

LIGHTING+SOUND *International*

THE ENTERTAINMENT TECHNOLOGY MONTHLY



BEAUTY AND THE BEAST

PHOTO: MICHAEL LE POER TRENCH

- The Good, The Bad and The Ugly: Disney's Beauty and the Beast
- The Big PA Spend in the Touring World
- FX Rentals: Taking the Hire Ground
- Supertramp's Tour de Force in Rotterdam
- Solitaire at the Swan Hunter Shipyard
- Lighting Designer Simon Sidi in Profile

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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



LIGHTING+ SOUND *International*

published monthly by the Professional Lighting and Sound Association

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ISSN 0268-7429

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The magazine is available on annual subscription

UK £50.00 Europe/rest of world £65.00 (US \$100.00) Airmail £90.00 (US \$135.00) Single copy £3.50 plus postage

Editorial Advisors: Peter Brooks, Wyatt Enever, Mike Gerrish, Derek Gilbert, David Hopkins, Matthew Griffiths, John Lethbridge, Iain Price-Smith, Neil Rice.

Lighting + Sound International is published monthly for \$90.00 per year by The Professional Lighting and Sound Association, 7 Highlight House, St Leonards Road, Eastbourne, East Sussex BN213UH. Second class postage paid at Rahway, N.J. Postmaster: Send USA address corrections to Lighting & Sound International, c/o Mercury Airfreight International Inc, 2323 Randolph Avenue, Avenel, New Jersey N.J. 07001



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PLASA Shanghai Initiative Gets a £400,000 Boost

Already launched by P&O Events for April next year, the planned Entertainment Technology exhibition at the Shanghai Intex Centre has been given a major boost with the news that PLASA has won approval in principle for its Entertainment Technology Sector Challenge Bid.

A large part of the funding (total £410,139) will be made available as grant aid across a three-year period for British companies who book to take part in the event, and subject to DTI approval, the funding will be made available in a similar manner to existing Trade Fair support schemes.

John Offord of PLASA was obviously delighted when he received the news on 29th May. "When Sector Challenge was announced I saw it as an ideal way for PLASA to gain endorsement of its plans for the international marketing of its

PLASA now poised to take the entertainment technology industry to the next Millennium

member manufacturing companies, and I'm obviously delighted that we won through with our submission.

"Over 600 associations and organisations originally submitted outline bids for the Sector Challenge first round and I understand a total of 307 full bids were eventually received by the Sector Challenge Unit of the DTI. Although I felt confident we would win through, only 186 bids, including PLASA's, were finally approved. I am sure our industry, newly supported and recognised by the DTI, can move on from here with growing strength in terms of global marketing projects and initiatives."

Planned dates for the Shanghai Entertainment Technology event are 14th-16th April, 1998 and full details are available from P&O Events Ltd in London on 0171-370 8231.

PLASA Restructures

There has been a key management change within the operational structure of PLASA. John Offord has stepped down as Chief Executive and Editor of Lighting+Sound International. The Association and John Offord have issued the following statement: "Following discussions, the Executive Committee and John Offord have agreed to terminate the current arrangements between the Association and John Offord and JS Publishing Services in respect of services provided by them to the Association. Over the past few months there have been material differences between John Offord and the Committee relating to the management of the Association's affairs and accordingly it was thought in the best interests of both parties for the existing arrangements to be terminated.



"There will be an orderly handover in respect of all projects in which John Offord and JS Publishing Services have been involved on behalf of the Association so as to minimise disruption and safeguard the Association's interests."

The existing Publishing team will continue to look after both L+SI and sister title, Sound+Communication Systems International, with Ruth Rossington taking on the role of editor for both.

Bumper Show Issue

With the PLASA Show now just a matter of months away, L+SI is planning its biggest ever pre-show issue. If you have any news relating to PLASA 97, fax it through to L+SI on (01323) 646905 before August 10th.

D.A.S. Take on Brits



Following Sennheiser's appointment as UK distributor for D.A.S. speakers, the two companies invited a group of UK pro audio journalists to visit their plant in Valencia. Pictured above from D.A.S. are Juan Alberola, Jack Palacio, Vincente Espi and Daniel Calabuig. Full report page 30.

PLASA AGM

The PLASA Annual General Meeting has moved to the Midlands and will be held on Friday 20th June at the Marriott Forest of Arden Hotel and Country Club in Warwickshire.

The AGM will be followed by an open forum giving members the opportunity to participate in a questions and answers session with members of the executive committee. For the first time ever there will also be a PLASA industry dinner on the evening before the AGM.

Further details are available from Pam Revington at PLASA on (01323) 410335.

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32 No-Noise Inputs

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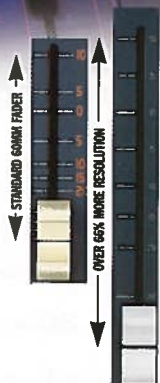
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Martin University and the Export Award



Martin Professional's Peter Johansen receives the award from Prince Henrik of Denmark.

Martin Professional has introduced its own 'University' to ensure that their 76 international distributors maintain a high level of product knowledge.

The first six-day course was held recently in Denmark at specialist theatre and performance facilities in Ebeltoft, near the company's Aarhus headquarters. An intensive timetable of lectures and hands-on demonstrations covering all manner of technical matters and products, plus sales strategy, kept 51 delegates from 19 countries busy for 12 hours each day. The modules concentrated on the study of new Martin products such as the MAC 600, Lighting Director, ShowNet and ShowDesigner, as well as highlights of the MACH loudspeaker line-up and the JEM smoke machine range. The course ended with a final exam, after which the delegates received their diplomas. The next course will be held in August.

Martin have also recently been awarded an export award from His Majesty Prince Henrik of Denmark. The King Frederick the Ninth Award for Honour was presented to managing director Peter Johansen by the Prince, in recognition of the company's high level of export achievement - 95% of the company's output goes overseas. Johansen commented: "To be honoured at such a level within our own country is the ultimate reward for all our hard work - both by ourselves in Denmark and by all our distributors and subsidiaries around the world."

Hong Kong Handover

When the Union flag finally falls on Hong Kong, a grand yet dignified ceremony will precede it. To mark the country's reunification with China on July 1st, preparations are in place for an all-day event lasting up to the stroke of midnight on the 30th June.

Much of the elaborate bowing out ceremony will take place on the harbour's edge set upon a huge 30m wide open-air stage backed by the Royal Yacht Britannia and flanked by giant video screens. Set designer Paul Staples, under the aegis of Caribiner Asia Ltd, approached ESS to provide not only support for the screens, but also graceful arched canopies to protect the orchestras playing beneath. Built from a combination of Tower System stock elements and custom fabrication the canopies are cantilevered out 16m from the towers, like giant eyelids above Jumbotron screens. Other show elements include high power 7k Xenon Skytrackers, fireworks on eight barges, water fountains, lighting a themed boat parade, live musical performances and special effects. The show is expected to last one hour and be viewed by millions worldwide.

Los Angeles-based Laser Media has been awarded the contract to provide an extensive array of laser equipment and effects for the event. The inventory includes four 40W high power solid-state YAG lasers positioned around Victoria harbour and two full colour laser systems stationed in a 60ft tower on a floating barge in the middle of the harbour. The producer for the event is David Goldberg of Los Angeles-based Don Mischer Productions who was responsible for the opening and closing ceremonies for the Atlanta Centennial Olympic Games.

Strand Lighting, meanwhile, has equipped the conference centre with a Galaxy Nova, 25 LD90 dimmer racks and 160 luminaires, including 60 2.5kW Altos. The lighting will be augmented by a 550 control console running Lightpalette Operating Software in view of an expected large moving light rig.

A raft of companies are involved in the handover, the details of which are still coming in to the offices of L+S. A major feature covering this historic event will appear in a future issue.

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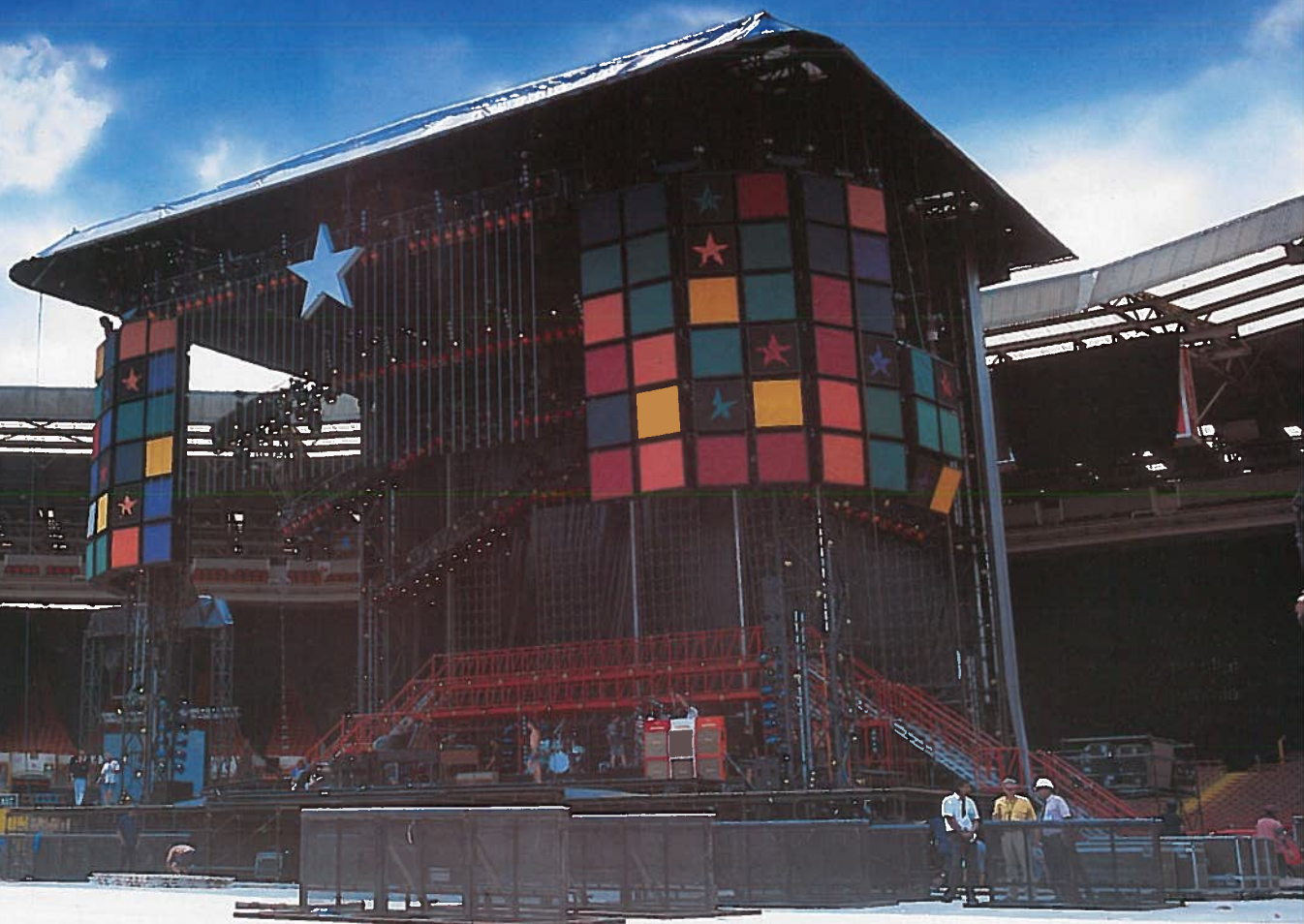
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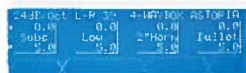
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Les Misérables First UK National Tour

With the London production into its 12th year, and just a few weeks after the Broadway production celebrated its tenth birthday, Cameron Mackintosh expanded the *Les Misérables* empire still further by launching the first UK national tour from the Plymouth Theatre Royal. The production has been designed as a 'bus and truck' show - an attempt to bring the high-speed, self-contained style of theatrical touring regularly seen in America to the UK!

"Les Mis has been designed as a 'bus and truck' show - a style of touring regularly seen in America."

To build the set, production manager David Gregory turned to Brilliant Stages. The company did construct much of the set, though with deadlines for the much larger-scale U2 concert looming, they also ended up farming portions of the work out to others. Stage Technologies filled their familiar role as providers of automation: they supplied two Revolution! drives to handle the show's famous revolve, as well as truss-mounted BigTow motors.

Above the stage, lighting designer David Hersey took the opportunity to specify a higher tech rig: 17 Digital Light Curtains in place of the fixed-colour, aerial-rotator controlled units still seen in London, Rainbow scrollers instead of London's semaphores, and Source 4 profile spots. To reduce focusing time, a two-colour Par-can backlight wash was replaced with 14 High End System StudioColor washlights which very quickly found a huge variety of other uses. The show also featured two moving beamlights, formed by merging an R&V 500W beamlight head and a Strand Pirouette yoke. The rig is controlled through ETC Smartrack dimmers mounted on flown service platforms that double as side-stage followspot positions and parts of the set. The dimmers and moving lights are controlled from a Strand 520 desk running the new Genius Pro software. The rig and control were supplied by White Light, with the automated lighting coming from the Moving Light Company.

To further reduce rigging and focusing time, production electrician Alistair Grant designed a custom truss for the show; this has two hinged 'wings' which fold down when the truss is on the ground to form wheels and protect the equipment, but then fold up as the truss is flown to form the handrails of what becomes a walk-on focus bridge.

A slight scheduling clash with the production period of *The Fix* at the Donmar Warehouse meant

that sound designer Andrew Bruce brought in Terry Jardine as co-designer and then commuted between London and Plymouth. Bruce, Jardine and production sound engineer Chris Full had also streamlined their equipment as much as possible, with the 64-input Cadac E-type desk and the rest of the mixing area equipment living permanently in just two cases, with the FOH Meyer MSL2 and UPA2s being rigged within custom-designed motorised speaker towers with the rig driven by Crest 7001 amplifiers.

Vocals are brought in to the desk via 23 of the well-proven Sennheiser radio mic transmitters, but for the tour Bruce has switched to the new B&K miniature microphone. The Sennheiser transmitter's reliability means that just a couple of spare packs cover all eventualities, while their reprogrammable EPROMs mean that any frequency changes will be easy to implement.

Robert Halliday

Casino Theming



Production Services (HPS) and Scenic Technologies (ST) have combined the efforts of their Las Vegas offices with innovative results: a \$25m 'Carnivale' with live performers and 100,000 pounds of equipment hanging from 950ft of track.

While spectacle is the primary element for the Rio Suite Hotel's glittering, high-tech parade that glides effortlessly above casino patrons, the companies had to deal with practical considerations, namely, communication. The Rio's five floats range in weight from 13,500 to 17,000 pounds and travel on a suspended track - movement is controlled via a microwave buss system with the production controlled by ST's Stage Command System.

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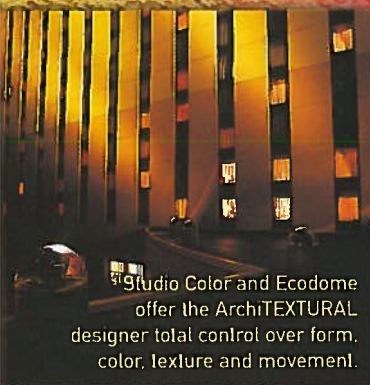
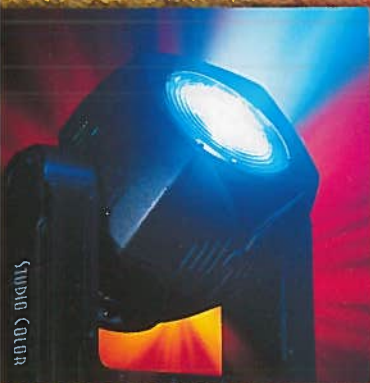
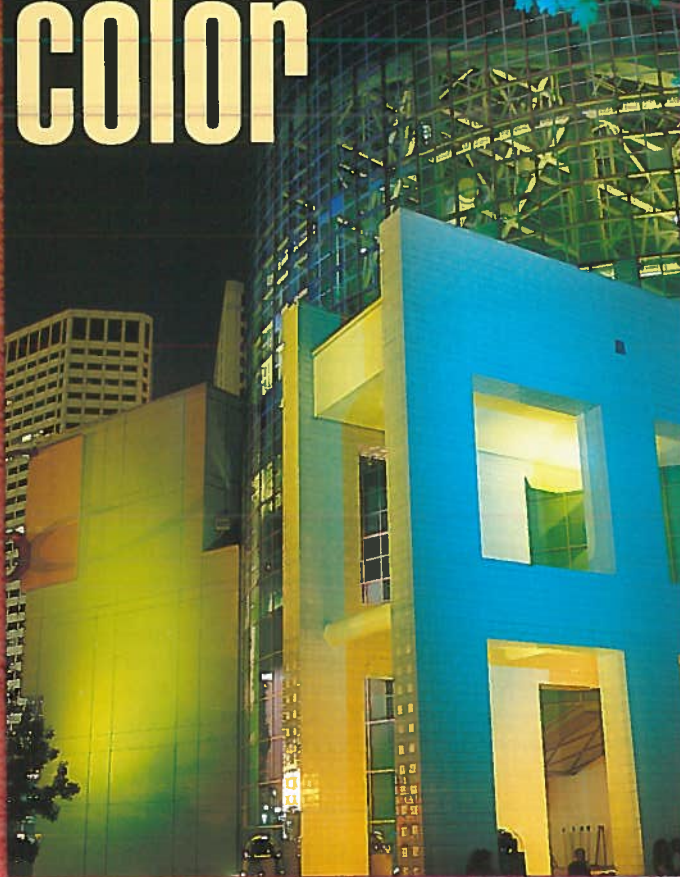
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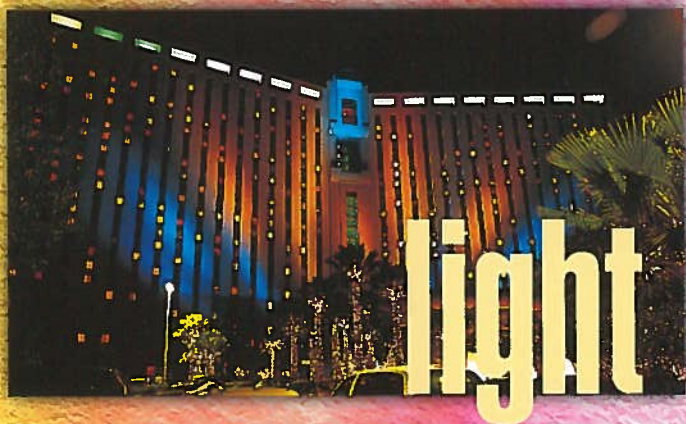
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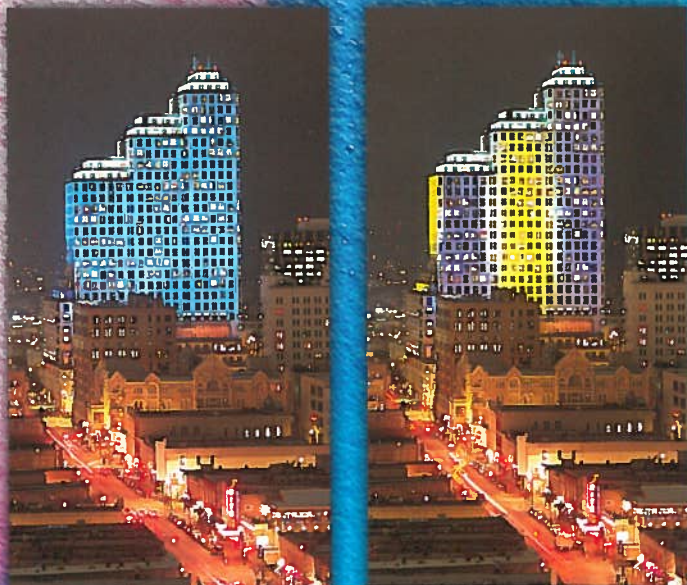
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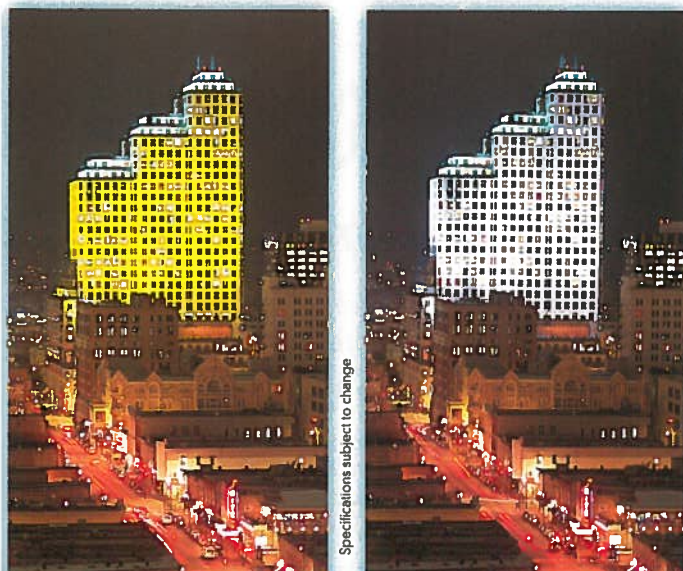
A quantum leap in strobe technology. Brilliant new technical advances place AF1000 in a class by itself as not only an ultra high power flash system, but also as a continuous illumination source.

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Studio Color: WINNER, "Product Innovation," Professional Lighting & Sound Association 1996

Studio Color: WINNER, "New Lighting Product of the Year," LIVE! Magazine 1996 Awards

Ecodome: WINNER, "Architectural Lighting Product '96," Lighting Dimensions International 1996



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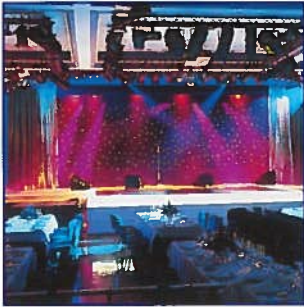
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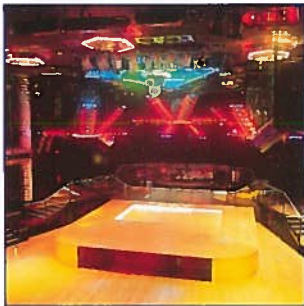
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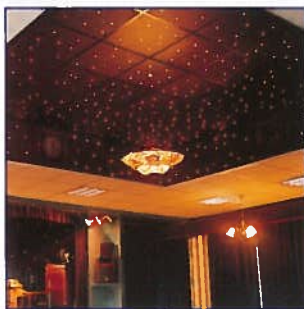
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Sporting Structures



Cyberdescence have supplied and installed over a kilometre of Trilite truss at the Science Museum in London. The installation was for the European Science of Sport Exhibition (designed by Henry Lowe Associates, with detailed design by Del Trew at Cyberdescence) which opened in March.

The Optikinetics-manufactured Trilite forms nine structures which are enclosed with nylon net and vinyl panels to form safe environments for visitors to have a go at a wide range of sporting activities. Trilite was also used to construct 72 free-standing graphic supports, various display arches and the impressive curved entrance arch with its 'floating' balls. Many of the Trilite components had to be specially designed to provide the framing for the nets and other cladding which were tensioned on the inside. The centre-piece of the exhibition, however, was the McLaren Formula 1 racing car (pictured above) dramatically displayed on two Trilite arms' cantilevered from a plinth at 35 degrees.

Starlight Facelift

HELL has just undertaken its third major re-fit of Starlight Express at the Apollo Victoria. The musical has been running for 13 years now and HELL, having been involved the first time round and contributed to each subsequent upgrade, have been called upon again to replace the underfloor lighting. As a result MR16 bulbs, not commercially available 13 years ago, have been installed.

Wire Rope Seminar

The Association of British Theatre Technicians (ABTT) and wire rope specialists Rope Assemblies held a joint seminar on the use of wire ropes at the Phoenix Theatre in London's Charing Cross Road recently.

The main speaker at the seminar was Mike Curtis, a consultant in industrial rigging and suspension who has worked for many years in heavy industry. Terry Hitchen of Rope Assemblies said that the idea behind the course was to educate people about the proper use of safety bonds, as many theatres still use little more than lengths of lavatory chain as secondary bonds for their luminaires. According to BS4533 (Amendment 3, 1993), safety bonds should be tested by raising the luminaire from a free hanging position to a height 300mm above this, and allowed to fall. All bonds are required to pass this test 30 times. Rope Assemblies' own tests on a number of safety bonds widely used in theatres found that the bonds consistently failed after 8-12 drops.

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with sound/light chasing built in. Flexi-Flash and Rigi-Flash use strobe circuits enclosed in tubing to generate a synchronised sequence of flashes which can follow the edge of a ceiling rig or any other structure as it can be cut and bent as required. A range of fluorescent colours are available for extra effect under ultra violet light. The Flexi-Flash controller allows you to control up to fifty metres on each zone, and offers the unique facility of firing sequences forwards, backwards or both simultaneously and at different speeds.



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ISOIMPORTS - a system of isolated DMX512 wall mount inlet and outlet boxes providing up to a maximum of 1536 channels. Available in 3 models, the ISOIMPORT provide venues total integrity of their distributed DMX512 system.



ISONODE - an intelligent wall mount DMX512 inlet that can detect activity on its DMX512 input and automatically switch the downstream DMX512 to its input and isolate the upstream data.



ISOPOWER - a 19" rack mount power source for the ISOIMPORT and ISONODE network modules. Providing three isolated and buffered DMX512 inputs and outputs with a 24VDC output, the ISOPOWER is short circuit proof and can be linked to another ISOPOWER to provide full redundancy.



DMXchange

allows the crosspatching of a large number of DMX512 outputs to a smaller number of DMX512 inputs. Master unit has integral LCD and function buttons to setup crosspatch and electronically label each input and output. Additional slave units each providing an additional 6 inputs and 12 outputs can be connected to the Master providing up to a maximum of 24 inputs and 48 outputs.



