

# LIGHTING & SOUND *International*

THE ENTERTAINMENT TECHNOLOGY MONTHLY



THE FASHION THEATRE CATWALK - PART OF THE BBC CLOTHES SHOW AT THE NEC IN BIRMINGHAM

PHOTO: JONATHAN PARK

- Star City: Sydney's latest gamble . . .
- Disney on Rails: Hercules steams into Brussels
- Technology within tent at London's Midland 97 concerts
- A Fixture with Fashion at the Clothes Show Live
- Joy to the World from the Royal Albert Hall
- Director Stephen Daldry in Profile

**PLASA**

**JANUARY 1998**

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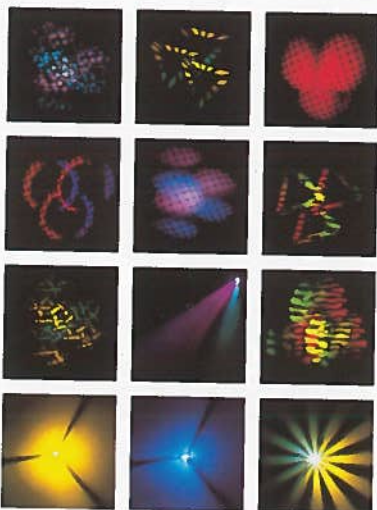


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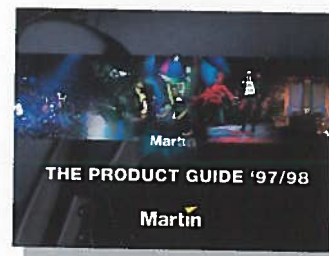
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## 1998 Yields Interesting Possibilities for Industry

There's much to look forward to in 1998 if the flood of suggestions to this office for editorial coverage is anything to go by - what follows is just a taster of what you can expect to read about in the pages of L+SI over the coming months...

Cirque du Soleil (currently at the Royal Albert Hall with their latest spectacular Alegria), will premiere a new show in Las Vegas later in the year which takes place in and around a water tank!

On Broadway, the Lion King has been gaining rave reviews for every aspect of its production and is such a hit that Disney are talking about opening a second simultaneous production. London's West End, meanwhile, will welcome a batch of new productions, including Saturday Night Fever, Whistle Down the Wind, Rent and Showboat. A new production of Aida will get its world premiere in Toronto in early May. The production will feature a screen 50 metres high and 78 metres long and the set is reportedly 20% larger than the one currently in use by the Rolling Stones, who themselves head to the UK later this year aboard their Bridges to Babylon bandwagon. In the immediate future we can look forward to Elton John's collaboration with Billy Joel and, of course, the Spice Girls' much-hyped tour kicks off shortly.

By all accounts 1998 will also be the year of the multiplex: Virgin is investing £11m on a 16-screen complex in Cardiff; cinema operator AMC and entrepreneur Robert Earl, he of Planet Hollywood fame, are planning to open a chain of multiplexes, whilst Australian company Hoyts have coughed up £350m for a 12-screen multiplex at Bluewater in Kent (the first of a string across Europe). Not to be outdone, UCI is investing its money in Europe, notably Poland, where the company plans to open 10 sites in the next two years.

*1998 is shaping up to be a memorable year*

The final fate of Battersea Power Station remains tantalisingly elusive, and only time will tell whether its much touted redevelopment will gain legs. If it does, readers of L+SI can expect to learn more about the planned leisure complex (complete with 32-screen cinema) which is scheduled for a year 2000 opening and projected to cost a cool £35m. A modern Crystal Palace is also set to rise in time for the Millennium and the 70-foot, glass-walled building,

which will occupy the same site as the original, is boasting plans for a 20-screen cinema complex and bowling alley.

It will be interesting to see whether the Ministry of Sound succeeds in its plan to turn the Royal Yacht Britannia into a 'floating rave venue'. Even it does, it seems unlikely that this will worry those masters of entertainment afloat, Disney and P&O: Disney Magic, the first of two 85,000 tonne cruise ships, sets sail in April from Port Canaveral, Florida, whilst P&O's Grand Princess sails into port in early summer. We also have the World Expo in Lisbon to look forward to in May.

Hundreds of new clubs, bars and restaurants will open this year, as well as a number of new theatres, notably those of the Royal Court and Sadler's Wells. Late summer, meanwhile, will see the launch of the first National Centre for Popular Music in Sheffield. Another major event this year will be the April opening of Hong Kong's Chek Lap Kok Airport, a project of scale with a price-tag to match.

That same month will also see PLASA launch Light & Sound Shanghai - the Association's first foray into exploring new business links with China, whilst the PLASA Show in September will provide the perfect backdrop to the Association's celebrations for its 21st year.

## Richard Harris

Richard Harris, a 30-year veteran of the professional lighting and sound industry, died on Thursday 18th December last year following a brief illness of cancer.

Richard, aged 69, started his career in the industry 30 years ago with Rank Audio Visual as sales manager. Within a year he became UK sales manager of Rank Strand following the acquisition of Strand Lighting by Rank. In 1980 he was appointed international sales manager and was in charge of Rank Strand's overseas sales operations. During his later years at Rank he became the editor of Rank Strand's in-house magazine - Tabs.

In 1988 he was persuaded out of retirement to join his previous Rank boss John Ball at Allen & Heath as marketing manager where they both stayed until its take-over by Harman in 1992. He then had a brief spell with the newly formed Luff Light & Sound, before leaving to join Lighting Technology in its new projects office. At the beginning of 1996 Richard joined Nigel Cunningham in partnership of the recently acquired Metro Audio, and became actively involved in developing the company's profile. Although one of the 'old school', Richard had the ability to interact with both young and old and will probably be remembered by many for his sense of humour and contagious laughter.

His funeral was held in Leatherhead, Surrey, on January 2nd 1998, and was attended by many friends from the industry. Donations were made to the Princess Alice Hospice, Esher, where Richard spent his final weeks.



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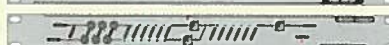

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## NEWS Shorts

**QSC Audio** have expanded their manufacturing capabilities by 10,000sq.ft. The additional space will allow room for the new production technologies such as through-hole and SMT auto-insertion machines.

In order to strengthen their move into the studio market, **Marquee Audio** have taken on the dealership for the Soundscape multi-track hard-disk recording and editing system, which is now available in their showroom.

**Onview Presentation** services have established a branch in Nottingham, which expands the Gearhouse Group's coverage within the UK. The company can be contacted at Unit 2 Bailey Street, Stapleford, Nottingham NG9 7BD.

**Future Light** of Cleveland, Ohio, has announced a new agreement with West Side Systems to exclusively distribute the Virtual Light Lab (VLL) software.

**JEM Smoke Machines Ltd**, taken over by Martin Professional in 1996, has changed its trading name to JEM Smoke Plc. The address and contact numbers remain the same.

**CP Cases** recently completed a consignment of nine cases to house a mobile studio for Sony Broadcast and Professional. The studio was commissioned by ERTT for use on sports events or political rallies.

## Changing the Guard at ETC



**Bill Gallinghouse (left) welcomes his successor, Fred Foster as the new managing director of ETC Europe.**

Top management changes at US company ETC will see company founder and president Fred Foster take over from Bill Gallinghouse as managing director of ETC Europe as from February 1998. Foster, who founded ETC in 1975, told L+SI: "ETC has made tremendous strides in the international market, and I'm excited to begin 1998 working with the European-based part of the team to continue this progress."

In the States, Dick Titus will remain as the company's chief operating officer, while Mark Vassalo (previously Northeast regional sales manager) will take on the role of vice-president of sales, which was temporarily filled by Gallinghouse. In Europe, ETC have appointed David Gray, formerly general manager of Edinburgh-based Black Light, as projects co-ordinator.

Meanwhile, Bill Gallinghouse returns to the United States after nearly two years, where he will move from ETC to the Production Resources Group Lighting Division, one of ETC's major customers in the New York metropolitan area.

## PLASA Shanghai Gains International Support

PLASA's sister organisations, ESTA in America and VPLT in Germany, will be actively supporting PLASA presents Light & Sound Shanghai which runs at the Shanghai Intex Centre from 14th to 16th April 1998.

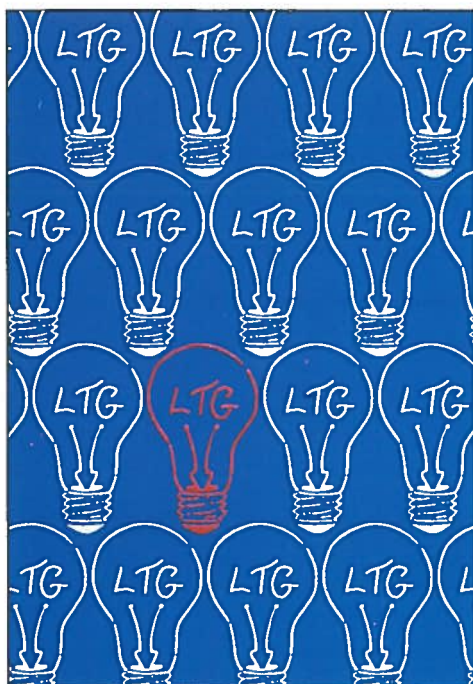
Such international support has been welcomed by the Chinese Government Sponsors, PLASA and P&O Events, who recognise the importance of having the backing of these leading associations. ESTA was set up 10 years ago to represent American entertainment technology companies. Two ESTA members have already signed up for the event with many others now expressing interest. As Paul Vincent, president of ESTA commented: "China is a very important market - the Shanghai event will give our membership, and American companies in general, the opportunity to explore new business links in China."

VPLT has a similar function in Germany and is well respected in Europe. Florian von Hofen added his own support: "For years German companies have been trying to find the right platform to sell their products into China and now they have that opportunity. PLASA should be congratulated on this initiative."

For further details contact P&O Events in London, telephone 0171-370 8231.

## Bandit Lites UK

Bandit Lites have opened a new 24,000sq.ft office complex in north London. The company was established in the States 15 years ago and such has been its growth that it recently relocated to new headquarters in Knoxville. Bandit specialise in full service production for touring, theatre, and special events. The new office, based in Ashley, Bedfordshire, will be managed by Tony Panico, formerly of Meteorlites, with Phay MacMahon as director of European touring and Jesper Luth in the role of general manager. The company can be contacted on (01462) 731739.



