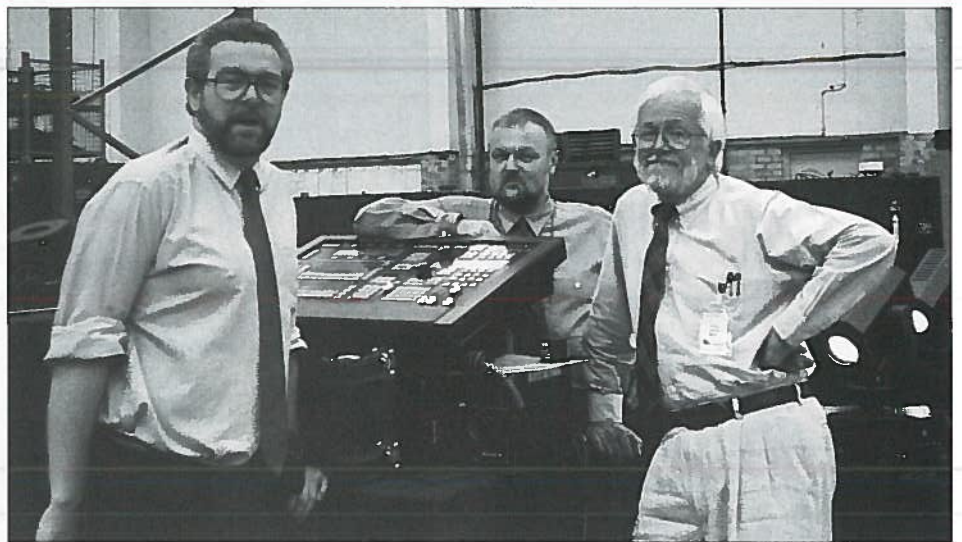
But another developing market has ensured that the company do not miss the work, as they still carry out a great deal of projects for industrial 'roadshows', described by Thomson as: "... the MD of a company and his financial advisers shooting around Britain or Europe, trying to sell confidence in their companies. We do quite a lot of that type of work for Imagination. We recently did our first roadshow for the Millennium project, again for Imagination, and there are a couple more in the pipeline."

Details of the actual Millennium project remain vague at this point (see news this month), but it seems that TP will have their hands full with the biggest bash that the country has ever seen. This, though, is TP's speciality: the Big Event. Recent history shows that TP are very much geared to deal with the big ones. The Wall, Aida at Earls Court, major tours by Pink Floyd and the Stones, Royal Tournaments, the VE and VJ Day celebrations of last year - the list is, as we have seen before, an impressive one.

So what is there that TP haven't had a hand in? Well, the tours have been a bit on the quiet side of late, but Alan Thomson explained why this isn't a problem for TP: "We haven't done any of the major ones this summer - Bon Jovi, The Eagles, etc, although the funny thing is that a lot of our equipment is still used on those projects, even though we don't handle them as the main contractor. For example, we bid for a Michael Jackson tour some time ago and didn't get it, but we still rented 35 motor hoists out to the company that did, which were out on tour for nearly 17 months - on very reasonable terms!"

As Thomson points out, 1996 brought with it no VE Day or VJ Day anniversary celebrations, and the absence of a Rolling Stones or a Take That tour may have contributed to making the year seem uncharacteristically dull for TP - on the surface, at least. However, the new year may well turn out to be a different story, with a number of big-name tours in the offing (including Phil Collins), but we will, of course, have to wait and see.

One of the ironies of the relationship between TP as one of Europe's major rental houses and VL as one of the world's foremost moving light manufacturers is the inevitable, if



Pictured at Theatre Projects' Greenford headquarters in 1992 are (left to right) Alan Thomson, Brian Croft and company founder Richard Pilbrow.

occasional, clash of interests. Although TP's workload is spread all over Europe, Greenford remains their only premises, whereas VL have centres in France, Germany, Austria, Belgium and Scandinavia which, despite the close relationship, are effectively rival companies to TP. Thomson illustrates the position: "We're doing *Sunset Boulevard* in Wiesbaden and we probably competed against a Vari-Lite sub-distributor in Germany to get it."

TP may also be asked to supply a moving light system from a manufacturer other than Vari-Lite, but that's the nature of the rental business and it doesn't ruffle too many feathers in Dallas. What's clear is that Thomson needs a certain degree of autonomy from Vari-Lite in order to successfully operate a European rental company of the stature of Theatre Projects, and that is what he gets.

When asked if there were plans to extend their area of operation in the future, Thomson added: "We've obviously got our eye on one or two main markets that we don't think are properly supplied at present. We will perhaps move in to these areas eventually, although it will be very much in the role of technical and logistical support for Vari*Lites. The reason I say that is that there will not be the traditional theatre, touring or industrial markets in the areas that we are looking at."

TP have exclusive UK distribution rights for Wybron's Autopilot system, launched at PLASA 94, where it won the Best New Product award.

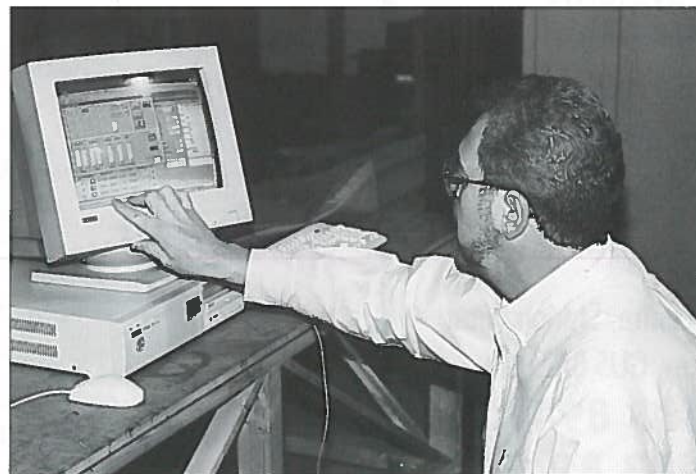
Rather surprisingly, the system hasn't done quite as well in the UK as Thomson expected. He explains: "Autopilot is a very, very good product, but people just don't seem to have picked up on it. I think one of the reasons is that it kind of negates the designer's role. In a way it doesn't need the designer to place the lights and they think 'I won't use that because it will put me out of a job'. We recently worked with Welsh television on a kind of Opportunity Knocks show, where they did 18 acts in a day. So every act that came on just had a belt-pack pinned to them and off they went - the lights followed them everywhere - the show was never in the dark because they didn't have time to re-shoot. Autopilot was absolutely ideal from that point of view."

An area in which the company has been making extensive efforts is that of software development for the control of Sky-Arts searchlights, which are manufactured by TP. In the cavernous warehouse at Greenford, Thomson showed us where the Sky-Arts control software package was undergoing final testing. This package provides full status information on pan, tilt, dimming levels, focus and colour, overseeing all the light's characteristics, including head temperature, bulb temperature and bulb current. This project is an example of the company's commitment to high quality service.

Another large investment has been made in having every one of the thousands of items in



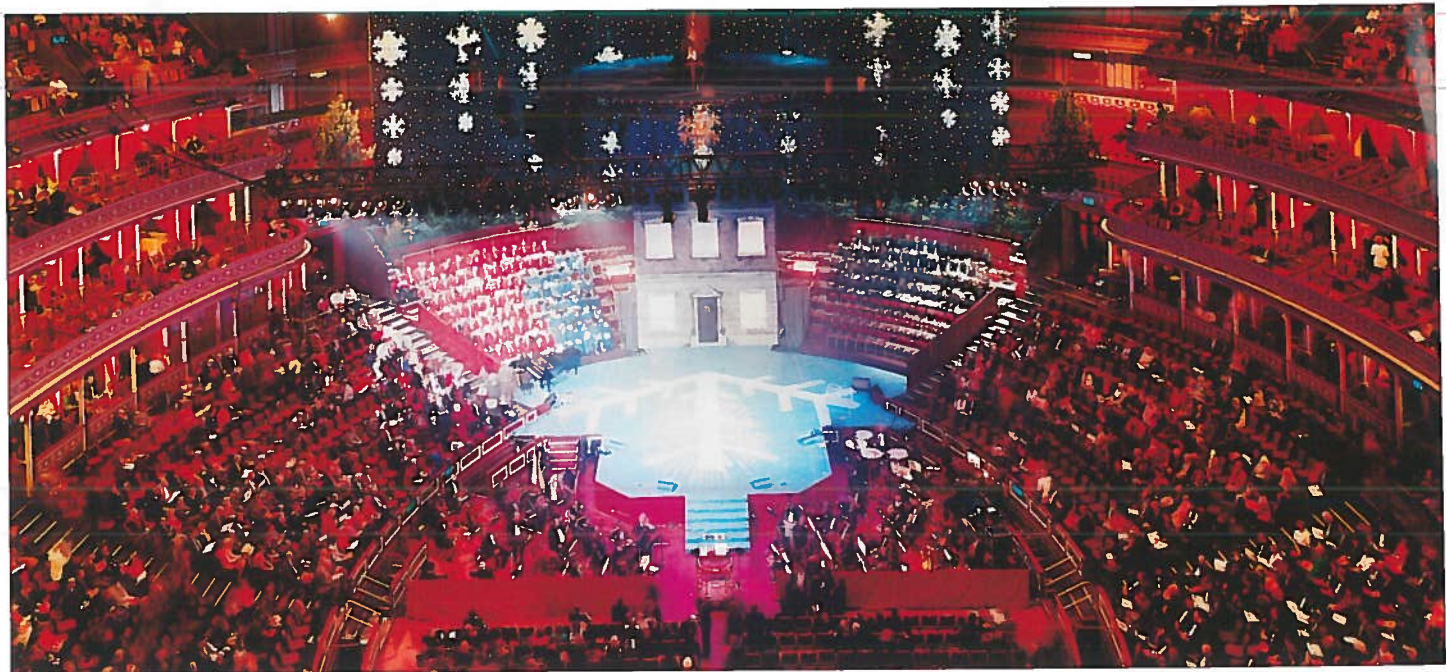
TP's customer operations manager Peter Marshall.



Alan Thomson demonstrates Theatre Projects' software control package for Sky Arts searchlights.



Concert Production Lighting's Carol Croft.