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V-DOSC Scales New Heights



A concert on top of a mountain? Diana Ross in the snow of the Austrian Alps? The concept seemed intriguing and in Ischgl, Austria, on May 1st the reality did not disappoint. The event, now in its third year, is the highlight of the local Spring Snow Festival. Where else could you ski all morning and then enjoy a great lunchtime show, one and a half miles up a mountain, surrounded by spectacular scenery at an exhilarating altitude?

For those in the know, this already unusual show had an added dimension. The PA System used was one V-DOSC, from Westfalen Sound in Germany - a revolutionary system as yet little exploited in the mainstream of the touring circuit, and now currently being used by both Supertramp (see separate feature this issue) and Miss Ross on their world tours.

At Ischgl, where the logistics involved manoeuvring all the equipment up a steep and icy five mile road to the venue, the crew were impressed by the minimalism of the V-DOSC system. It took less than three hours to fly a total of 32 cabinets from twin 13 x 2 metre towers either side of the stage, set up and operated by the three-man team from Westfalen led by veteran David Bryson, working alongside the production manager/sound engineer Ross's world tour Lars Brogaard. V-DOSC is pioneering a new era in the field of PA systems - out-performing large-scale traditional systems using fewer cabinets and power amplifiers. Easy manageability coupled with quality of sound, will ensure a buzz of interest in the V-DOSC over the coming months.

Diana Scrimgeour

PLASA '97: World Showcase

Now in its 20th year, the PLASA Show is, without doubt, the international meeting point for the entertainment technology industry, attracting 15,000 visitors from over 70 countries to witness the launch of a predicted 400 products. In response to market demands, the Specialist Sound Sector will be expanded and further feature areas will be added. Incorporated on the Top Deck, will be a live stage for focused seminars (work shops), a sponsored theme bar and an Italian speciality cafe. There will also be a dedicated area for specialist audio-visual companies.

Application forms for the 1997 Product Awards will be in the post shortly and the deadline for returned entries is Friday 1st August - don't miss out.

For further details on PLASA 97 at Earls Court 1 in London, contact P&O Events, telephone 0171-370 8229.

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The Cult of the Dj

The G-Mex, Manchester, was the venue chosen to host Dj Culture 1997. Perhaps the beginning of a new wave of entertainment technology exhibitions, it served to bring the dance music industry firmly into the mainstream, by creating a specialist event, the first of its kind in the UK, for the credible and club Dj.

The atmosphere was unpressured, providing adequate opportunity for valuable feedback on many products. Exhibitors were not deterred by the unknown quantity of such a show and made the most of the almost undiluted end-user, retail outlet and club owner audience to platform new products. The approach taken was very much 'hands on' which contributed to the unique style and overall success of the show.

Lighting companies were there in force: **Abstract** debuted the Futurescan 1CE, an interactive lighting product complete with extras such as a 3 way prism effect. **NJD** mounted a lightshow of over 60 lights, choreographed through a Merlin desk, to the strains of Mission Impossible, which ended with strobes, pyros and plenty of confetti.

White Light North Ltd reported positive interest in their products, particularly the Little Black Box haze machine, and boasted sales to match. **Martin Professional** also launched a new budget-priced smoke machine, the PRO1000, designed by **Jem** and built by **Martin**. Alongside were two new mixers by **Ecler**, the SMAC32 and the SMAC42 which provoked a great deal of interest.

The Dj equipment was the real pull of the show. **Intimidation** premiered the Apex fader with yet more revolutionary features. **Gemini** presented their PT2000 turntables in the UK for the first time and opened their stand, turning the use of the equipment over to the masses. Likewise **Lamba**, who laid on ample space for punters to play with their products. Two new mixers were featured on



the stand one of which was the GMR 6.2 which offers a separate input for the Vibemaster, an innovative system for listening to music without headphones.

Gemini and **Lamba** sponsored the mixing competition, along with **Pioneer**, **Ecler** and **Numark**, which ran throughout the weekend, for which **Mushroom Lighting** supplied the lighting, sound and production. Professional Djs judged the heats of the competition which involved Djs sourced by the companies during the show. The overall winner was Si Smith, pictured above being presented with his prize by Jim Tremayne from DJ Times. As a result he will be flown to DJ Expo in the US later in the year.

The event also offered seminars and demonstrations covering all aspects of dance culture and, critically, tips on how to become a Dj from some of the leading exponents in the industry, including Mr. C live on the Gaia Internet, which Nick McGeakin of Numark hailed as "one of the most informed overviews of what today's club culture is all about." One of the latest crazes for the internet, a live radio broadcast by 1996 PLASA Mixing Champion HS Pro further consolidated the presence of Dj Culture in the market.

The opinion of many was summed up by Alex Hazzard of Vestax: "A real success and hopefully the first of many for the North of England."

Jo Boyd

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A&H and Harman Part Company

Allen & Heath and their UK distributor, Harman Audio, have decided to part company with effect from July 1st, 1997. The British audio mixer manufacturer, part of the Harman International group, will then assume responsibility for the distribution of its range of products throughout the UK.

The two companies have arrived at this decision so that each organisation may concentrate fully on their core areas of business. Allen & Heath are introducing several new mixers during 1997 and want to ensure their dealer base is fully prepared for the new ranges leaving Harman Audio to concentrate more fully on the distribution of their other Harman brands, which include C Audio, JBL and AKG.

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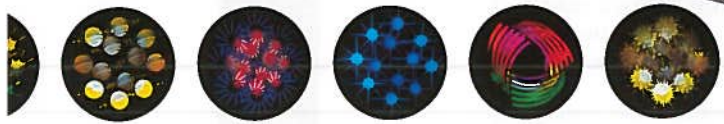
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STAGE SCAN - the brand new luminaire for lighting designers working in the concert, television and theatre sectors. This new fixture joins **GOLDEN SCAN HPE** and **SUPER SCAN ZOOM** to create an absolutely matchless trio, setting industry benchmarks in terms of performance and reliability in the professional lighting sector.

With Stage Scan there's no need to hang around for the bulb to cool before switching on again: the built-in **hot-restrike igniter** means that the luminaire is always ready for action. You won't even be left in the dark after momentary power failures, so there's no need to keep your fingers crossed during thunderstorms! And when the shutter is closed, you can either power down the luminaire direct from the desk or select automatic power-down.

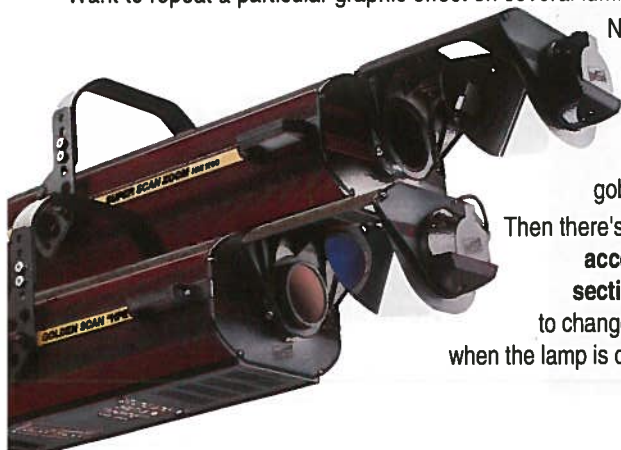
Stage Scan's innovative **MSZ (Multi Step Zoom)** system provides apertures from 13 to 25 degrees by selecting the most suitable of the fixture's 6 lenses - directly from the lighting desk. You'll also have fingertip control

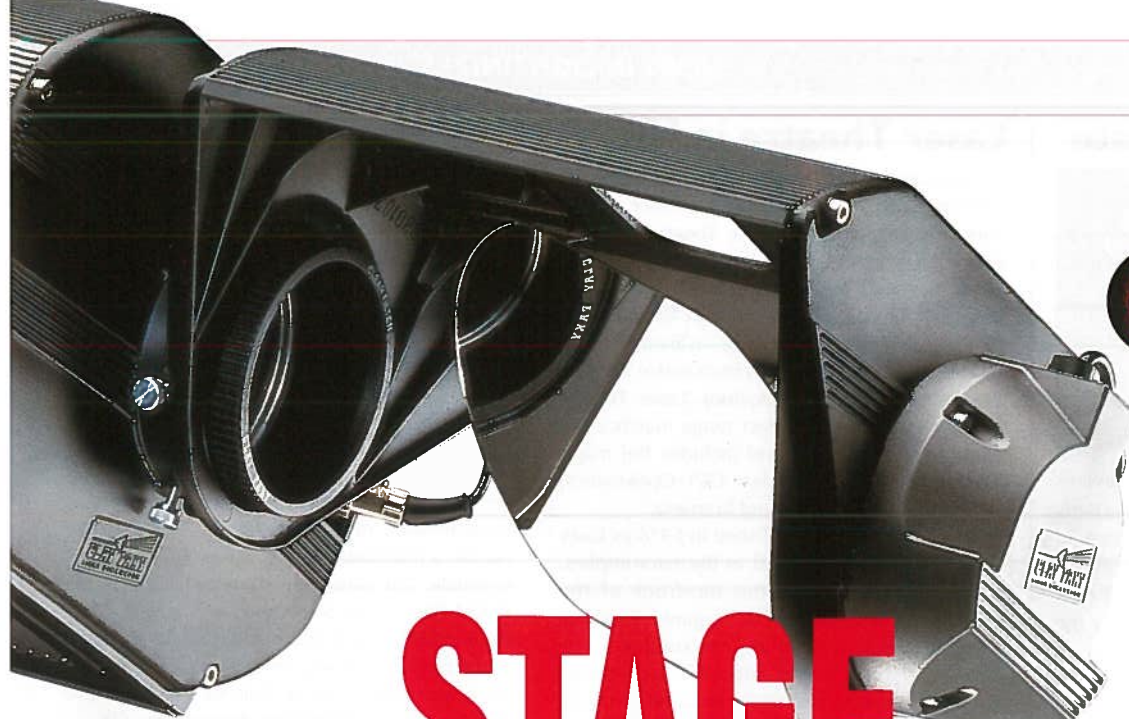


of any colour you can imagine, thanks to the **RGB colour mixing** system and to the special frost filters including the exclusive **Clay Paky "frou effect"**. Want to repeat a particular graphic effect on several luminaires?

No problem - Stage Scan features a **rotating prism indexing** system in addition to gobo wheel indexing.

Then there's the **independent access to the effects section** that allows you to change gobos, etc. even when the lamp is on, without burning





THE STAGE

your fingers or getting dazzled. That's just one of the details that make Stage Scan particularly suitable for professional applications. Further examples include: **easy access to the electronics**, mounted on the inside of the conveniently hinged back cover; conventional fuses replaced with

the more efficient and safer **circuit breaker**; totally simple **mains voltage/frequency changeover** system, making Stage Scan fully compatible with all world electricity grid standards. Noise? Hush! - every Stage Scan luminaire features a carefully designed **silencing system** that will meet the tacit approval of even the most attentive audience. So if you're into stage lighting, you've probably realised by now that Stage Scan has absolutely top-level credentials - just take a glance down this features checklist:

- HMI 1200 lamp, 110,000 Lumen, for uniform color temperature and extended life;
- Hot-restrike igniter;
- Gobo unit with two separate wheels controlled independently or in combination;
- 4 M-size metal gobos - static position and interchangeable;
- 4 interchangeable rotating gobos (indexed positioning), including two dichroic glass gobos;
- 10 additional gobos supplied as standard in a special housing in the body;
- RGB colour mixing with ultra-pure dichroic filters for an infinite range of colours;
- Special effects filters (bi-colour concentric beams, four colour beams, colour temperature conversion and ultra-violet);



- Three frost filters including the exclusive Clay Paky "fou effect";
- Multi Step Zoom (MSZ) for beam angles of 13°, 14,5°, 16°, 18°, 21° and 25°;
- Electronic focus;
- Independent access to the effects, to the lamp and to the electronics sections;
- Input signals protected against accidental application of mains voltage;
- Circuit breaker replacing fuses;
- Voltage / frequency changeover system;
- 16 control channels plus one optional channel for the remote lamp on/off;
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- Re-calibration possible from the control desk;
- Compatible with the most widely used digital control signals: DMX 512, RS 232 (PMX).



Clay Paky offers a wide range of metallic, photographic and dichroic gobos. The fascinating catalogue full of new high-definition images satisfies the creative flights of fancy of even the most demanding lighting designers. Also your black-and-white or multicolour images can be turned into original Clay Paky gobos.

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PROFESSIONAL SHOW LIGHTING

Turbosound Celebrate



Turbosound celebrated their second Queen's Award for Export Achievement recently with a party at Bar Mambo in Guildford, the first venue to specify the company's Impact range of loudspeakers. The Queen's Award recognises a 250% increase in Turbosound's exports over the past two years. Pictured above at Bar Mambo are the Turbosound trio of (left to right) export sales manager Sean Martin, managing director Mike Bartlett and marketing director Martin Reid.

ADB ISO 9001

ADB have reason to smile following news that their quality management system has been certified in accordance with the requirements of the International Standard ISO 9001.

The certificate was awarded following a full assessment of ADB's working methods by the Bureau Veritas Quality International. Over the past two years, the company has been working through an intensive programme of development.

Laser Theatre in HK

Equipped as well as anyone ever could be for the coming changes in Hong Kong, Lawrence Chan's internationally-minded Laser Theatre Lighting Limited has offices and contacts covering the South East Asia region. Set to serve ever more strongly in China itself, the company has two of its 10 regional offices located there - in Shenzhen and Xiamen. Meantime, business from and in Korea is the highlight on the sales front. Laser Theatre Lighting's distributed project range matches the scope of its sales area and includes the major names of Clay Paky and Pulsar, CCT, Optikinetics, Citronic, Abstract, D.A.S. and Kremesa.

The company was established in 1978 as Laser Electronics Engineering, and, as the name implies, laser equipment is at the forefront of the operation's expertise. The organisation has designed and developed its own controller, the Alpha, and buys in the latest US technology, assembling and packaging the required elements and linking them up with control software.

The latest developments on the laser front will



Lawrence Chan and engineer Frank Ko show their latest laser technology control systems.

see the incorporation of the new polychromatic acousto-optic modulator (PCAOM) which can handle a multitude of laser wavelengths without crosstalk. I'm sure when Lawrence Chan visits PLASA this coming September, and he gets asked the inevitable question about how things are going in the new Hong Kong, his answer, accompanied by a wry smile, will be that for Laser Theatre Lighting, things will be a touch more than OK.

John Offord

QCommander Seminars

Lightfactor Sales are to run a series of regional open days to heighten awareness of the Light Processor QCommander console. These will take place during August and will cover six areas: London and the South-East; the South-West and Wales; the Midlands; the North; the North-East and Scotland. Venues will be announced shortly. Club owners, lighting designers, DJs, rental companies or anyone else with a vested interest in control of generic and intelligent lighting fixtures are invited to attend. For further information contact Lightfactor on 0181-575 5566.

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Museum's Lottery Boost



Above, an artist's impression of the Museum after development.

The Museum of Science and Industry in Manchester has won an £8.8m grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund. The money will go towards the creation of new exhibitions, a Science Theatre and a Communications Lab in the restored 1830 warehouse. A new exhibition called Manchester Science will be housed in the Xperiment! centre.

CP Sound At Imperial College

CP Sound have just completed a major sound and lighting installation/refurbishment project at Imperial College in London.

The venue - christened dB's and originally constructed in 1911 - is used for live acts, discos and cabaret-style events. The primary challenge for CP from an installation aspect lay in shoe-horning the quantity of gear required into the confines of the space. The sound spec consists of a Formula Sound PM90 mixer and AVC 2 limiter, C Audio amps, CP Sound 115 bass bins, a new RSE amp driving a CP sound DJ monitor, plus a Formula Sound 'Guardian'. CP also supplied a live PA desk which connects to the mixer allowing up to eight channels to be mixed from the DJ box.

The lighting originally consisted of two High End Trackspots, which were later joined by a further pair and, on this refit, MADScans, MADStars and Light Processor dimmer packs. The Pulsar Masterpiece controlling the lights has been reprogrammed by CP with new sequences. The fixtures are mounted on two new Penn Fabrications' semi-circular trusses, rigged back-to-back in the roof.

New DTI Line-Up

Following the landmark victory of the Labour government, UK-based L+SI readers may be interested to know the new faces that will now be looking after trade and manufacturing interests in this country. Margaret Beckett is the new President of the Board of Trade and has overall responsibility for the DTI, Lord Clinton-Davis joins her as the Minister for Trade, with John Battle (manufacturing, technology), Ian McCartney (company law) and Sir David Simon (trade and competition) becoming the new Ministers of State, whilst Nigel Griffiths and Barbara Roche have taken on the mantle of Parliamentary Under Secretaries of State for consumer affairs and small firms respectively.

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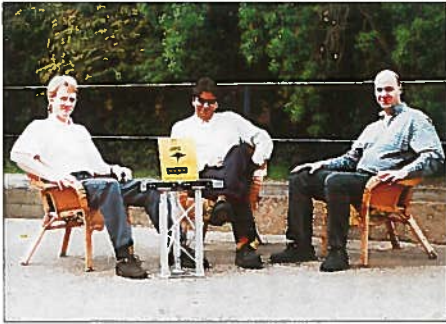


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ARX/LTP Join Forces



Melbourne-based ARX Systems, manufacturer of high-end signal processing, amplification and loudspeaker equipment has appointed LTP Audio as its distributor for the United Kingdom and Eire.

LTP Audio is the professional audio distribution arm of the Lighting Technology Group, with the American loudspeaker manufacturer Eastern Acoustic Works already in its stable.

Pictured above is LTP Audio Systems manager Peter Kenny (left) with sales team members Glyne Mackenzie and Peter West.

AJS & LSC

The full range of Atom and Axiom lighting control desks and DMX products from Melbourne-based LSC will now be distributed exclusively in the UK by the LSC UK division of AJS.

One of the key lines will be the new Distributed Network Advantage (DNA) DMX512 range which includes Isoport, Isonode, DMXchange and DMIX.

Labour Gets WAKky

The Labour Party employed WAK Media Production to handle all their 'on the road' sound and lighting needs throughout the 1997 election campaign, including the party's Manifesto Launch at the Institute of Civil Engineering in Westminster. In all, WAK covered a staggering 168 separate events for over one million people, supplied sound feeds to over 45 different TV companies from around the world, lost numerous windgags somewhere about Tony Blair's person, used 18 miles of gaffer tape, five miles of PV tape and travelled 34,000 miles via van, coach, train, plane, helicopter and barge!

In order to handle the massive project, WAK's crew were split into five teams; two Roadshow crews covered the length of the country - one with Tony Blair's coach and a second running ahead - with a further team member with 'The Prescott Express'. The rig for the 'on the road' teams was a free standing square 6m x 6m Trilite truss with angled corners. From this were hung an array of Vari*Lite fixtures and Bose Panarays and where necessary, venue sound was reinforced with EV SX200s. In addition, VL6s were used to project custom 'New Labour' gobos, with VL5s washing the set in various colours, whilst main camera lighting was covered by ETC Source 4s.

Dance-Tech 97





David Graham of Sound Division (left) is seen with Ian Jenkinson and Chris Birch of Universe and Chris Mellor of DJ magazine (right) holding a Vestax mixer and Yamaha synthesiser - two of the many products at Dance-Tech 97.

Dance-Tech 97, the exhibition aimed at DJs remixers and producers, will be taking place for a second year on Sunday 20th July at the Complex Club, 1-5 Parkfield Street in Islington, London.


The exhibition, organised by PLASA member Sound Division, will feature several major manufacturers including Yamaha, Roland, Akai, EMU, Korg, Vestax, Pioneer, Denon, Intimidation, KAM and Gemini. This year Dance-Tech 97 is being staged in association with DJ Magazine and is officially sponsored by Yamaha-Kemble Music and Vestax Europe. As before, it is also supported by the Mean Fiddler and Universe Organisations. There will be guest appearances by several top-billing DJs and Remixers.

For further details, or to order tickets in advance, contact Sound Division on 0171-700 6677.





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Steve Williams
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Uli Speckemeier
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Lighting Innovation for Broadway's 'The Life'

The new Broadway musical, Cy Coleman's *The Life*, has a unique claim to fame. The production is something of a test ground for a previously untried combination of lighting control systems. This development grows from experiments in moving light control that Richard Pilbrow first demonstrated at the PLASA show in London in 1995 in collaboration with Steve Terry of Production Arts, Keny Whitright of Wybron, Robert Bell of Cast Lighting, Fred Foster of ETC and his colleagues Dawn Chiang and Robert Halliday.

The Life - on Broadway for the first time - uses two Wholehog II controls and WYSIWYG software to control 37 Vari*Lite VL5B and VL6 moving fixtures and 300 conventional instruments (mainly ETC Source 4s) and Wybron colour scrollers. During programming, the WholeHogs were operated independently, while in performance their programs are merged and one device acts as back-up to the other.

Since the introduction of moving lights in the theatre, Richard Pilbrow has been fascinated by the comparative crudity of the interface available for their control. At PLASA 95, Richard Pilbrow demonstrated a 'mock-up' of what he described then as a new paradigm for moving light control. This brought together WYSIWYG software to give on-line graphical display of all the moving light focuses, Wybron's Autopilot and Copilot to instantly focus any or all instruments to any position, and ETC's Expression with Digitizer Tablet for rapid operator/designer access to the system. Focusing with Copilot (or using WYSIWYG's new Autofocus feature) allows every instrument to be focused to one point in space in literally an instant.

Pilbrow explained his choice of the Wholehog II for control: "The Wholehog offers some extraordinary facilities, principally the ability to name and display in text, alongside WYSIWYG, the prefocus position and all beam information, including colour, focus and iris. The twin touch screens offer instant access to channel, groups, prefocuses, colour effects etc, and the in-built effects engine and multiple masters present very rapid capability for manipulating complex multi-level light movement.

"Originally I hoped also to use the Wybron Co/Autopilot for both rapid focusing and three-dimensional followspotting, but budget limitations led to its deletion. However, WYSIWYG's Autofocus feature (developed by manufacturer Cast Lighting since the PLASA demonstration) which drives every selected fixture to any point touched on the VDU stage plan, provided much of the same capability.

"For the conventional installation, the Wholehog performed well. Follow-ons, multiple masters, part cues and delays allow subtle control but the ability to insert a thousand 'point' cues between each whole number proved not wholly necessary."

Does *The Life* provide a signpost to a new lighting control? Well, 'yes' is the quick answer and surely it is only a matter of time before we have virtual reality models that can be manipulated. The days of digits, numbers, keypads and wheels are numbered. New methods of painting the stage with light in time are not just around the corner - they're here.

photographs by Lewis Lee



Above and right, experiments in lighting control systems for Cy Coleman's 'The Life', lit by Richard Pilbrow and currently running on Broadway.

The Black Box Vanishes

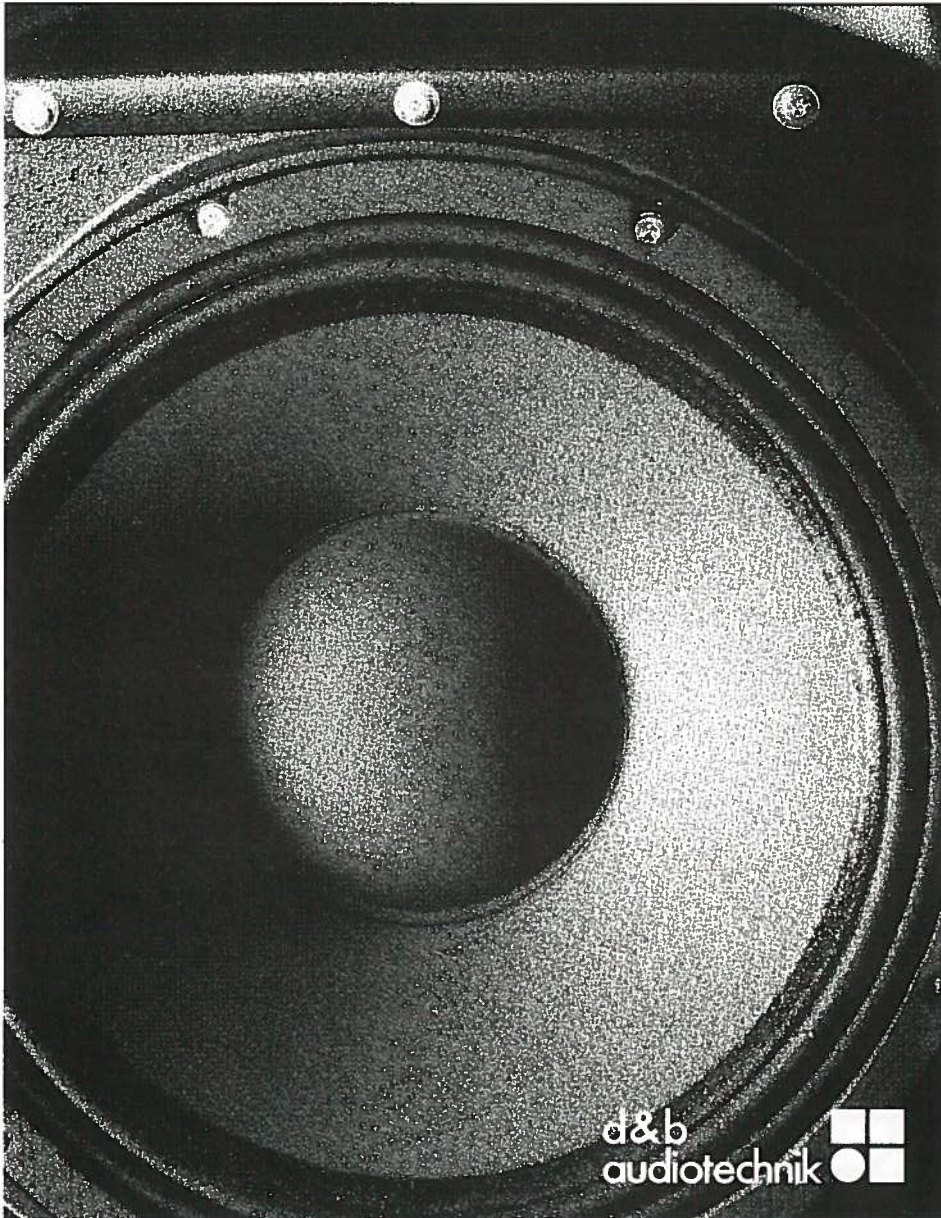
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Kiev Light & Sound

It has been four years since PLASA and Illusion organised the first Western trade mission into the new Ukrainian Republic, and this is probably the first year and the first exhibition where the industrial, economic and social decline of the country seems not only to have halted, but to be showing some signs of improvement. The Hrivna, the new currency introduced last autumn at a rate of 1 to 100,000 Karbonyets, has brought an end to the record-breaking inflation.