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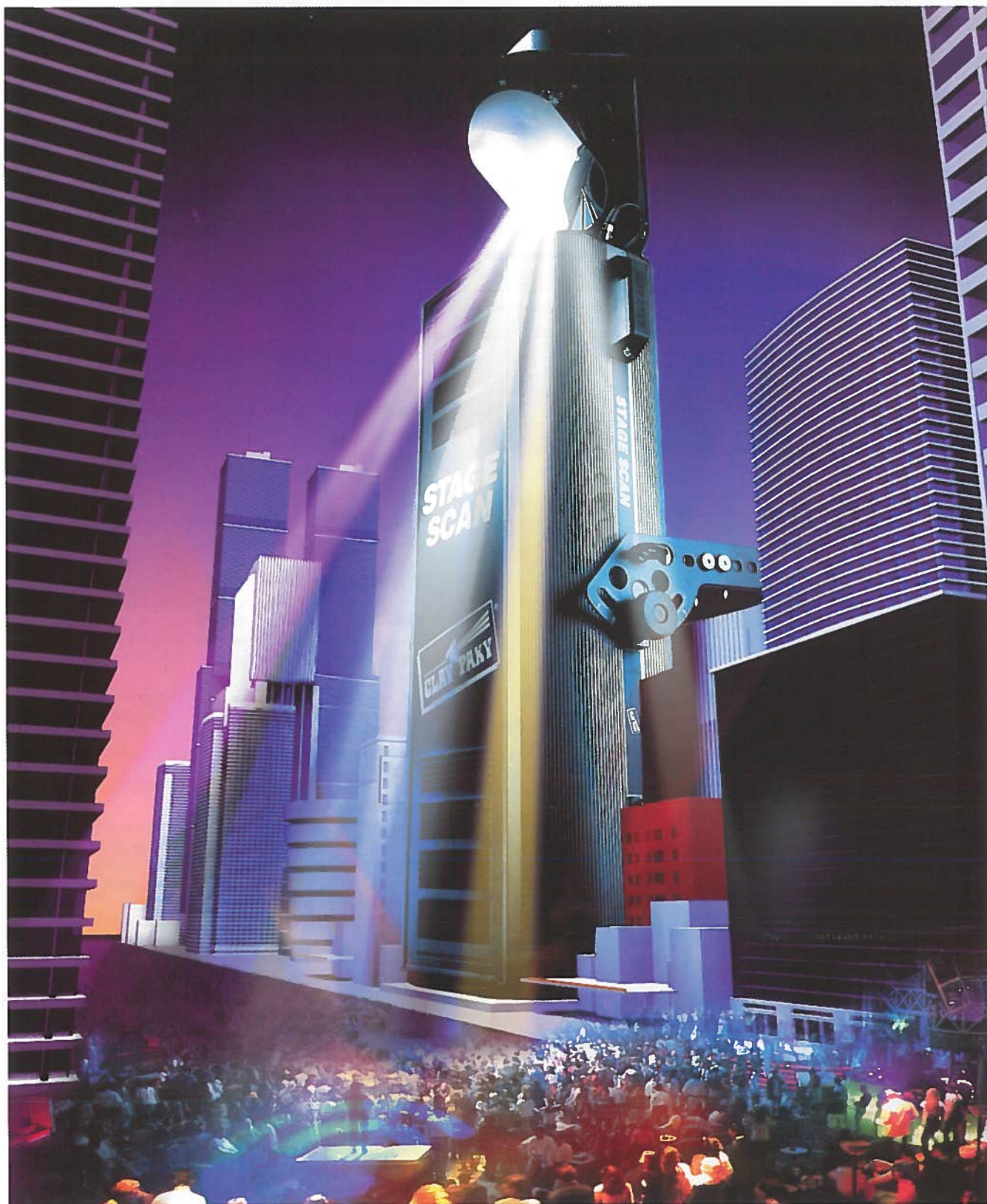
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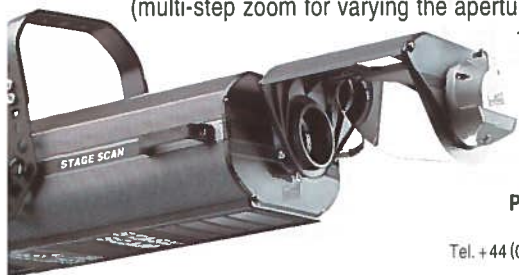
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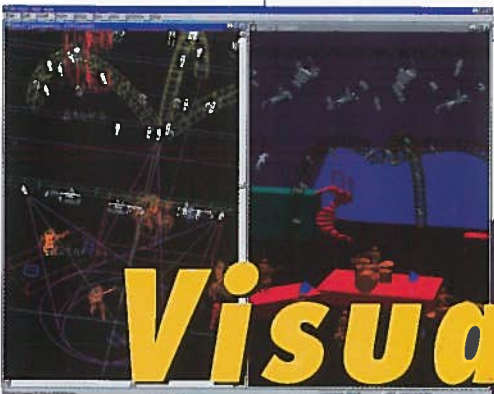
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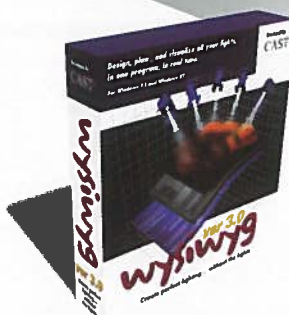


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## EAW at the Royal Festival Hall, London



Marquee Audio's Spencer Brooks (left) with David Brown of David Brown Audio (centre) and head of production at the Royal Festival Hall, Nigel March.

London's Royal Festival Hall has become the latest high-prestige venue to receive a new EAW sound system. Marquee Audio supplied and installed the system, working closely with David Brown of David Brown Audio, who drew up the specification. Nigel March, head of production at the Hall, first approached David Brown to put together a consultative document in 1994, also incorporating the other venues in the South Bank complex. When, three years later, a sum of money was made available to proceed with the first stage of the installation, David Brown turned to Marquee for the product sourcing.

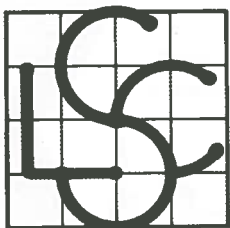
The racks and stacks phase included Klark Teknik DN3600s, Drawmer DL 441 compressors and Yamaha D1030 digital delays among the processors, with a 32-channel DDA CS-8 mixing console front-of-house. EAW speakers were chosen by Brown because of their transparency and versatility. The system consists of a pair of EAW KF650s (60 x 40 degree dispersion) and a pair of FL103s (100 x 100 degree dispersion) per side. The KF650s cover the upper tier and balcony, while the 103s are directed at the stalls. Underneath the balcony, four UB 12s (120 x 120 degree dispersion) are used as fills and behind each main cluster, a single JF80 fires upstage.

Using EAW's proprietary crossover network, the KFs are run three-way active in tri-amp mode, while the FLs are run two-way active bi-amped and the UB12s and JF80s are run passive. Amplification is from Crest Audio's CA series which, as Marquee's Spencer Brooks explained, has a wide enough range of models to cater for the various power requirements within the system.

Until fairly recently, the RFH was almost exclusively a classical venue, but the increasing need for diversity has led to a broad increase in the style and number of functions and performances at the hall. The venue hosted around 350 performances during 1997, and, as well as serving as home to both the Philharmonic Orchestra and the London Symphony Orchestra, also hosted many other types of event. As David Brown pointed out, classical concerts nowadays are often accompanied by a narrator.

Brown said of the Hall's acoustics: "It's neither the best nor the worst space you could find, but you have to accept the acoustics for what they are and work with them - not try to fight them." Brown included 72 lines of signal multicore in the infrastructure (36 per side) and 48 pairs of loudspeaker core to make the system as flexible as possible for visiting productions. To make the system equally unobtrusive, the venue's rigging specialists, Vertigo Rigging, were commissioned to build a special single-bar flying arrangement for the main clusters (more on that next issue). Further upgrades to the system will be implemented as the budget becomes available.

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- beam iris
- shutter blackout/strobe effect
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- weight 36 kg



### Washlight

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- dichroic YMC colour mixing
- motorized focus
- beam angle 9°-36°
- dimmer 0-100 %



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- weight 18 kg

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## PSL Call the Shots on Tour With Blur . . .

The Concert Division of PSL designed and assembled their biggest video production unit for the current Blur arena and theatre tour, requiring a 45-ton truck to transport the new PPU, Barco 9200 double stacks, 16 video projection cubes, plus all the cameras, switching devices and hard disk storage modules - something of a record in itself.

For video director Des Fallon, as much as for the band, what started out as a nerve-racking experience disappeared after the opening night at Dublin's Point when Blur, who had confessed to being nervous at carrying this sophistication of video reinforcement, became camera-aware and relished in the new medium. For Fallon, the tour also marked a welcome reunion with the band's long-time LD, Dave Byars; the two men had collaborated way back on the Blur-headlining Roller Coaster tour, and more recently on the Pulp tour.

Two years ago a band like Blur touring with any form of video reinforcement, let alone a truck-load of components, would have been unthinkable - but thanks to PSL, video is now appearing on tour riders far removed from the traditional boy bands, at one end of the scale, and the corporate dinosaurs at the other. But established road crews are always anxious to protect their territorial rights, and had not Dave Byars been video-friendly, the huge amount of light generated from the 16 projection cubes making up the two 4 x 4 walls might have entirely negated the effect of traditional beams.

Similarly, the sight of cameramen running around onstage, weaving between backline crew and instrument technicians in pursuit of the best angles, could be enough to provoke feelings of animosity towards the image providers. But after just the second concert, Blur's drummer Dave Rowntree summoned stage cameraman, Ian 'Bruce' Smith, into the dressing room to tell him how pleased the band were with his discreet movements onstage.

PSL's new system was designed by engineer Richard Burford. The stage set resembles a jungle scene, with slashed drapes fabricated by Hangman; indeed the two Barco 9200 side screens are sited close to the stage and 'dressed', making them an integral part of the set. The two Proquip projection cube walls have been specially adapted for touring purposes - easy to rig and fast



to de-rig. As they are arranged in a 4 x 4 configuration, they will take 16 projectors per wall, but the design allows two projectors to load into the same hanging frame.

These walls, under the supervision of Myway, form a focal backdrop and are the target for much of the computer-generated ambient effects. The three-camera shoot is based around the new Sony D30s, which operated remarkably well given the wide variance of light levels. As for the pre-recorded material, Des Fallon recorded and stored a lot of band footage at production rehearsals as well as programming 1200 projection wall cues, while Blur Productions provided images from the Beetlebum promo.

As the tour progressed Fallon, sensing the need to break from the classic approach to shooting a show, started to use the Dataton computer-controlled switching system with increasing effect to sweep powerful images in a chase right across all four screens. He was concerned that the crew were working together for the first time, and that he himself had not been on a tour of this scale for a number of years and therefore may be feeling a bit rusty - and was this the time to be debuting a new portable production unit and the For-A FDM-V162 16-input digital desk? His fears proved to be entirely unfounded.