Theatre Projects supplied the lighting for the Joy to the World televised carol concert at the Royal Albert Hall, London, Christmas 1996. The rig included over 700 conventional fixtures and 40 Vari*Lite's, with lighting design by Robert Ornbo. Photo: Julian Calverley

the company's stocks bar-coded, in order to provide instantaneous hire histories for everything from a cable to a Par can to a control console. It begins to become clear just what a laborious and highly expensive process this must be when you see the extent of the equipment stored at Greenford, but it will streamline the hire service and help to reduce costs in the long term. Thomson demonstrated the value of this by pointing out the sheared end of a power cable among some returned stock.

"This has clearly been damaged, but instead of just having to swallow the cost of replacement ourselves, we can find out very quickly who used this last, and when and where."

Evidently, as they push on towards their 40th anniversary, Theatre Projects are confidently continuing the tradition of success begun by Richard Pilbrow in 1957. They have an enviable reputation built on many years of high quality service and experience, a progressive attitude, firm backing from Dallas and the right

products, workforce and systems in place to head into their fifth decade. Thomson informed me that the exact details of the 40th anniversary celebrations are secret, but Richard Pilbrow has been making preparations and is keen to hold two parties, one in London and one in New York, which will possibly be satellite-linked(!). This is presumably to give as many people as possible a fair go at taking part in the celebrations. A thoroughly commendable approach.

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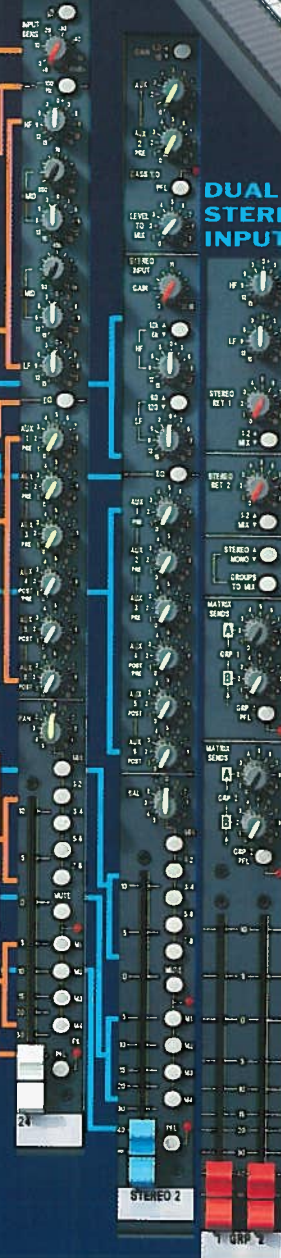
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SOUND QUEST

John Hoskyns of mm productions goes in search of true surround sound

What is the next thing that will revolutionise the way we work, the way we produce sound? What will follow on from multi-channel radios, desk automation, MIDI, processor-controlled speaker systems, delay lines, digital effects? Well, it could be surround sound. At any one time there are a number of good ideas in circulation, any, or all, or more probably, none of which will become part of what we do. I know of no way of differentiating between the wheat and the chaff other than getting in there and having a good old thrash, or thresh which is probably the correct verb in the circumstances.

THE BACKGROUND

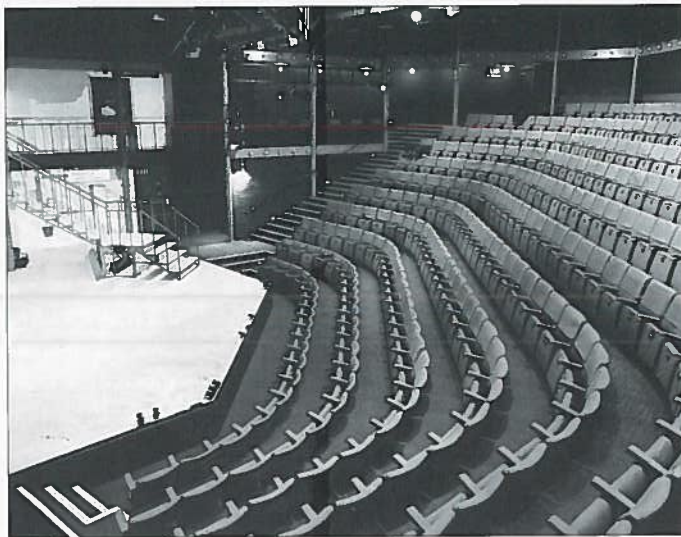
Surround sound is the theoretical goal towards which stereo was the first step after straightforward mono.

What various groups are trying to achieve is a convincing and reliable way of reproducing a sound experience for a listener using as few speakers as possible. Dolby and Ambisonics are two of the best-known names associated with this, but by no means the only ones. However, they do describe the two different camps that surround sound systems fall into, which are the replayed sound and the live sound camps. By virtue of size, replayed sound has commanded by far the lion's share of the interest and money and although a system designed for, say, cinema sound can be used for live sound, there are differences which are important and have practical implications.

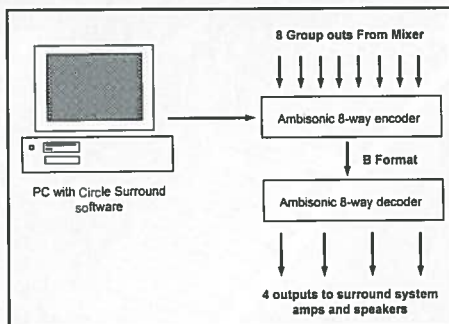
Technically, surround sound systems all use phasing as well as level to create the sound image within the confines of the speakers. Theoretically, it should be possible to create a fully circular sound space, but as yet, this is not commercially available. What is claimed to be available is the ability to place a sound in a 360 degree horizontal plane. These systems are not simply panned mono as was the original Pink Floyd Quad system, which only varied the level at each speaker and did not address the phase differences when sounds move in space.

THE QUEST

I had been aware of surround sound for some time, mainly through articles and visits to the cinema. Generally, when live surround sound was mentioned in the literature, it was either an afterthought or was so complicated that it was not worth considering as a practical proposition, especially for rep theatre which is the field I am most concerned with professionally. However, a review of the Audio Dimensions Circle Surround software for the PC interested me, mainly because it offered MIDI control over sound movements which was a great step forward. This led me to make contact with Chris Blythe of Audio Dimensions. Could I get to see a system in operation? Preferably an Ambisonic set-up controlled by the aforementioned Circle Surround software? Again, my reading had suggested that for live



Above, the auditorium of the Wolsey Theatre, Ipswich - an opportunity to test the surround sound system and below, the Function One set-up.



use, the Ambisonic system was the one to go for, as it offered a larger listening area. This was a little tricky. Unfortunately, there were not that many systems in use. Eventually, Chris Blythe put me in touch with Tony Andrews of Function One in Dartford (the man behind Turbosound). A meeting was arranged and I, together with Tim Speight - technical director of mm productions - set off for Kent.

The Function One system comprised an Ambisonic 8-way encoder and 8-way decoder, outputting to four custom built speakers controlled by Circle Surround Software. The system was set up in a medium-sized living room. The eight inputs to the encoder came from the eight groups of a Soundtracs Megas desk and we were listening to ambient/dance music programmed using Notator Logic with various modules as sound sources.

Originally, the idea was to have a system which could store or encode what you had done down to stereo, as stereo tape recorders were standard items. So your encoder would have a number of inputs all or any of which could be moved around the soundfield over time and the result was recorded in what was known as B format. Then you would play back your B format stereo tape through the decoder, the outputs of which would be connected to the amps to drive the speakers - thus an 8-way decoder could drive up to eight speakers.

In fact, Function One were driving just four speakers. Each output from the decoder is set up to run a speaker at a specific point on the

circumference of the surround circle. This is done by fitting resistors in the output circuit. Four speakers at 90 degree angles will describe the soundfield, and any extra will fill-in information, useful in larger or asymmetric spaces.

What did it sound like? Well, we spent an hour or so experimenting, mainly with the Circle Surround software as there is not a lot to manipulate on the Ambisonic boxes, and there was certainly sound coming from all four speakers. However, whilst I felt that the movement of sound was convincing in front, I was not so impressed with the movement behind. What was interesting was that this was still the case even when I turned to face the back speakers, in other words it seemed to be a function of my head

rather than of the room. The surround feel of static sounds was fine.

In discussions with Tony Andrews later several points emerged. He had bought the system a couple of years previously having seen it at an exhibition and been impressed by the fact that even when standing outside the ring of speakers, the illusion of movement was preserved within the soundfield. We were not able to confirm this. Also, he felt that the listeners usually took some time to learn what was going on. As to the rear movement, it may be that a larger room with greater distance between the speakers might help.

From our point of view, the software was promising, and it transpired that the decoder had another eight inputs which would route sounds directly through to the associated speaker. This we considered to be a great plus as we could address individual speakers, as well as having them as part of the surround system. We have used rear speakers and put band reverb through them in musicals (a technique borrowed from Paul Groothuis) to create an impression of space. It might also be possible to use a central vocal speaker cluster in a similar fashion.

The next step would be to try and get hold of a system and use it on our terms. A suitable opportunity came along in the form of an amateur production of *The Pirates of Penzance* at the Wolsey Theatre, Ipswich. This was not your average G&S, set as it was on an underground station. The opening few minutes were designed in such a way that we could put a surround system in the 400 seat auditorium and have sounds whizzing around at will. The run was for a week with a two day get-in - about average set-up time for touring or rep.

Audio Dimensions supply the software and the encoder, but the decoder is the product of Cepar Ltd. Fortunately, there was a demo system in Bristol, so we booked it and dreamt of glorious sound vistas.

As delivery date approached, it transpired that there was a problem prising the demo system away from its current users, so it was

suggested that we try an RSP Circle Surround system instead. Although the software was designed for the Ambisonic system, it would work with the RSP equipment equally well.

Setting it up was straightforward as it was similar to the Ambisonic system in that there was an encoder and a decoder. There was also a separate controller which acted as an interface between the computer and the encoder along with a custom ISA card (the Ambisonic system just used a card) but it became evident that we would find this system rather restricting as there were only four inputs and none of the direct inputs to the decoder. Also, reading through the literature, it turned out that it was a system that made allowances for cinema sound, being biased towards the front speakers and allowing for a dialogue centre cluster. We decided to put four speakers at each corner of the auditorium which is essentially a rectangle with the sides somewhat shorter than the front and back.