The recent Ukrainian Light, Sound & Stage Exhibition in the Palace of Sport in Kiev was testament to these changes; the curve of the ceiling, the chain winches holding up logos and equipment, the introduction of aluminium truss stands instead of plain shell schemes and, of course, the battle between dynamic lighting manufacturers in full spate. The hall was dominated by two enormous stands - the largest being the joint **Megashow/Beta Music/Avolites** stand. This was, in reality, a full-size stage 20m wide and 3m high, with a full lighting rig of nearly 400 Pars, Golden Scan 3s and Russian-made lasers, all controlled by an Avolites Rolacue Sapphire, together with 40kW of Turbosound PA.

At the other end of the hall was **Zinteca**, the new **Clay Paky** distributor with a much quieter stand consisting of a giant backdrop for projection, a bar and lots of tables and chairs. This was a place of retreat in this generally noisy, chaotic but exciting exhibition, with Clay Paky's Renato Ferrari handing out the drinks. The dynamic lighting here was controlled from a Compulite Spark.

Pulsar, represented by Derrick Saunders on the stand of their new distributor **Light Converse**, were demonstrating their new interactive cueing system as well as the Masterpiece training video, whilst **High End** had a very decorative stand run by their new distributors, **Lamo**. Medium-scale concert company, **Feyeria**, were busy promoting **Celco's** Navigator, whilst **Martin**, because of pressure of work elsewhere, had a lower profile than usual.

The cast aluminium trailing mains sockets which horrified us so much four years ago seemed to have been replaced by European standard connectors and, in general, the volume of Ukrainian or Russian-manufactured goods has decreased dramatically over the past few years, being replaced to a great extent by British-supplied equipment. The organisers would do well to follow PLASA's lead by zoning sound areas in order to contain some excessive noise levels, allowing exhibitors to talk to clients comfortably.

Ian Hill

Diamond Lights

Blur's penchant for trend-setting extends to their LD Dave Byars, who recently purchased his very own Avolites Diamond III for the band's world tour this year!

Following in his footsteps are UB 40's LD Tony Austin and Wet Wet Wet LD Martin Nicholas - both of whom have large shows of intelligent and conventional lighting on their forthcoming tours. American rock dinosaurs Aerosmith are also touring, and LD Jim Chapman, using DMX for the first time, is doing so on a Diamond III.

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EnTech 97 - The Australian Connection

Following its successful outing in Sydney last year, the third annual EnTech exhibition, organised by Caroline Grafton of Connections Publishing, took place recently in the new Melbourne Exhibition Centre. Over 4,500 visitors prospected through the 10,000sq.m complex looking for the latest product and service innovations from over 100 exhibitors.

The show has a wide remit, attracting participation from all sectors of the industry, including lighting, AV, staging and multi-media. It also has the largest display of pro audio anywhere south of Singapore (excluding South America!) and draws a large group from the sound reinforcement, studio and post-production industries.

Unlike previous years, the seminar and conference programmes were arranged around the exhibition. As a result, the two major conferences, on DVD technology and Technical training, were held prior to the show opening so that visitors had the chance to participate fully in both seminar programme and exhibition, whilst the remaining seminars (some 24 in total) were organised in streams to allow plenty of time for trade show floor browsing. A new feature this year was the product clinics held hourly on the trade show floor, whilst Melbourne also saw the return of a slightly more controversial aspect of the show - product evaluations, which this year concentrated on the large format moving lights.

There were many new products to be found on the show floor (too numerous to mention in this short report) but of the many innovative new products that were released into the Australasian marketplace during 1996, several were highlighted at the 1997 Awards Ceremony, which took place at the PLAZA Ballroom in Collins Street.

High End stomped home with Best New Lighting Product for the Studio Color automated wash luminaire honoured for its innovative design. Breaking from the past seemed to be the rule of the day as Best New Lighting Control Product went to the Obsession ML from ETC for the unconventionality of its operating system. The Media Matrix Mini Frame from Peavey was the contractor's choice ensuring it picked up Best New Pro Audio Product, whilst the FRO-1 speaker cabinet by Brisbane-based Acoustic Technologies picked up the award for Best New Sound Reinforcement Product. Finally, JEM snapped up Best New Lighting Effects Product for the Hydrosonic 2000.



Part of the British Group at EnTech: Rick Wilson of Le Maitre joins Martin Kelly of Martin Audio, Matthew Griffiths of PLASA and Neil Rice of Optikinetics.

A second strand of awards recognised those products that have somehow become part and parcel of the industry. These awards go to the 'old favourites', the 'Classics' of entertainment technology. Working on the basis that the words 'Most Popular' appear in front of all the following, the awards ran as follows: the widespread appeal of the High End range came firmly into evidence when the Cyberlight picked up the Moving Light award, whilst Lighting Effect went to the High End Dataflash, with Martin's Roboscan 812 taking the prize for Compact Moving Light.

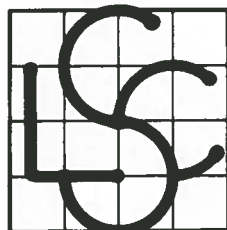
EnTech also honoured its own as Selecon collected the Luminaire award for the Performer MSR 1200 followspot, whilst Jands' HP12 dimmer collected the Lighting Product accolade. The company also went on to scoop the Lighting Control category for the Event range of lighting consoles.

On the audio side, the Midas XL3 walked away with the Mixing Console award, whilst the QSC Powerlight 1.8 took the honours in the Amplifier section. DigiDesign's Pro Tools walked off with the Recording Product award, whilst the Studio Monitor prize was collected by ATC's SCM 100A.

Mark IV's SX 200 made the grade in the Loudspeaker section, whilst the overall Audio Product award fell to ARX and their EQ 60. Shure's SM 58 was hailed in the Microphone category and the MC 303 Groove Box by Roland claimed the award for DJ product.

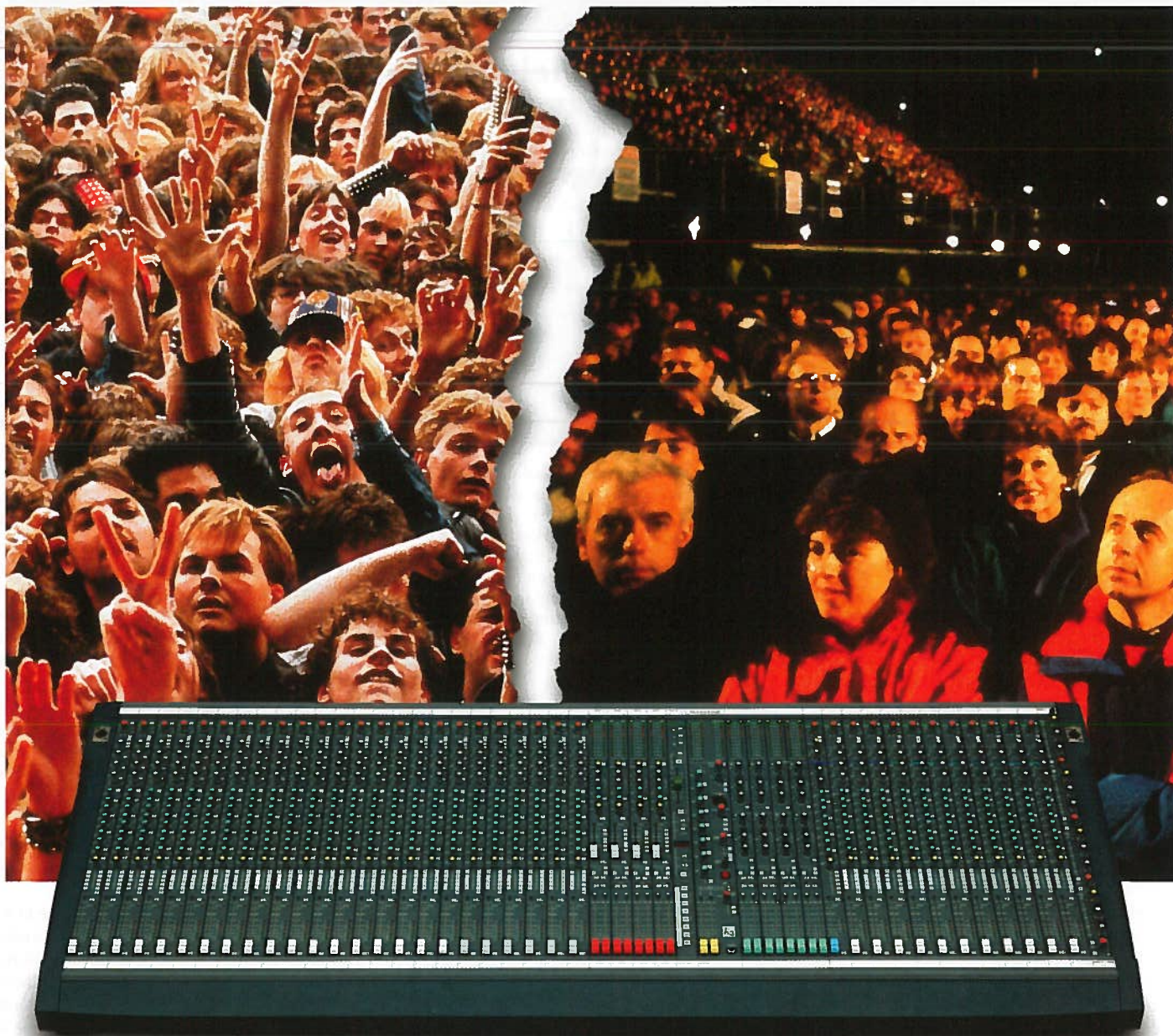
All in all, EnTech 97 saw new ideas, better exhibits, effective communication and most importantly, commitment and enthusiasm from all concerned. The organisers are now deep in planning the 1998 show which returns to the Sydney Exhibition Centre next April.

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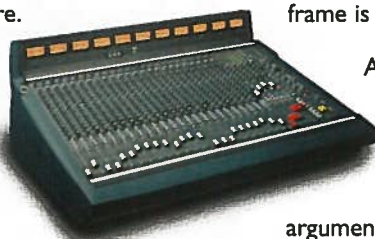
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D.A.S. Take on the Brits with Sennheiser UK

We reported in March that Sennheiser UK have become the official UK distributor for the full range of D.A.S. loudspeaker enclosures. In May, gearing up for the big push into the UK, D.A.S. and Sennheiser arranged for a group of UK pro audio journalists to visit their plant in Valencia, Spain, and witness for themselves not only the standard of manufacture and performance of their product range, but also what the UK can expect from the fully-fledged arrival of D.A.S. on its shores.



Above, L-R: D.A.S. founder and president Juan Alberola, Jack Palacio (sales director), Andy Turner (product manager, Sennheiser), Vincente Espi (D.A.S. marketing director), Daniel Calabuig (D.A.S. marketing), Sennheiser's Rob Piddington and MD Paul Whiting. Below: Rob Piddington demonstrates the ST system with a fine burst of Julio Iglesias.



provides an extremely strong cabinet with no unwanted vibration. D.A.S. compression drivers utilise titanium diaphragms which, although a notoriously difficult material to form, provides a far tougher component than the traditional aluminium, which can be prone to stress fractures if driven hard over long periods. Flat-wire wound voice coils are used, which the company claim are 20-30% more conductive than equivalent round wire coils and are therefore more efficient.

So, on to the range. There are four mainstays - Factor, Dynamics, Reference and Sound Touring, plus the recently introduced Performance range,

which is aimed squarely at the MI market (more details on this range in a future issue). First off, the Factor series of music monitor speakers for smaller leisure installations consists of the Factor 5, Factor 8 and Factor 12. Sennheiser's Andy Turner, the D.A.S. product manager, said of the Factor 5: "It's a great speaker - really punchy. When we've got the full line on display like this, and we demonstrate the Factor 5, people always assume they're listening to something bigger, and say, 'can we listen to the little ones now?'" The same goes for the whole of the Factor range, and its larger relations, the Dynamics sound reinforcement range - all of them tough, punchy, reliable and good-looking speakers.

The Reference series of sound reinforcement speakers is aimed at a wide range of markets including auditoria, larger clubs and live applications. These trapezoidal cabinets are constructed from high-density plywood, with internal bracing to minimise vibration. The speakers feature a die-cast aluminium chassis, high induction magnetic circuits and 102mm diameter voice coils. The compression drivers feature the titanium diaphragm assemblies, coupled to constant directivity horns for even coverage. The double 15" models can be used either full-range or two-way active.

The Sound Touring series consists of the ST-110, which uses the Bullet-2 mid-frequency compression unit, along with a 10" speaker coupled to a horn and a 4" compression driver whose 2" outlet is followed by a constant directivity horn. The ST-218 houses two 18" G-45 woofers with a folded horn arrangement and the ST-32 is a 15" speaker/2" driver coaxial, aimed particularly at monitoring applications.

Sennheiser's Rob Piddington said of the D.A.S. product range: "Sennheiser UK have been looking for quite some time to bring a product of this type into the UK market, but nothing has fitted the bill until now. When we heard the D.A.S. boxes for the first time, we all knew that this was the one we wanted." The quality and suitability of the Factor and Dynamics series for BGM, leisure and club installations should mean that the D.A.S. name finds favour with those market areas. As for the touring market, that will always be a far tougher nut to crack in terms of market share, however good the product. We will watch and wait . . .

Lee Baldock

HÖREN

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Futurist Set New Trend for Regional Shows

The first Futurist Light & Sound Fest eased onto the exhibition calendar in style when it opened its doors at the magnificent Alhambra Theatre, Bradford, in late May. The advance publicity promised that the event was going to be something special, but the reality was even better.

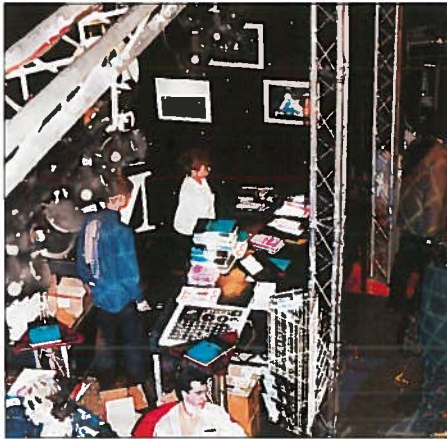
In teaming up with key suppliers, Futurist showed what a shrewd nose for business they have and the line-up of companies involved was enough to attract over 900 pre-registrations from right across the country. The incentive, apart from the exhibitors, which included Maltbury, CEEP, Teatro, M&M/ETC, Zero 88, Doughty Engineering, Shuttlesound, Pulsar, Harkness Hall, Lee Filters, Rosco, Le Maitre, Bose, DHA, EV, Total Fabrications and Lite Structures, was the provision of free travel from major cities across the UK, the promise of free lunch for all those who attended and a goody bag worth £150.00. Not surprisingly, this solicited a high turn-out and, though it's hard to put a figure on it, would guess somewhere in the region of 900 turned up. For a one-day regional event, this is a pretty impressive figure.

Although there was little new in terms of product, two companies did have something to shout about. Doughty had the prototype (patent pending) 'Overlocker' clamp which can be snapped rapidly into position and has a provisional safe working load of 1200kg. Look out for it at PLASA where it will receive its official launch. Teatro UK, also took the opportunity to announce that they will be acting on behalf of the Netherlands-based control and dimming manufacturer IES in the UK. Of key interest to the European market will be the company's two latest products - the Power Bar Range and IGBT dimming series (full story next month).

Running in tandem with the trade show were a number of specialised 'clinics', with speakers including Anna Western of Rosco, Bingley Little Theatre's Richard Thompson, Ric Green of Opera North, David Wilmore of Harrogate International Centre, Rick Fisher of the ALD and Matt Twist of LIPA.

Michael Lister and the team at Futurist, in particular Frank Fallows who handled much of the organisation, deserve credit for not only running a very professional event, but also choosing to do so away from London, which must have been a strong temptation. The company are certainly making strides on the business front and recent projects have taken them to the Far East to design a state-of-the-art system for the largest hotel in the World, and they have also been involved in a number of projects in Brunei. Over the next few years, the company is on target for major business expansion that will lead to new custom-built offices and further recruitment. As part of this initial development, Futurist used the Light & Sound Fest to officially launch its new Project and Productions arm - STORM Production Technology, which has been set up to offer a complete turnkey service designed to cater for every scale of production, from full product launches to simple weddings.

With such a successful event, it's hardly surprising that Futurist plan to repeat the Fest next year and there is talk of it being over two days and in a venue that can accommodate up to 3,000.



Looking down from the upper balcony across the Futurist stand.



The official launch of Storm with Sam Maclaren, Vin Holme (who will head up the operation), Christian Smith and Andrew Waddington.

Strong Parent Acquires Xenotech

Ballantyne of Omaha, Inc, the parent company of Strong followspots has purchased Xenotech, Inc, a xenon searchlight and entertainment lighting manufacturer located in North Hollywood, California.

The new company, Xenotech-Strong International, enhances the product line of both companies by now providing a complete package of xenon lighting units from 1000W up to 7000W. The Strong Xenon Super Trouper is a well-known followspot which has been the industry standard in the entertainment lighting industry. The Britelight series of xenon searchlights from Xenotech are widely used as rental lights in the film production business and have a growing presence in the architectural lighting market. Both product lines are frequently used together, especially in the big-event productions such as the Super Bowl half-time shows, the Olympics, and in other spectacular productions.

Moving On

The Moving Light Company, part of the White Light Group, invited lighting designers, programmers and technicians to a week-long series of open days at their new Parsons Green premises.

On show was the entire range of moving light and control equipment from their rental stock, including StudioColors, Starlite MK5Ts, MAC 600s and 1200s, Golden Scan 3s, ControlLite and WashLites, Pirouette Alto PCs and Digital Light Curtains. A Wholehog II, Jands-Hog and Strand 250, alongside WYSIWYG, provided the control.

Not only did visitors get the opportunity to see the lights used in a demonstration rig, but they also had a chance to meet with the teams from the White Light Group's newest addition - The Service Company, a specialist technical support company and Electric Sun, a dedicated film and television lighting company.

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Lightpower Open Day in Paderborn

Lightpower Showtechnik of Paderborn, well known as the German distributors for a whole clutch of manufacturers, including Clay Paky, Pulsar, Columbus McKinnon, Doughty, Rosco, ETC, Rainbow and MA Lighting, to name but a few, recently held a two-day seminar and workshop - the second time they have organised such a venture.

The event, which took place in late May at the company's Paderborn headquarters, drew a large attendance, notably from the company's customer base, together with installers, specifiers and representatives from some of the major manufacturers. The two key attractions were the product demonstration areas and a series of technical seminars presented by experts from specialist fields.

The seminars, which covered a wide range of subjects, included a series of presentations on 'Stage Technology', examining the use of trussing systems, 'Lighting Architecture', which considered what the future might hold in this area and 'Training', which focused on the importance of this issue in the industry and its application in practice.

'Network Technology' went on to discuss whether EtherNet is the natural development of DMX for lighting control systems of the future and 'Scale Design' considered the planning of productions and included a demonstration of real time simulation. This latter took place in the famous 4:1 Studio transferred from Cologne to Paderborn specially for the event.

Technical refinements and the latest product developments in the field of image and gobo projection were discussed in the 'Creativity' seminar, whilst the combination of conventional and modern lighting in classical surroundings was the subject for 'Light Design'. Last, but by no means least, 'Planning' came under the spotlight and the role of a professional planning agency for major projects, along with comments on the procedure of public tenders, drew the seminars to a close.

Running alongside the seminar programme was a series of workshops designed to give visitors hands-on solutions to complex technical problems. Demonstrations of MA Lighting, ETC and Pulsar control and dimming systems, along with a presentation of the new Clay Paky Stage Scan and Miniscan, were central features of these events. Visitors also got a sneak preview of products which should come on-line in the not-too-distant future.



Lightpower's Ralph-Jörg Wezorke (left) with Enrico Caironi of Clay Paky.



One of the main demonstration areas.



Ken Sewell and Derrick Saunders of Pulsar Light of Cambridge.

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New Appointments

Peter West has joined LTP Audio to promote the EAW range of professional loudspeakers. West will use his knowledge of the live performance and studio markets to further the awareness of EAW product within the PA and music industries.

Sister company Lighting Technology has appointed **Jonathan Adkins**, previously with Rosco, as sales co-ordinator for the newly formed Donmar Drama Dept. The company has also expanded its export department with two new clerks - **Richard Hartwell** and **Premila Mepani**.

Glantre Engineering has named three new international site managers to oversee major contracts. **Ken Norman** rejoins as project and site manager for the Petronas Towers Concert Hall contract. **Martin Moore** is well known to many in the industry and joins the company as site manager at Fincantieri's Marghera shipyard in Italy, where he will be in charge of the Disney Cruise Line contracts. **Charles Rose**, formerly with Stagecraft, joins as site manager for a theatrical rigging and machinery contract in Brunei.

Pulsar Light of Cambridge have recently appointed **Cristina Marinelli** as sales and marketing assistant.

Simon Roose has joined Vari-Lite Europe as leasing project manager. Roose comes to VLE from Strand Lighting Ltd where he worked for six years. Vari-Lite Inc, meanwhile, has appointed **Paula Millstone** as eastern regional leasing sales manager. For the last nine years, Millstone was director of exhibitions for LDI.

PCM, distributors of Columbus McKinnon



Left, **Simon Roose**, who joins Vari-Lite Europe and (right) **Bob Harrison** of beyerdynamic.

Lodestar chain hoists, have appointed a new workshop engineer, **Steve Leek**, to address the increasing volume of business following their busiest May ever.

beyerdynamic have appointed **Bob Harrison**, a familiar face to many in the industry, as UK sales and marketing manager.

John Hornby Skewes & Co Ltd have appointed **Peter Barnard** as their UK pro-audio production manager. Barnard, who has over two decades of experience in live and broadcast engineering, has moved from HW International and joins JHS to head the company's new pro-audio division.

Carole Bond, ex-marketing manager for the Playlight group, has set up her own consultancy and marketing services company, Tempo Marketing. The company specialises in business to business marketing.

ETC Europe has further strengthened its European operation with the appointment of **Tim Stokholm**, previously managing director of Bico Professionel in Copenhagen, as regional manager for Northern Europe.

Alan March, previously area manager for HW International in central London, has been promoted to assistant sales manager. The new position will incorporate technical sales support and responsibility for press and promotions.

High End Systems have appointed **Marcel Fairbairn** as director of new market development. Fairbairn was previously director of sales at Tracoman/Martin US.

Martin Professional, meanwhile, have taken on **Jens Horneman** as commercial director of Martin France. Horneman previously worked for Martin in Denmark before moving to Seleco in Italy.

Finally, **Daryl Vaughan** has announced that he is to quit the entertainment technology industry after 15 years. He previously worked with Rank Strand, Samuelson, Vari-Lite Europe and most recently with Wybron UK/US Lights.

David Holmes, BSC

David Holmes, BSC, founder of Lee Filters, died on 13th April this year, aged 69. He was a successful cinematographer before starting Lee Filters in 1967 which grew to become one of the world's leading manufacturers of lighting and camera filters for a wide range of applications.

Eddie Ruffell, managing director of Lee Filters, paid tribute: "We first produced the Lee Filter product in Andover in April 1974 and I have the honour to continue his work. I, and performing arts around the world, will always appreciate his work."