It was left to Richard Burford to explain how he had put together a system designed for multiple

screen routing, which would send separate mixes to many destinations. The two side screens and walls take four feeds each, and the director was using two vision mixers and two Magic DaVE digital effects generators - including the aforementioned For-A, with its Mix/Effects bank, which allows it to function as two individual mixers. In total, this switching and routing system is designed for a possible 15 destinations.

One of the keys to the show's success has been the access speed offered by the new Flamingo Digital Systems' hard disk, with all data stored on PVR video cards. "We need to take VT's fast and loop them through this system," explained Burford. His three machines provide 54Gb of hard drive space, allowing storage of three hours' worth of broadcast quality video across the three machines. With little rehearsal time, the hard disk proved a godsend, replacing pre-roll time with instant cueing.

The success of the show has relied heavily on the intuitive flair of Des Fallon and Dave Byars and their mutual respect. Remarked the latter: "Knowing that the band wanted to use two different mediums we sat down around eight weeks before the tour started to discuss ideas. After the projection we had done on Pulp and Blur's Mile End show we wanted to supply something more than just conventional video reinforcement."

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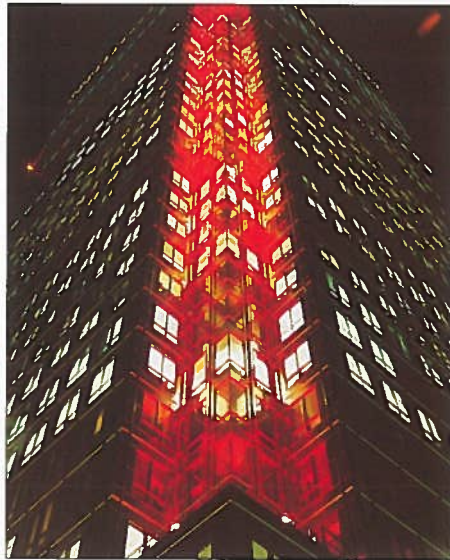
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## Canary Wharf in Lights

Canary Wharf was elegantly lit for the three-week Christmas period this year. Designed by Jonathan Park of Studio Park and realised by Bruce Kirk of LT Projects, eight Sky Arts uplit the recessed corners in a changing cycle of colours, while the upper 'mansard' from the 47th to the 50th floors and 'pyramid' were floodlit in blue, green and red with animated highlights provided by 16 Irideon AR5s.

The project was commissioned by Canary Wharf Arts and Events who, having seen how successful the illumination of Landschaftspark in Germany had been, wanted to contract the same team. In addition to the SkyArts and AR5s, the equipment, supplied jointly by both LT Projects and Theatre Projects Lighting Services (TP), included 160 coloured discharge floodlights.



## Gerriets Whisper Shell

Gerriets Great Britain has supplied a revolutionary whisper shell, designed for acoustic clarity, to The Edinburgh Festival theatre.

Designed by Nick Bycon of Gerriets USA, the need for the shell arose when The Scottish National Orchestra moved from Usher Hall, the concert hall in Edinburgh, to become resident at The Edinburgh Festival Theatre whilst Usher is undergoing refurbishment. In order for the orchestra to make the move, the technical department of the theatre had to find a solution for the acoustics of the theatre as the orchestra had already performed there previously and found the sound quality unacceptable. Technical director, Alan Campbell, remembering something he had read about the New York Symphony Hall which has been fitted with an acoustic shell from Gerriets, called the British division to investigate the option of installing one at the theatre.

The structure looks much like a huge tent constructed over and around the orchestra, which reflects the sound out into the auditorium rather than letting it escape up into the ceiling. Made from projection screening, the shell can be projected upon or lit to create a number of different effects.

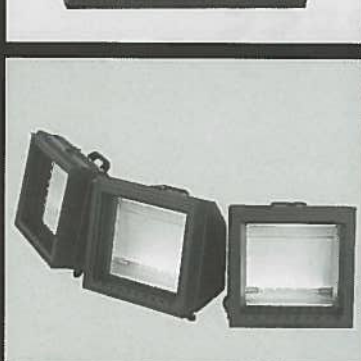
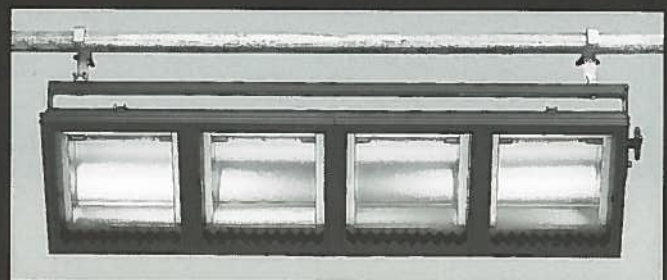
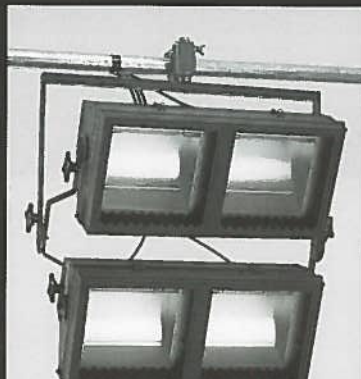
Our apologies to High End Systems. In the November issue of the magazine we inadvertently stated that their European office has closed. This is not the case and High End Systems GmbH continues to trade from its Munich base.

## Car Canopy

Contracted by Park Avenue Productions, Edwin Shirley Staging were asked to develop a special dome structure to provide a novel setting for the launch of the new BMW 3 series.

Bill Harkin, responsible for the concept design for the event, dressed the dome's interior with a lavish custom fabric to create a suitably decorous setting. Built using the elements of the standard Lite Tower system, the dome proper spans a 45m by 25m base area. "The project is a joint venture between ourselves and Ocean State Rigging," said Jeff Burke of ESS. Staged at the Forte Village in Sardinia, the dome will be erected above two swimming pools drained and covered for the event. Access is very limited, and the whole structure has to be transported the last 400m by hand. After an intensive two week fit-up and three weeks of rehearsals, BMW will be flying senior sales people for a series of shows spanning two weeks.

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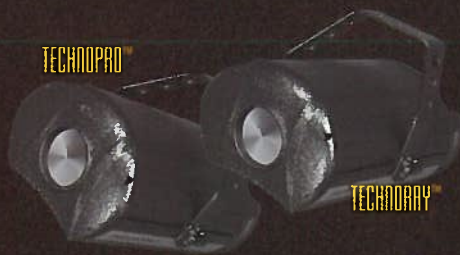
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## NEWS Shorts

Gerriets has provided a variety of drapes and floor coverings for Opera North's Julietta, Aida and Così Fan Tutti. For Julietta, the company produced a fitted floor covering for a steeply sloping and contoured floor. The covering was textured and painted by Cardiff Theatrical Services to resemble sand.

Italian pro audio manufacturer Outline has produced a CD-ROM with details of their factory premises, product range and club installations.

Theatre Projects (TP) is supplying the stage lighting for the Eddie Izzard Glorious II tour. The equipment includes four VL5 wash luminaires and 12 VL6 wash luminaires. The company also supplied HMI profiles, colour arc followspots and cabling, as well as supplying additional lighting for the video shoot at The Labbatts Apollo.

## People On The Move in 1998

As noted in the earlier news piece on the changes at ETC Europe, **Bill Gallinghouse** is leaving the company to join the lighting division of the Production Resource Group. Gallinghouse, who will be appointed senior vice president - sales and marketing, brings over 15 years experience to the job, including time spent with Broadcast & Theatrical Products and seven years with ETC where, for the last two, he was managing director of ETC Europe.

**Loren Haas** has assumed the role of executive vice-president of Vari-Lite Production Services and will be responsible for the worldwide network, and subsequent expansion, of Vari-Lite Production Services' rental operations and services. Haas' appointment follows the departure of veteran Vari-Lite manager **David Alley**, who is leaving the company to pursue other opportunities.

Martin Audio have appointed **Rob Lingfield** as sales and marketing manager, working alongside Martin Kelly. Having formerly owned Hill Audio before moving to Millbank, Lingfield has spent the past three-and-a-half years with American manufacturer Renkus-Heinz specialising in Europe and the Far East. Lingfield will bring additional management expertise to the company's expanding global network.

Harmer Public Relations has appointed Theatre Production (MA) graduate **Clare Prenton** as an accounts executive for clients within the entertainment



Bill Gallinghouse.



Rob Lingfield.

technology industry. She has worked as a freelance theatre director and recently assisted for the Women's Playhouse Trust at the Queen Elizabeth Hall.

**Paul Knowles** has joined Beyma UK as sales representative - he will be responsible for all Beyma speaker component sales in the UK. As well as being a recent marketing graduate, Knowles is an accomplished DJ, having worked alongside big names such as Danny Rampling and Boy George.

**Ian Woodall** has left Harman Audio and moved to LMC Audio, where he will be sales representative for the Southern region.

**Mike 'Bunny' Warren** has joined the sales team of Capitol Sound Hire. Warren is a well-known FOH engineer and, over the years, has worked with a number of bands, including Take That, Status Quo, Gary Moore and the B52s. More recently, he was sales manager for Britannia Row. His appointment coincides with a busy time for the company which sees them involved in a

number of projects including the Ocean Colour Scene and Supergrass tours, as well as the Gala Charity Performance for Red Hot which takes place this month.

White Light North have welcomed **Frank Fallows** to the sales team. Fallows, formerly with Futurist, will take on the role of business development manager.

**Ginny Goudy** is to resign as marketing director of Garwood - the in-ear monitoring company. Goudy is returning to freelance consultancy and will advise several leading pro-audio manufacturers on promotional activities.



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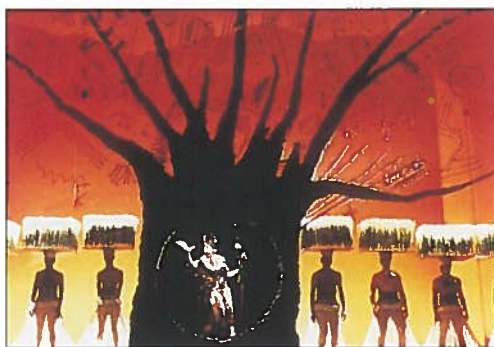
## NEWS Shorts

Tannoy has appointed TEAC UK as the sole UK distributor for their range of studio monitors. Tannoy's Alan Lochhead told L+S-I: "The agreement will allow Tannoy to increase monitor sales in the studio, broadcast and post-production sectors, while allowing our sales force to concentrate on the sound reinforcement markets."