Pre-programming began on the Saturday. The four track windows seen occupying the top half of the screen (see fig 2) control the four inputs into the circle surround encoder. The circle in each track window is the 360 degree soundfield and the dark line within is the movement that the sound you are inputting will describe. These movements are stored as patterns and each is assigned to a MIDI note and can be recalled by sending this note. Each track is assigned a MIDI channel which you can see in the MIDI window centre bottom of the screen. Thus, sending a MIDI note E0 on channel 1 would load the pattern Thunder into track 1. This note event could also trigger the thunder sound on the sampler. Up to 128 patterns can be held ready at one time. This is plenty.

This all worked fine and in the small programming room we had sword swishes darting around the room in a most impressive fashion, and the rear definition seemed much better than with the Ambisonic set-up. There was also a nice surround feel to general wind and low frequency sounds.

We decided to have four inputs from an Akai S3200 routed to the four inputs of the encoder

via the theatre's DDA desk. We were running Opcode Vision on a Powerbook to generate the MIDI to fire the sampler and the Circle Surround which was on our old 486 Amstrad PC. There were other spot effects on an Akai DR8 which was also controlled by Vision. The speakers were passive Renkus-Heinz TRC121s driven by EV P1250 amps.

We got into the theatre on Sunday, but didn't get a chance to do anything much until Monday. The fast moving sword swishes which were so effective in the small room were now a mess, and there was no impression



The surround sound set-up at the Wolsey Theatre.

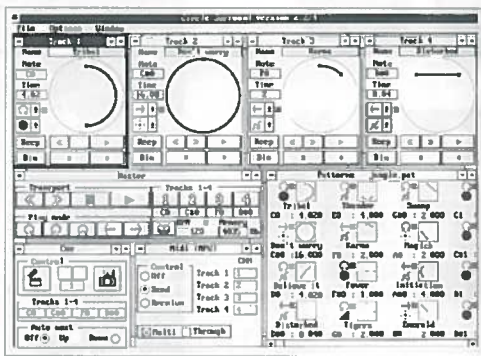


Fig 2. Computer screen shot.

of their position or movement. They could be placed at left or right front, but not so well behind. If we wanted to get an impression of sound moving or being placed at the back of the auditorium, it had to be moved slowly and placed right at the back. It was impossible to get all the sound to move to the centre as the sequence reached its climax - the idea here was to focus attention upstage centre. However, the sound in the auditorium was dramatic and interesting, and the ambient wind, low frequency rumble and the sci-fi whooshes had a lot of depth.

I invited Simon Whitehorn, an experienced freelance sound designer, to join us for the listening tests. Whitehorn does a lot of work with various London fringe companies, as well as designing for the Open Air, Regents Park and

tends to talk sense as well as knowing how to produce good sound for little money. His feeling was that the end result was a good sound but that similar results could be achieved with less technology.

Personally, I don't think the Circle Surround system is versatile enough for theatre. We need to be able to place sounds, have them move and have this reliably reproduced in different environments. If speaker position is crucial to this, this should be programmed from the front panel or via software. I would like to hear an Ambisonics system in real life to evaluate it properly.

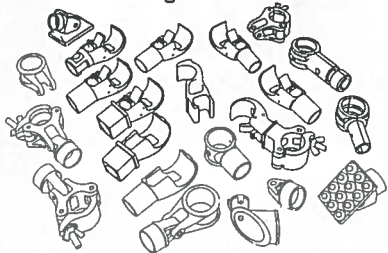
Mike Lowe of Britannia Row has tested it in Earls Court and commented: "We had heard it in action in relatively small spaces and were keen to hear how it performed in a very large room. The most impressive thing about the system was the quality of the moving image when we positioned ourselves in areas where we would have expected to be dominated by the nearest speakers." It would appear that Ambisonics should work well in large spaces.

The most impressive part of the system is the software, which is both intuitive and reliable, although it does mean yet another dedicated computer. However, I have the feeling that there are still a few years to go before an off-the-shelf live sound surround system is in use. The quest continues.

Photos: Mike Kwasniak

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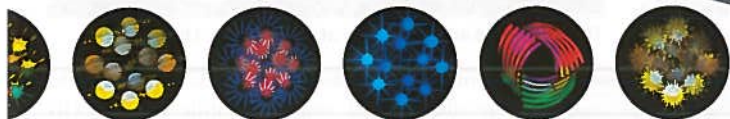
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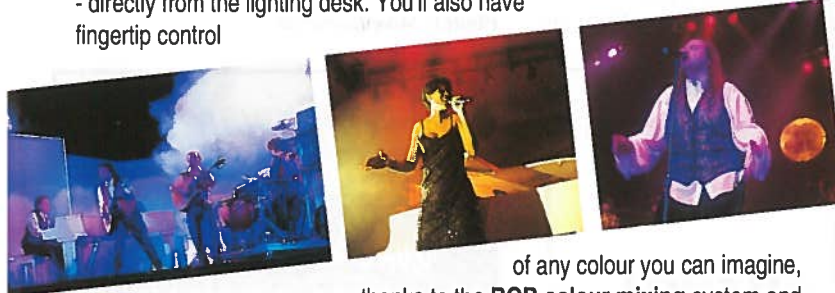
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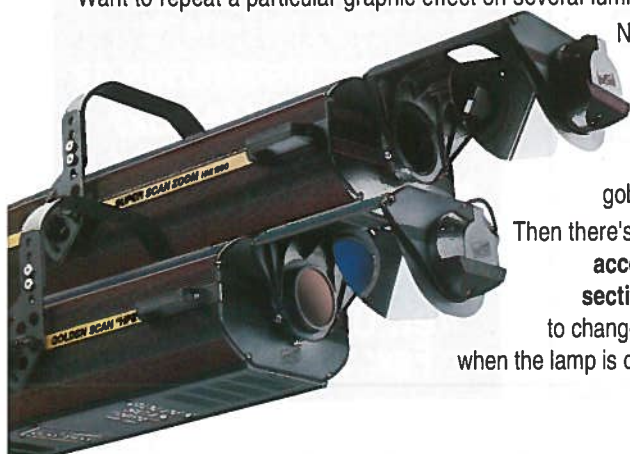
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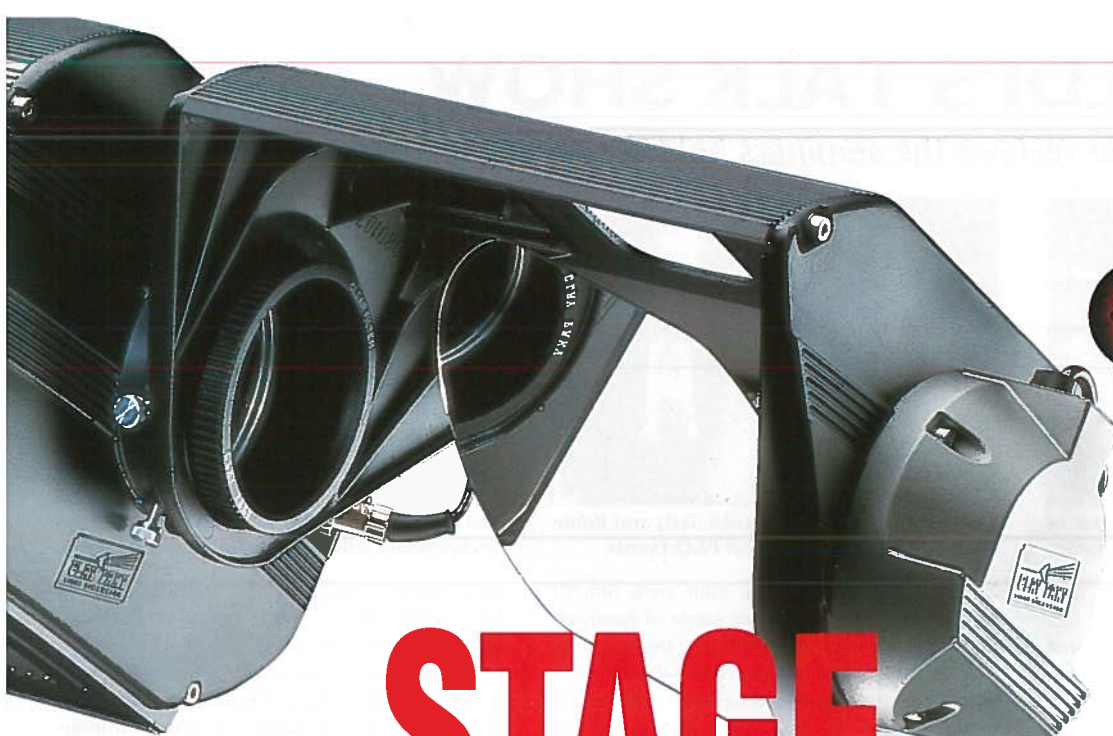


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THE STAGE

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PROFESSIONAL SHOW LIGHTING

LDI'S TALK SHOW

Tony Gottelier reviews the seminars held during LDI last November



Jon Petts of Jem with Carsten Ladefoged of Martin Professional, JEM's new US distributor.



Unusual Rigging's Alan Jacobi (left) and Robin Elias with Nicola Rowland of P&O Events.



Mark Agar (left) and Nikki Scott of Stage Technologies with Peter Ed of Strand Lighting.

The LDI Show is always hot on Workshops, new English argot for what we Brits would call seminars. This year was no exception, with three fun packed days for those received wisdom addicts who were able to escape the mayhem on the Show floor.

The Americans do this sort of thing extremely well, and of course they need to, to justify the full conference badge of \$345/395 or the daily rate of \$195/225, charges unheard of in the UK for such an adjunct to an exhibition. But then LDI is strictly a combined event. Great credit must go to Ellen Lampert and the rest of the LDI team for their organisational skills in staging this massive talkfest and for making it such an outstanding success with the delegates.

I counted a total 22 of these workshops this year, the additional fourth day during set-up wasn't used this time, all of which were neatly subdivided into four main sectional interests - 'Lighting Design and Production Techniques', 'Light in Architecture', 'Sound in Entertainment' and 'Themed Environments'. In addition, there were New Product Presentation Breakfasts, an

Ethernet Lunchbox (bring your own lunch!) sponsored by ESTA, a whole range of hands-on tutorials, for a separate fee ranging from \$195 to \$255 and Backstage Orlando - a two-day technical tour of the city's themed attractions for those able to stay on after the main event had passed into history.