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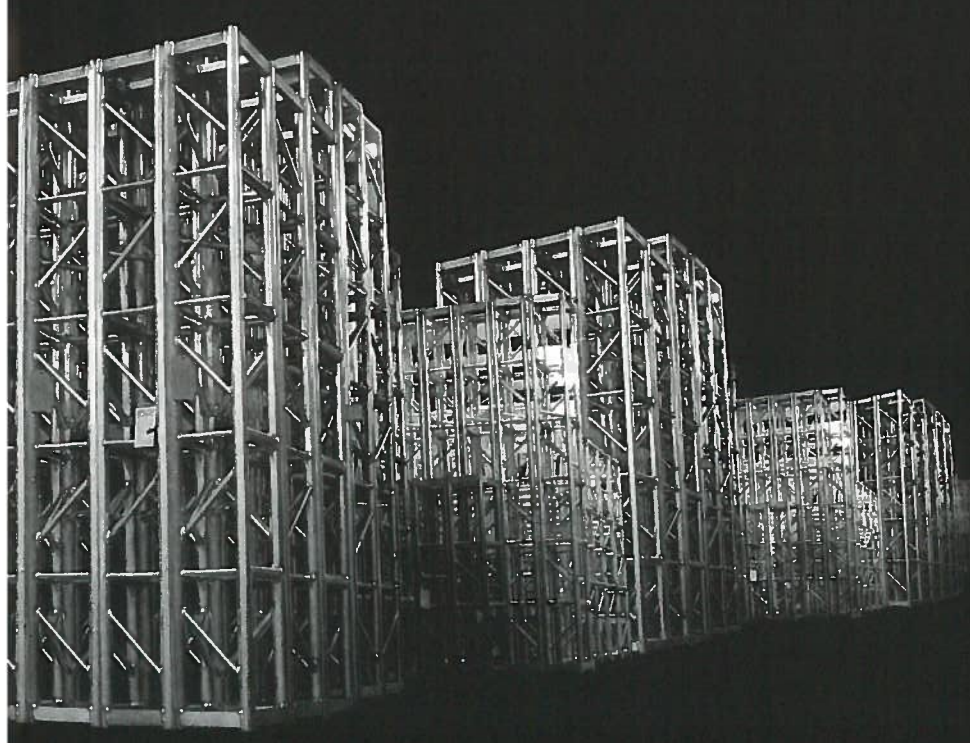
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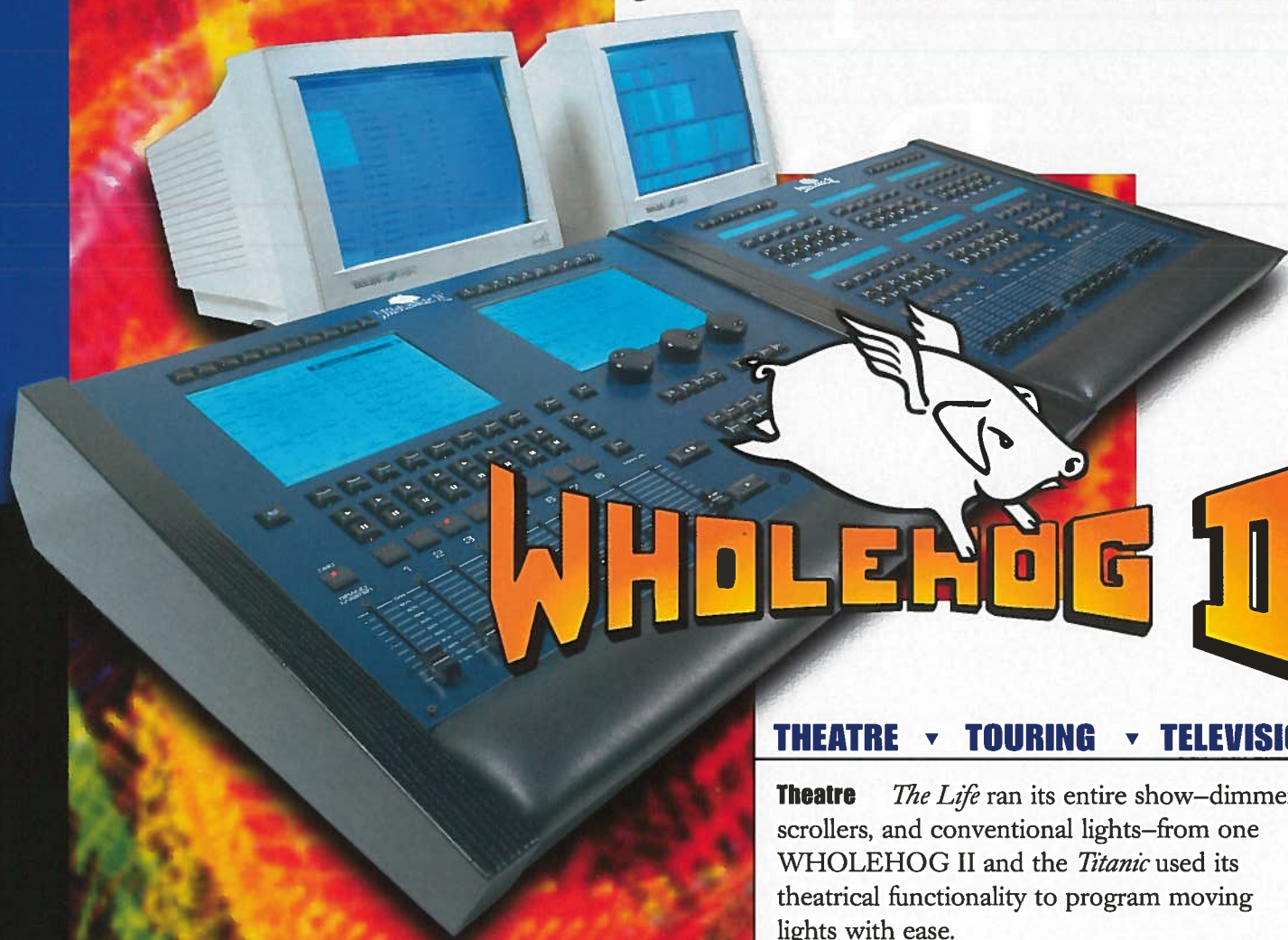
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Vari-Lite's Television Times



The Irish Television company Radio Telefis Eireann, RTE, have recently entered into Vari-Lite Europe's long term leasing plan. RTE has been renting Vari*Lite luminaires so regularly that they wanted them permanently as part of their Outside Broadcast Unit equipment. The lease of the VL6 luminaires coincided with RTE's recent 'Eurovision Song Contest' production. Vari*Lite equipment on the programme included 16 VL6s with custom gobos and 28 VL5 luminaires. The lighting designer for the show was Keith Hyland and the Vari*Lite operator Louis Pavieda.

Another Vari-Lite first is in the world of television lighting design. Lighting director Brian Pearce used a rig consisting *entirely* of Vari*Lite luminaires for the Prince's Trust 21st Anniversary Gala at the Manchester Opera House in May. The set consisted of 36 VL5 Arcs, 26 VL5s, 33 VL6s and 2 VL2C luminaires - all controlled from two Artisan Plus consoles and a mini-Artisan 2 console.

Theatre Lighting Talk

A seminar on Theatre Lighting: Design and Technology is to be held in London from the 1st-9th September, 1997. Directed by Francis Reid, the seminar will examine the role of lighting in current stage practice. Main topics will include the role of lighting in today's theatre, design and new technologies and education and training. The programme will be of particular interest to those involved in performance lighting. For further information contact International Seminars, The British Council, telephone (01865) 316636.

Sabre is Snapped Up

Stagetec (UK) Ltd, Compulite's UK distributor, report that the first of Compulite's new Sabre desks has been snapped up by Richard Martin Lighting (RML) before they have even seen it! Sabre is capable of controlling up to 192 moving lights and replaces the well-established Animator. On the same day as the Sabre was delivered to RML, a Spark console went to White Butterflies for control of Hardware for Xenon projectors, initially for a new production of Aida in Barcelona controlled by three separate Compulite consoles.

Stagetec (UK) Ltd, have also been busy on the installation side, providing a complete lighting and sound installation for the Coliseum Theatre, Rhyl and a complete recording studio installation at Silwood Studio, Windsor.

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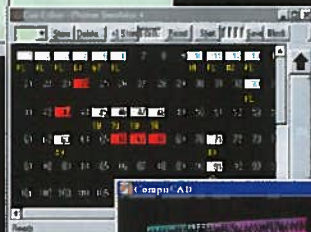


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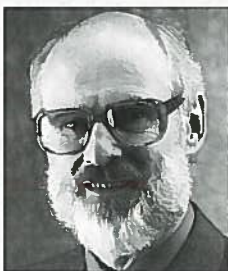
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New Stage Engineering Design Office for Glantre

Over the last few years Glantre Engineering has seen the stage engineering content of projects, on both land and sea, increase steadily and today it comprises around 50% of the company's workload. As the stage engineering workload continues to increase, the company has taken the decision to open its own Stage Engineering Design office. Many of the UK's most experienced stage engineering designers are based in East Anglia and this is where the new office will be based.

On July 1st, Glantre Stage Engineering Design will open for business in Bury St Edmunds and the company has appointed Dave Morley (pictured) as design manager. A highly respected and well known industry figure, Morley has some 30 years to his credit in the design field. With a long career in TV and theatre engineering, including design



management positions at both TeleStage and Mole Richardson. Joining Dave Morley will be Ivor Gammon, who is returning to his roots in East Anglia, from where he moved to join Glantre's stage engineering staff at Reading in 1995. Gammon has worked for several stage engineering companies, including TeleStage and Stagecraft. Also transferring to Bury St Edmunds

will be Peter Woods, a mechanical engineer who joined Glantre last year, co-ordinating stage equipment design for the theatre and two show lounges of the Grand Princess.

Derek Gilbert, managing director of Glantre told L+SI: "We have no plans to start manufacturing stage mechanical equipment and will continue to contract out the fabrication to the local companies."

Adam Hall Italy



Bob Mundy of Adam Hall UK (right) with Roger Smith who will run their Italian subsidiary.

The Adam Hall Group are to establish an Italian subsidiary. The new company, Adam Hall srl, which begins trading on 1st July, will occupy a warehouse facility just outside Rome and will be run by Roger Smith, whose association with Adam Hall goes back many years as head of their Italian distributor, R&R Musical Services. The company will also represent Fane Acoustics in Italy.

STLD Visit National

The National Theatre was the venue for a recent backstage visit by members of The Society of Television Lighting Directors (STLD). After hearing about the history of the National and its working methods, the group visited the Lyttleton and Olivier theatres in the company of National staff Mark Jonathan and Mike Atkinson. Those attending were then able to see a performance of the new musical 'Lady in the Dark' followed by discussion with lighting designer Rick Fisher. The Society are also involved in preparations for their Summer Ball at the Monkey Island Hotel near Bray on Friday 4th July, 1997. Dinner in the River Room will be followed by speaker Jon Plowman, head of BBC Comedy. For further information contact Dave Lock, telephone 0181-878 5392.

Brian Richardson

Brian Richardson, well known in the music touring industry as a lighting freelancer and PSA member, died suddenly at home on 4th May, 1997. He was 36 and leaves a widow, Jacqueline, and son Jacob. Anyone wishing to make a donation to a fund set up in his memory can send a cheque (made payable to the Production Services Association and clearly marked 'Brian Richardson' on the back) to PSA, Unit 5, 193 Garth Road, Morden, Surrey SM4 4LZ.

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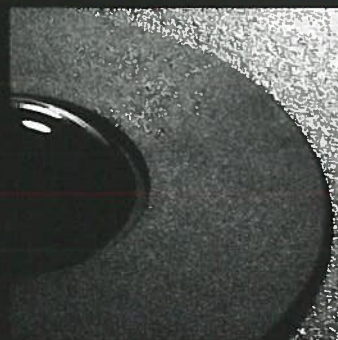
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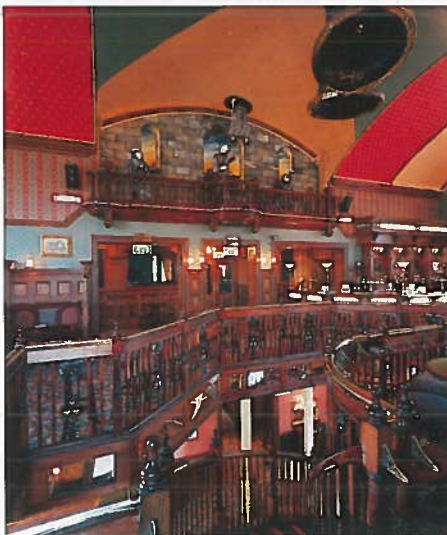
A hundred years ago a glamorous marble staircase was built in anticipation of a visit from Queen Victoria to the Royal Bell in Bromley. Sadly, she never turned up, although the venue can boast another claim to fame in that it is referred to in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*.

Now the famous former coaching inn (pictured right) has been restored by Greenalls, with another staircase installed (in addition to the original). Other parts of the restoration programme include mosaic floor and decorative plaster mouldings, while timber panelling, a minstrel's gallery and an ornate fireplace on the upper floor have also been restored.

The sound, lighting and video equipment was installed by Shepperton Studios-based Marquee Audio, who service many of Greenalls' sites in the lower half of the country.

The sound specification included RCF Event 1000s, Monitors 8s and Monitor 5s. In the amplifier rack there are Yamaha P3500s and P2500s, AB215 equalisers, RCF EQ crossovers and two Cloud CX242 zoners, whilst the DJ booth has a mix of Denon DN200F twin CD players, a Cloud Discmaster mixer, Technics SL1210 Mk2 turntables fitted with Stanton cartridges and Shure SM 58 microphones.

The weight of the lighting system falls on the shoulders of 10 Abstract Futurescan 3CEDs with effects provided by a JEM ZR20 smoke machine. A Kaleidovision graphics generation system is also installed to video-trail forthcoming events and promotional nights.



CSS Hold Seminar

Cheltenham Stage Services are holding a one-day training seminar covering mobile or installed sound systems, small lighting systems, video and production management. The seminar will be held at Cheltenham & Gloucester College on Saturday June 21st at 9.00 am. The day will include a number of hands-on sessions.

For further information contact Cheltenham Stage Services, telephone (01242) 244978.

Harkness Hall Open US Production Plant

Hertfordshire-based Harkness Hall are opening a production plant in the USA. The new plant in Fredericksburg, Virginia, on the appropriately named Harkness Boulevard, will occupy some 50,000sq.ft and provide facilities to meet production demands well into the 21st century. Harkness Hall are already a recognised part of the US movie industry and the establishment of the US manufacturing operation will enable the company to provide further support to their US distributor CFS Rentec.

Ventura Thai Venture

The partnership between Celco and their Singapore-based representative Audio-Visual Land Pte Ltd paid dividends in May when the latter placed an order for a Ventura 1000 lighting console and 15 Fusion 1210 programmable digital dimmers for the first phase of a huge leisure project in the north of Thailand.

Owner V Mingmaung has yet to name the 2,000-seater conference centre and 1000-seater concert hall/discotheque, but it is likely to become the country's most influential live music venue, hosting some of the world's premier acts.

Celco engineers will visit Thailand to commission the concert hall system and train operators this summer, whilst Audio-Visual Land intends to introduce further Celco products to the venue during the second phase of development.

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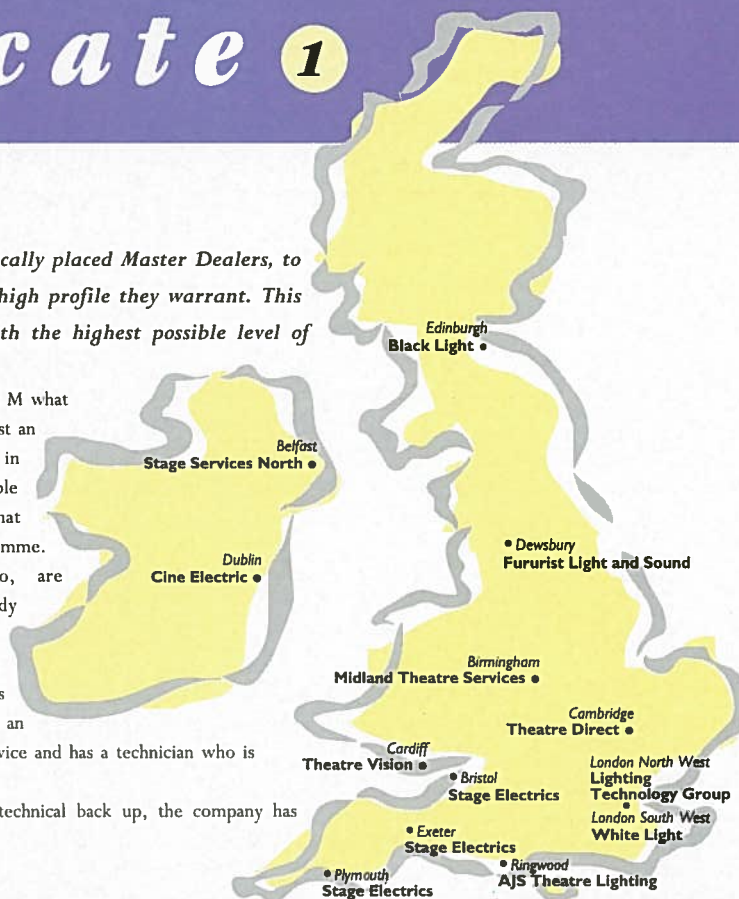
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Communicate asked Michael Goldberg, managing director of M & M what it takes to be an ETC Master Dealer. "A Master Dealer is more than just an outlet which takes orders. Each one must be actively involved in promoting and demonstrating the product and must employ staff capable of carrying out that promotional programme.

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Michael Goldberg also told Communicate that, as part of the technical back up, the company has appointed Andrew Hurst as in-house technical sales and client contact.



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Imagination Work Magic for Disney



A concept painting of the 85,000 ton cruise liner Disney Magic.

'Disney Magic', the first of two 85,000 ton ships for the newly formed Disney Cruise Line, has been launched in Venice. The fleet will be amongst the most modern vessels afloat when they enter service in early 1998.

Imagination, the London-based design consultancy, was appointed by Disney as overall lighting consultants for both ships. The company's remit is to design and specify the architectural lighting for the ship's exterior and public circulation areas, including restaurants, theatres, night clubs, a health spa and retail and merchandising outlets.

"Despite the fact that we have never designed a ship's lighting scheme before, Disney were very impressed with Imagination's approach to the lighting of the Lloyd's and Hoover buildings, as well as our previous track record with show productions," Paul Scott, project director for Imagination, told L+S.I. Co-ordination of the work over the past 18 months with the ship's architects Yran & Storbraaten of Oslo, is entering the final phase as installation is now being carried out at the Fincantieri shipyard in Italy.

Imagination has created a diverse range of lighting for the ships' purpose-built design and interiors with dedicated areas for children, families and adults. These include a night constellation of Disney characters in the 15,000sq.ft of children's space; a themed animation restaurant which transforms from black and white to colour during the meal; rekindling of classic influences for the external promenade and pool decks, as well as enhancing the funnels and superstructure.

City's New Taktics

Le Mark TVS has appointed City Theatrical Inc as their exclusive distributor within the United States and Canada to offer their self-adhesive accessory Blacktak Light Masking Foil. The company will market Blacktak through their extensive dealer network. Gary Falls of City Theatrical is pictured presenting the ceremonial 'first roll sold in America' to the production electrician of Phantom of the Opera in New York.



Club Nights in the North

The Liquid Room, a new 1200-capacity live venue in the Scottish capital, owned by 2001 Leisure, has upgraded its sound specification. The venue hopes that the system, designed by Craig Shaw and costing £110,000, will entice bands not carrying their own production to play across on the Scottish east coast. A Crest 40-channel LM12 monitor console lies at the heart of the specification. A 40-channel Century Vx desk had already been supplied to the venue for FOH duty and Shaw wanted to keep continuity with Crest when it came to specifying the stage set-up. The sale, via Bathgate-based EFX Audio, was confirmed by Northern Light of Edinburgh, Crest Audio's Scottish dealers. The spec also includes a purpose-built Logic Systems house (20K) and monitor sound reinforcement system.

Across the way in Glasgow, the new Trash venue is the latest addition to the city's club scene. It operates three separate dance rooms, which include Logic Systems' sound reinforcement systems, all driven by Crest. There are also two massive projection screens (with a selection of Nintendo and Sony Playstations). The sale and installation was carried out by Northern Light.

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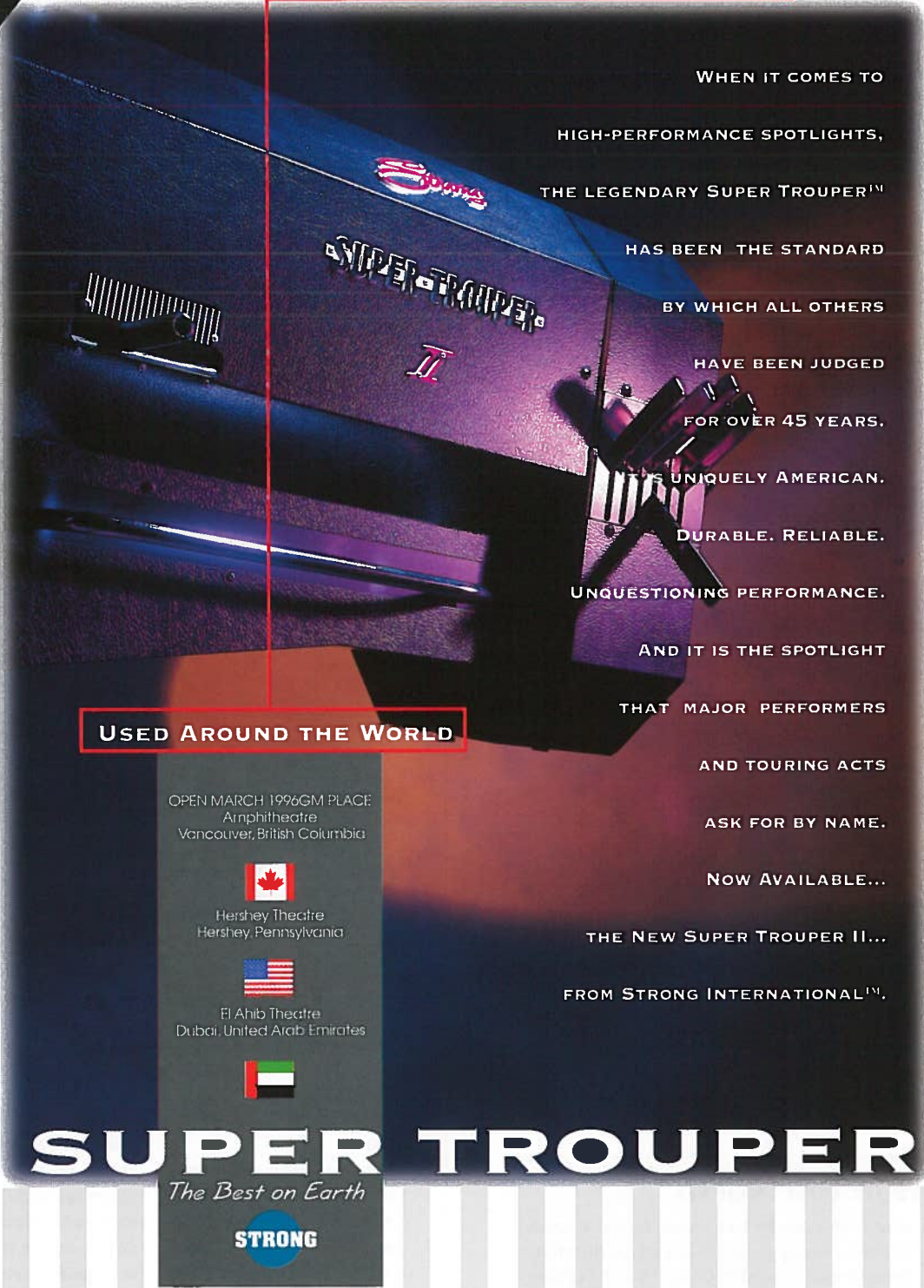
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St. George Rides into Battle in Salisbury



The recent St. George's Day Celebrations in Salisbury culminated in a spectacular Son et Lumière event in the city's market square.

Two PIGI projectors, supplied by ETC Europe, were used to cover the front of the Guild Hall delivering images of St. George's return from the Holy Land following the Crusades and his subsequent battle with the Dragon. Below the projection, real life knights fought it out in the market square. ETC gleaned some of the images from a number of sources including contemporary texts and children's drawings, but also had to generate much of the artwork from scratch.

Cue Restructure

Cue Pro Audio, the London-based audio repair service company, have carried out a restructuring exercise designed to improve operations and further enhance turnaround time for projects.

Gerry Pietrafesa has been appointed as technical manager and will oversee the running of the service department. He will provide technical support and advice for clients. Diane Pender, already a familiar voice to Cue customers, is now operations manager and will be dealing with all logistics and administrative inquiries.

A new face on the team will be Paul Godfrey who joins the company as sales executive for the new Cue Pro Audio sales department. Godfrey has previously worked for Yamaha and Crest Audio UK and will be responsible for developing sales, including the exclusive distribution of Apogee sound systems in the UK.

High End Bag Clutch of Industry Awards

1997 has been an award-winning year so far for Texas-based entertainment lighting manufacturer High End Systems Inc.

In January, the company accepted its first Readers Poll Award for Lighting Equipment Manufacturer of the Year from Performance magazine, whilst Studio Color took home the first-place Gold trophy for New Lighting Product of the Year as voted by UK-based Live! magazine readers.

Three awards for technical achievement were given to High End products in April at the EnTech Trade show in Australia: the Cyberlight was acknowledged as the Most Popular Enhanced Moving Light; Studio Color was awarded New Lighting Product and the Dataflash AF1000 xenon strobe took the spotlight as the Most Popular Lighting Effect. Finally, High End's EcoDome architectural housing won an Award of Distinction in the New Product Showcase segment of Lightfair International in New York.

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Baby Bird

The Irish Centre, Leeds

LD: Dave Morris

SD: Paul Lemon

This was a rescheduled gig following a cancellation some weeks earlier when the main man, Stephen Jones, had lost his voice. The Irish Centre was a poor substitute for the Leeds Town & Country in terms of capacity, but was possibly a last opportunity to see this artiste in a truly intimate setting. Lucky for some. I say 'main man' because Baby Bird are personified in Mr Jones: two hits down the path of fame, his legend is already set. This man not only writes, plays and sings acutely original material, but he also had the prescience to record four albums before launching himself upon the pop world. The talent of Baby Bird is transparent for all who care to look.

SOUND

In view of the rapid rise to popularity, this is the first tour Baby Bird have ever attempted carrying production. Despite the relative brevity of their career, front-of-house engineer Paul Lemon has been with the band since their second ever live gig a little over two years ago. Lemon's is a new face in the engineer's role, but he has served his apprenticeship, having initially worked as a sound technician at Sheffield University and then three years mixing for the Leadmill: "When it was more a live band venue than a disco, as it is now," he said ruefully. Well, the Leadmill's loss is Baby Bird's gain.

Lemon has a Turbosound Floodlight system from Skan PA. "I chose them because I was looking for a company that would look after me and the band," he explained. Meeting Skan at the Essential Festival last year was enough exposure to the ethics of Skan PA for Lemon to make his choice.