The new 3,000 seat Clyde Auditorium venue at the Scottish Exhibition and Conference Centre used **AC Lighting** as one of its major suppliers for the lighting equipment including Jands Hog consoles, equipment from Artistic Licence, Zargees, and the drapes and cycloramas.

Loudspeaker manufacturer **Logic System Pro Audio** has supplied eight stacks of their CS1260 system to Aylesbury-based PA hire company Moonlight Productions. Products from Logic's LS range of loudspeaker cabinets have also been specified for a number of installations by Lightmasters.

## Lion King Roars onto Broadway



Disney's *The Lion King* made an impressive Broadway debut recently, as the show opened in the refurbished 1800-seat New Amsterdam Theatre after its run in Minneapolis. Directed by Julie Taymor, the show has made a highly successful transition to the stage, featuring a cast of 48 and a 23-piece orchestra. Whilst Taymor designed the costumes, masks and puppets, Richard Hudson designed the sets.

Sound design is by Tony Meola, with sound equipment supplied by ProMix Inc of New York - including a 117-input Cadac J-Type console and 45 Sennheiser radio mics. Don Holder, who worked with Taymor on *Juan Darien*, returns as lighting designer. The lighting equipment was supplied by Westsun International and Vari-Lite Inc with additional equipment coming from ETC, Strand, Altman, Wybron, High End Systems and Robert Juliat.

*Lion King* will be reviewed in a future issue.

## CPL Light Pope's Visit

Concert Production Lighting (CPL) has recently supplied the followspots and communication systems for the massive Maricana Stadium in Rio for the Pope's visit to Brazil.

The spots included 12 Gladiators for the roof of the stadium and two further Gladiators and 12 Super Troupers for the balcony in order to light the field and audience as well as front-light the various sub stages. CPL also provided 30 ways of intercom for the production team and two specialist members of crew.

The event was notable not only for being the largest assembly of Catholic Bishops ever to take place in the Southern Hemisphere, but also for an unusual projection surface for the stained glass window images projected from the roof - the 200,000-strong audience who had been asked to wear white T-shirts.

## Frankfurt's Forte

Further growth is anticipated at the next Frankfurt Music Fair which runs from March 11-15th. 2,000 exhibitors will attend, 540 of which will feature in the ever-growing Pro Light + Sound area which this year will occupy an additional exhibition hall. The British Joint Venture Group attending under the sponsorship of the Music Industries Association is the largest ever with some 39 companies exhibiting, 33 with government support.

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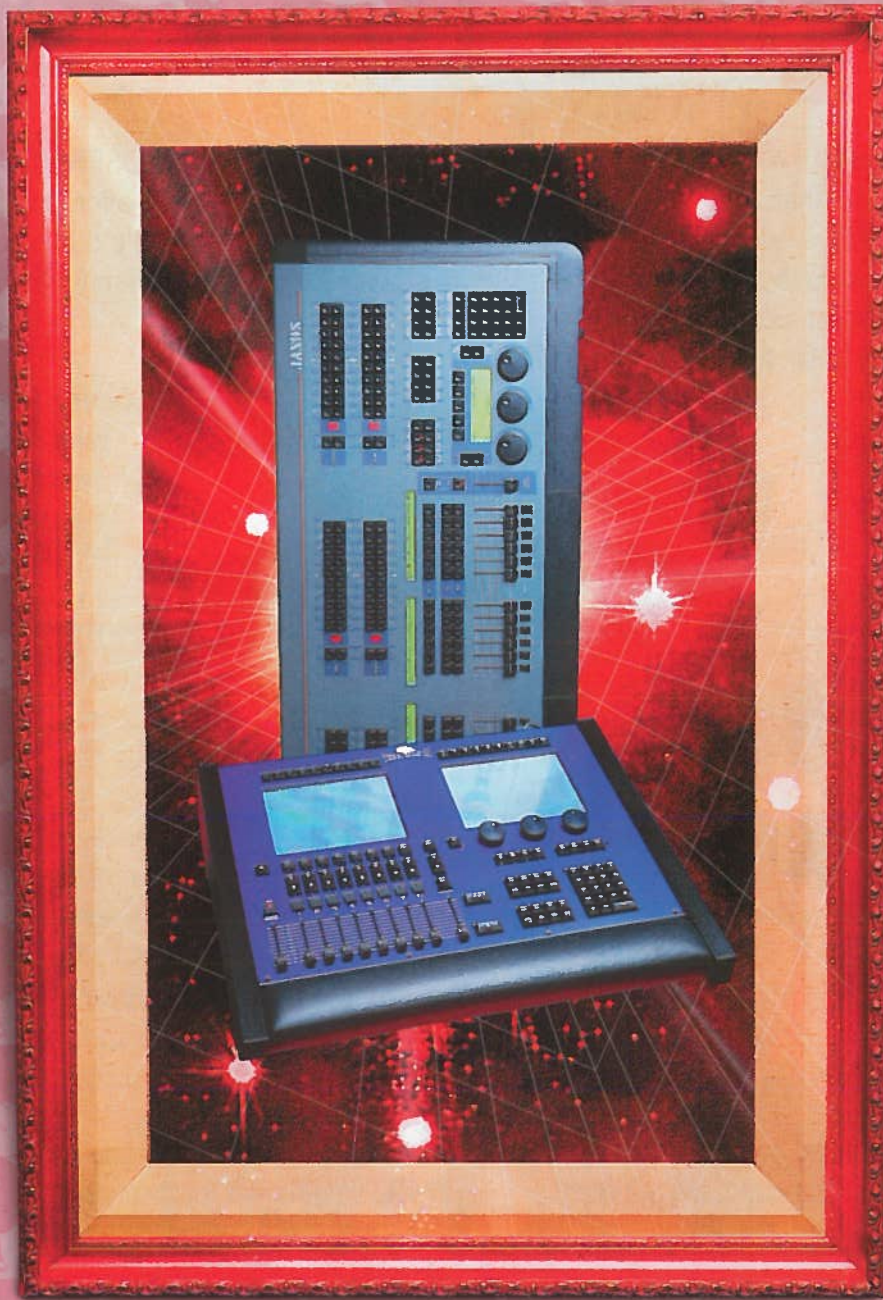
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## Stage Lighting Design

The book 'Stage Lighting' first appeared in 1970. It was neither the first nor the only work on the subject, but it was written by a practising British lighting designer and it was packed with useful information, diagrams and pictures - and it was a good read! It thus became the seminal work on the subject, credited by many as the one that gave them the information and encouragement they needed firstly to 'do' stage lighting, then to follow it as a career.

It is a credit to author Richard Pilbrow that, despite last being fully updated in 1979, it remains as popular as ever. However, though the principles of good lighting haven't changed, it was starting to feel dated both in terms of the equipment it described and, most importantly, because the entertainment industry itself - the business of lighting - has changed so dramatically. Pilbrow himself initiated many of these changes, so it only seems fair that he should be the one to update the story. Which is exactly what he does in his new book - the changes reflected in a title newly expanded from 'Stage Lighting' to 'Stage Lighting Design: The Art, The Craft, The Life'. It sounds pompous but is, in fact, spot on.

The book is divided into four sections. Part one, 'Design', and part four, 'Mechanics' are the carry-overs from the earlier work and it is part one that will be most familiar to Pilbrow's existing fans: the text has been slightly updated, but many of the worked examples are the same. Completely new are the cartoons by Lucy Gaskell; informative and amusing, these set the tone for the whole book which is much more personal and less dry than the earlier editions. Also new are sections talking about rates of pay, moving lights, and the practicalities of getting a show on - right down to the important business of providing refreshments for visitors to the production desk! The mechanics section includes data for lighting equipment of every type, as well as sections on computer software and theatre auditoria. It is a useful reference, though it's a shame that the descriptions of lighting desks (in particular) aren't more consistent from model to model. Sadly, the rate at which equipment now appears means that it is already, inevitably, slipping behind the times.

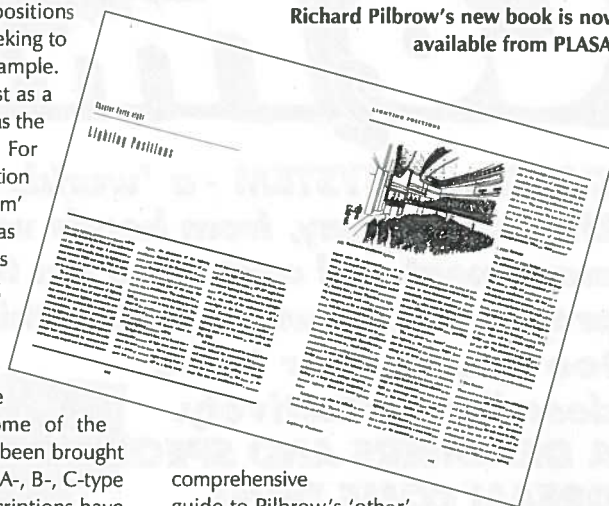
Part two, 'History' is a look at the development of stage lighting from the original cry of "let there be light" onwards; it adds a historical perspective that was missing from the earlier editions. There is also a section looking at the history of electronic lighting desks which, though interesting, feels rather cursory. Part three, 'The Life', is the big new section: 14 in-depth interviews with various LDs, interspersed with anecdotes from Pilbrow's life and work. This section starts with a digression about training which will be frustrating to many readers because it is so American-oriented, and also sounds slightly odd coming from someone who has spent a career learning by doing. But the interviews themselves are fascinating. They show how the lighting industry has expanded, and give depth to the book by allowing different backgrounds, opinions, approaches and techniques to be compared.

The book is a fascinating read both in itself and, for those familiar with the earlier versions, as a record of how techniques, equipment, and the author's approach have changed over the years: Richard Pilbrow now clearly has quite a hard time reconciling his role as a lighting designer

demanding more FOH lighting positions with that of a theatre consultant seeking to produce 'magical' auditoria, for example. Strangely, the new book works best as a companion to the old, rather than as the replacement it is intended to be. For example, I miss some of the production shots from the old book ('The Storm' and 'Shelter' are still used as examples, but no production shots remain). I miss the shots of lighting rigs that were in the earlier book: these would have clearly shown how rigs have grown and rigging and masking styles changed over the years. And, slightly curiously, some of the sketches of old lighting desks have been brought in from the old book complete with A-, B-, C-type labels - but the corresponding descriptions have been left behind.

There are other niggles - some of the photographs are really too small to show a great deal of detail and there's the odd bit of poor proof-reading. Added to which, Richard now writes using American terminology and spelling, and what did happen to the missing Pilbrow Story 12?. That said, none really distracts from the overall triumph of this book. Pilbrow describes the book as the 'final version of one that began its journey in 1970'. I hope it isn't - though perhaps he does need to turn his attention to an equally

Richard Pilbrow's new book is now available from PLASA.



comprehensive guide to Pilbrow's 'other' profession, creating new theatres!