The panels themselves covered a wide range of subjects but several were of a 'look back in wonder' nature, based around the tours and events of 96. Lighting designer Peter Morse presented Reba McEntire on the Road, Tim Macy, from the organising committee of the Atlanta Olympic Games, introduced lighting designers Tim Hunter, Candace Brightman and John Ammitari, all of whom had been involved in lighting the huge and extraordinary corporate pavilions which had helped to turn the whole event into a sparkling and commercially successful jamboree, together with Bob Dickinson who lit the opening and closing ceremonies. In another portfolio discussion, designers Stan Pressner, Rick Fisher and others discussed the use of up-front lighting technology in mega stage

performances, such as the current genre of large-scale and accessible opera productions, billed as Illuminating Aida.

Others sessions addressed a gamut of technical issues, through safety and standards regulations, the secure use of lasers in entertainment situations, the controversial matter of synthetic fog, moving light control, low energy light sources and automated scenery. PLASA's safety officer Tony Douglas-Beveridge sat on the panel, sponsored also by ESTA, to brief American manufacturers on how to comply with the requirements of the CE mark. Derek Gilbert of Glantre Engineering chaired the Technology at Sea session, which reviewed the exponential growth of massive light, sound and broadcast entertainment systems in the booming cruise industry. Within the other disciplines covered by these seminars, underwater lighting, remote source lighting and UV light were also named for discussion.

If this whets your appetite, then mark off October 24-26th in your diary, for this year's fun filled LDI 97 extravaganza heads to Las Vegas.



Pulsar's Derek Saunders, Andy Graves and Ken Sewell with Clay Paky's Pino Tinto (second right).



John Simpson of White Light with DHA's Diane Grant and Wyatt Enever.



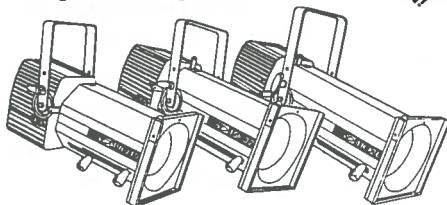
John Jones of Pfaff (left) with Phil Chandler and Craig Johnston of CM Lodestar with the Prostar.

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Assiettes in the Stalls . . . Ian Herbert

The crash of breaking crockery was a recurrent theme in Divadlo 96, the festival of theatre in the Czech brewery city of Plzen. The special pleasure of Divadlo is that it gives the casual foreign visitor a chance to take the temperature of today's Czech (and Slovak) companies in one very concentrated long weekend, in the most hospitable atmosphere.

As if that were not enough, the troupes from other countries give perspective to any broader judgements one may try to form, while the availability of Plzen's most famous export, whatever its effect on the judgement, is not to be missed. This latest Divadlo offered visiting companies from France (Philippe Genty), Poland (Teatr Polski from Wroclaw) and Germany (Frank Castorf's Volksbuhne from Berlin). Curiously, all three concerned travel.

Genty's *Voyageur Immobile* (pictured right) had the same wide-eyed magic about it that we have seen in the shows he has brought to Britain. Gaalle de Malglaive's lighting made excellent use of the cyclorama and from time to time gave a most other-worldly quality to the everyday materials of the set. Krystian Lupa's production (in Polish) of *Immanuel Kant*, by the dyspeptic Austrian Thomas Bernhard, was apparently originally staged in a disused railway station. In Plzen's Old Theatre it was given the scenic works, with the main action taking place in a huge downstage cage which had its own built-in lighting rig. Behind it, using the full depth of the stage, tableaux vivants passed from time to time on what would no doubt have been railway trucks in Wroclaw station. God knows what it was all about - the simultaneous Czech translation wasn't much help to me, of course.

It was a little easier to see what was happening in Frank Castorf's production of *Honeymoon*, by the Russian Vladimir Sorokin. The performance space had its own resonances - it was the ballroom of a former Russian barracks, where the audience sat enclosed in a high square of cardboard boxes, which the cast of five knocked down in moments of stress (ours, as much as theirs). The stress in the story is on the unlikely marriage of the daughter of a Soviet secret policewoman and the son of an SS officer.

Castorf, whose *Murx den Europaer* was a shock success at last year's LIFT, seized on this piece to ram home the guilts on which his little Marxist corner of Germany still thrives. It's childish, very violent (not flying plates, but flying bricks - and almost everything else on the set) and deeply disturbing in its refusal to forget the legacy of the two ideologies which have left such a mark on today's Europe - the Czech Republic as much as Castorf's native Germany. Maybe they're just tired in the former Czechoslovakia - they're certainly not doing anything as politically engaged as Castorf is.



Jiri Menzel, known to us as a film director (*Closely Observed Trains*), brought his latest stage production for the Vinohradec theatre in Prague. This was a production of *Jacobowsky and the Colonel* which had none of the lightness of the NT's version a few years back - he set it in a grey box raked by the occasional followspot - but did emphasise the play's plea for tolerance. And the Slovak satirical comedians Lasica and Satinsky, who were banned from any theatre for 14 years of the old regime, were content now to commit themselves to the gentle entertainment of an evening of Chekhov's short comedy sketches. He was the star author of the festival, with two other major productions, both also by Slovak companies.

Roman Polak, whose work has been seen in Edinburgh, directed an energetic *Uncle Vanya* for the Bratislava company Astorka-Korzo 90 which made up in the intensity of its acting for some pretty slipshod staging. A tatty set of touring flats was lit in the most perfunctory way, apart from a small window which acted as a kind of mini-cyc and went progressively madder as the production continued.

The Slovak National Theatre's approach to *The Cherry Orchard* was much more grand, although like Astorka's *Vanya* it ignored Chekhov's request for different settings in each act. It opened with the Gayevs' house under wraps save for a grand piano playing gently upstage left. As the wraps came off the furniture, so the piano was hoisted towards the flies, where it hung visible for the rest of the show.

Perhaps because director Martin Huba was worried about it dropping on the scenery, he put that all downstage left, which meant that his actors tended to clump there in a rather embarrassed way. The National obviously had a bigger budget than the Astorka: their set was more professional. Still, when Dunyasha breaks a plate for the National, she can break a whole set - part of the theme of the weekend.

There was much breaking of crockery, too, in another production, for me the best of the festival. This was Jan Antonin Pitinsky's staging of Thomas Bernhard's *Ritter, Dene, Voss* a title which is simply the names of its original actors, in parts now played by two Czechs and a Slovak. Its about the eccentric philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein, here seen in Vienna squabbling with his sisters. Again, I didn't have the first notion of the actual meaning of the Czech script but such was the musicality of Pitinsky's production that I felt I understood every emotional nuance of this piece. Played on an elegant secessionist set, designed like the Chekov's for touring, but infinitely classier with its rich wood panels and luminescent walls, the production was a splendid integration of all the arts of staging, with light used properly to suggest the minutest grades of transition in the play's progress.

There were other enjoyable shows in the event, among them a jolly deconstruction of the national musical monument, Smetana's *Bartered Bride* and a worthy revival by the local troupe of a Czech classic *Marysa*, very clearly directed by Jan Burian. I've left the silliest till last. One morning we were ferried to the city's well-equipped children's theatre, where a pair of clowns proceeded to break plates. They broke them on the stage, on the scenery and on each other. What was moderately funny for the first five minutes paled somewhat after an hour. The one useful technical discovery of the morning was that if you put a strobe on while two guys are charging about the stage smashing plates like there's no tomorrow, it can be very effective. But in small doses only, if you take my advice.

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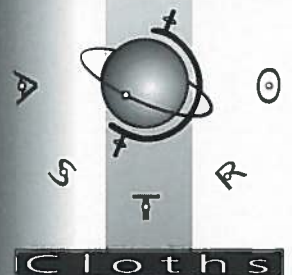
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LIGHTING UP THE SHEDS

Mark Cunningham and Jo Boyd headed for The Forum in London to catch Shed Seven live and witness the debut of Celco's latest lighting console, the Ventura 1000

Just as it was in the 1960s, the UK has once again been divided into musical regions with their leading bands jostling for pole position in the charts. While Oasis head the national pack as Mancunian ambassadors, Ocean Colour Scene rule the Midlands and Blur rate as top Essex lads, Yorkshire's current flagbearers are Shed Seven whose single 'Going For Gold', well-timed with the Atlanta Olympics, brought them instant acclaim.

November saw Shed Seven on a UK tour in support of their newest single 'Chasing Rainbows' and second album 'A Maximum High' - a fine collection of infectious tunes, executed with the kind of BritPop venom we have come to love (or loathe) over the past couple of years. At the back of the hall at London's Forum, tour manager and front-of-house engineer Dave Leaper mixed the band's sound from a 40-channel Midas XL3, which fed into the house Martin F2 PA system, while Alan King manned the monitors with a TAC console. Was it loud? Put it this way, those of us given a pound for every decibel would be planning our retirement.

On record, the Sheds create a full-bodied, guitar-heavy sound. Less convincing is their live persona. Singer Rick Witter did the band no favours by throwing shapes like a Liam Gallagher wannabe, while their brazen delivery gave their songs the air of throwaway Stones, Doors, Stone Roses and, ahem, Oasis material. Despite memorable moments being thin on the ground, 'Parallel Lines' and the final number 'Getting Better' forced a spark which insisted on attracting one's attention. The punters lapped it all up, however, with a uniform enthusiasm that saw huge numbers 'body surfing' towards the stage as photographers negotiated flying limbs between snaps - 'twas a busy night for security.

What the band lacked on stage was countered by the dazzling and thoughtful light show, designed and operated by erstwhile Sheds production manager and former Rory Gallagher and Wildhearts LD, Pete Sarson, whose choice of Celco's new Ventura 1000 console marked this product's live debut. This latest Celco innovation follows in the footsteps of its Navigator, Aviator, Major and Gold boards, and has been designed to compete favourably with its nearest rivals the Wholehog II, Avolites Sapphire and Compulite Animator. Featuring DMX512 and Lightwave Research 16-bit high resolution output, the Ventura allows the control of 1000 channels of up to 100 automated fixtures of mixed parameters, with 240 dimming channels over 10 pages with 1024 DMX dimmer channels arranged on two lines, and 18 playback and 24 preset faders arranged on two banks of 12. Its memory stores 500 multi-parameter cues, each of which will recall up to three sequences, and there are 99 sequence patterns of up to 99 steps and 99 stack/lists, each with the capacity for 999 entries.