The Irish Centre is small: low roof, hole-in-the-wall stage, with beer bars every six feet. It's a typical Northern Working Man's Club-style venue - it wouldn't be hard to put a PA in here and blow everyone's heads off. Lemon has a system of six subs per side with four Floods on top and a fifth on stage, angled across for the front few rows. FOH he has a Midas XL200, a multitude of gates and compressors, plus three SPX990s, a PCM70, a 901 and two SDE330s. It's the latter he calls upon most, with the number of delay cues that fit the show. This music is quirky, never really touching on rock. During the course of the show there is some harder-edged material, but it's the dynamic vocalisation that dominates the style of the mix. This is not a band that you can sit back and watch as an engineer, so Lemon really has to ride the desk: "All the material was recorded on a simple four-track originally, so there's no discipline of level on stage," Lemon explained.

Jones' vocal technique is excellent: whatever else he learned while locked away recording, he certainly mastered his own powerful voice. Lemon is a gentle mixer, letting the voice ride up with



Baby Bird's Stephen Jones at the Irish Centre, Leeds, with the cumbersome but effective egg prop.

Jones' enthusiasm, just teasing in the odd fattening touch of delay at the cue points he's so obviously familiar with. This is the lowest level mix I've heard in ages - just enough to submerge the background chatter of the venue and allow Jones to feed off his own voice in the house - something that undoubtedly helped Chris Leckie on monitors.

Leckie has only been with the band since last October, but has quickly mastered the major instrument: "He (Jones) spent a lot of time developing his own sound and getting it right, and that's what they want to hear. His voice is very powerful, running from just a whisper to a real shout. If I do anything, it's just to compress his vocal to stop the rest of the band getting killed."

Although Leckie was offered the ubiquitous XL3 for monitors, he took the smaller Soundcraft SM12, for logical reasons: "I needed something I knew would fit on-stage." He also uses a pair of Clair Brothers wedges for Jones, for that more hi-fi sound. And that was the lasting impression I took away: hi-fi.

LIGHTING

These rescheduled shows have left LD Dave Morris with something of a 'catch as catch can' rig: "On the original show a few weeks back, I had a rig from Art of Darkness (AoD) plus a system of VL6s and VL5s. With this just being a three-show stint, it didn't make sense financially to re-use Vari*Lites and some ceiling had to be imposed on the budget."

That said, AoD have provided a two-truss rig (to give you some perspective on the venues, they're supported by Zodiac towers), five four-lamp bars of Pars, two Bi-lites, a couple of floor Pars, a few ground rows and 10 Trakspots, all run from an Avolites Pearl. The main obstacle for Morris has been the band's relative lack of experience. At the start of the tour his design was first seen by the band the night before at the opening venue; they dismissed it out of hand as 'too rock and roll'. Fortunately, he was rescued by production manager Mark Ward, who recognised a bout of

pre-tour nerves masquerading as artistic concern. Nevertheless, Morris had one night of programming to a show tape recorded on the one set-up day, before being subjected to a 'now show us what you can do' session the following afternoon, before doors opened on the first show. These nerves seem to have manifested themselves as a dislike of gobos, a dislike of movement and various other neuroses. Morris was thick-skinned enough to persevere and over the past weeks has been able to gently introduce some of the claimed dislikes back into his intended show design.

The dominant feature of the stage is the Baby Bird egg - a 3D structure approximately eight feet tall with the band's name in bright neon lettering around its girth: "It's a pain," said Morris, "built by a theatre shop in the band's home town of Sheffield. The thing is heavy and incredibly difficult to handle - even the flight-case wheels are set too far apart to fit any truck ramp. That said, it looks really nice and is just about worth the hassle."

It is a great prop, which Morris doesn't fail to exploit: neon on, neon off, lit by Trakspots, up-light, down-light and I forgot to mention Morris has four VL5s in his rig (the only vestige from the original) that by careful focus convert the egg to heart shape for the song 'Candygirl'. Despite the small stage and overbearing presence of the egg, the fact that the band still insist on all trussing and back wall being masked does mean Morris is able to let it dim into the background for some songs. In a tight space he produces a fair variety of looks.

Last time I visited this venue it was to see Oasis. While I don't expect history to be repeated in the same way, there's no doubt in my mind that Stephen Jones is equally talented, although not in the mould of Noel Gallagher: Jones is a more considered songsmith, able to produce truly original material without reference to previous genres. If Baby Bird (or should I say Stephen Jones) were a company, then I'd buy as many shares as I could with a view to them becoming a blue chip in my long-term portfolio.

Kenny G

Wembley Arena

LD: Seth Jackson

SD: Al Tucker

If you're the kind of person that thinks seduction is how many Malibus you can pour down a girl's throat before rendering her unconscious, then read no further. As front-of-house engineer Al Tucker said: "This is music people make love to. They don't want their heads blown off - this is a sensuous experience."

SOUND

Al Tucker has one of the best jobs in the industry. Who wouldn't relish sitting front-of-house for a band that know how to play, play to controlled levels (not constant level, but never the pursuit of increasing volume so many musos are unable to resist), and provide all the information your ears need to follow the peaks and troughs of this languorous musical foreplay. To say Tucker spends most of the night inactive at his desk is to understate his role somewhat: admittedly, once the show is underway, his job is mainly that of watchman, but the set-up is crucial and determining level a vital contribution.

"These are intelligent, well-educated and discerning concert-goers. They don't come to a Kenny G concert to be seen by their friends. The biggest ego I have to deal with is right here," he said, pointing to his Midas XL3. "The band are just great to work with. The live sound does have to be

different - there's a need to inject some drama into what they hear, but it's the fine line between concert and album that I have to tread. The albums are not recorded loud - that's the level I have to find. It's the level they expect."

Tucker uses a proprietary PA system from Maryland Sound. For Wembley, he has 12 cabinets a side flown with six more stacked two high down on the floor in front of the PA wings. A little hefty for the job (they are almost the size of an S4), these are to put some near fill across the front few rows that aren't reached by the flown system. Needless to say, Mr G often stands right in front of these fills. Maybe he's taunting Tucker, lingering and playing all the while - but ne'er a squeak is heard of feedback. It's a completely untreated sound: it needs nothing added and it gets none. The image hangs plumb from the heart of the stage and the only time this seems even remotely less than perfect is when Kenny's out on his tours of the auditorium, but then what are you going to do about that?

LIGHTING

Seth Jackson has just ended a run in the US using a mixed Icon/VL5 system designed by his predecessor Val Groth. Groth and Jackson have colluded on Kenny G over the years, with she as the LD and production manager, he being her programmer. Now, having elected to quit the road, she has generously, but quite logically, handed the reins to Jackson. For the European leg he's designed a rig that, by his own admission, bears much of Groth's influence: "There's nothing symmetrical here, five trusses all at different heights and varying angles."

The system is supplied by CPL/Vari-Lite Europe and comprises VL2Cs and VL4s. The switch of

moving yoke lamps was made for purely practical considerations: the tour is going to circle the Pacific after Europe and they're looking as much as possible to secure the same rig wherever they go. Jackson has added a couple of items he won't be able to carry along - DHA Light Curtains for one, and a set of six motorised venetian blinds, kindly dug out of the Brilliant Stages' compendium of stage props, for which Jackson is extremely grateful: "I couldn't believe my luck when Mick Healey from CPL took me around to Brilliant and I found these blinds. I was looking for something to put some depth into the back of stage and these are just perfect."

Although Mr G was less than impressed when he first saw them during rehearsals, Jackson was able to demonstrate their effectiveness from the front-of-house position and now hopes he has persuaded the boss to pay for them to tour the Pacific. This is a mood show, which is not to say that Jackson is content to paint a scene and then rest. There is a fairly constant, though subtle blending from one state to the next. The palette rests predominantly in the blue spectrum, as suits the overall musical style, but there is variance. One number, heavily coloured by South American rhythms, is lit in a fire of reds and ambers. Jackson is also adept at lamp repositioning during a song, like a warm-blooded version of Autopilot, he's ever ready to take the VL2Cs off the stage to follow Mr G on his tours of the auditorium.

This is a deeply sensuous show, although it's actually rather odd that people would want to experience such intimate musical emotions in the live environment. Maybe they just want to pat him on the back and thank him for re-kindling some lost passion. If music be the food of love, then Kenny G should be as fat as his drummer.

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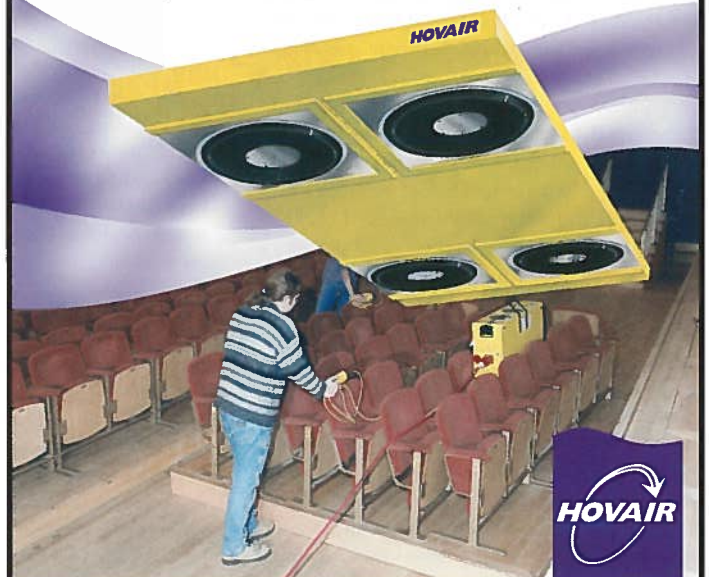


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BRING OUT THE BEAST

As London's most expensive musical settles into its stride at the Dominion Theatre, Rob Halliday looks at where a substantial portion of the reported £10m has been spent

It's a funny old world at times: while the tradition has been for new musicals to start on the stage and then progress to the cinema - a trend undergoing a revival with last year's film of *Evita* and talk of a film version of *Phantom*, allegedly to star John Travolta - Disney, an undisputed king of cinema, are moving in the other direction. *Beauty and the Beast* enjoyed considerable success as an animated feature film and is now, as the advertising constantly points out, London's most expensive musical - a £10m blockbuster that has settled into the Dominion Theatre for what all involved hope will be a long run. Turning a stage show into a film is relatively easy: the cynic might say that you just employ a star (singing ability optional) and scale up the visuals. But to turn a film into a show - especially an animated film, where just about anything goes? That's harder.

It works in this case because even in its film incarnation, *Beauty and the Beast* had a familiar story told in the structure of a good old-fashioned musical - narrative linked songs, interspersed with moments of spectacle. This is probably because of the theatrical background of its creators: author Linda Woolverton, composer Alan Menken and lyricist Howard Ashman.

Once the film was released, its theatrical nature was recognised by director Robert Jess Roth, designer Stan Meyer and choreographer Matt West, a trio then working on shows and parades at Disney's American theme parks. They took a proposal to produce a stage version to the Disney executives who, after some persuasion, agreed. The show, expanded with extra lyrics by Tim Rice, brought in after Howard Ashman's death in 1991, opened on Broadway in 1994, collecting countless awards and spawning not only further productions around the world (London is version 10), but also a new division of Disney - Disney Theatricals, which owns the New Amsterdam Theatre on Broadway and is actively involved in developing more musicals.

DESIGN

The show's look is based quite closely on the film - the human characters, Belle, her father, Gaston and the villagers, are dressed practically identically to their cartoon counterparts, while scenic designer Stan Meyer also manages to cram most of the locations featured in the film onto the stage. Perhaps, the biggest challenge facing the creative team was translating the 'object' characters from the film - Mrs Potts the teapot, Lumière the candlestick, Cogsworth the clock and their friends - into something that would work on stage.

Meyer's design combines techniques from scenic design through the ages. There are moving 3D pieces of all sizes: the enormous castle which tracks up and down stage, the castle's west wing which also moves up and down stage, but can spin to show the Beast outside on his balcony (a complex piece of engineering, since the tower has to change its



Beauty and the Beast: the highest production values, but critics have been 'sniffy'.



rake to compensate for the raked floor as it turns) and the village houses which track on and off stage. There are flown pieces, notably the exterior of the Beast's castle and a series of drapes and cloths used for various locations inside. And there are pieces which rise up from the floor - a bench downstage and the huge staircase which rises up centre stage during the huge Be Our Guest production number.

But Meyer is also not afraid to use the oldest type of theatrical scenery, and one which has gone somewhat out of fashion in these days of film-style 3D realism: the painted cloth. The cloths work because they are beautifully detailed and exceptionally well painted, and because a great deal of care has been taken in lighting them.

Getting this scenery up and working was entrusted to production managers Simon Marlowe and Stewart Crosbie and production carpenter Micky Murray who, to a great extent, treated the show as a new British production rather than just a clone of the New York version - with one British contribution, the new versions of the pyrotechnic effects created by Le Maitre, particularly delighting the director and designer. The five main players in its construction were the Artscene Partnership,

which painted the backcloths, Terry Murphy Scenery, which built and painted the 3D elements, Delstar Engineering, who constructed the structural elements and installed the sub-stage hydraulic ring-main, Stage Drives and Controls who were responsible for the automation and Vertigo Rigging who hung it all in the air.

The range of projects tackled by these companies were very diverse, but all required tight co-ordination with each other. The Beast's castle, for example, moves up and down stage from self-contained drive systems, but also contains dimmers to feed the many

lighting units hidden within it, and pulls a large cable 'drag chain' containing automation, lighting, Vari*Lite control and power, and control for items such as the magic rose with falling petals - a Howard Eaton Lighting Ltd (HELL) special. As well as making this work, Delstar also found themselves refurbishing the Dominion's own, long unused, centre stage lift, put to use in the show for the Be Our Guest number, while Vertigo had to revamp the theatre's grid, suspend the Foy flying system used to fly the enchantress at the start of the show, support the stage lift while Delstar worked on it and even lift the industrial-sized washing and drying machines into the wardrobe department, newly constructed as part of the extension at the rear of the theatre. With the producers talking of a run of at least five years for the show, Vertigo and their crew chief Ken Mehmed worked to ensure that all of the rigging would meet forthcoming safety standards. And with the show's flying pieces forming a very tight fit in the grid, the company also tried to build in flexibility with a pulley block system that allowed millimetre-fine adjustment up-and-down stage so that when the inevitable clash of flying pieces occurred, it could be resolved with the minimum of fuss.

As is now becoming standard practice in large-scale musicals, all of the scenery in the show is automated, partly to allow complex movement sequences to be run identically night after night, and partly because that's how this show has always been done because of the high labour costs in America. The automation system was supplied by Barry Steele and his Stage Drives and Control company, using their new PC-based control system which controls the 44 counterweight-assisted motorised flying pieces, the hydraulically powered pieces, as well as elements such as tracking chairs, tracking cloths (these running on Triple E Unitrack, with some of the tracks corded in an unusual manner and including rearfold carriers to allow the soft material to stack correctly in the wings) and the line of pop-up candles across the front of the stage.

LIGHTING

On becoming part of the creative team for *Beauty*, lighting designer Natasha Katz joined a director and a designer who had already been working on the project for a couple of years, and so had already filled most of the available space overhead! To gain the most flexibility in what little space remained, Katz turned to Vari*Lites to form the core of the design for which she received a Tony lighting award nomination. Vari*Lites remain the principal part of the rig in the London production: 67 units, a mixture of VL2Cs and VL4s overhead and on the side-lighting ladders, with VL6s on the circle front and tucked away between the iron and the red show portal and VL5s built in to the top of the Beast's castle.



Barry James as 'Cogsworth'.

The rest of the rig is largely a mixture of Par cans and ETC Source 4s. Front-lighting comes from a new lighting bridge, custom built and installed by Vertigo, that runs practically the full width of the Dominion's wide auditorium. This contains a high- and low-bar, each fed from custom trunking supplied by HELL and containing a mixture of 10 degree and 19 degree Source 4s, and allows easy access for maintenance or focusing. The theatre's lower circle position was refurbished, with the old boxes being removed and a new, wider bar installed and then filled with Source 4s, Par cans, VL5s, a Pani 2.4K projector complete with

film scroller and greyscale shutter from Production Arts used to project falling rain in the climactic final battle sequence, and even one five-degree Source 4 to give a bright highlight to the falling rose petal painted on the show's front gauze.

Upstage is a battery of floodlights to tackle the huge range of backcloths; these are lit with a mixture of direct and indirect light from above and below. ADB 1K floods are recessed into troughs in the show deck, some of these loaded with Devon glass, capable of giving deep colour without burning out, mounted in custom colour stand-offs supplied by City Theatrical in New York, while overhead there is a combination of three- and four-cell 1K floods, lines of Par cans (substituted for the 6-cell Par striplights found in the States) giving another six colours, and then a line of DHA Digital Light Curtains fitted, unusually but effectively, with medium flood bulbs.

The rig also contains close-on 100 Rainbow 2-16 scrollers, System 1200 photoflash strobes used for lighting effects, remote controlled dimmers from Howard Eaton Lighting driving some practicals in the battery-powered invention, four of the superb SS-6000 dry ice machines from City Theatrical, and 40 DHA Double Gobo Rotators, some used to project rotating knives and forks in *Be Our Guest*, the rest used to give a 'sparkly' effect to the cloths and characters in some numbers. The conventionals in the rig were driven by a dual-electronics ETC Obsession 1500 desk, with a Macintosh driving the DLCs, another Mac controlling the Pani film loop, and an Artisan used to program the Vari*Lites, which

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was replaced by a Mini Artisan 2 once the show was running. The Obsession's ETCNet ethernet network was used to drive an Obsession designer's remote on the production desk as well as a remote video node at the Artisan which allowed the Vari*Lite operator to see the cue sheet and so stay in sync during plotting.

All the lighting equipment for the show was supplied by Theatre Projects and Vari-Lite, with TP's Michael Odam serving as UK associate lighting designer and the rig and control system being installed by production electrician Gerry Amies and his team of Jonathan Badger, Greg Hamlyn and electricians Mark Whittemore and Mark Leahy; the Vari*Lite were installed by Paul Cooke and Chris Dunford, programmed by Stuart Porter and are now operated by Simon Targett.

However, with the show requiring a great deal of other electrical work, including a new dimmer installation, new power supplies for automation, cable management for the scenery and an enormous number of practical circuits built into the set, TP expanded their role to become the overall electrical manager for the project. They then sub-contracted Dick Smith of RWS Electrical to re-wire the theatre's dimmer outlets to a mixture of Socapex and 15A outlets, then install a new mains distribution system and 366 new ETC Sensor dimmers in the sub-stage dimmer room.

On stage, Ken Priddy was contracted to install the cable management systems to several sliding trucks and the more extensive system feeding the Beast's castle. This consists of two drag chains, one to the main castle and one to the west wing, that contain automation



Derek Griffiths as 'Lumière' and Rebecca Thornhill as 'Babette'.

power and control, DMX, Vari*Lite data and power to feed the ADB dimmers built in to the base of the two trucks. With the VL5s in the truck being controlled from the Artisan but powered from the truck's on-board dimmers, a merging arrangement was also required to convert the Artisan data to DMX, then feed it to the dimmers alongside the data from the Obsession.

Theatre Projects also oversaw the practical installation; Andy Evans managed this area, daunting because practically every piece of scenery contained some kind of light source,

from the red eyes in the monsters moulded into the castle's tracking columns, through the birdies highlighting areas of the castle itself, to the chasing bulbs, neon and sparkle strobes built into the huge Be Our Guest flown portals, the show portal and several other flown cloths. Evans and his team became shadowy creatures during the fit-up, eventually appearing only at night when they could work on bits of the set uninterrupted!

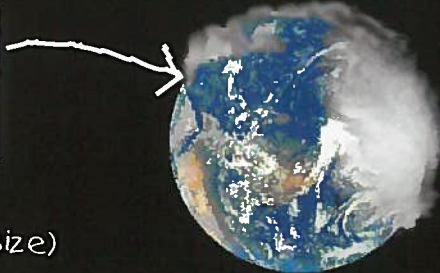
As the lighting period for Beauty approached, the American lighting team for the show was actually being stretched quite thinly, with Natasha Katz herself about to give birth to her second child and associate lighting designer Greg Cohen stuck in Mexico City working on another production of the show. Early lighting was thus handled by Aland Henderson, expanding from his usual role of Vari*Lite programmer, and assistant lighting designer Dan Walker alongside Mike Odam, with Natasha Katz arriving just before the start of previews to apply her own refinements and revisions. The conventional rig was focused very quickly, but the vast majority of the show is lit using the Vari*Lite rig which, with a hard-edged light and a wash light clustered together just about everywhere, is close to being the ultimate rep moving light rig, able to get a light of any quality, in any colour, from any angle to just about anywhere on the stage.

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their VL2 and VL4 colour mixing systems, especially when lighting brightly coloured pieces of scenery. The rest of the rig just fills the gaps and lights the cloths, with four followspots (two 2K Super Troupers in the front box and two Lycian StarkLites in the side auditorium boxes) highlighting principles. Unable to get the soft edge they desired from the spots, Henderson and Walker had some 'baggies' - American plastic sandwich bags - Fedexed over from the States, to give a diffusion to the edge of the beam that is subtler than the more commercial frosts!

Lighting sessions were also very entertaining because of director Rob Roth's fascination with the lighting technology, 'just hold positions while we Vari*Lite you', being one of the most commonly-heard cries. The result is a very busy show, lighting wise: the Obsession has no free effects, and somewhere less than 5% of free cue memory. It is distinctively 'American musical' in style at times - bright washes made up from several colours, all cleanly focused off the set - yet the Vari*Lites also allow the creation of moody gobo states, or tight highlights to particular areas. When spectacle is required, it is delivered - especially in Be Our Guest when at one point it almost seems that every lamp in the rig is chasing. One of the best moments comes in the garden scene where the Beast and Belle waltz. Here, there is a painted backcloth, but with the painted lamps wired with tiny bulbs, a pair of 3D gates dressed with 3D flowers, and a beautiful blue gobo wash from the Vari*Lites that lets Belle's dress appear to flow as she moves. The audience were enraptured. The lighting designer's hope is that the show will run long enough on Broadway for her children to appreciate its magic . . .

EFFECTS

Le Maitre's brief was to supply and install all the pyrotechnic effects. As the show was an exact copy of the US version, the company had to custom make all the effects to Disney's requirements. For this Le Maitre put chief chemist Colin Lindsay to work, whilst technicians set about installing all the cabling to shoot the effects. Key effects are installed into Maurice's cart, whilst smoke effects are



Vari*Lites handle all of the specials in the show, as well as many of the washes.

packed into Mrs Pott's spout with both fired by the actors from hand-held firing systems. The company were also responsible for the ignited fireball which is thrown across the stage and explodes on impact.

SOUND

It was the combination of a great deal of experience and of being in the right place at the right time that landed Richard Sharratt the first large-scale musical sound design of his own. Originally asked to be the UK associate to sound designer Jonathan Deans, Sharratt's role on the London production grew slowly as Deans and Disney came into dispute over the ownership of sound effects in the show. This probably isn't the place to get involved with the politics of that dispute, but the result was that though Disney brought some of the sound effects with them, Sharratt and his team had to create everything else from scratch - something that caused some early panic in the director, who'd been expecting the sound system to arrive on floppy disk and be ready to go. Fortunately, as Sharratt explains: "He very quickly realised that we'd done our homework,

and things were fine after those initial moments." Indeed, Sharratt now feels that having to programme the show, especially the LCS computer system controlling the complex effects, has been more useful to the team running the show since they've been able to learn the systems from the ground up, rather than just being thrown into a pre-existing show.

And those effects do take some learning: whereas the sound for most musicals is about reinforcing the singers and balancing the band, with perhaps just one or two short sound effects, *Beauty* is altogether more challenging because of the director's desire for lots and lots of sound effects, in an almost cartoon-like manner. To achieve these effects, Sharratt's sound team divided forces; while one team, led by production sound engineer Thomas Ashbee and including Jim Armstrong, Jim Douglas, Harry Harris, Paul Johnston, Tim Lynn and Greg Pink, lived in the theatre and gradually got the huge rig up-and-running, Sharratt and sound effects mixer Tracy Campbell spent more time in the rehearsal room, which was equipped with a miniature sound effects system and so allowed them to rehearse the 'comedy' sound

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effects with the company. Campbell now spends the shows in a sub-stage sound control room, running the effects from two Akai 3200 samplers for the spot effects and two Akai DR4 hard disk recorders for the longer effects, all routed through the LCS system - this even being versatile enough to make sound effects follow visible on-stage sources (such as the invention truck) through speakers hidden on stage.

The sound effects join the rest of the system at the "embarrassingly large array of Cadac equipment" located at the rear of the stalls. A 60-way J-type desk handles the 34 radio mics (presided over by Lisa Sykes), reverb returns and effects, while an F-type is used for the orchestra mix. The F-type is equipped with 17 dial mono inputs and 19 stereo input modules, these created for the show by Cadac at Sharratt's request. A two-man team run the desk, Phij Adams mixing the chorus and orchestra, while Borneo Brown handles the radio mics and the overall sound of the show. Having two operators is a rare sight in this day and age, but is something that every production of *Beauty* has enjoyed and which, Sharratt feels, probably gives a better result.

Vocals reach the desk through Sennheiser SK50 radio mic transmitters connected to Countryman B3 mics, while the orchestra sound is captured by a comprehensive range of mics in the pit. The sound then runs through 33 Macrotech MA1200 amplifiers and on to the loudspeakers.

The separate vocal and band systems share space on large booms either side of the pros, each containing (in order, from the top) a 650 sub-base unit, two self-powered MSL4s carrying the band to the circle, two UMs carrying vocals to the circle, two MSL4s (stalls band), three UMs (stalls vocal) and a further 650 sub-base unit. The booms themselves, rigged by Vertigo, are actually constructed from two RSJs bolted to the floor and secured at the top, and with ladder steps welded in to the back of the 'I' beam. Though looking slightly precarious to a casual observer, they actually give a very clean line to the speaker's rigging (without the usual mess of boom arms) as well as allowing easy access to the crew.