If you are involved in lighting in any way, buy it. If you need to explain to a parent, relative or friend what you actually do in that darkened theatre for all those hours, buy it for them too. Above all, if you think lighting might be for you, buy it and get some idea of how, and why, from a master who has already inspired many.

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Rob Halliday

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## Projection at the National Theatre



Production Arts have sold their second slide projection package to The National Theatre - for their Cottesloe Theatre. It made its debut for the highly successful new Tom Stoppard play *The Invention of Love*, which opened in The Cottesloe and transferred to the larger Lyttelton to continue its run.

The deal was completed by Production Arts' Glenn Wade in conjunction with Cottesloe production manager Diane Willmott, and consisted of two Pani BP 2.5K projectors, complete with AMD 32 slide changers and two sets of dimming shutters.

Projection for the show was demanded by director Richard Eyre who oversaw the creation of the artwork. This follows a previous purchase of two Pani BP 4Ks with slide changers to the Lyttelton which were bought specifically for *Amy's View* which opened in the summer (and has now transferred to The Aldwych). This was also directed by Eyre, with slide artwork designed by Wendell Harrington. Space restrictions at the Cottesloe necessitated the construction of a completely sound-proofed projection booth in which to house the projectors. This was flown above the auditorium on chain hoists and flown out to accommodate other productions in the current rep.

*The Invention of Love* was designed by Anthony Ward with lighting by Peter Mumford.

## Metier Awarded NTO Status

Metier, the lead body responsible for training in the arts and entertainment sector, has been awarded National Training Organisation status by the Government. The award was announced by David Blunkett MP, Secretary of State for Employment.

Metier, formerly the Arts and Entertainment Training Council (AETC), will now have a greatly enhanced remit, including a greater role in vocational education, increased responsibility for careers guidance and information, a stronger research function and a responsibility to ensure wide consultation and involvement of the sector.

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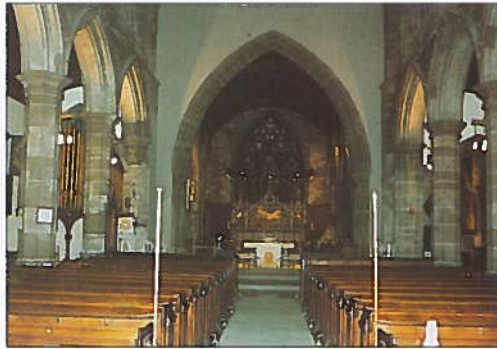
## NEWS Shorts

Action Lighting of Manchester, recently appointed Celco distributors, have sold a Celco Ventura 1000 console to the Albert Halls in Bolton. They have also sold two Celco Pathfinder consoles to Local Education Authorities in Luton and Leicester.

Vari-Lite have published a record of the works of stage lighting photographer Lewis Lee, entitled *A Different Light*. The book is published in memory of Vari-Lite's Kirby Wyatt, a pioneer of concert lighting who died in 1995, and proceeds will go to DIFFA and Broadway Cares.

LTP Audio, distributor for the ARX product range in the UK, have recently installed a quantity of their products into The Circus restaurant/bar in Soho, London.

## Cue for the Church



The first installation of Apogee equipment since Cue Pro Audio took over the UK distribution of Apogee Sound Inc products has now been completed.

The slightly unconventional venue for this first UK Apogee site is the parish Church of St. Mary's and All Saints, Kidderminster, which utilises Apogee Point 5 and Point 5 PRO speakers in a new audio system.

The Apogee deal was cemented at PLASA 97 between Cue's Danny Kitainik and Jeff Byard from Jeff Byard Sound & Broadcast, who undertook the installation. It was a demanding audio brief: the sound system had to be completely unobtrusive without sacrificing sound quality for the congregation and all aspects of the installation had to adhere to the stringent rules and regulations of the Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC). The side aisles of the church are independently covered by Apogee Point 5 PRO speakers with the smaller Point 5s used for nearfield monitoring in the High Altar Area. The nave is covered by a separate speaker system.

## Artistic's High Impact in US

Artistic Licence, through its American distributor TMB Associates, is finding its products, particularly the Preset console and Micro-Scope II, to be increasingly popular with touring bands in the USA.

The Preset 6 and 12 consoles, which are small, simple DMX512 output lighting desks, are beginning to convince the American rental community of their value. An American company, Remote Source, has gone as far as including a Preset 6 in its package of specialist lighting. TMB anticipates more interest in the Presets in its home state of California, where productions often find themselves renting larger boards than are required which are utilised to control only a few dimmers. Micro-Scope II, the hand-held DMX512 analyser, is also proving popular, being used extensively on tours including those of Yanni, Tracey Chapman, Tool, Adam Sandler, Natalie Cole and Rage Against the Machine.

## Total Audio Solution

Total Audio Solutions Ltd, specialists in personnel and equipment for the broadcast market, has completed a healthy year of trading by announcing a move into sales and hire, and the appointment of Simon Beesley as director of operations in this new division of the company.

The company is a pro-audio dealer for Sony broadcast and professional equipment, Sennheiser, Neumann, Beyerdynamic, and Rycote. The Total Audio Mobile, the company's 24-track mobile recording facility, has also been upgraded with the addition of 16 extra channels, and 32-track capability.

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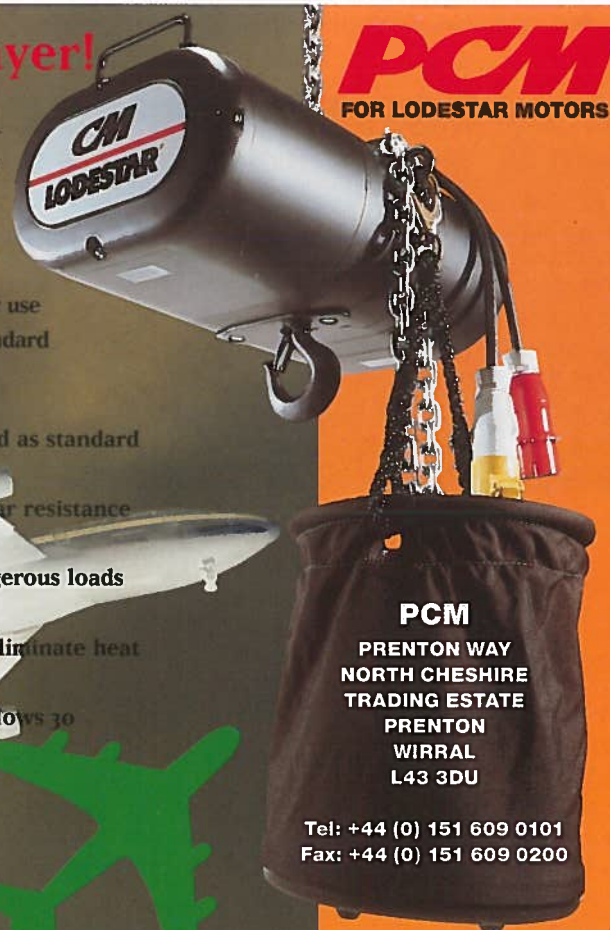
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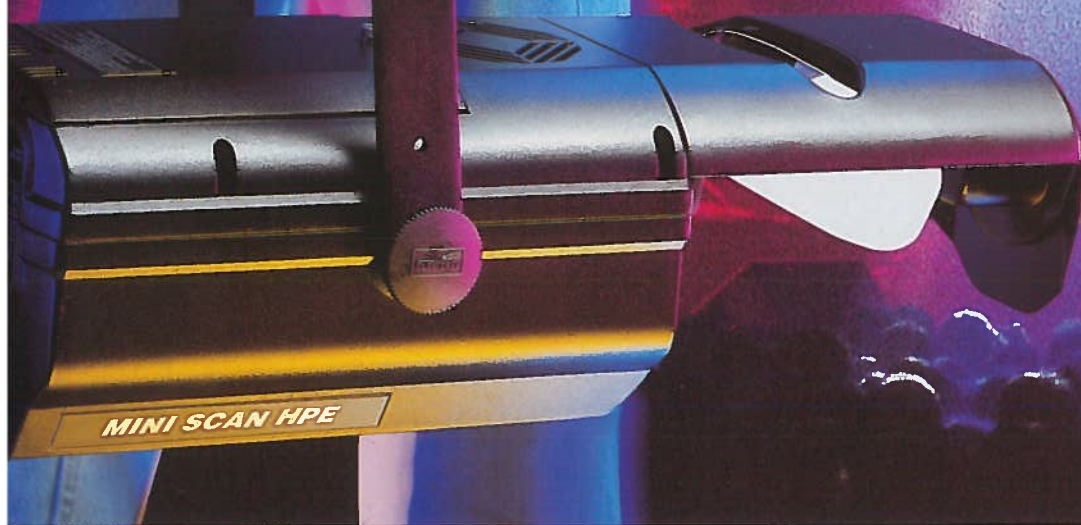


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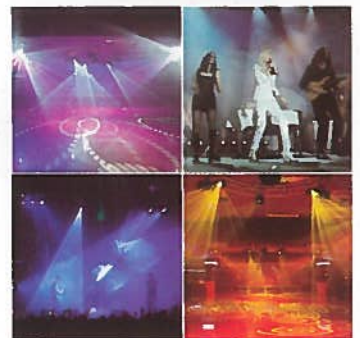
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03 - 07 / 12  
09 - 11 / 12  
21 - 22 / 12