The development of the Ventura can be traced back to September 1995 when Celco



Shed Seven, Yorkshire's answer to the BritPop phenomenon, performing at London's Forum.



The Celco Ventura 1000 lighting console.

originated the specification, although the physical work on the prototype did not begin in earnest until May 1996, leaving just enough time to have a finished model available for viewing at PLASA. Celco's business manager Keith Dale says that many of the ideas for the board were put in place in 1991 with the Navigator. "With the Navigator, there was always this concept of having a professional extension wing with most of the features that we have seen lately in the Wholehog and Wholehog II. Due to other commitments, however, it never got off the ground at the time.

"This has been an expensive R&D project because of the number of software designers involved. They were just part of a large team dedicated to the Ventura who each worked on specific aspects, such as the screen displays, front panel hardware, the core CPU programme and DMX handlers, and it's all come together in a very short space of time. The experience of seeing it all through has really proved to me just how much the business has changed over the last 10-15 years.

"Back then, it didn't take too long to produce a piece of software, but hardware was very time-consuming. Nowadays it's the reverse, because of today's sophisticated demands on software, but with modern computer-automated techniques, hardware and circuit design is so quick and easy."

During his 10 years in lighting, Sarson has regularly used Celco consoles, his choice often governed not only by the inherent quality but also their compact designs. "When I work abroad with bands, I like to be able to take my preferred board with me," says Sarson. "The Navigator was a really small board that came to me recently and its size allowed me to take it on an aeroplane without a problem. When I was in Thailand, I had some difficulty running the board with Intellabeams and I got in touch with Celco who helped solve everything by supplying some personality cards which I tested out for them. I started to develop a relationship with Keith Dale and while I was out all over the world with the Navigator, in clubs and other venues, they began sending me software upgrades and I gave them my opinions on how they worked with specific types of lighting equipment. Eventually, Keith told me about this new board that was coming out and asked if I would contribute to its development, which I did happily."

Haircut 1000

Bizarrely, Celco's decision to debut the Ventura with Shed Seven, rather than a higher profile act, appears to have been inspired by a haircut. "We thought Pete would be an ideal candidate to take out the first Ventura," adds Dale. "He told me he was working for Shed Seven and as a coincidence, I heard the band on the radio in my barber's and thought they were bloody good! We knew several months ago that Pete would get the first bite at the cherry and it's great because although he is a brilliant board



Celco at the Forum: product manager Mel Collins (left), office administrator Lisa Booker and business manager Keith Dale.

operator, he's not so big in the industry that we might lose a degree of communication."

One week before the start of the Sheds' tour, which climaxed at the Barbican in their home city of York on November 21st, Sarson spent three days at Celco learning the ropes on the new desk. "The first time I saw the Ventura was on a schematic drawing; the second time was a photograph; the third was in the flesh, but without software, but even the look of the board had me hooked. When I started learning how to use it, there was no question - it was going on the Shed Seven tour!"

The Verdict

Sarson began working for Shed Seven three years ago when he and a roadie colleague traversed the country in a Renault van carrying just two Golden Scan 2s and backline equipment. With a truck full of lights for the current tour, courtesy of Prism Lighting, things have progressed somewhat and the LD reserves much praise for the new Celco product.

Scene Wizard is a facility on the Ventura which offers a selection of preset animated 'looks', such as Jungle Greens, Ocean Waves and Moody Blues, from which the user may run an entire show and therefore reduce programming time. Meanwhile, the Auto Select function tracks the current output and permits the user to busk a show by quickly altering the current lighting state. Cue programming is significantly eased by auto tracking which defines three trigonometric positions for lamps to which all stage positions are then referenced.

"For me," Sarson notes, "the Ventura offers enormous benefits, not least the fantastic speed of programming. You don't have to go through different menus in screens to find out how to programme a group and edit chases, for example, because it's all in front of you. There is a library of effects which helps you work quickly and you can programme in a colour sequence and get your Scans to circle in a matter of seconds without having to plot the stage. The Ventura's layout of the buttons and faders makes things very easy to grasp.

"On the colour palette, it automatically puts 10 colours and four rotating gobos into the beam palette for you. It also selects some preset focuses, so you immediately get 10 positions at your disposal. Once you've done that, you really are ready for action. There are 20 colour buttons and to choose red you will, for example, hit button A. If I wanted 20 lamp groups to be in red, I would choose the last selected lamp - number 20 - and select Colour A (red), then enter that by holding down A and pressing Lamps. I would then press Save which effectively saves 20 Scans in red. If you were using other boards for the first time, you would have to be shown how to do that. But with the



Lighting designer, Pete Sarson.

Ventura, if you were shown how to input Lamp 1 as an HPE1 and then told that the colours and beams were already available by selecting these buttons, you would be able to operate the board in minutes - it's that foolproof!"

The addition of a monitor for use with the board is a necessity, not a luxury, says Sarson. "There are four rotaries which can do so many different things and the monitor gives you instant access to so much information about configuration changes, more than you would see on a regular board. You might need five channels for Skyroses and 12 for HPEs, and without the monitor you can't actually see what these rotaries are doing. And the monitor readout is absolutely brilliant.

"In that respect, it's the ideal board for festivals. Every reputable hire company used to own a Gold and a Major which were 60 and 90-way boards and all the festivals I used to do tended to have one or the other. To programme in cues you very simply pulled back a fader and pressed Enter, and the LDs who looked for that level of simplicity in other boards will, I'm sure, be very impressed with the Ventura."

Showtime

The Forum was the only venue on the Shed Seven tour where any in-house equipment was used - a decision influenced no doubt by the high premium charged by the management for removing the in-house wares to allow space for touring rigs. (Yorkshire Audio with an EAW and Soundcraft Vienna II rig and Prism Lighting serviced the remainder of the tour.) Sarson's own specified rig consisted of six Golden Scan HPEs, eight Martin Pro 400s, two Skyroses driven with DMX colour changers, profile spots with gobo rotators, Mega strobes and a new DMX smoke machine and a DF50 on the front and back truss. These were augmented by 150 of The Forum's own Par cans (gelled with Sarson's own colours) and 14 VL5s, controlled from the in-house Avolites board. Sarson limited his use of the VL5s to just five songs, and adopted his normal approach of using specific effects once only in order to give each song a different look.

"The first song, 'Dolphin', starts off with lots of strobing, then slows down and builds up again. Their songs are subject to a lot of mood swings, so I react by having the stage looking quite dark and desolate one minute, and then introduce bright flashes of light everywhere. 'Out By My Side' is a very slow and moody number, for which I keep the stage reasonably dark and use just one wash. 'Going For Gold'



FOH engineer and tour manager, Dave Leaper.

features the Skyroses and a dot spread gobo in the Scans, as well as coloured sequencing moves and chasing Par cans. That song goes into 'Parallel Lines' at the end of the main set. I focus the Scans on to the mirror ball at the start of that number and then bring in the ACLs as the song warms up.

"The band had been talking about having a backdrop but I wasn't keen on the idea. I compromised by suggesting that when Rick Witter sings the words 'A Maximum High' in 'Parallel Lines', those words would appear on the rear screen. So I made some frames with special video screen paint and the backdrop was painted in the same colour, so it would take the Scan projections and all the different effects. I then painted the words 'A Maximum High' in invisible UV paint so that it would only be seen when I introduced the UV guns on that number."

Ventura Value

Features aside, cost will surely be a consideration which will sway most potential customers towards the Ventura. Keith Dale comments: "In terms of price and performance, and the market slot we have targeted, I believe we have achieved our aims. When we put together our specifications we have a good idea how much materials, time and labour will cost. We ended up being only £15 over the Ventura's target cost which by anyone's standards is pretty amazing! We put a lot of quality features into our products and there are elements that we never want to remove, such as the quality of the buttons and faders or just the paint finish. We could get the costs even lower, but it would be moving away from the Celco concept."

The interest in the Ventura has grown to the extent that since PLASA, Celco has accumulated a £500,000 order book - a phenomenon which the Dartford-based company has not experienced for a number of years. "We are taking on more people next year in sales and software development to target more end-users throughout Europe. There are so many rental companies that are coming to us whom we haven't heard from in ages and it's all down to this wonderful new desk," says Dale, who formed Celco in 1978 as a designer with a rental company before moving into manufacturing.

"When we launched the Aviator desk in 1992, we began to focus more on theatre and television than rock and roll, out of necessity rather than choice. The Ventura is a genuine all-purpose desk which has a place in theatres, but it certainly puts us back into rock and roll and demonstrates our strength at being able to focus on different areas of the performance industry with ease. I feel at home working with road crews; I like that mentality and attitude.

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LIMERICK BY NIGHT

Steve Moles visited Eire to see how the venue owners of Limerick are catering for a sizeable generation of young clubbers

Limerick has changed out of all recognition since I was last there. In 1976 it was just a quiet provincial town on the west coast of Ireland, a great place to discover the delights of imbibing Guinness, but other than the drinking, not the sort of town you'd visit for a big night out. Today, Ireland's economy is listed in the top five for growth amongst the world's richest 50 nations and this is reflected in the town. New shops and malls line O'Connell Street, there's a forest of tower cranes along the banks of the Shannon and, most importantly, there are hordes of young people with disposable cash that populate the streets most nights. So, like any other European city, there's the warm familiarity of Euro commerce, the streets lined with 'hole in the wall' banking machines, retailers like the ubiquitous Body Shop, and sizeable restaurants from the world's two largest hamburger chains.