Filling the gap between the booms in this very wide theatre is a central cluster containing



Mrs Potts - Le Maitre smoke effects are packed into her spout.

three MSL4s and three UM downfills, and then a comprehensive delay system, with two rows of eight UPM1s for the stalls. There is also a set of front-fill loudspeakers built into the front of the stage, though these are split into groups and can 'pan' with the main booms, helping the effect of sound moving from one side of the stage to the other for those sitting in the centre of the stalls. The speaker tally is completed with a comprehensive surround system, formed mainly from JBL Control 1s at the back of each level, and then above each level pointing downwards to help the effect for people who would normally be away from the surround systems. Each run of Control 1s is wired alternately, to help move effects around, and the surround system is completed by two USW sub-base units hidden (by the ever versatile team from Vertigo!) in air conditioning ducts at the rear of the stalls from where, by a fortunate quirk of the air conditioning system, they also get sound to the circle. The surround and delay systems are driven from amplifiers hidden in a tiny amp room at the rear of the stalls, in the wall behind the mixing desk - and, given the production's budget and anticipated life, sound engineer Tom Ashbee even managed to acquire some wooden flooring from Ikea, to add a touch of class to the proceedings!

So, despite being the newest member of the creative team, Sharratt and his team seem to have got up to speed with the show very quickly, with vocals being, for the most part, clearly and cleanly audible. Some of the 'cartoon' effects don't work quite as well, but I suspect that's because the difference in sound

quality between a 'real' actor speaking and a sound effect, and an actor on film and a sound effect, is enough to make the sound seem unnatural. But the kids in the audience loved them. And anyway, the Disney team must be happy: having avoided the subject until after London opened, they've now signed Sharratt up to create the sound for the forthcoming production in Stuttgart.

The show opened in London on Tuesday May 13th, 1997. Nobody quite wants to say exactly how much it cost to fit-up, how much it costs to run, and how much it is taking at the box office. Rumour suggests that, to break even, it can't close until sometime in the next century, and has to consistently be very full between now and then. And, of course, it didn't get off to the best of starts when most of the critics were very sniffy about it.

On the other hand, during the London production period, the Broadway version of the show celebrated its fourth birthday. Just after London opened, the Mexico City production - the first large-scale musical ever to play that city - opened, and is then intended to play to a number of cities in South America. Another production opens in Stuttgart later in the year. Disney is, above all, a commercial organisation and wouldn't keep opening the shows if people weren't going to come and see them, so clearly, lots of people like it - though it is interesting to note that Disney have licensed the London production to the German producer, Stella, and so stand to lose little but reputation if the show doesn't last here.

The best London critics commented that the show was a large-scale pantomime; that is about right and, as with the best pantos, there are lines which will sail safely over the children's heads while making their parents laugh. It is one of the few current London shows which is a 'good night out for the whole family'. Yes, it's an expensive night out. But that money buys you the highest production values, just as it does in the films, or at the theme parks, or with anything else connected with the Disney brand. Disney seem to understand that people will pay more for that kind of quality and solid craftsmanship; a lesson that some producers of underdeveloped, underproduced pap would do well to learn.

Photos: Michael Le Poer Trench



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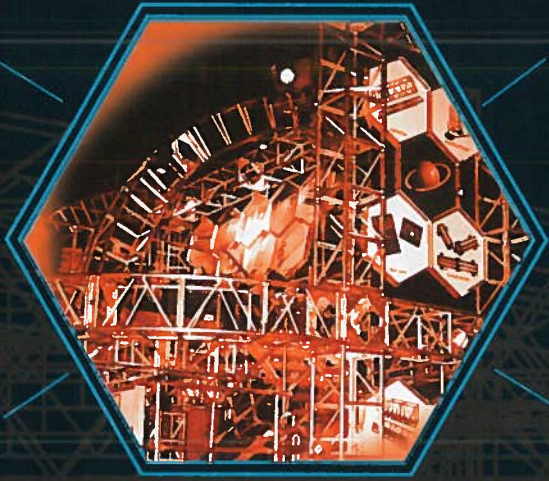
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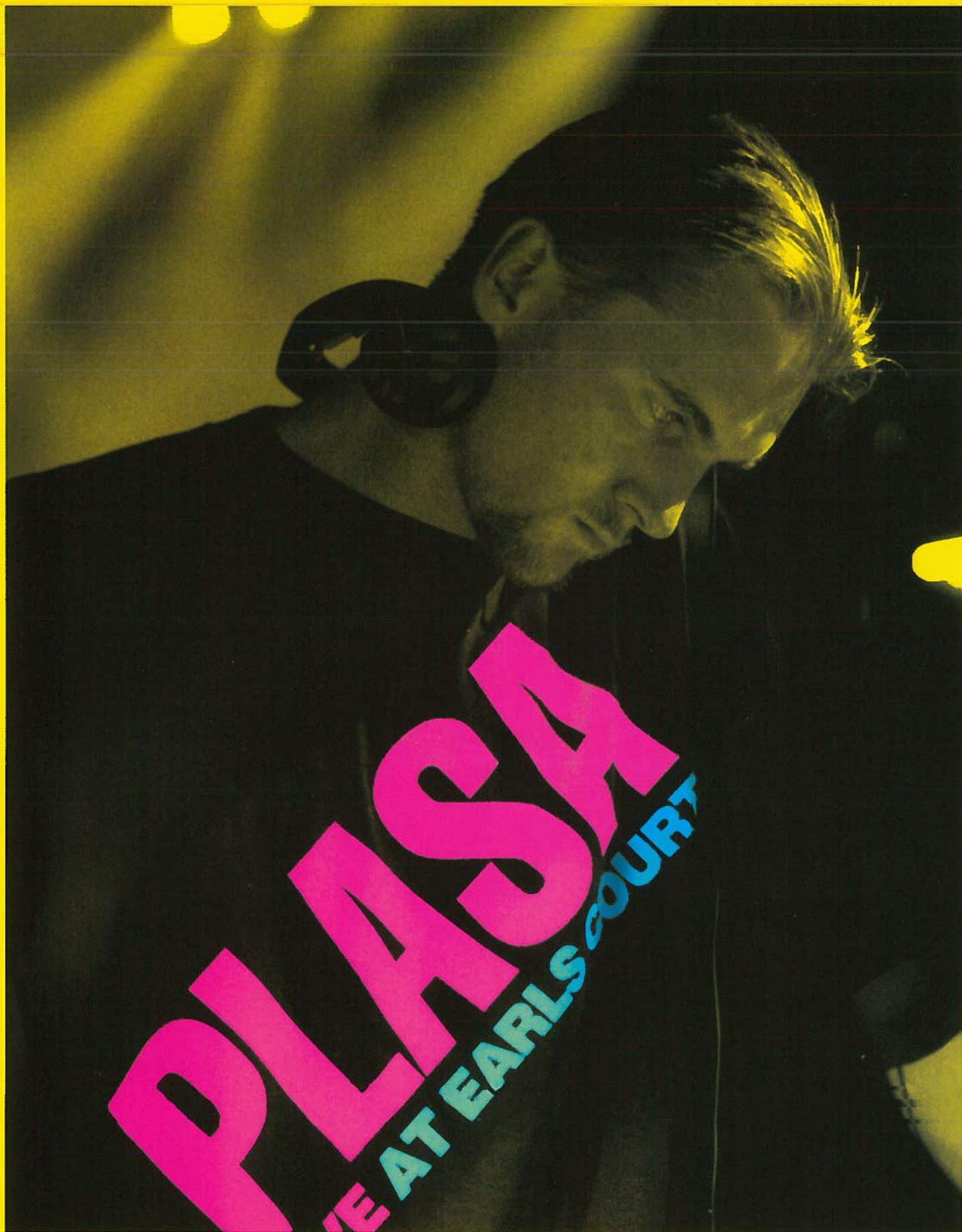
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THE BIG PA SPEND

Over the past 18 months, substantial purchases of PA system hardware have been made by many of the major sound hire companies. Steve Moles considers the trend

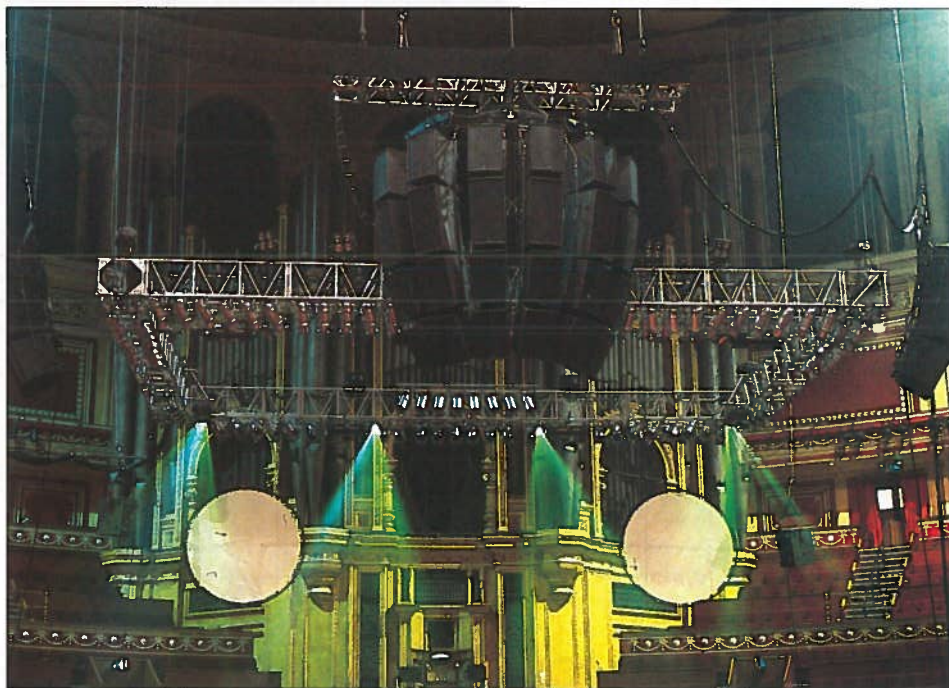
The trend started with **Wigwam** back in late '95 when they bought the new d&b 402 system which they've continued to expand throughout '96. They were soon followed by **Canegreen's** purchase of Meyer's new self-powered speakers (MSL4s et al), one to which they continued to add over the following 12 months to create a total spend that exceeds half a million pounds on the year. **Britannia Row's** Brian Grant acknowledges that the company spent £500,000 themselves on more Turbosound Flashlight (another 48 pairs) as well as a substantial investment in control and signal processing equipment.

More recently, **Capital Sound** have purchased Martin's Wavefront 8 Compact, 70 cabinets as a first phase, according to managing director Keith Davis. **Entec** are now buying into d&b technology in a big way with two arena-sized 402 systems and **Concert Sound** slapped a big 400Gs on the table at LTP for more EAW gear. With **SSE** spending three quarters of a million on Nexo's new Alpha system, there's clearly something going on. Has everyone's existing system worn out or is there a whole new chunk of concert-goers out there that nobody else knows about?

Taking the long view, one of the obvious stimuli to this purchasing extravaganza has been the change to compact, highly directional PA systems able to deliver power in a more controllable form. A vindication for the R&D departments of all concerned, this has certainly been a case of the technology forcing the market. Turbosound Flashlight arguably leads the way in the touring market, but we've seen strong showings from EAW, d&b audiotechnik, Meyer, Nexo and Martin Audio (with the much improved variant of the Wavefront 8, the Compact version). There is a convention about comparing apples to apples, and I might venture that all these systems are much of a muchness, but that's not the purpose of this piece. The point is that under the control of the service companies, these systems do compete for the same business. I don't mean to belittle any of the systems; the overall improvements to delivery and quality of sound in the past eight or nine years has been impressive, but I can hear the cries already.

For example, when I tentatively put this scenario to Brian Grant as a pre-cursor to the question 'does this then mean PA companies can only compete on price and levels of service?' he quickly intervened with: "I'd still argue that I haven't yet heard a system up to the quality of Flashlight." But the issue may be something else entirely: put a novice driver in charge of a Formula One car and he will spin off at the first bend. Put a good engineer at the controls of a modest PA and he will get a good sound.

Whatever the pros and cons of the various systems, that concerted switch to the new



Above, Martin Audio's Wavefront 8 Compact system ready to go for Ocean Colour Scene at the Royal Albert Hall in February, and below, Turbosound's Flashlight PA System rigged by Britannia Row Productions for The Cure.



directivity convention is largely complete for most companies, so the buying spree appears less to do with achieving parity of technology and more with changing markets.

Without looking at every company in detail, scratching the surface of a few reveals clues as to what influences purchasers apart from the product itself. Some of the purchase justifications are entirely business driven as Yan Stile at Canegreen points out: "You have to be perceived as a growing company, you can't stand still. I'm buying even more PA this year because I need to. This spring we've handled a lot more than just concert tours. *Bottom* with Rik Mayall and Adrian Edmondson was out for quite some time.

"This extra-curricular work gleaned from television is part of a planned strategy but work on the company infrastructure has also wrought improvements. The addition of

Andrew Frengley to the team has allowed us to diversify into commercial-style presentations, but perhaps the best investment has been in Information Technology. We took on maths graduate Richard Martin and he has built the most amazing stock control system for us. It's really good, not only does it spot gaps and re-jig equipment usage, it also provides different sub-hire parameters. It compares lengths of hire to equipment availability so we can go for

maximum usage of our own gear and sub-hire in for the shorter runs if we have to."

It's important to emphasise that despite the maximised utilisation that Stile claims for their new stock control system, they are still purchasing more hardware. In spite of this, it might prove a bit tough for the equipment salesmen in the short term. Arguably, they're not selling as much PA to Canegreen as they might have done, but if the improved usage maintains Canegreen's longevity then, taking the long view, that has to be a good thing.

As a bench-mark, it's noticeable that Canegreen have enlarged their premises considerably, recently expanding to 15,000sq.ft. They also had 30 classical music festivals booked for the summer season when I first interviewed them at the beginning of this year and by the end of March had already purchased another 32 MSL4s in anticipation of

this work (at £7,000 a pop that's a fair chunk of cash). The company have now purchased a total of 80 Meyer MSL4s in less than a year.

Capital Sound continue to expand their investment in the Martin Compact version of the Wavefront 8 system. "We're now up to 82 stacks," explained MD Keith Davis last month. "We bought another 12 stacks in January so we could handle a small venue tour, as well any arena shows." Davis has also been re-equipping amplifier-wise with a purchase of 56 Crown 3600s for the low-end of the W8 system and, as with the improvements in efficiency of speaker cabinets, the amplifier manufacturers have not been found wanting. "The Crown is an excellent amp for the low end," Davis said. "When Gary Glitter (a regular client) played Wembley we put just nine subs a side. Now that's a show that needs plenty of bass but the 7' folded horns were just the job with the Crown 3600s. What I heard was enough to convince me to replace all my low end amplifiers."

Like Canegreen, Capital Sound have also diversified into conference and corporate work. "We now have a separate division - CS Design - run by Andy Jackson that deals specifically with non-concert work and although we've bought a stack of small-scale gear - desks and W2s for example - to deal with this sector, equally there are jobs on a scale with the larger rock shows. For example, we are handling an outdoor show for the Rotarians in Scotland at Ibrox Park in June which 30,000 people are expected to attend and, needless to say, we will be drawing on our concert stock and experience to cover that."

While others have only recently expanded their operations through diversification, Wigwam have been a uniquely diversified company almost since inception, servicing not only concert and conference work, but also having a well developed reputation in the installation field and to some degree, mobile recording. (They also trade in staging hire as do SSE down in Birmingham). As already touched on, Wigwam were one of the first in the wave of buying for the 18 month period considered here, and their early commitment to the d&b 402 system points to a healthy cash flow. It might seem a long time ago now, but back in late '95 when Wigwam made their first purchase the only people talking about the green shoots of recovery were the Tory government.

Looking back at my On Tour records from that time, the arena circuit took a severe nose-dive and everything moved downscale into Town Halls. Arguably, Wigwam's diversity may have enabled them to raise the cash and make a decisive purchase when no-one else could. Speaking to Chris Hill, director of Wigwam's concert touring division, it emerged that they are now up to 100 stacks of 402. "We'll have 120 by the end of this year and we are just about to take delivery of some of the new 702 wide dispersion cabinets." This might not seem such a big thing until you remember that Wigwam still possess all the Meyer and Nexo equipment they had four years ago. The



Turbosound's Flashlight PA System rigged by Britannia Row Productions for Peter Gabriel's Secret World Tour.

"The record industry may refer to the PA companies as 'the plumbers' but if you have to work in a bog then what else is there?"

kit will be out this summer working across a number of classical events.

Wigwam's buying strategy is carefully focused: "We don't respond to specific requests," said Hill, "like we've got to have a new desk for this tour. If the tour isn't long enough to justify the purchase, and let's face it tours aren't that long these days, then we won't do it. It's one of the central dilemmas in any purchasing decision: just improving or buying into the latest technology doesn't necessarily allow you to charge any more than the market has already determined for that particular type of tool, be it front-of-house desk or complete system. We only buy to suit Wigwam, not the clients." That may be the voice of a phlegmatic Northern business man stating the obvious, but it's probably as sound a piece of advice as anyone in the PA hire business could want.

But there's always the exception that proves the rule. Brian Grant, talking in early April of the spending Britannia Row has committed over the past 18 months noted: "A lot of our big spend is not so much speculative but usually for a specific tour. If a client asks us to provide a particular desk for example, and such a purchase is justified by the tour length, then we go ahead." It's a common enough explanation; the only imponderable is what percentage of payback do you look for in making such a decision: is it an over-simplification to categorise purchase strategy entirely in terms of being led by market forces. Apart from

responsive purchases and the inevitable equipment wastage, two fairly substantial buys have appeared on Brit Row's capital expenditure ledger since 1995.

The purchase of Bernard Brown of Dallas, the PA side of the company - not the lights - gave Brit Row the largest Turbosound Flood and Flashlight stock in the US. Indeed, Grant now positively claims that Britannia Row are the biggest holder of the Flashlight system in the World. A claim verified by Martin Reid at Turbosound who calculates Brit Row's current holding at 350 Flashlight and 100 Floods.

That kind of purchase has several elements to it: Bernard Browns were subject to a take-over by a company that was not interested in the sound side of the business, so in one way at least, the disposal of the PA business to Brit Row was opportunistic. But you still have to weigh up the existing and projected market when making such a buy. After all, this was not an insignificant investment. Despite the US economy leading the world in emerging from the recession of the early nineties, this buoyancy has not been reflected in their touring industry, which has seen punters spend their disposable incomes on more

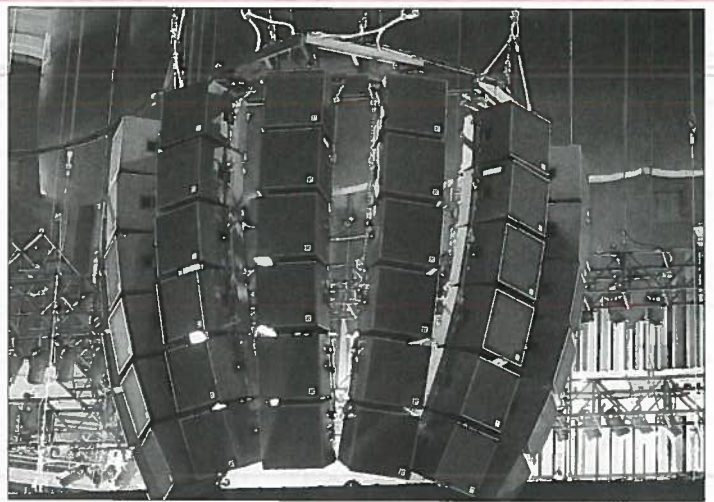
lasting pleasures than rock concerts.

But while US touring has fluctuated over the past 18 months, the European market appears to be strengthening steadily. With shipping costs across the Atlantic relatively low (especially as the dollar/pound rate has improved during this period) a compact system like Turbo is easily and cost-effectively re-deployed between the two markets. Presumably for Brit Row, the opportunity was matched with some strategic thinking.

A substantial investment has also been made in Behringer control electronics specifically for two tours last year. This is front-end stuff - you can't drive systems without the gear to allow engineers to finesse it to the act that pays them - but in this instance there is a very obvious link between purchasing strategy and the market. The past few years have seen a very noticeable return to the kind of touring that preceded the massive expansion of rock and roll that took place in the mid eighties.

Throughout 1995 and 1996, the town halls and theatres of the UK were filled with bands displaying their wares in the more austere 2-3,000 seater circuit. Productions have been routinely squeezed into one artic, or occasionally two, and costs are kept tightly under control. To seek evidence of this, you only have to look at the way the big arenas (Sheffield, Nynex, NEC and Wembley amongst them), have adapted themselves to this shift. Playing to 5,000 people in one of these big halls is now perfectly acceptable in terms of cost and presentation to punter, promoter and band alike. I don't say everyone is comfortable with the arrangement - I'm sure all but the punter would like to see these venues regularly filled again, but the point is it works.

While the same amount of blue boxes trundle out of Brit Row's doors all the while, they are admittedly on smaller productions, albeit more frequently, thus the need for more front ends



The Martin Audio Wavefront 8 Compact system ready to go at Zenith, Paris, on the World's Apart Tour last November (left) and d&b's 402 system with MAN three-wide flying system rigged for Clannad at The Royal Albert Hall (right).

to drive them runs concurrent. "Since Christmas we've sold two XL3s", said Grant, "but this was more recycling. In turn we've bought a Recall, an XL4, a DDA and two Soundcraft SM12s." And, in fact, Grant sees recycling as the second major influence on the company's purchasing decisions. "In a normal year we spend up to half a million on equipment - sometimes it seems like we do that just to stand still. There is some element of expansion, but that spend represents between 10 and 15% of our stock and much is replacement and re-equipping."

The biggest worry when such an expansion in the reservoir of equipment takes place is whether a price war will break-out. Although I

encountered the usual 'so and so bid in the gutter to get such and such a tour' comments, the reports don't indicate an era of low-bid blood-letting, not in the touring industry at least. In fact, everyone I spoke to sounded remarkably buoyant, yet none would point to there being more tours on the road. Perhaps it's the diversification into the conference trade that warrants the spends. Conference-only sound companies may be due a hard run for their money in the near future.

As for anything outstanding on the PA service company wish list, there was a universal cry for lower prices personified by Brian Grant's apposite remark: "There's nothing specific I'd like to see manufacturers produce, but it would

be nice if the equipment was cheaper." But then isn't that the argument the promoters are always laying on the service companies? Maybe it's time the roles were reversed and someone turned round to the band and said 'you're only going to make £3million on this tour, not £4million, because we are going to pay the service companies what they're worth, give the promoter a stress-free tour and ensure that you'll come back next year'. But that's rather like expecting architects to take sound reproduction into consideration when they design a multi-purpose arena venue. The record industry may refer to the PA companies as 'the plumbers' but if you have to work in a bog then what else is there?

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THE HIRE GROUND

Ruth Rossington profiles FX Rentals - a sound hire company with a major stockholding who are gearing up for the Millennium

As FX Rentals, the West-London based audio hire company, approach their fifth anniversary, they can reflect on the years since their formation with some small measure of pride. Although still in their infancy, their rise and rise has taken even hardened industry observers by surprise.

Even by current standards, it has been something of a rapid ascent: the company was formally set up in mid 1992 and not all of the group of investors behind it had a background in the pro audio industry. Neil White, a chartered accountant, came in as managing director, with Roger Evan as technical director and Nick Harris as operations director.

The watchword of that first year was 'consolidation'; by the end of it, when loss had turned to profit, White felt confident enough to reinvest some of that money in new technology. His actions killed two birds with one stone: not only did it expand their product base, but it also reduced the amount of equipment they were having to sub-hire from competitors.

One of the key investments was a Sony DASH 48-track digital recorder, a snip at just over £100,000, which signalled to the market that the company were a serious player in the rental game. The investment proved shrewd; the payback period was much quicker than anticipated and provided the company with a foundation on which to invest in other new products.

In 1993, the trio were joined by Nick Dimes who, within a year, took on the mantle of sales and marketing director and knuckled down to the task of actively promoting the company. As a result, the profile of FX began to take shape and hand-in-hand with these developments, came two driving forces: continual reinvestment in essential equipment and a determination to offer a high quality service to the marketplace. With the pieces in place and the industry showing strong signs of recovery, it was only a matter of time before FX were



The four directors - Roger Evan, Neil White, Nick Harris and Nick Dimes.

claiming a 50% share of a what is estimated to be a market worth somewhere in the region of £5million.

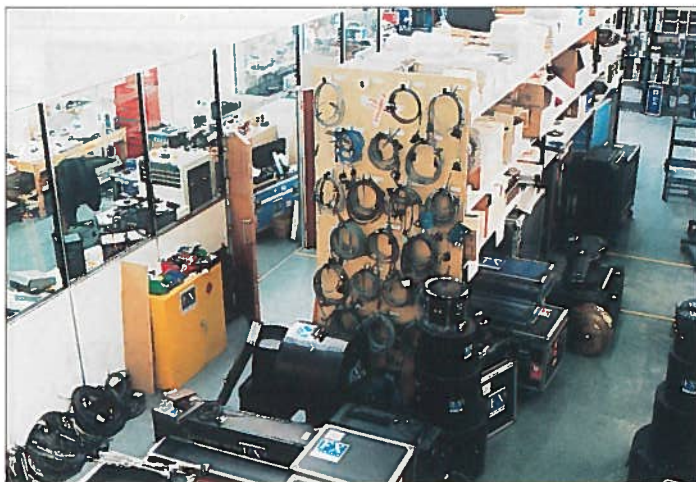
As a result, Neil White believes that FX are now the largest pro audio company in Europe. A bold claim, and one that is hard to quantify, but there is evidence to hand that takes this assertion some way beyond pure posturing. Within the last four years, turnover has increased dramatically (in 1996, for example, turnover increased by 38%), investment has been significant and, today, FX employs a staff of 36 and operates 24 hours a day, every day of the year.