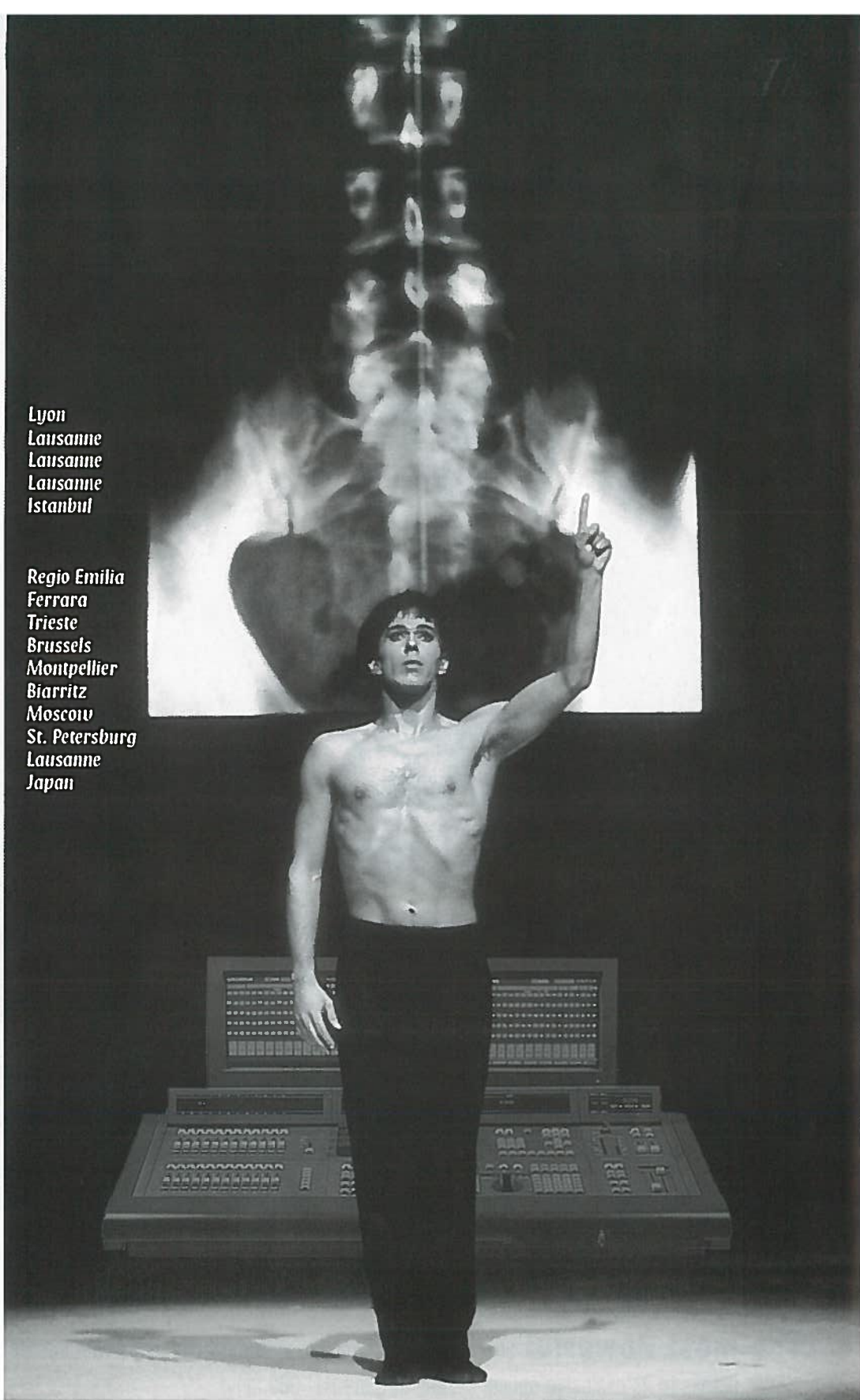
*Lyon  
Lausanne  
Lausanne  
Lausanne  
Istanbul*

## 1998

30 / 01 - 1 / 02  
03 - 04 / 02  
07 - 15 / 02  
27 / 02 - 05 / 03  
10 - 11 / 03  
13 t-15 / 03  
06 - 21 / 04

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## Texas, Belgium

Texas ended the European leg of their theatre and arena tour with a sell-out performance at the Brabant in Leuven, France. The demand for tickets, however, so caught the promoter by surprise that the venue had to abandon its planned smaller auditorium configuration in favour of the full-size 5,000-capacity arena.

For production company, AdLib Audio of Liverpool, this meant hastily re-evaluating their sound reinforcement rig, forcing them to move their new Martin Audio Wavefront 8 Compact system, purchased specifically to handle auditorium sound in the smaller halls, to delay duties. Along with war cemeteries and chocolates, Belgium is awash with loudspeaker inventories and AdLib were able to source familiar Martin F2 stock for the occasion, consistent with the rig that they have been running in conjunction with Capital Sound Hire on the larger shows. Aside from the Wavefronts, there was plenty of new kit for engineer Andy Dockerty to extol to the press corps - notably the new Series 5 FOH desk from Soundcraft and the new BSS FDS-355 Omnidrive Compacts.

In the end, the rig comprised eight Martin F2 combis and eight F2 bass bins per side, supported by eight of AdLib's own DF3 single 18" folded-horn subs. Flown some 80ft back in the auditorium were two clusters of six Wavefront 8 Compacts. AdLib also provided DF2 side fills, two stacks per side, and further infill cabinet - plus the 15" and 2" RCF-loaded AdLib-designed wedge monitors. The rig was driven by C Audio RA 3001s and RA 4001s for the tops and mids, with C Audio SRX 3801s on bass and Crown Vz 5000s handling the subs.

As the F2 is a five-way system it leant itself ideally to running the BSS FDS-388 Omnidrive in the system rack. As system engineer Dave Kay explained: "Because we're running the F2 in conjunction with our own subs we use the Omnidrive to time-align the system. The standard box parameters remain the same, but the time alignment between the cabinets changes."

A regulation system rack included Lexicon PCM70s, Yamaha D1500 delays, two SPX 900s and a Rev5. "With the MIDI-assignable delay we can change the parameters using four channels of the BSS Varicurve," added Kay. The ground stacks and flying system are generally EQ'd separately with the BSS FCS-916 parametric EQ used as system EQ for the infill stage cabinets.



Adlib Audio's system engineer Dave Kay (left) and FOH engineer Andy Dockerty.

BSS equipment continued to dominate the drive rack with a DPR-901 II processor used on Sharleen Spiteri's vocal - as she tends to sing in two distinct vocal ranges the DPR-901 kills both the wooliness and the harshness. More selective compression was obtained by adding in the two-channel BSS DPR-402, which was well represented in the rack.

In a break during soundcheck, Andy Dockerty set out the rationale behind the purchase of the Martin Wavefront 8 Compacts and even newer W8CS - the Compact's dedicated sub. "While we know our systems are good, and very popular with the bands we work with, we realised that if we wanted to be taken seriously when quoting on new business we needed a recognised, named cabinet to put alongside our own boxes."

AdLib have also been the first hire company to invest in Soundcraft's new Series 5 console, which they beta-tested (and thus had design influence) with Texas in the early summer. The desk is mighty compact (which will be a relief to those still reeling under the weight of the Europa), with dual-channel inputs, a decent EQ (with full four-band parametrics), 12 aux sends, 10 VCA groups, eight audio sub groups, 256 MIDI snapshot event scene memory, a 16x10 matrix section, L/C/R panning, bags of outputs and a new power supply.

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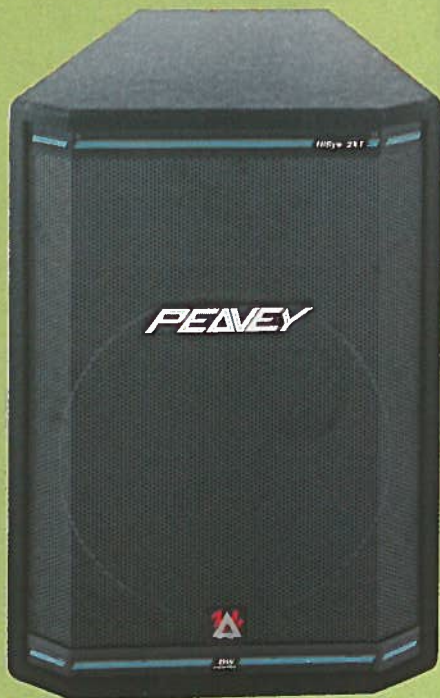
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**MOBO Awards**



Coolio performing at the 1997 MOBO Awards. photo: Jonathan Park

The recent MOBO (Music Of Black Origin) Awards was a small, but perfectly formed, awards show of rising importance videoed for Carlton TV at the Connaught Rooms. Jonathan Park and Pippa Goldfinger of Studio Park devised a tough-looking metallic setting for the event, incorporating built-in lighting and Vari\*Lite VL5s and VL6s with scenic gauzes and a wraparound starcloth, creating the illusion of great space for the TV cameras.

The scenic elements were front and back-lit to great effect by the lighting designer Mike 'Sooty' Sutcliffe. The simple set was enhanced by the use of textured paints and surfaces, which reflected the lighting and allowed a wide variety of looks to be achieved - both sophisticated and stark. The angled stage with its offset presentation podium and numerous access stairs provided a wealth of camera angles and performance positions for the presenters, winners and performers.

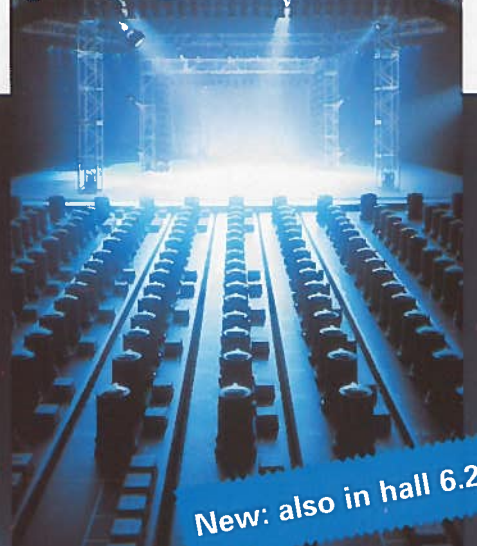
**Live! 98 Returns to Roundhouse**

The 1998 Live! Show has broadened its boundaries to include live elements in all sectors including the broadcast industry. In particular, visitors to this year's show can expect to see a solid presence of TV specialists such as set designers, lighting designers and sound engineers, along with major video, graphics and staging companies.

Running on February 5th and 6th, the Live! show returns to the Roundhouse in Chalk Farm, London, and will also host the Production Services Association (PSA) conference, which runs over both days and is available to members and non-members alike, in addition to a seminar held by the Association of Lighting Designers (ALD), at 2.45pm on February 6th. The Live Awards will be held on the evening of the 5th at the Royal Lancaster.

For further information, contact the organisers on (01322) 660070.

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## Leamington Work for Cameron Hartlepool



Camerons in Hartlepool.

Leamington Sight & Sound have carried out four major installs in the North East for Cameron all inside a month and using Martin Audio components. The conversion of a former bank into the flagship Lighthouse Café bar/dance area was a major contract for Leamington, who were called in to provide audio, lighting and video. In the café bar they sited two concealed EM 150 subs along with eight distributed EM 26s, flush-mounted to the walls. In the back room they specified a punchier dance system, using a pair of EM 151 subs and four EM 186s, run full range. The bass bins were hidden under the raised area and the mids and tops were flown from the lighting rig. A Martin M1 processor is used on the café bar sound, while the dance rig is run in conjunction with a Martin EMX2A.

Leamington have also been busy elsewhere in the region, fitting four EM 56s and a pair of EM 150 subs at the nearby Merchant Stores, while another Cameron bar, The Outpost, recently opened in Sunderland, sporting Martin Audio ICT 300s and ICS 300s. Finally, Leamington completed a hectic month by equipping The Baltic Wharf in Hull, using eight Martin EM 26s split into two zones. The company then augmented the sound in the main bar with a pair of EM 201 subs.