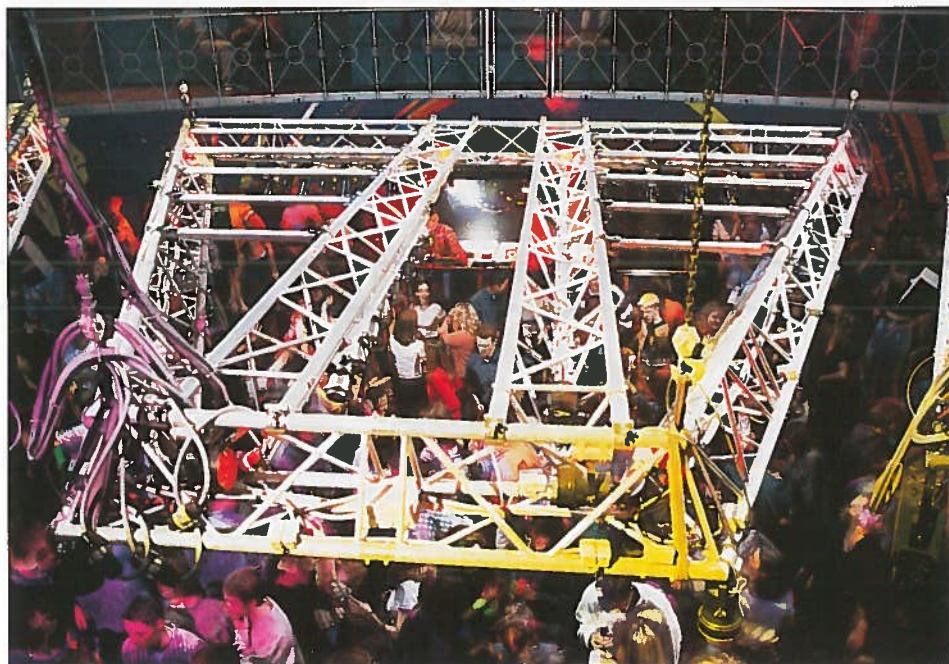
Where Limerick differs is in the club scene. Whereas in the UK and the rest of Europe there was an evolution through to the large, purpose-built venues during the Saturday Night Fever era, this somehow passed Limerick by. Here, dancing was the preserve of the bars and traditional dance-halls, and was usually accompanied by a live band. Today, this has finally grown into a more conventional club scene, but in Limerick the popular venues are within the city's bars and hotels.

Hotel-based night clubs are of a type in the UK; although often well-equipped, they are not renowned for being the place to go if you want the latest sounds of garage, techno or hip hop. To put it bluntly, they are not *trendy*. In Limerick, however, the exact opposite is true. The music is completely up to date, thanks largely to the enlightened practice of using top radio DJs to host the clubs, and thus on a Saturday night in Limerick, if you're under 25, then the George Hotel is the place to be.

PHASE 2

The Phase 2 on the hotel's mezzanine floor is a converted ballroom and in the light of day, it looks it. Basically, it's a large oval room with an upper level that is an open gallery and rings the dance-floor from above like a halo. The club's presence has involved some remodelling of the room, the floor around the main dance floor has been split into different levels to give a variety of vantage points to the onlookers, and to comfortably distance the drinkers from the swingers. This latter is an important feature as the Phase 2, like everywhere else in Limerick, still serves all drinks in proper glasses (and yes, it does get rather crunchy underfoot late at night, but thankfully not through any violence, just a loose grip here and there).

The other big alteration to the ballroom is, of course, the sound and lighting system, but here again, the approach to installing technology differs greatly to that found in the UK. Where a British club might tend to the radical re-furbishment with a large commitment of



'Famous' Phay McMahon's convertible lighting rig at Phase 2. The main truss section lowers to the floor and with the addition of some boards, doubles up as a stage for live music.



Above, the Phase 2 dance floor, an array of High End Systems' Cyberlights, Coemar NATs and Martin Professional Roboscans.

cash, a high profile launch, and the need to quickly capture a big slice of the available market to pay back the investment, in Limerick the approach is more gentlemanly. No one is trying to have it all, but all want to retain what they have. Rather than go for the major facelift, club decor and equipment is reviewed and updated regularly, and the Phase 2 is a typical example.

Its owner Kieran Murray, and his brother Frank who manages the club, can be found each September attending the PLASA Show in London - not with a fixed shopping list in mind, but open to ideas and looking for something that will give their club a bit of added value. Last year's visit was no exception and the Phase 2 lighting system now proudly hosts six Cyberlights and four Coemar NAT TM1200s, part of a steady programme of additions. The core of the extant light show is three Trilite truss shapes above the dance-floor - a 15ft equilateral

triangle at each end, with a slightly larger proportioned trapezoidal truss dominating the centre. All three are crammed with Par36 pin spots, over 100 in all, mainly in sets of four but also with truss toners tucked in each end of every straight section. The toners are a bit of a giveaway as to the origins of the designer, for Mr Murray has engaged the talents of Ireland's best-known rock and roll LD, 'Famous' Phay McMahon. There are other touches to the system that betray Phay's roots: the one I found most intriguing is the ability to convert the centre trapezoidal truss to a platform for visiting bands to perform upon. Which is simple enough to do: the trussing is all cross-braced and has two additional straight sections running up and down the centre section to strengthen the whole structure. Short braces span the gaps in between at intervals of around three feet or so, and are more than ample to support decking sections with a modest band and back line set-up above.

The truss is, of course, grounded: three sets of legs (of varying lengths, depending on how far you wish to distance the band from the crowd) mean it can be landed squarely on the dance floor and the chain hoists detached and winched away. It's a great idea made possible by the relatively high ceiling above. Being able to run a dance event for a few hours and then in the middle of the evening clear the floor and,



The main dance floor at the Brazen Head, attracting the slightly older, more sophisticated punter?

in just a matter of minutes, present a set by a live act is a useful addition to the venue's functionality. Obviously, it also affects its popularity, as well as saving on the under-utilised dead stage space that more conventional venues endure.

The main light system, aside from the P36s, comprises mainly FAL and TAS disco products, Moonflowers, white and coloured Scorpions, Ventaglios, a couple of centrepiece effects rigged vertically from an end wall and naturally there are plenty of strobes, UVs and the odd mirror-ball. There are also six Martin Roboscan 1020s from a previous update to the core system.

McMahon's other contribution to the club's more advanced technology is the installation of an Avolites Pearl desk for a more sophisticated control system. Although he has programmed in a large selection of scenes and chases, there's still plenty of memory space for visiting lighting jocks to impose their mark. Dimming and switching comes from 13 Anytronics four-channel 10a packs and four 4-channel relay packs, the whole lot laced up to a Pulsar

"This is a club with a comfortable ambience: in another city and era we might have seen Tony Bennett singing here, and yet it doesn't look dated."

Universal Interface DMX converter. What I most liked about this light show was that it worked on two levels. The Cybers, NATs and Scans are set above the truss rig and McMahon has gone to great lengths to selectively programme in effects from these lamps that pierce the rig below and, at the same time, provide more muted effects up on the gallery.

Thus a quick run up the stairs can provide the punter with a welcome respite from the crowd below and, in effect, the gallery provides an almost 'chill-out' type atmosphere without being too detached from the action. The sound set up is not quite as sophisticated as the lighting, but its improvement is only a matter of time. An elderly Martin PA system (though none the worse for that) sees four mid-highs hung from the gallery balustrade with a pair of

twin 15" bins neatly tucked in beneath the false floor to each side of the dance area. There's also a very large (perhaps five cubic feet) 'W' bin of uncertain pedigree, but like all mongrels it's a trusty beast. Not only does it deliver the desired rumbling low end but also doubles as a poseur's dance platform with a suitable crash-rail rigged around its top deck.

Power comes from a pair of Yamaha P2200s and two C Audio RA2000s, the sound feed coming from an SM550 Remix desk run through a Court EC7 crossover. The desk takes two mic, two phono and two CD lines in, the CD being the main music source fed from a Denon 2000F twin-head machine. This has a remote control unit set in alongside the mixing console, putting access to pitch, track select and cross-blend in easy reach.

Because of the gallery and the positioning of the mid-high units, this is a very pleasant club to be in. Off the dance-floor and particularly near the bars, there is a pronounced drop-off in level for everything over about 400Hz, making conversation and ordering drinks easy on both the ears and larynx. Conversely, the volume on the floor is everything you'd want and the DJ I heard overcame the urge to submerge everyone in a swamp of bass.

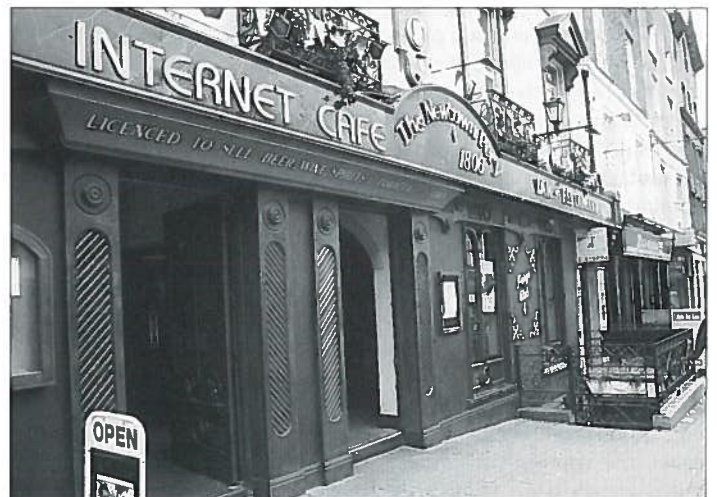
THE BRAZEN HEAD

Just a few yards up the street is a different venue altogether. Again an updated establishment, in this case a bar, the Brazen Head is aimed at the slightly older club-goer, the more sophisticated 25 and upwards range. The bar is modelled on the European style and sells real coffee, as well as booze and snacks both during the day and at night when the club is open. On the counter behind the bar, bottles of gin vie for space amongst the mini fridges filled with individual tubs of Haagen-Daas ice cream. Downstairs, the club proper has a discrete low-ceilinged dance floor surrounded by a JBL system, run from an almost identical control set-up to the Phase 2.

Lighting is much less of a feature here: just a couple of small moving mirrors, a broad array of pinspots and a couple of minor-league disco effects. The secret to the Brazen Head's success (and it is packed seven nights a week, unlike the Phase 2 which only opens from Wednesday to Sunday) is the roster of presenters that host this more restrained setting.



Seen this before? The one-time Vari-Lite stand from the PLASA Show now straddles an Irish Street.



Signs of the economic upsurge in Ireland are to be found in venues such as the new Internet Café, which sports a dozen terminals.