Clearly, this has a lot to do with a buoyant industry, but it also owes something to the company's determined efforts to distinguish itself from other hire companies by offering a higher level of service. Most would agree that whilst important, product is probably not the

motivating factor, it's the level of service that makes the difference.

Offering a 24-hour service is certainly not cheap, but it's an investment that the company feel is worth making. Quite apart from instilling a strong level of confidence in customers, it has led to some important new business as FX have picked up the slack left by other companies. In addition, there has been time and money spent on expanding the customer base and FX can count many of the key recording, conference, production and studio companies amongst its clientele.

With these initiatives paying dividends and company development travelling at a rate of knots, it wasn't too long before they outgrew their original home and late last year, they relocated to larger premises (8,000sq.ft to be exact) in Telford Way, West London. Although the move was largely in response to the need



Left, part of the new facility - just about every manufacturer is represented and, right, Geoff Scarr prepares equipment for a client.

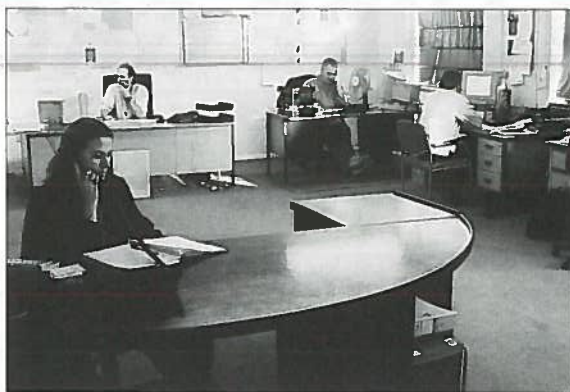
to accommodate a growing stock inventory, it also placed them much closer to central London, making the company more accessible to a large number of clients, thereby creating a faster response service and shaving valuable time off delivery deadlines.

Statistics in this industry are always a great form of entertainment and so it proved at FX as the roll call of products went through. The company have a staggering 2,600 items in stock ranging from the aforementioned Sony DASH, of which there are now three, through every type of tape machine format imaginable (they have 55 8-track digital machines of which 33 are ADAT), down to the smallest item of stock, the nuts and bolts, literally. In the last 12 months a further £500,000 has been invested in new equipment (including the world's first Studer A-827 'Compact' - a 24-track analogue machine and an Otari Radar 24 track hard disc recorder) - a sign that FX is confident about market trends. The company also has an extensive backline section, run by Paul Kershaw (known to everybody as PK), which is turning into big business for them.

They also operate a watertight system of testing and maintaining products and have two full-time maintenance engineers on the team.

For those who think that the hire business is just about moving boxes around, think again. It's actually quite a complex operation, which requires those who run it to have very sharp organisational skills, an eye for detail (bordering on obsession) and a fair degree of nerve to invest large amounts in money in products that may well never leave the shelf. Second-guessing the market is often part of the equation, although in the recording and studio sectors, the market does tend to be quite stable. Because of budget pressures, a producer will rent what he knows can do the job, steering well clear of unknown quantities that may turn out to be very costly. The rental business will always be demand driven, but the skill comes in anticipating the demand.

Another key issue is the life expectancy of a product - its shelf life can depend on any number of factors, not least the manufacturer's delivery date for the next upgrade. However, as Nick Dimes points out, very little new product gets straight into the rental system, because there is practically no time for experimentation in recording studios - it's a bit like osmosis really, the market absorbs new innovations at



The new bookings office where Renee Lollback, Paul Todd, Rick Picton and Gary Jackson handle hire requests.

"Because of budget pressures, a producer will rent what he knows can do the job . . . rental will always be demand driven, but the skill comes in anticipating the demand."

its own pace. Rental companies can also provide a vital link in the manufacturing process, acting as an unofficial R&D extension, by agreeing to punt out prototypes to clients for road-testing.

The people who run hire companies will tell you that there are no guarantees in this line of business and those nerves of steel referred to earlier, have to once again be in evidence when it comes to the day's order book. Typically, there may be 15 or 16 calls logged in the diary for any particular day, but by close of play that figure needs to be substantially higher. Fortunately for FX, the reality is that it is more often than not in the 50 or 60 region. That's confidence for you. Not just from FX, but from those who pick up the phone and expect an order to be fulfilled within the hour.

With the UK market firmly on line, sights at FX have latterly been firmly fixed on Europe, and moves have already been taken to exploit the potential for growth. "Things were going extremely well in the UK and we were looking to develop new markets," explained Nick Dimes. "The UK is still the lead market in the recording business which has led to our

services being in demand across Europe - especially France and Spain.

"The French market, particularly, has been strong. Because we had no wish to set up FX Rentals France, we struck a deal with Mille et un Sons - a well-established company based in Paris and run by Gabriel Nahas. A similar arrangement then followed with Audiorent, headed by Peter Wolff, in Germany."

As the link grew, it seemed a natural development to formalise the arrangements further and so the trio set up PARN - the Pro Audio

Rental Network, which was officially launched at the 1996 AES Show in Copenhagen. Essentially, the idea behind PARN is to pool the resources of all three and in so doing create a larger base of equipment for the client, simplify the processing systems, whilst also offering a common level of experience and expertise.

A UK record company, for instance, can order rental equipment intended for Germany through FX Rentals, be invoiced in sterling and yet have the order fulfilled by Audiorent. In truth, FX have probably gained most from this arrangement and there is greater traffic of orders to the UK, than vice versa. Nevertheless, each is very happy with the way things have developed and now hope to expand the PARN network by looking for member companies in other countries.

FX Rentals, meanwhile are keen to continue with their own programme of expansion, as outlined by Neil White: "We have always been very focused on rental and have never strayed into sales - that's why we've been so successful. The plan now is for more of the same and we will continue to offer the very highest level of service with all our investment linked towards the growth of the company."

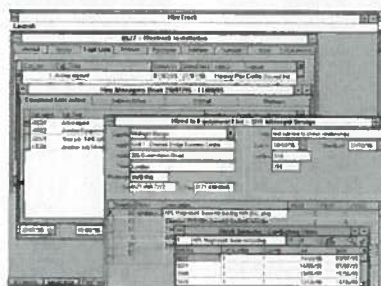
In the immediate future, this has led them to consider the possibility of opening a satellite office in the North West of England, whilst also keeping a watching brief on the Eastern European and Far Eastern markets for signs of greater stability. With product and service providing the two corner-stones of the operation, and new initiatives in the pipeline, there doesn't appear to be anything that can get in the way of FX Rental's forward momentum as they gear up for the Millennium.

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Second Take . . . John Watt's view from beside the camera

I thought that this month I really ought to write something about real lighting. That is, after all, how this column began, or was the original intention at least. Whilst a good idea, the realisation is harder given that some young sprogs might take any information seriously, so it really ought to have some substance. They should apply to Bill Lee or Alan Bermingham, from whom they will probably receive two completely opposing, but equally valid views.

Recently at Showlight I was talking to Boris Popovic who, amongst his freelance activities, teaches lighting for film and TV in his home town of Zagreb. Yes, in that unhappy country they still care about the aesthetics of picture making, so what excuse have we got for giving up when the only snipers we have ever faced are ETU shop stewards, now largely disarmed? I asked Boris about teaching lighting and how to do it, given the inexact nature of the subject. I started off with my number top test questions for all teachers, viz: 'How do you satisfactorily light a two-handed interview?', and 'how do you light a three-handed interview with the anchor in the centre seat? But this is really for year two students. Since I am now in year 37 and cannot get it right, you will understand my reluctance to offer solutions.

Television lighting directors give themselves a hard time trying, as they do, to see the actors' faces and eyes in particular, and provide decent portraiture with one key and, therefore, shadow and treat the backing separately, usually all on several cameras at once - which is a tall order, even before you get to mood, atmosphere, environment, etc. Of course, as with low-quality woodwork, generous amounts of bounce light have their applications too, but these are often a lighting man's admission of defeat. Maybe the only real nugget of useful information I can give to any budding lighting designer who, like me, finds it near impossible to cope, is 'create a diversion'.

The concert world discovered years ago that it's difficult to concentrate on a human face at 300ft - even if it is lit with four Super Trouper - when there are a couple of hundred moving lights in every colour of the rainbow plus pyrotechnics, smoke and moving trusses. Even news programmes have their own budget-conscious version, when they put their hapless presenters in an open plan office. Behind them lots of people traffic in sharp focus upstage, arm bands, red braces *et al* plus the essential show-off 'acting casual' obviously destined for stardom.

Always try to persuade producers to feature a large projection device in the set - videowall, Barco projector or whatever - as they will then be trapped into displaying moving images all the time, regardless of relevance and this will keep the viewer's attention away from the inadequate portraiture you have managed to achieve. Oh, and while I'm on the subject, robotic cameras are another sure-fire distraction. Managements, having saved the salaries and pensions of at least four camera operators, then go on to save another grand or two by only buying one controller for the four cameras, so that only one can be panned, tilted or focused at any one time. Given an animated discussion, say between Greg Dyke, Rod Hull and Mary Whitehouse (I wish), the joystick operator's decisions on which camera to move and where and when definitely outweigh, in entertainment value, the ill-chosen blue backlight bouncing off Dyke's head. You will note that I haven't mentioned framing, as the word isn't part of this operator's vocabulary: he knows you buy a picture in a frame at John Lewis, but hasn't made the intellectual leap to the concept that framing has any place in television. Watch this space for part two of Watt's masterclass!

I was fortunate to take part in an STLD visit to the National Theatre this week, a meeting which, like many that august body mount, successfully combined education, information and entertainment. The National (to pinch another well known maxim) is like a Swan, all calm and tranquil on the surface, but paddling like hell underneath. It was fascinating to hear Mark Jonathan (the NT's lighting manager) describing just how fast and how often they turn around shows in their dauntingly frantic repertoire system. It felt a bit like hearing how an image orthicon pick-up tube functioned - it's a terrific theory, but will never work. Well, it patently *does* work, thanks to a lot of technology and a dedicated team. I still cannot get my TV man's head round the idea of a fixed (within limits) rig plus specials, even if you can find time for a lot of them. Compromises there must be, but they certainly aren't evident, not at least in the production of *Lady in the Dark* lit by Rick Fisher, cheating a bit by using some Vari*Lites which (glory be!) didn't move too often, but provided some stunning colours. I am usually rude about the colours from Vari*Lites because they are so much larger than life somehow, but it's difficult for me, I know, the whole point being you can choose what you like. And, what's more, the VLs were quiet. Rick submitted himself to some searching questions from the STLD lot and generally strengthened

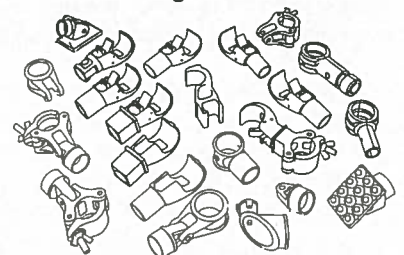
the bridge between them and the ALD - two very different organisations with a lot in common.

Futurist, in a successful attempt to prove that there is plenty of life north of Watford, ran their Lighting and Sound Fest in Bradford recently (see report page 32). A very large turn-out proved, if it needed proving, that the thirst for information still exists amongst young enthusiasts. It was also an opportunity for yours truly to re-kindle acquaintances with the Alhambra and the National Museum of Photography (The Imax Cinema still has the ability to stun and make you feel queasy at the same time) and Yorkshire in general. Things that caught my eye included a budget Source 4 range with dinky colour changers to suit from M&M, Teatro's new IGBT dimming (it stands for Insulated Gate Bipolar Transistor, but then you knew that) which should make distributed dimming even easier to achieve (don't ask me, ask Andy Collier) and Rosco scenic paints, a far cry from all that stuff at B&Q, which makes you wish you could paint with paint instead of light!

So, to another month. It's now summer and, as everyone knows, contrast ratios tend to be highest at this time of year: American Football is coming up again (too big), a news bulletin studio (too small), a game show (too many a day), Wimbledon (too dressy) and too many days waiting for too few jobs which, when they appear, will come two at once. Maybe a ballet will come along - but then this may prove too much for me, especially if I have to wear a tutu too.

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TOUR DE FORCE

Steve Moles catches up with Supertramp in Rotterdam - the first major rock band to take the new French-built V-Dosc PA system on tour in Europe

It was a bright spring morning in Rotterdam on May 1st. Curiously, the streets were quiet and deserted for 9.00am on a weekday, just the odd baker flinging wide his doors and setting free the delicious aroma of cheese bread. Also out and about were an armada of street cleaners for the pretty sidewalks with their abundant tubs of geraniums were littered with the detritus of a serious street party. The previous day was the Queen's official birthday and the populace of Holland had enjoyed themselves as only Dutch people can, ending up rampaging the streets into the wee small hours, yet never quite losing that sense of proportion that makes them such an admirable race.

Down at the Ahoy meanwhile, the Supertramp crew were just beginning to grapple with their first arena on a long tour that will visit many such venues over the coming six months. In the production office, PM Bill Leabody is already attending to the details that will make such a lengthy trawl through Europe more bearable - the runner has been sent out to buy a decent dart board for the band's dressing room. This is just the third show, but already you can sense that everyone here's been doing this for long enough to know what's what. Appearances can be deceptive though. Despite a lengthy production rehearsal, this is the first time the lighting rig and set has been seen at full height and width, and for the sound department, particularly FOH engineer Angus Davidson, this is the first opportunity he's had to really stretch a PA he's never toured before and most people have never heard.

LIGHTING

In a way lighting operators have to encounter a new system every time they go out. Indeed, one of the pleasures for the operator is in learning to exploit the system as the tour progresses, but the first few gigs are generally pressured. For Guy Forrester, who is running this Roy Bennett-designed show, there are several elements to contend with that make this early pressure a little more stressful. He's only operated the Icon Show Controller once before, and more critically all the programming has been done by old fast fingers himself, Bennett's long-time programmer Gary Westcott. "I understand exactly what Gary was doing in terms of his cue structure, and not knowing the desk would guess I'd do it pretty much the same way," said Forrester. But what about the desk - strange that a man of his experience should hardly have touched one before?

"That's just circumstance really, but the desk itself is not a problem. Having done most of my work on an Artisan, the biggest difference I notice with this board is the ability to assign any control to any function, which just makes it so easy to operate. For example, most of what are commonly perceived as the masters at the centre of the desk are all filled with primary



Supertramp at the Ahoy in Rotterdam - the first venue of a long tour.

"In essence, what V-Dosc promises to deliver is as close to perfection as a sound man might reasonably expect in today's world."

functions - four faders for chase control alone. Inevitably, Gary has been forced to put second order control to one side, but even so has dedicated two buttons to a 'last step, next step' function so if I'm working in that section of the board when a change is due, I don't have to switch back to the centre." It's perhaps a small thing, but the comfort factor it brings is apparent in the way Forrester chose to draw attention to it.

A bigger problem for him is the trim factor and it rather beggars the question - why spend money and time on production costs for full technical and band rehearsals and then go to an undersize venue? Does Frank Williams take his new Formula 1 cars for a spin around Surbiton? It's not as if the tour - admittedly the band's first in 10 years - is on rocky ground. Already, the itinerary was filling with return visits before rehearsals even began. I guess that's for the bean counters to answer, but they should be made aware that for a band like Supertramp the audience is going to be mature, relatively sophisticated and very discerning in its expectations. A penny saved in rehearsals is thus a false economy when the real engine of wealth is the longevity of the product (and I hereby bequeath my soap box to the new incumbent in Downing Street).

Bennett's design (he is credited for both set and lighting) is stripped back and very open. The set on stage is just three risers dressed by steps to front and sides that are a cacophony of false perspectives making them look severely off-kilter. The effect is to trick the eye into believing that both drum kits could slide off at any minute. Like the drawings of Esher, what we see looks upon first glance to be perfectly ordinary, but underneath there's a suspicion that our eyes are playing tricks on us and we can't quite put our finger on what it is. For an eight piece band, three of whom quite regularly swap jobs and playing positions, this minimal approach to the on-stage set is ideal, giving as it does lots of room.

The show though is of some import and thus requires weightier detail elsewhere to provide scale in keeping with the venue. Bennett has created it in the back wall. Following the nonsensical perspectives of the stage, the wall is a mosaic of mis-angled white squares framed around a trapezoidal rear projection screen that is also hung off square. The broken symmetry is both pleasing and intriguing, and it lends itself to a variety of lighting effects, but the achievement of this has a cost: the wall is difficult and slow to assemble. All the set is built by Brilliant Stages and stage manager Paddy Fitzpatrick reports that it's all well made and tourable, but the asymmetry of the wall means that assembly is very slow and methodical.

The lighting rig is supplied by LSD: it appears a small inventory on first examination, but as is often the case with Bennett designs, you quickly discover there are lights everywhere. It's a big grid but is sparsely hung with lanterns - just 38 Icons (many of which are on the floor), 12 Boblights with Colormags, 16 Source 4

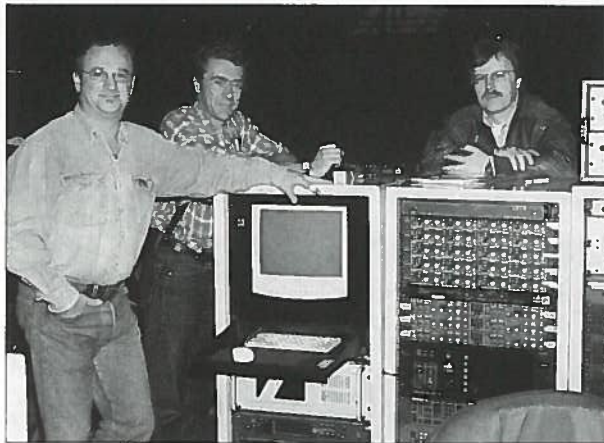


The French-built V-Dosc system flown with the amps seen clearly behind.

profiles and the odd Par here and there, with various curved custom tab tracks from Triple E bought specially for the tour. On the floor as well as the Icons there's a couple of Molemags beside the centre stage drum kit, plus one each behind the other two risers. Positioning is the critical element; much of the style is determined by the selection of source position relative to target, giving a variety of looks that the eye rarely tires of. It's not an original idea, but one always worth exploring and it's very effective on a bare stage.

The back wall resembles a construction of light boxes from a sixties TV pop show, but instead of being lit from within, a more distant backstage assembly holds 15 VL6s and five Source 4s with Colormags, one for each square. The VL6s and an assortment of custom gobos bring another dimension to the surrealistic images that are projected on the main screen, expanding and enhancing - and on the occasions when the projection ends - sustaining the imagery by use of gobos with strong visual associations to the lost moving images. The wall is Bennett's second powerful tool and he alternates the balance between it and the source-target emphasis, by use of a black tab across the wall - the two contrasting looks easily switching mood from intimacy to extravaganza by the sweep of a curtain.

The video projection comes via two Barco 9200s backstage centre operated by Neil Broome, with the whole system supplied by Creative Technology. It's a fairly modest set-up by most arena standards - the video is there very much as a visual endorsement to certain of the surrealistic images inherent in Supertramp's lyrics. The source is just two Sony disk machines and as there are no live cameras and nothing in the way of graphics or effects; Broome mixes between the two machines via a Sony DFS500. His big cue comes during



FOH engineer Angus Davidson with Westfalen Sound's managing director Carl Cordier and V Dosc designer Dr Heil.

footage of the famous Brighton to London in five minutes train ride, where he runs two disks simultaneously, the second disk being the ending sequence which he has to manually insert at a given point to ensure the heart-stopping arrival at Waterloo coincides neatly with the song's dying crescendo.

SOUND

For engineer Angus Davidson, the problems associated with the rehearsal venue are far more pronounced. He's using the French-built V-Dosc system for the very first time and although what he encountered at the Ahoy is more to do with the learning curve he will have to confront as he takes a brand new system from venue to venue, he would at least have benefited from greater system familiarity had he been able to utilise the PA back then.

As mentioned earlier, lighting designers have to vie with a new system every tour, but at least they are familiar with the characteristics of its component parts - for Davidson this was not the case. (It is worth noting here, that in terms of PA, the rehearsal venue would not have been a problem for a more conventional system, but because of the way V-Dosc is designed to work it was unsuited to the rehearsal room).

That said, the reason Davidson is in the job

and using V-Dosc is part good fortune (as ever) and part persuasion: "I got the job because Mark Hunt from Crowded House, a band I'd mixed for several years, joined Supertramp as keyboard player and recommended me. When I was sent the AES report on this new PA system I read it and immediately wanted to try it." He flew to Paris from Australia to hear the system demonstrated at the Zenith by its designer Dr. Christian Heil. One listen was enough.

The theory has been well written about, and by much more authoritative pens than mine, but it's worth a quick reminder because, as far as I'm aware, this is the first major rock band to take the system on tour in Europe. The concept is essentially simple, as outlined in the manual: 'An assembly of individual sound sources arrayed following a regular step on a plane or curved continuous surface, is equivalent to a single sound source having the same dimensions as the total assembly if one of the two following conditions is filled:

1) Frequency - the step (the distance between acoustic centres of individual sources) is smaller than the wavelength.

2) Shape - the wavefronts generated by individual sources are plane and fill (together) at least 80% of the total surface area.'

In essence, Dr. Heil has created a very large linear array - if you like, a giant WEM column, and broken it down into strips to make it more tourable. Instead of the current preoccupation with creating small beamed, highly directional cabinets that produce ever-expanding cylindrical wavefronts, the Heil theory proposes to control and limit the wavefront to an exact geometric pattern (in the low-mid to high end, where this is practical), thus eliminating the inevitable interference that any conventionally radiating system will ultimately produce. The benefits inherent in the theory are there to hear: greater travel of coherent sound through the absence of system produced interference; efficiency of power and delivery thus follows; dispersion is 90 degrees in the horizontal with whatever you choose to array in the vertical; clarity and intelligibility follow by dint of the above and, as Davidson said, in terms of truck space and personnel, this system has it over a country mile. There's also the more altruistic benefit of improved sight lines and a system much less physically intrusive to overall stage production. (Heil reports having placed a system actually behind scenic flats for one opera production.)

However, as a sound reproduction unit it's a PA concept predicated on coupling precision and direction, and as such demands great rigour in setting the system. Deployment is fairly straightforward, the cabinets (1300mm x 435mm x 690mm) weigh 108kgs apiece and are rigged with their longest dimension in the horizontal, producing a linear array approximately four feet wide and as deep as the number of cabinets needed for vertical coverage. Main mechanical fixing comes from a heavy duty steel coupling permanently mounted to the cabinet rear that is modelled on the linkage of Caterpillar tracks.

Complete arrays are linked face down on the floor (the wheel board fits to the front grille) and then picked up en masse by the top cabinet.

Vertical coverage is determined by reference to a simple, but accurate, 2D sectional view of the relevant building being visited, to impose a dispersion pattern across the seating areas, the criteria being uniformity of physical area covered, weighed against the maximum five degree increment between individual cabinet faces. Extrapolating the geometry from the drawing, precisely machined metal angle straps that attach to aeroquip fittings on the cabinet sides allow for exact setting of the front curve of the array. The rear is laced up with a pair of ratchet straps in the conventional manner, but the side straps ensure total adherence to the predetermined front curve pattern.

A clever touch to setting the array once aloft is provided by Johan Schreuder, the system engineer from Westfalen Sound (who are the service company for the tour). In essence, the stack hangs beneath a square steel frame suspended from centre points on its front and rear edge. Because the vertical dispersion is so precise, it's essential to angle the whole stack (by raising or lowering the rear point) relative to the highest seat in the gig. This is for two reasons. 1) If you don't get the top-most seats in field as it were, then quite simply those people will hear virtually no mid high at all. 2) If the top angle is incorrect then your whole array, relative to the geometry of the building, is compromised.

Schreuder has developed a simple but efficient tool to make this setting easy. Each stack is hung with its own amp racks flown immediately behind it and Schreuder has fitted



Johan Schreuder and Angus Davidson with Soundbench from BSS.

a simple domestic electrical time switch and clip light to the top rack so he can see a crack of light between the first and second cabinets. Because the angle between the two cabinets is already known, and the relative position of that point in the building is also known, he can ascend the nosebleeds and in a relatively short space of time set the kelp angle. The light, of course, switches itself off later.

(Incidentally, Westfalen are also beta-testing the new Soundbench software platform from BSS Audio on this tour. The kit is used to control dynamic racks of BSS Varicurve slaves and Omnidrives, including the new Compact, which is being used on the outfill system of the V-Dosc PA, although the Compact cannot yet be controlled from Soundbench.

What I heard at the Ahoy was certainly never worse than the many other systems I have heard there myself when I toured, and in many, many ways it was much better. There was no

denying the coverage, intelligibility and power at all points in the building. I've heard less than favourable reports regarding the vocal reproduction of this system - that was not the case on this occasion. For the size of system I found the power and clarity astonishing.

But the fact remains there was a problem with phase/time alignment in the subs that eluded Dr Heil, Davidson and Schreuder on that first show. It meant the drastic curtailment of the low end for the duration of the evening. Personally, I found it quite refreshing not to have my bowels rattled (especially after the compulsory Indonesian Riz Taffel), the sound being akin to what I've become accustomed to from my hi-fi - something which Carl Cordier, MD of Westfalen Sound, was in total agreement with. Davidson however, and the rest of the sound crew, plus Dr Heil, were not content (naturally), and they were still debating things in the hotel three hours after the show ended. This speaks volumes for the critical finessing this system imposes upon its users.