## Starlite Moves at Clothes Show

The Pepe clothing stand at the recent Clothes Show Live at the NEC in Birmingham was lit by some of the new Starlite Mk 5 moving yoke luminaires. Chosen partly for their high quality optical system, the Mk 5s were fitted with customised dichroic gobos for their use. Four times a day the Starlites came into their own for a fashion show taking place on the stand. Also featured in the lighting system were Golden Scan 3s and a sprinkling of Par cans, in a design by LD Billy Potts, which he controlled from a Jands Hog. All of the equipment for the show was supplied by Tank Stage Lighting, and CSE / Visua, who are part of the SSSVC group of companies, and included all of the sound equipment for the show as well, which consisted of a Nexo system controlled from a Soundcraft console.

This was the first time that Alan Heath Davis of CSE/Visua had used the new Starlite fixtures, and Tank Stage Lighting have now placed an order for six units to be added into their permanent rental stock.

## Selfridges' Big Night

The recent celebration of Selfridges' new atrium - part of a major refurbishment programme set for completion in 1999 - took the form of a staged party for 550 people in their Oxford Street store.

The event, conceptualised by Sara Blonstein and Andy Kooky McDonald of Persuaders, was designed to encapsulate Selfridges' new look. Delta Sound Inc were awarded the contract to provide sound reinforcement by the party planners. With Simon Wooler as project engineer, it was Delta Sound's duty to 'bridge' all five floors of the store with audio reinforcement, including two floors of main system which were matrixed from the Soundcraft Vienna desk for live and playback purposes. The main rig comprised EAW JF200 enclosures, infilled with JBL Control 1s and Electrovoice S80s, distributed elsewhere in the store. All the playback was from Denon DN1100 and DN990 minidisc players. The surprise compere was Jonathan Ross, whom Delta kitted out with a Trantec S5000 UHF handheld radio mic system.

## NEWS Shorts

Surrey-based **Essential Design & Essential Systems** have recently merged to become **Essential Lighting Group Ltd**. The new company is located at Unit F, Imber Court Trading Estate, Orchard Lane, East Molesey, Surrey, KT8 0BY. Telephone: 0181-335 6000 Fax: 0181-398 7205. The hire department remains in Battersea.

**C Audio** sales took off in France this month with two high-profile sales by their distributor Harman Pro France - The Palais des Congrès in Toulouse underwent a complete audio refit where C Audio RA Series amps chosen, and in a separate installation, five RA3001s and two RA2001s recently went into the Caribees nightclub in Pau.

**Acoustone Corp**, the US-based manufacturer of sound fabrics and grille cloth, has appointed World Marketing Associates as their representative in Europe and the Middle East.

The 998 edition of the **Showcase International Music Book** is now available in book or CD-ROM form. For details contact Showcase in London, tel: 0181-348 2332.

**Trantec's** special gold-finish version of their S5000 UHF system was given a high profile outing with the Spice Girls recently when Covent Garden-based Better Sound received an order for eight golden radio microphones from LWT for use on the filming of An Audience With The Spice Girls.

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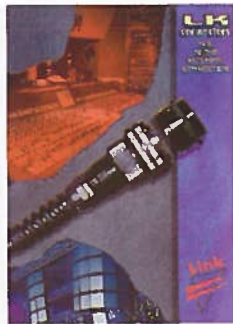
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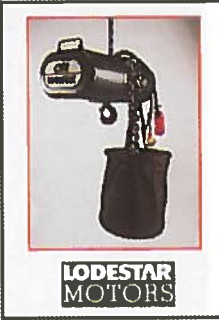
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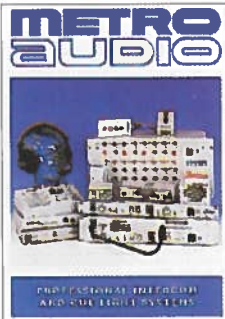
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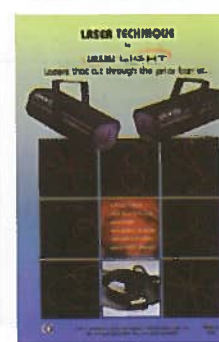
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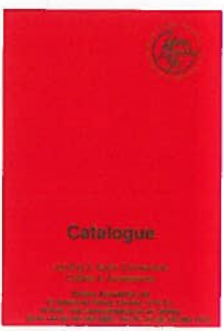
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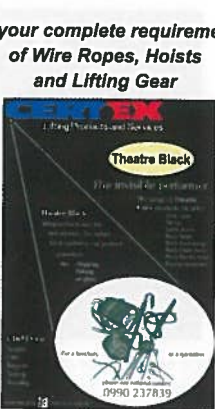
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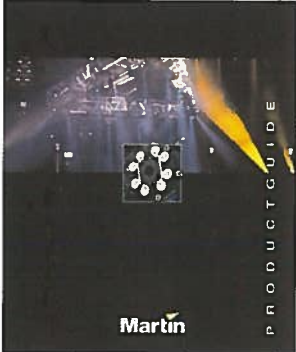
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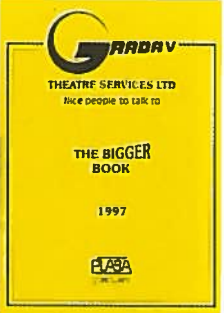
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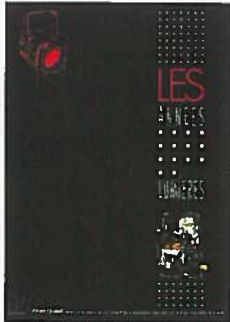
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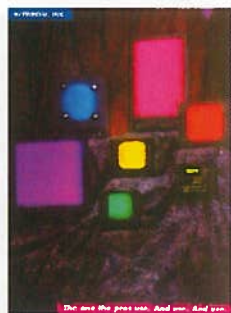




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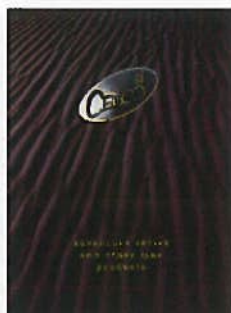


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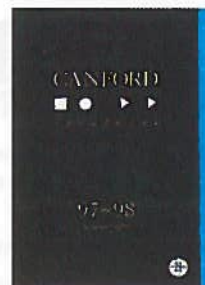
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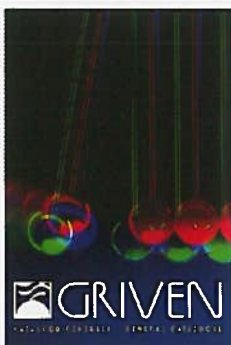
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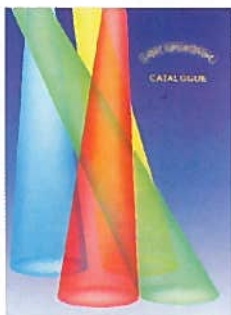
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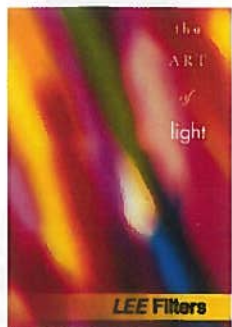
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# STAR CITY

*From Las Vegas to Sydney, lavish casinos are on the increase - Rob Halliday travelled to Sydney, Australia, to take a look at one of the newest arrivals in the casino world*



**The Lyric Theatre - a traditional, three-level horse-shoe auditorium.**

So, you want a new casino? It's easy. Just go ahead and build one. At least, that's how it works in Las Vegas - as visitors to this year's LDI exhibition and countless thousands of other tourists have seen. But elsewhere in the world things are slightly harder: how many large, lavish, themed casinos do you know of in the UK?

On the other side of the world, in Sydney, the casino builders are taking the middle ground. Some years of lobbying the authorities for permission eventually led to the creation of the Sydney Harbour Casino, an unprepossessing, low-level building that sat quietly in the Pyrmont district of Sydney, next to the maritime museum and opposite the aquarium. But this was just a taster, a warm up act - as the business-types might say, a cash flow creator - for what was to follow: Star City.

This new complex, built on a formerly derelict site just behind the old building, is as over-the-top as the old was understated. The huge building houses the casino, a hotel, a block of luxury apartments, a shopping mall, the usual Showroom cabaret theatre and a slightly less common 2,000 seat Lyric Theatre. It faces out into Pyrmont bay and, with glass towers at either end, countless water features in between and transparent lifts rising up to the pink neon in the centre, just screams out for attention.

Getting to the building is almost as easy as spotting it: a monorail, a light rail system and a network of free sponsored coaches all run to the casino's doorstep. The intention is clearly to aim for the same family audience that Vegas is now reaching out to rather than the old-style Casino crowd: even the name avoids any gambling connotations, and the two men on the cherry-picker who spent the post-opening morning tearing the lettering off the old building were clearly trying to ensure that the old was pushed out of people's minds as quickly as possible.

Three years of construction reached their conclusion on November 26th, when fireworks blazed out across Sydney to announce a free public concert by Diana Ross outside the casino, followed by more private, invited-audience performances by Tom Jones in the Showroom Theatre and Michael Crawford in the Lyric. The event certainly drew the crowds, with the more affluent cruising into the casino's bay in their boats rather than fighting the crowds on the public transport then getting the surprise of their lives when fireworks started launching from a barge moored just behind them as well as from the roof of the casino itself.