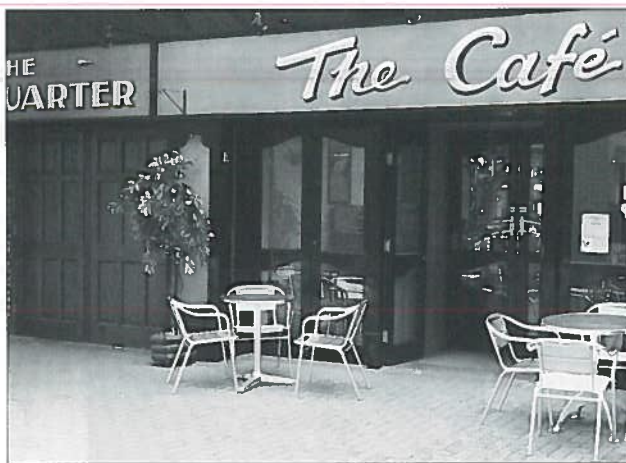
With DJs from national radio RTE2 FM and other high-profile disc jockeys, the combination of personality and content makes for a popular venue. The club area also has a separate lounge room adjacent to the dance-floor with its own bar where local luminaries (The Cranberries are frequent visitors) can retreat for some privacy.

Another detail that sets the Brazen Head apart - this might seem a little coy but it's worth mentioning - are exquisitely furnished and well maintained toilets, claimed to be the finest club loos in Limerick. It's touches such as this that make this a popular venue with a more mature audience. This is a club with a comfortable ambience: in another era we might have seen Tony Bennett singing here, and yet it doesn't look dated.

CITY VENUES

There are other clubs in town - the Henry Cecil is another bar/club venue but with a decidedly hostile atmosphere when I deigned to poke my head around the door. **Molly Malone's** is more of a place to go for a quiet dance after a meal, while **The Works** down by the river is definitely on the up and up with the student crowd.

Other elements in Limerick's recreational facilities also point to its economic upsurge in recent years. Five minutes walk from the Phase 2 is the **Internet Café**. The converted bar of a very large city centre pub (you can still pop next door for a pie and pint), the Café sports a dozen on-line terminals, has helpful and



The Old Quarter - combined pub and café.

knowledgeable assistants and, if you fancy surfing on a Saturday afternoon, is the most convivial of settings. Down the hill towards the old city castle is a new venture for Kieran Murray, **The Old Quarter**, a combination pub and café. The two elements are separate entities within the same building, a central island bar and kitchen serving both while dividing them.

The decor is decidedly of the moment: a modern interpretation of art deco with lots of concealed lighting, furniture and fittings is all curves and sharp lines in wood and steel. Despite a vague nagging that such a setting should be out of place in a city like Limerick, the local clientele appeared to be perfectly at ease here, both day and night.

For those of you who are regular attendees at the PLASA Show and visit the Vari-Lite stand

each year, The Old Quarter will seem vaguely familiar. Not content with buying equipment at the show, Mr Murray was so impressed with the curving arches of Brilliant Stages' design for the Vari-Lite exhibit that, as Victor Kayam might have said, he bought the stand. Most of the structure is still languishing in a Limerick storehouse awaiting planning permission, but the main arch sits gracefully spanning the street outside, welcoming all to the delights within.

Time did not permit a more extensive exploration, but what I can tell you is that the most recent census of Limerick and its surroundings (1991) established its population at 52,000, with almost half of them in the under 24 age group. Such preponderance of youth has, inevitably, wrought many changes.

After my first night in a real Guinness bar 20 years ago, I went out at 8:30am in search of cigarettes and sporting a sizeable hangover. A kindly corner shop tobacconist, noticing my plight, invited me behind the counter and into her front room, where I and several other men in similar condition were given a reviving glass of 'the black stuff'. Sadly, she's no longer there, nor the corner shop, but I can vouch for the continued potency of the Guinness. The passing of such places only points up the vigorous development taking place. If the younger population continues to expand, then no doubt we'll see a few more shoppers from the Emerald Isle at next year's PLASA.

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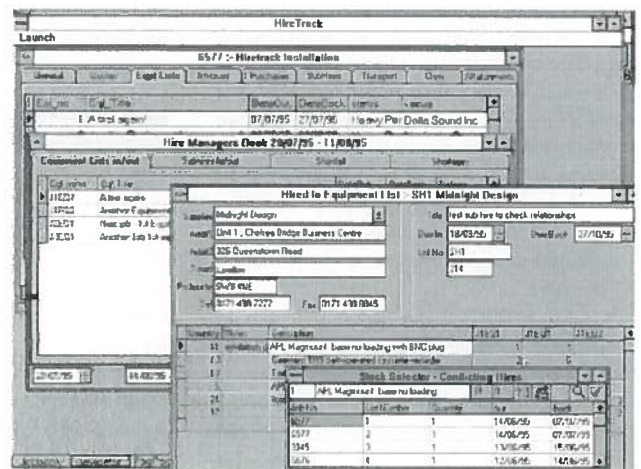
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by STEVE MOLES

AND PRODUCTION NEWS



Above, dramatic lighting sweeps for Eros Ramazotti and below, an over-dark look for Tom Jones.

11-piece band plus Eros are all on Garwood in-ear monitoring systems, and with most of the backline DI'd, this is a steady stage sound. The only item in the whole package you are unlikely to see in most other PA set-ups was the off-board mic EQ Maggi used. "The Brunetti Pro40 is a custom parametric EQ which I use for Eros' vocal and for the kick drum. It's made by a friend of mine and is as good as any similar product, so why not?"

And why not indeed? With allowances for the array (just six subs on the floor and a pair of 650s each side of stage to fill the front few rows of the stalls) the downstairs sound could have been better. There was a gap at the low-mid end, not disastrously so, but it left the vocal sounding a little topky. Higher up, things were properly balanced and it was not until you reached the vertiginous peaks of the prom level that you would regret buying cheap tickets. For a man that had only visited the RAH once before, to mix a guest spot by Zucchero on a Clapton show, Maurizio Maggi deserves a pat on the back.

LIGHTING

LSD are supplying the entire rig for this show. The trusses, however, are all brand new, having been made especially for the production by Total Fabrications. Lighting designer Billy Bigliardi (like Maggi, a time-served Eros associate) has conceived a rig of four concentric circular trusses that can all move independently of one another.

All four are filled by a total of 128 snub-nose Par 64s, all permanently mounted within the web, and each fitted with AC Lighting's new Chroma Q colour changer. Crewman Vic Collier, whose job it was to maintain the colour changer system for the past three months pronounced the Chromas "not a problem". All the snub-nosed Pars are fitted with ACL bulbs, thus the greater part of the light show falls to the 24 Icons, 37 Washlights and 37 Cyberlights that Bigliardi has spread about the rig.

The simple stage set (from US-based Access All Areas) has a gentle banked and curved rear just two metres high at its centre, along which Bigliardi has arrayed 16 Cyberlights. This is surmounted by a large full stage width semicircular cyc with a dozen each of Icons and Washlights alternating along its curved top. Presentationally, it's very clean, and wouldn't look amiss on a big TV spectacular, and Bigliardi often works it that way with big effects sweeps, leaving the ACLs, followspots and eight Molemags above the rig to wash the band and stage. Billy runs all non Icon lamps from an Avolites Diamond II. The most startling thing about the rig is how much it seems to grow in scale when the four circles are tipped out of a flat pancake into a severe rake. In the horizontal it looks quite modest: tipped, it was enormous.

Presentationally, this is a very good-looking show and can't be faulted on its production values. As a regular concert-goer I found it enjoyable and certainly not a chore. Whether that's enough to capture an English audience, I doubt. However, if Piu Bella Cosa, released just before Christmas becomes a hit, we could be talking tagliatelli.

Eros Ramazotti

Royal Albert Hall

LD: Billy Bigliardi

SD: Maurizio Maggi

Eros Ramazotti, the brightest star in the Italian pop firmament, brought his latest production 'Dove c'è Musica' to the Royal Albert Hall just before Christmas, as the finale to what has been his most successful tour of Europe ever.

This talented performer and songwriter is trying to perform one of the most difficult cross-overs in pop; to become a star in the English-speaking world without using the language. However, if I'm really honest, I can't understand half of what anybody sings anyway! Vocalists are just another instrument, something moody yet distinctive that overlays the melody. After all, lyrical content never stopped Bob Dylan selling quarter of a million records in Lapland, and his lyrics are reputedly of mystical importance. So Eros has a chance, but it won't be easy.

This is a truly international production with, of all people, the legendary Ricky Farr at the helm as show director. There's Danish pre-production, an Italian sound company, an American stage set, a German production manager, an Irish stage manager and British lighting, trucking and catering. This cosmopolitan package is not due to any European directive, just a "desire for the best". It has, however, sent warning bells ringing through the upper echelons of the Italian touring service industry.

Anecdotal evidence from all parts of the crew has it that during the Italian leg of the tour, city after city saw the arrival of leading figures from the domestic production industry incredulous that such a spectacular show could be produced with



all these foreign suppliers at a lower budget than his last major outing in '93 when they stumped up the goods.

SOUND

Dealing with the sound first, and to immediately evidence that Italian companies can acquit themselves just as professionally as anyone else, the mix at the Albert Hall was one of the better sounds I've heard there. Maurizio Maggi is an experienced house engineer with six years service for Eros.

This latest tour has been mostly arena-based, so Maggi found he was unable to hang the EAW850 series PA quite the way he would have liked due to lack of appropriate rigging gear. For the RAH he was obliged to put a tight horizontal wrap of 24 cabinets (six wide, four deep) each side, with little in the way of vertical helping, to give the coverage across the hall's many tiers. Milano Sound Systems are the service company, although both FOH and monitor desks, a pair of Midas XL4s replete with Flying Faders, come from Lars Brogard, who did pre-production.

David Bryson is in charge of monitors (now we begin to see Ricky Farr's hand at work), the

Tom Jones

Sheffield Arena

LD: Eric Swan

SD: Tom Woodcock

In the last year Tom Jones has performed 263 times, starred in a movie and recorded enough material for two albums. His production manager Sandy Battaglia says he's been working this kind of schedule for the 13 years that he's been with the singer. No wonder then, that at the age of 57 Jones no longer has the time, nor inclination, to bonk the many women who still insist on throwing their knickers at him. Personally, 'The Welsh Foghorn' has never appealed to me; he's just been there since my youth, belting out songs with his singular verve. Ever since he recorded What's New Pussycat I've associated him with that naff era in the sixties, of polyester shirts, Kaftans, and people saying 'groovy'. Hand on heart, I now have to admit to greater respect for the man: the show I witnessed at Sheffield Arena defines the phrase 'consummate performer'. Whatever your musical foibles, this man carries a two hour show with the minimum of production, entirely on his own.