In essence, what V-Dosc promises to deliver is as close to perfection as a sound man might reasonably expect in today's world. In return for this promise, it demands nothing less from the people who set it up and run it. This looked a tough price to pay in the first arena of the tour, but as I said there wasn't even the comfort zone of system familiarity to help deal with the imperfections of Rotterdam's vintage seventies tin clad velodrome. It will be interesting to see how things have changed by the time the tour comes through the UK in September.



one static gobo, one light



three rotating gobos, one light

before & after

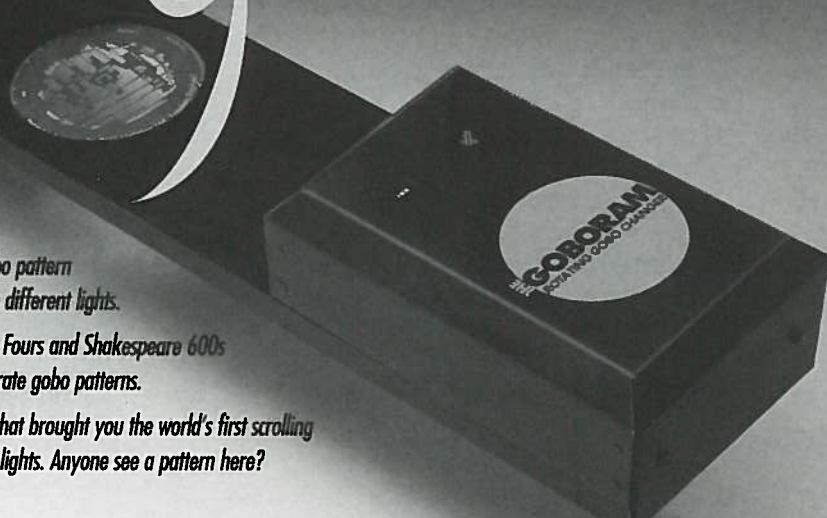
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GAME SOLITAIRE

Steve Moles previews the launch for Allseas latest pipe-laying vessel

Laying in the Swan Hunter shipyard at the mouth of the Tyne is the Solitaire. While all around her the towering cranes of Tyneside's once proud ship-building history stand idle like sentinels over a watery grave, the Solitaire sits like a Queen Bee surrounded by a hive of activity. Solitaire has a very singular purpose - she's the latest and most capable pipe-laying vessel in the world. Once a tanker, her 285 metre hull now has an additional 68 metres of lattice - which takes the form of a truss-like structure attached to the stern. Not unlike the ovipositor of some giant insect, it is aptly named The Stinger.



Allseas' Solitaire, complete with Orbit structure and Helideck.

The whole project is a huge undertaking for owner Allseas and with the conversion of a 72,500 ton vessel to a new task costed at \$500m US, it's no surprise that they wanted to create a bit of a media sensation at the inauguration ceremony. Some 500 guests, including senior oil executives from around the globe had been invited to attend. These are people accustomed, shall we say, to the finer things in life. This was not the occasion for a quick bash with a bottle of bubbly and a rousing chorus of Elgar's 'Nimrod' from the local brass band. Something a little more imaginative was required, nay, demanded.

If you look under ship launches in Kemps or the White Book you'll find the entries rather sparse; so it was that a relationship built upon the provision of VIP corporate functions for Allseas suddenly blossomed from tiny acorn to mighty oak. David Rylance's event organising company NDS and Roger Chopping's Project 42 had been the two parties servicing these functions in the past and they both responded immediately to the challenge. For NDS, this was a matter of scaling-up the demands of infrastructure and applying them in a semi-maritime environment, whilst for Project 42 the demand was for a concept of major proportions.

"I'd always wanted to be an Art Fag," joked Roger Chopping referring to the early years of

his career when he was to be found rigging and roof building. "I came up with the concept and basic design two years ago - in essence, to create a show in a large tent and have it parked right at the bows of the vessel for a big reveal." Which is a why a structure even bigger and more incongruous than the Stinger is to be found positioned at the other end of Solitaire.

It's the scale and engineering that takes your breath away with this event. The AMT Trader upon which Chopping's show is staged, is a specialist barge some 200 metres long and 36 metres wide. Fully submersible, she's designed to be sunk, have more modest shipping parked above her and then re-floated to raise the vessel clear out the water and provide instant dry docking for service and repair. She's the ideal show platform - just a vast flat open steel deck upon which you can do anything, like weld 48 pad eyes to hold down the 150 metre long Orbit Roof from Serious Stages.

Quite simply, it makes production facilities like the two Templine generators in their 20 containers look like children's toys. She's ideal for another reason too, because the coup de théâtre of Chopping's concept is that the Trader will be moved during the event. Proceedings will be interrupted around 6.00pm to allow the guests to return to their hotels and prepare for

a black tie dinner. While they're away, the barge will be towed across the Tyne to the far bank so the open end of the Orbit (formerly hard up against Solitaire's bow) will now face across stream to view Solitaire broadside. The guests will be escorted back to the barge, with various contrivances along the way designed to trick them into believing the AMT Trader is in the exact same position as earlier in the day. After dinner beneath the lavishly decorated Orbit structure, the guests will return to the theatre end of the barge, where earlier in the day they witnessed the inauguration ceremony performed against the backdrop of the

Solitaire's vertiginous bows. The massive sleight of hand will be revealed by a spectacular finale as the ship is lit by a dazzling display of lights and pyrotechnics.

The whole script for the day is based around concealment and NDS have contracted many familiar companies from the entertainment world to help realise Chopping's subtle conceit. "When the guests first arrive they enter via a modest reception marquee joined to the far end of the Orbit. Alice in Wonderland was a natural theme for the setting so a small portal, decorated as a fantasy rabbit-hole links the two," explained Chopping.

Solitaire. Playing cards. The Queen of Hearts. There's a nice association of the name and something completely out of the ordinary. A long enclosed walkway, a tunnel really, guides the guests through the heart of the Orbit and exits upon a heavily draped chamber dominated by a 10 metre square looking-glass, replete with an image of Alice straight out of Tenniel's famous original illustrations. Thence, through a hall of mirrors (distorted, naturally) into the open-ended theatre, a simple construction of Arena's grandstand seating for 500 facing directly onto Solitaire's bows.

Here Laser Creations International (LCI) provide the nub of the inauguration ceremony,



The battery of Sky Arts from Theatre Projects on deck (left) and the Mad Hatter fountain - part of the pastiche of Carroll's Wonderland (right).

a specially commissioned video projected upon a water curtain that neatly masks the Solitaire's bow. Russell Mason of LCI explained the detail: "The video is computer-generated by LCI. It's a sequence featuring the nine Planets of the Solar System with a soundtrack added to tell how each Planet represents a virtue. It's a brief sequence, but it presented some rare obstacles, like how you position two Barco projectors in mid air, above water, between the bows and the screen."

As I said before, it's the engineering that provides the surprises on this event. Quite simply Allseas had two scaffolding towers welded directly to the Solitaire's hull in just the right position. But if you want the real gee whizz, then the anchors take some beating.

"The two anchors presented us with a major shadow problem," added Steve Nolan of Chromatic, who had been brought in to design the lighting for the whole event. "These things are huge and each link weighs 100kgs. I explained to Suvaal the problem and before I knew what was happening they just cut them off and let them fall into the Tyne. Amazing."

The traditional champagne element of the ceremony has not been neglected, but did require some added panache. The owners wanted 100 bottles of fizz to rapidly cascade down upon the bows and Nolan devised a simple solution. Four open-ended runs of Triple E tab-track rigged at a fairly devilish rake above the guest seats will speed the bottles, each with a wheel bonded to the cork, down to their doom against the bow.

Meanwhile, back in the main part of the Orbit structure, the entrance tunnel/rabbit-hole that ran through its centre like a spine, has been struck revealing the Orbit's true content, a pastiche of Wonderland. Vignettes of Carroll's vivid fantasy are everywhere, the Mad Hatter's tea party, the Queen's croquet match, and by the time the guests file back from the theatre this main room will be peopled with a multitude of characters from the stories. The set design is by Peter Bangerman and is built in Newcastle by Master Fit with additional decor from Palm Brokers in the form of an elaborate rose garden



Lighting designers Mark Payne and Steve Nolan (above) with Mick Healey of CPL on the Helideck (below).



at one end as a setting for the champagne fountain.

Around the curved roof a dispersed rig of Vari*Lites (18 VL2Cs and 16 VL5s) and conventionals (48 1kW floods and 130 Pars, plus many bits and bobs) provided by Concert Production Lighting (CPL) has been rigged tight to the roof trusses. Steve Nolan, assisted by moving light designer Mark (The Pope) Payne, provide a suitably fantastic lighting accompaniment to this surreal setting. There is EAW PA discreetly placed about the whole room, mainly pairs of 300s as delays to stereo stacks of five KF850s and three subs concealed behind the Alice Mirror (there is also a further system of six KF850s and subs back in the theatre for the LCI video).

All PA is provided by Concert Sound; the three distinct PA systems are linked so in the event of an emergency they can double as a unified voice evacuation system for the entire barge. (CPL too have provided emergency

lighting and exit light systems, although probably their most unusual contribution is the half dozen submersible Par 38s around the hull). The Alice Looking Glass mentioned earlier is, of course, a two-way - a painted scrim and careful lighting giving the necessary effect - and doubles as a performance area for magicians and other entertainment. Later, the mirror would be de-mounted altogether (while the guests are safely away and the barge was traversing the river), to expose a full stage where Mark Knopfler's Notting-Hillbillies would provide the after-dinner entertainment.

Which is why Concert Sound were the natural choice for PA. Quite how two XL3s plus full monitor system and back line, Robert Collins (FOH) and Kerry Lewis (mons) were going to be smuggled aboard was not revealed. Needless to say, another battery of Pars and a modest number of VL2Cs had been rigged above stage for the show, but nothing too brash, as the Hillbillies are a low-key vehicle for Mr Knopfler to go out and enjoy himself.

After all that fun and frivolity the grand finale required a somewhat bigger brush. Batteries of Sky Arts from Theatre Projects on Solitaire's deck and more shooting from across the water, three multicolour lasers from LCI, a pair of the truly blinding 250kW Lightning Strikes from Cirrolite, plus a most unconventional pyrotechnic display from Walk the Plank Theatre. Almost all pyro was surface-based rather than aerial, the display featured an enormous magnesium cascade run the entire length of the hull, three stunt riders on water scooters with magnesium rocket packs, and the surreal Flaming Fish Boat, a most unusual pyrotechnic wire frame model of a giant fish mounted on a small whaler, that glowered malevolently for ages.


A bleary eyed Steve Nolan reported the next morning that festivities, scheduled to end around 1.00am actually continued until 3.30am, but the amazing thing was it all seemed to flash by in a couple of hours. It may all seem a monumental folly, but the owners Allseas are obviously immensely proud of their vessel and invested in her launch accordingly.

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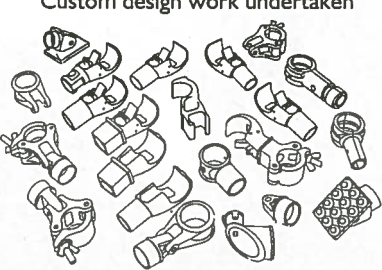
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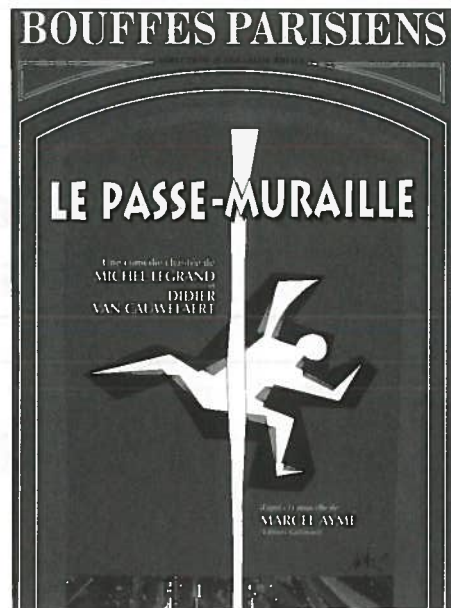
With the coming of Eurostar, it's now possible for Londoners to nip off to Paris for a matinée and be back the same evening - though you'd be mad not to stay the night now that the franc is getting back to a more realistic value. I saved up my *Times* vouchers and last month went over (three-and-a-half hours from Waterloo to Gare du Nord) on a free train ticket to see a show. Some twit was going on the other day in *The Stage* about the paucity of French theatre these days, and Michael Billington fell into the trap of agreeing there wasn't much around. Well, Michael, the local version of Time Out, the excellent and extremely cheap (30p) *Pariscope*, lists 125 theatres, including four Nationals and a couple of dozen West-End style boulevard theatres, without counting innumerable café-theatres and cabarets open in central Paris alone.

But there is a big shortage of musicals. The French don't like them very much, and Paris was the only place where *Les Misérables* never really caught on, in spite of being premiered there. This time, apart from *La Vie Parisienne* at the Comédie-Française, there was only one real musical listed in *Pariscope*. That made the choice extremely easy.

The show is *Le Passe-Muraille*, adapted by Didier van Cauwelaert from a post-war novel by Marcel Aymé about a chap who finds he can walk through walls. Its music is by Michel Legrand, who wrote the music for that colourful and charming through-sung 1954 film *Les Parapluies de Cherbourg* - oldies may remember the bloke pulling in at the petrol station and being asked in a clear high tenor whether he wants 'Super, ou Extra?' The new show, also through-sung, has much of the film's innocent appeal, and, in its looks, is also reminiscent of the only other post-war French musical before Boubli and Schönberg to make it to London and Broadway, Marguerite Monnot's 1956 *Irma la Douce*.

Booking is easy now that French box offices take credit cards, and tickets for the commercial theatre cost about the same as in London - top price for *Passe-Muraille* is £30. (You'd pay up to £20 at the state-subsidised Comédie-Française, or slightly less to see Deborah Warner's production of *A Doll's House* at the Odéon, another National Theatre.)

The theatre, the Bouffes-Parisiens, was the second of that name to be opened in 1855 by Mr Vie Parisienne himself, the composer Jacques Offenbach, and it housed his light operas until 1862. Rebuilt the next year, it remains a comfortable little 700-seater opera house and is now run by the film star Jean-Claude Brialy, who was in almost all of those French nouvelle vague movies from *400 Blows* to *Claire's Knee*. It has three shallow horseshoe balconies, the first of them too low over the stalls so that the back rows don't see much of the stage height. The two stalls boxes had been taken out for this show to house a minimal



three-piece orchestra: piano and winds stage right and percussion stage left. By percussion, I don't mean just a few drums - the guy also seemed to have all the instruments that can be banged into tunes - xylophone, glockenspiel, vibraphone, celeste, you name it - and dashed from one to t'other with great glee throughout.

There are some strange French customs the unwary visitor needs to know about - above all, the habits of the usherettes. These rather fearsome ladies will not do anything so demeaning as sell you a programme - they're on sale in the foyer at a mere £4. ('Programme', 'usherette', 'foyer' - have you noticed how much France has influenced our theatre-going?) What they will do is escort you the few yards to your seat, for which they expect to be tipped - they carry a very conspicuous bag at their hip to show this. They will also keep guard against anyone who wants to sneak down from the cheap seats to the more expensive ones before everyone is settled in their proper places. Mine did at least show me how to fold down my 'strapontin' - a collapsing seat at the end of the row which, when down, restricts movement in the gangway but springs up to give the departing audience much more aisle space.

Something of the technical gap that exists between French commercial theatre and the UK's was demonstrated by the show itself. Its charming and simple sets were by Guy-Claude François, one of France's most distinguished designers and Ariane Mnouchkine's favourite, who supplied some useful trucks and solved the problem of walking through walls rather well with some elasticated sheeting. Philippe Quillet's lighting, too, had its pleasures - there is one delightful moment when a battery of primary-colour gels transforms the basically monochrome set into a boulevard-painter's riot of colour - but while I'm not advocating expenditure for its own sake, I was very

struck by the venerability of most of the lanterns. And in the sound department they are way behind the times.

Leaving aside the desirability of miking a small cast in a theatre which is built specifically to allow good natural sound from the stage, with the tiny band hardly creating much competition, it was jarring in a musical so strong on old-fashioned values to see all the actors wired up with those telephone-operator jobbies, an ugly black scar on everyone's cheek. Nevertheless, the show is delightful - why not hop on the Eurostar and catch it before Cameron Mackintosh or Mrs Sean Connery does?

By a pleasant coincidence, I found myself with a strong sense of déjà vu a couple of weeks later in the Grand Opera House, later known as the White Rose and now just the Harrogate Theatre, for the premiere of Angela Carter's adaptation of *Lulu*. George Phipps built it in 1900, half a century later than the Bouffes-Parisiens, but the 500-seater horseshoe auditorium is very similar and indeed slightly better proportioned.

Production values for this ambitious show from a struggling regional rep were just as high as those in the Bouffes-Parisiens, with a neat circus-ring set from Neil Bray featuring a very well-used mini-revolve, and some suitably expressionist lighting from Nick Marston. The atmosphere at Harrogate is very welcoming - the spacious and airy circle foyer is used by the locals as a tea-room - and it's frightening to think that such an excellent space should be under threat from the usual combination of economic hardship and local council meanness. In Paris it would be treated as a national monument.

Ian Herbert is the editor and publisher of the critical journal, *Theatre Record*.

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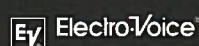

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L+SI catches up with lighting designer **Simon Sidi**

Simon Sidi is one of those enigmatic designers whose work has often been dark and brooding. Indeed, many of his early subjects were bands performing on the very fringe of popular music - Pere Ubu, Wire and Nitzer Ebb, more art school than rock school. And yet he's a light, open and very personable fellow, portraying little of the intensity that's apparent in his work. These days he's more likely to be found designing for archetypal pop groups like Erasure and The Beautiful South than walking into the Genetta Cochran theatre with six photo-floods.

Born in Manchester in 1965, Sidi's father was a peripatetic member of the rag trade. "I always remember him as being away, travelling around Europe buying and selling." Maybe that was an influence that helped draw him into the concert circuit, but if parental models shape our lives then Sidi's upbringing ultimately proved a case of the fox tweaking the hounds. "As a boy, my mum was a housewife in the classic mould, staying at home to bring me up. Now ironically, since my parents have split up she has followed my example and gone into the entertainment business, running her own balloon company doing corporate events and the occasional gig, so our paths cross from time to time. (His father, meanwhile, has moved to Los Angeles and runs a typically West Coast business 'Chemical Free')."

By the time Sidi was six, the family had moved to Wembley and as a teenager he attended Preston Manor High where, by his own admission, he excelled at nothing, but 'thoroughly enjoyed Art and English'. He also developed a penchant for pop music and thanks to an older friend regularly sneaked into the Wembley Empire Pool (as was), his first concert being that of Genesis during 'The Lamb lays down on Broadway' era. "It was a very theatrical period for Genesis then. I suppose they were one of the first bands to really marry theatricality to rock concerts. It certainly got me thinking. By the time I left school I knew I wanted to be an LD. I didn't know what one was of course, but I knew it was the visual aspect that attracted me."

At 16 he found himself at Fresh, a punk label, packing records and using his meagre income to run a band: "I was roadie, manager,



everything but musician. I tried to book them some recording time at The Enid's studio and ended up befriending one of the Enid who subsequently offered me a job." Not quite the visual aspect he was looking for, Sidi did nonetheless discover an ability as a studio engineer, something he recommends as good groundwork for understanding music and how it works.

The Enid did have an LD, though their time of live concert work was really at an end, but he did introduce Sidi to James Dan and before long he was doing light shows for Dee Lights. "It was around the time of the Falklands war. I started by doing lots of one offs for the GLC and quickly moved on working as a lampie, meeting people from other companies, Brian Croft and Simon Tutchener at Theatre Projects I remember as being particularly helpful to me.

"Not long after, I met Patrick Woodroffe and although not in the position he is today, seeing what he was doing then made me realise that being an LD was a real job and not just a bit of fun." Sidi immediately secured work as designer for Johnny Rotten's band PIL and ran head-on into his worst critic. "I was really unhappy with what I was doing. In my mind what I produced looked awful." Before making a similar error, he set about working with loads of little bands and went through a period of experimentation and learning: "Around this time I met Brian Grant (a director at Britannia Row) who was a big help. He managed Wire and whilst they might have been a rather marginal band, they were very expressive and it was the perfect situation in which to learn about light." From

one fringe act to another, and before he knew it Sidi was in the States lighting Nitzer Ebb who were opening for Depeche Mode: "LSD in Los Angeles were servicing the tour, it was the first time I'd ever had contact with them. Tim Murch recommended I talk to the infamous Simon Austin when I got back to England, which I promptly did and ended up working with the Prince of Darkness himself, Jonathan Smeeton. The mercurial Smeeton took Sidi out with Kylie Minogue and then Def Leppard (their last big thrash before Metal Music went into hiding in late '92). "It was a useful time for me. Jonathan did pass on many pearls of wisdom, but I wanted to grow as an LD and when the offer to light Jesus Jones came I jumped at it." Mr Jones's career may be awaiting resurrection, but Sidi's star has not waned since.

The last five years have seen him do striking work for the American songstress Tori Amos, who's awkward, but compelling, tunes demand a very different style of lighting - something his fringe band origins have definitely helped with. And at the same time he's managed to have a life outside the business, marrying Suzanne and producing two kids, Pace and Scarlett.

Without actively seeking it, he now finds himself invited to design for bands - most notably The Beautiful South - who repeatedly ask him back. He's also completed his first architectural project, lighting Tori Amos's new home in Florida: "She asked me to do it, treating both inside and out the house. It was interesting work, but I have no inclination to give up touring at the moment."

And Simon Sidi does still have unfulfilled ambitions in that area: "I'd like to light Madonna, or someone of that stature. Like artists in the past had their sponsors, Kings and nobility for example, the really big rock stars of today give us the greatest canvasses to work with."

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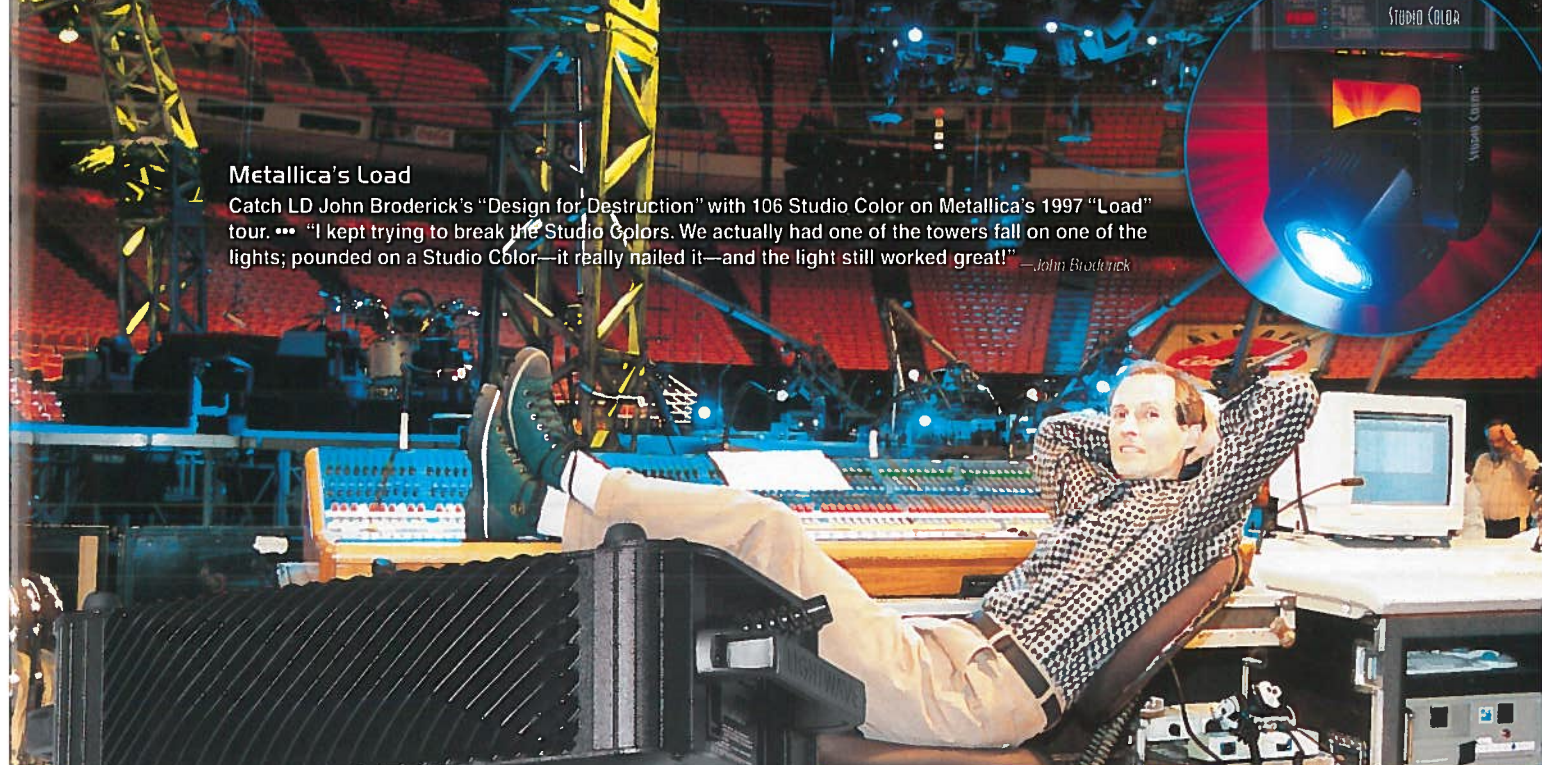
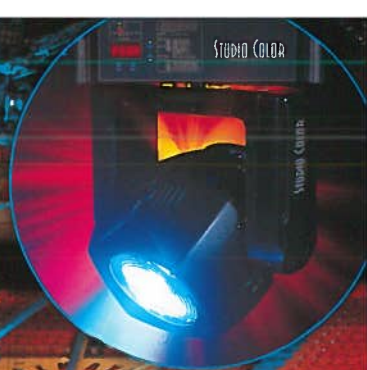
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