SOUND

For FOH engineer Tom Woodcock (mixing on a Yamaha PM3000) it's all about the voice: "Tom is without doubt the most powerful singer I've ever worked with." And this from a man who two years ago was mixing for Extreme. But I suppose you could say Mr Woodcock has just gone from one very powerful group of musicians to one very powerful instrument, though in the case of Extreme I use the term 'musicians' advisedly.

Woodcock was brought in by Sandy Battaglia, who previously held the mix position himself. It's a demanding position - for most of the time this is a band/LD/monitor man/FOH engineer kind of touring; just the principals turn up and use whatever house system is there. The Concert Sound EAW850 PA is thus a luxury from the point of view of consistency on a day-to-day basis, but it's also a system Woodcock really likes.

He has strong views on processor-driven systems: "Particularly the ones where the processor thinks it knows better than the engineer and starts moving crossover points on you during the show." (Anyone recognise that scenario?) "That's why I like this system; it does what you want it to do when you want it." Tom Jones is backed by a 10-piece band, three backing vocalists, three horns, and a four-piece rhythm section. The stage sound is well controlled, even the horn players have their own perspex shield behind the mic, but for monitor man Ed Ehrbar (Midas XL3) Jones' fairly recent conversion to in-ear systems is what makes his job a breeze.

Now this self-propagandising piece of kit doesn't really need any more exhortations about its efficacy but there is a slightly unusual side benefit in this situation. "We used to have side-fills, and Tom likes it loud," - an understatement from Ehrbar when you consider 118dB as a comfortable peak, "so after he'd sounded out Phil Collins and Rod Stewart about in-ears, we did a trial and within half an hour he'd decided he wanted to use them that night." What's ironic is that Tom Woodcock now has to put a pair of KF850s immediately beneath Jones, in the pit, with just a vocal mix through them to place his voice back in the centre. "In the old days his side fills would rip the heads off the first few rows and give me considerable trouble out front," he added. "Having argued for years, like every sound engineer, to get rid of the damn things, now I'm having to replicate a similar scenario, but at least it's under my control."

A Beta 58 receives the brunt of the Jones vocal blast, often from over a foot away. Heavily compressed through a Summit TL100 it's noticeable that this man can provide astounding force across the range. Bell-like at the top end, deep resonance from his large head lower down, you can see peaks emerging at 200, 400, 800 and 1K. Only when he performed The Boy from Nowhere did he seem to struggle and only then when he had to drop his voice into the basement.

LIGHTING

LD Eric Swan is also enjoying the luxury of a regular lighting system. Supplied by Supermick and Vari-Lite, it's a relatively modest collection of

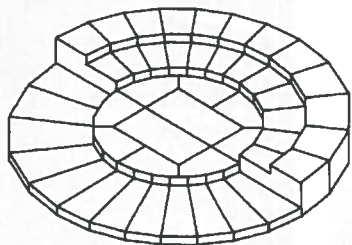
Pars (26 six-lamp bars, one for each section of pre-rig truss), 24 VL2Cs and 14 VL5s. Swan controls the whole system himself from the Artisan. The trusses and Pars (all silver) form a significant feature above the stage - a W upstage, an X across the mid, with a short straight section across the front. Swan lights them all with truss toners and, in the absence of any stage set whatsoever, they form a welcome counter-point to the collection of musicians below. With Tom Jones constantly dressed in black, the stage cries out for a cyc, something Eric Swan acknowledges: "The budget doesn't permit it, much as I'd really like one," was his plea.

I have to say, at the risk of upsetting Vari-Lite and Swan, dump a dozen 2Cs, add a few more VL5s and for God's sake, put a cyc in. There were times when the all-black look was acceptable - appropriate even, but the pervasive atmosphere was heavy and made the artiste much smaller than his voice would have us believe.

This is a slick one-man show - a display of unique talent and warrants better presentation. Instead, Swan resorts to some unnecessary movement cues and occasionally bizarre colour combinations. In his defence, he does run a tight show - the spot calls might be perfunctory with just the one star on stage, but he will pull them out when Tom is stationary and fade in VL2Cs instead. There were some well-composed looks, especially for the more recent songs, but these were too infrequent to lift the general malaise.

Not wishing to end on a low note, this is still an artiste well worth checking out. (The movie, by the way, is a comic book parody of last summer's sci-fi hit, *Independence Day*. Called *Invasion from Mars*, it stars Tom Jones as himself contributing heavily to the salvation of the Earth). Naturally, he still does Thunderball and Help Yourself, but there's modern stuff in there too. As a classic interpreter of the country and western genre his current rendition of Walking in Memphis (the song Cher had a hit with in early '96) is easily on a par with, say, Joe Cocker. The high point for me was Delilah, basically an oompah-pah song but with a heavy metal middle eight. It made me realise that when Alex Harvey did his parody on this song and made it a hit again, he actually changed nothing and merely substituted his own voice. A classic.

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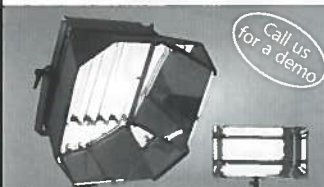
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John Offord talks to Celco's Keith Dale

Management restructuring just announced at Electrosonic (see this month's People News) has signalled a major new initiative by the multi-faceted media to entertainment group. John Offord talked to marketing director Keith Dale about the company's future and caught him in up-beat mood about prospects for the industry as a whole.

The standard PR announcement of various new appointments, 11 in total, at Helvar Electrosonic tends to shadow the importance of those made to the board of Electrosonic Ltd in the UK, where three leading industry 'names' now take their seats and are set to play an important role in directing the fortunes of the company.

For Keith Dale, a stalwart of the performance lighting control industry from the days of the Celco 'Gold' and earlier imagineering, it will mean taking on a much wider role as marketing director, and it was this signal that persuaded me to take a trip to Dartford to find out a bit more from 'behind the scenes'.

Things began to take shape six months or so ago. "Every summer, we have a strategy meeting, and Kevin Murphy (now sales director), Kevin Madeja (now products director) and myself sat down to work out a pre-strategy meeting strategy," Dale explained. "There is already a lot of co-operation between the individual business units such as Celco, video and systems engineering, but we felt we could maximise this by breaking down the existing business unit barriers, and try to make sure that there was even better co-operation and communication between sales managers on one hand and product managers and development on the other.

"Our strategy ideas seemed to fit, and were accepted enthusiastically and largely as we had proposed. Although we have done quite well at Celco in broadening our market, we have also generated leads for video, for instance. We wanted to make sure that we exploited this situation to the full and formalise it. The new structure will take time to bed down, but I have high hopes that it will make us more efficient and able to take advantage of the opportunities that we are presented with up to the Millennium and beyond."

Glancing through the latest issue of Electrosonic World the reasons for Keith Dale's new-found energy become readily apparent. Celco control systems come at you glossily from status-ranked installations as far away as Shanghai and Tokyo, and the coupling of this control with every conceivable possibility of image portrayal provides for a renaissance-style

situation, and has put him in the right frame of mind to think creatively.

"I honestly think I have always been enthusiastic about what I've done, but one of the main things that made me warm to the idea of putting the new strategy forward and possibly myself as marketing director was that perhaps I could offer something to Electrosonic overall in a marketing capacity. I have to admit that things I enjoy, like product and advertising style and creative work come to me a bit easier than looking at profit and loss sheets and trying to spot the weak link! I had a rude awakening when we arrived here five years ago, and I doubt if I really knew what a profit margin was. However, I've learnt quickly and now feel much more 'rounded'. I've obviously still got a main interest in the promotional side, but I think I now know what the bottom line means!"

So, in effect, Keith Dale is, so to speak, back on the board, after a five year gap, but at a much higher level and on a different plane. "It's really a new beginning. Within the Celco business unit we were very autonomous - probably the most autonomous within the group - but I was still a manager. Now I can set policy with Kevin Murphy and Madeja and the other members of the board and I really feel we can put things in the right order for the future. We will still be monitoring the product lines and distribution channels, but it will now become a wider team effort and reflect what we have actually been doing on many projects. As a result we feel that we can increase the overall business on any particular project."

Turning to the future of the industry in general terms, Keith Dale reinforces the view that the special element within it is the character of the people involved. "They are all of a similar mind, and have been attracted in from the broader arts world. They are people who really want to prove something and are at the same time both individualistic and enthusiastic. They've got something they want to say and nothing is going to stop them. Then we have very clever development people who have been attracted in or been persuaded in by entrepreneurs who have sought them out.

"The industry is also maturing and becoming far more regulated. Some of us might question the need for some of the standards and regulations involved, but the important thing is that we will get on and deal with them, and I don't think it will ever block us. It will always



Keith Dale.

be a dynamic industry but possibly a more sensible one!

"A few years ago I was worried about poor ticket receipts in the UK for touring shows, coinciding as it did with the emergence and huge growth in computer-based home entertainment and part-manufactured or studio-based music production. However, all that has changed, and Oasis and others have turned things round completely and I see it going

forward again. In terms of technology and what we can do for the future, I know there are an awful lot of things such as growth in development of video for the consumer market that will have spin-offs for us - and in the lighting world too. In the longer term, I can see a converging of both video and lighting - basically image control - which is the strapline Electrosonic are putting forward now. The new technologies really will make this happen, and it is just as exciting for me as it was when we first started thinking of using micro-processors in a hands-on type of lighting control desk."

The bigger our industry becomes, the more one begins to worry about how the momentum can be maintained and jobs secured. Keith Dale's natural enthusiasm buoyed me through and above these concerns. "We must not lock ourselves into any particular technology, but keep an open mind so that when people want something done artistically it is down to us to determine what tools are needed to achieve the desired result. We must never say 'we only do lighting controllers' for instance, or we will be restricting ourselves from the outset. There is an awful lot out there, and going back to our own changes here at Electrosonic, it will enable us to exploit this situation that much further.

"Just look at the avenues open to us in the retail area. Stores are becoming much more adventurous and getting to grips with videowalls, for instance. In the area of dynamic lighting it wouldn't surprise me at all if, within a few years, car showrooms have a group of Martin projectors - or whatever - in action."

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