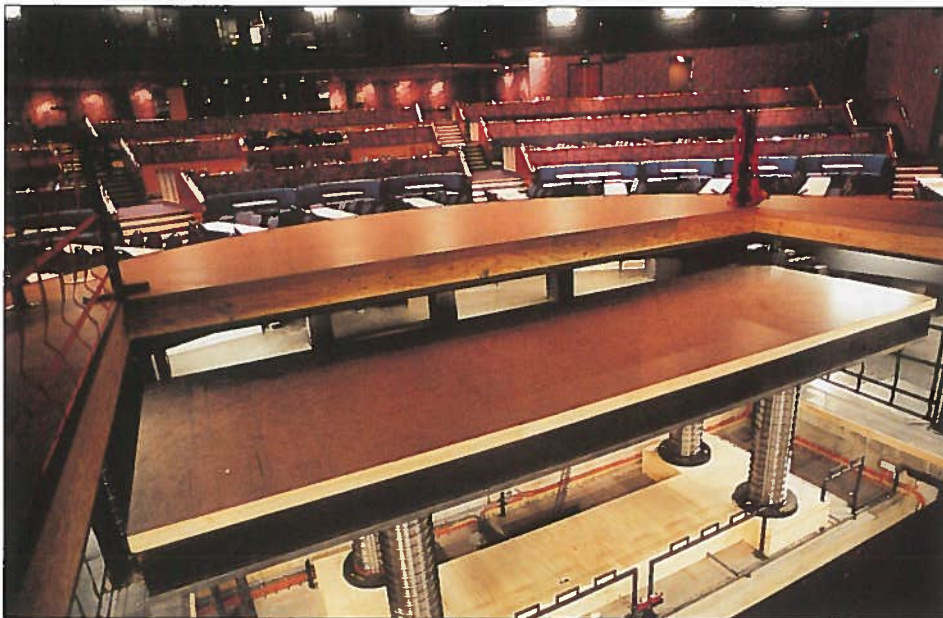
The next morning, it was back to work finishing off all those trivial little jobs - like installing the public telephones, getting the

public area lighting working and sorting out the snags in the water features. The calmest people in the building seemed to be the contractors who had worked on the two theatres; for Glantre Engineering, for example, responsible for the comprehensive lift installation in the Showroom it was all over bar the paperwork. Funny how the perception in the 'real' world is that theatre people don't understand real-world projects and deadlines when on this evidence exactly the opposite is true.

## **THE SHOWROOM THEATRE**

The Showroom Theatre at Star City looks like - well, a casino showroom theatre. There's a working stage behind a quite traditional looking proscenium arch, but then a very deep thrust stage with the audience, basically on one sloping level, curved around it and a relatively low roof above it. The seating is arranged into booths and around tables; eating and drinking is intended to be as much a part of the show experience as the act on the stage. The decor is predominantly black, with gaudier splashes of colour in the carpet and some of the wall treatments.

At first glance, the technical installation appears relatively simple: trussing above the forestage and audience, with some TV-style winches installed by ITE from Melbourne further out at the sides, and fairly conventional



The Glantre Spiralift installed in the Showroom Theatre at Star City.

counterweight flying bars installed by Jands above the stage area, though with some motorised sets intended for lighting bars. But the theatre has some tricks hidden within it, tricks which reveal a history to the venue's planning which never came to fruition. Early in its design, it was to be an overseas home for the famed Lido de Paris club (L+SI, Feb '95), famed for their spectacular girls-'n'-feathers-'n' more shows, produced with the highest theatrical-style production values. It was the Lido, for example, who specified the flying beam, a track in the roof of the auditorium capable of lifting a load of up to 1 tonne (be it flying person or flying dragon) and carrying it out, over and around the audience. They also demanded a comprehensive lifting system in the stage, to allow them to make their shows more spectacular, both by adding movement to them and by allowing scenery to be changed out of view of the audience before being lifted into sight. Accomplishing such changes on the stage would be quite hard because of the limited wing space, while on the forestage it would be impossible.

The casino is now open, and Lido are not there, having pulled out of the project some time ago. But their legacy remains, thanks to Glantre who have installed four 9m x 3m lifts in the stage. Two of the lifts are installed in the forestage and two in the main stage area; each half of each pair can be operated separately or can be driven together to give two 9m x 6m platforms. The lifts are formed from the increasingly common, yet still fascinating, Spiralifts from Gala in Canada. These are usually used to form orchestra pit lifts because they require so little depth for installation; Glantre recently completed such an installation as part of the refurbishment of the Barbican Theatre. But Andy Macdonald, their project manager in Sydney, is quick to note that the Star City installation is altogether more challenging: "the standard Spiralift is an orchestra platform; it just moves up and down at a fixed speed and that's it. Here, they're used as stage lifts and so you need a greater degree of control; you have to be able to set different heights and different movement speeds." Glantre also had to meet the demands of New South Wales Workcover, the equivalent of the British Health and Safety Executive, and

one last demand from the Lido. "Three of the four lifts are fairly standard," Macdonald explains. Each is supported by four Spiralift columns and has a lifting capacity of 13 tonnes, though each has a different range of travel with lift 1 (at the front of the forestage) travelling 3m, lift 3 (downstage of the stage area) travelling 4.5m, and lift 4 capable of travelling 9m down to the dock door and intended as a scenery and equipment lift. Lift 2 is the odd-one-out; it sits on eight Spiralift columns and has a 75 tonne lifting capacity, which is what you need if you want to lift a 2m high swimming pool up to stage level, as the Lido did! The lift also has 5 metres of travel rather than lift 1's 3m. "This meant that you could have the pool set, which is 50 tonnes of water, but cover it and still have a flat surface with lift 1, suitable for putting a truck, a revolve wagon or, in an early plan, an ice-rink wagon onto" Macdonald explains. "Then the Lido pulled out and the pool got scrapped!"

Though there is a Bytecraft automation desk sitting in the theatre's control room, running the powered flying and the tabs, links between it and the lifts weren't specified in time. Therefore each lift is currently operated by its own controller. These devices are equipped with touch screens, allowing easy selection of heights and movement speeds, and the controllers for the adjacent pairs of platforms can be linked together, one controller then acting as the master for the other. The controllers for the two stage lifts plug into sockets hidden in traps in the stage floor; the controllers for the downstage two can plug into either a downstage box or a duplicate outlet on the front-of-house catwalk. All of the controllers also interact with the comprehensive safety system: because an operator at stage level can't see what's happening sub-stage, a second technician has to be positioned below the stage pressing a 'clear to move' button before a lift will run. All of these control points are equipped with ring intercom connections, allowing the two technicians to talk to each other. The lifts also have plenty of emergency stop buttons, pull wires in the lift pits so that someone working in that area can stop a moving lift, and safe-edges at every level to stop a lift if an item of scenery is protruding over an edge.

However, a lift will still not normally move unless it is surrounded by a safety barrier at all of the levels it passes through; these barriers consist of sections of webbing between two pillars that slot into sockets at the corners of the lift. A handle then tensions the webbing and enables the lift, and a lift moving in this way also sounds a warning klaxon when running. All of which would be somewhat distracting and impractical during a performance! Glantre have therefore included a 'show mode', enabled by a keyswitch at the prompt desk, which removes the need for the barriers and disables the klaxon. The intention is that a show's stage manager will enable this mode just prior to the start of a show, when the stage is known to be clear.

The lift system has also necessitated a very unusual safety curtain: because the forestage could effectively be at basement level, the safety curtain also reaches down to this level: as it is about half way to the stage it hits a lever in its track, which opens a trap in the stage. The iron then passes through the stage to land on the basement floor. It's quite amusing to watch, though you wouldn't want to be standing underneath it!

The other equipment in the theatre is fairly minimal, with the intention being that shows will bring in their own equipment: an Artisan and various members of the Vari\*Lite family for the Tom Jones show, supplied along with the rest of the equipment for the launch events by Jands Production Services. There is a DMX distribution system, installed by TCP, and some dimmers, by Dynolite, but in all of the planning and preparation for the new building some simpler but more important items were clearly forgotten: the operators for the opening shows had nothing to put their equipment on and nowhere to sit. The control room is now decked out with a collection of furniture that was probably destined for bars elsewhere in the theatre. The resulting look, it has to be said, is comfortable and relaxed!

The theatre will now play host to a collection of short stops by various artists but will then become home to permanent show: Steel City, a new dance show by choreographer Dein Perry, who created the international smash-hit *Tap Dogs*. The move clearly marks Perry as the Australian equivalent to Cirque du Soleil - popular, classless and, above all, free from language and so with multi-national appeal. It will be interesting to see whether Perry and his team push the new theatre's equipment as hard as the Cirque team tend to.

## THE LYRIC THEATRE

While the Showroom Theatre looks like it is in the right part of town, the rather beautiful Lyric Theatre looks like it got lost en route to somewhere else. The theatre's foyers aren't that different from the rest of the casino: the glass tower that protrudes from the foyer is a twin of that on the Showroom theatre (and bears a slight resemblance to the big RAC buildings in the UK), but the Lyric's tower contains a glass staircase, each step internally lit in white neon that almost manages to give visitors the impression that they are walking on air as they look out at the views over the bay.

You can detect an immediate change as you step through the doors into the marshalling areas around the auditorium; as the doors close on this pale-wood lined corridor the

noise from the casino subsides to a distant murmur. But the real surprise comes as you step through into the auditorium, and discover a fairly traditional, three-level horse-shoe auditorium, a nineties interpretation of a much older theatre design theme common in European opera houses. The immediate impression is of silence - unusual in Sydney, where many of the theatres seem to suffer from the regular rumble of passing underground trains and the noise of construction is everywhere as the city rebuilds itself for the Millennium and the Olympics. The Lyric team worked to avoid this, with acoustician Bob Fitzell noting that the entire auditorium has been suspended on rubber isolation pads. Yet the theatre also seems healthily alive, perhaps a product of the 1.35 second reverberation time.

And the 2000-seat auditorium is also, at first glance, beautiful, in a very restrained way. The side and rear walls are faced in an attractive pale wood, and there is an oval panel in the roof containing predominantly white fresco by artist Colin Lanceley; this jarred slightly with the rest of the auditorium, to my taste, but did make a refreshing change from the functional ceilings of many modern theatres. The seats are comfortable, and the circles are shallow enough and high enough that the view even from the rear of the stalls and first circle is very clear. Only in the seats at the extreme ends of the circles do problems become apparent: the high backs, thick circle front and height mean that anything on their own-side of the stage from just a little way past the centre line is rendered invisible.

The front-of-house technical aspects are neatly handled - though admittedly a theatre that has been operating for just a day hasn't had time to acquire the clutter of hard work. But lights hanging on the circle front bars are then cabled through neat traps in the wooden panelling on the circle front, meaning that the usually ugly plugs and sockets are hidden from view while still allowing easy access to the lamp for focusing. There are pros' booms and a circle slip position, each coloured black to help hide lamps and speakers, and there are also lighting bridges in the roof (though the furthest downstage of these apparently suffers because of the mural, and the upstage bridge is currently double-hung as an alternative) and the usual hanging points in the pros' area. Lighting and sound control rooms are located at the rear of the stalls, while there is a large spot box at a very good angle to the stage at the rear of the upper circle.

One unusual aspect of the auditorium, which should please any visiting lighting designer, is that there are no emergency exit lights, something that head mechanist Chris Pigott thinks makes the theatre practically unique. Because there is no centre aisle and there is a door in the side wall of the auditorium for every two to three rows of seating, the appropriate authorities were convinced that the exit routes were clearly enough defined without illumination. Only when the extra rows of seats over the front of the adaptable orchestra pit were added did a problem occur, though this was resolved with careful negotiation.

The stage area is a model of a practical, modern pros-arch theatre. The casino owners and the Really Useful Group, who are running



Star City's foyer - suitably over-the-top



The main gaming floor.

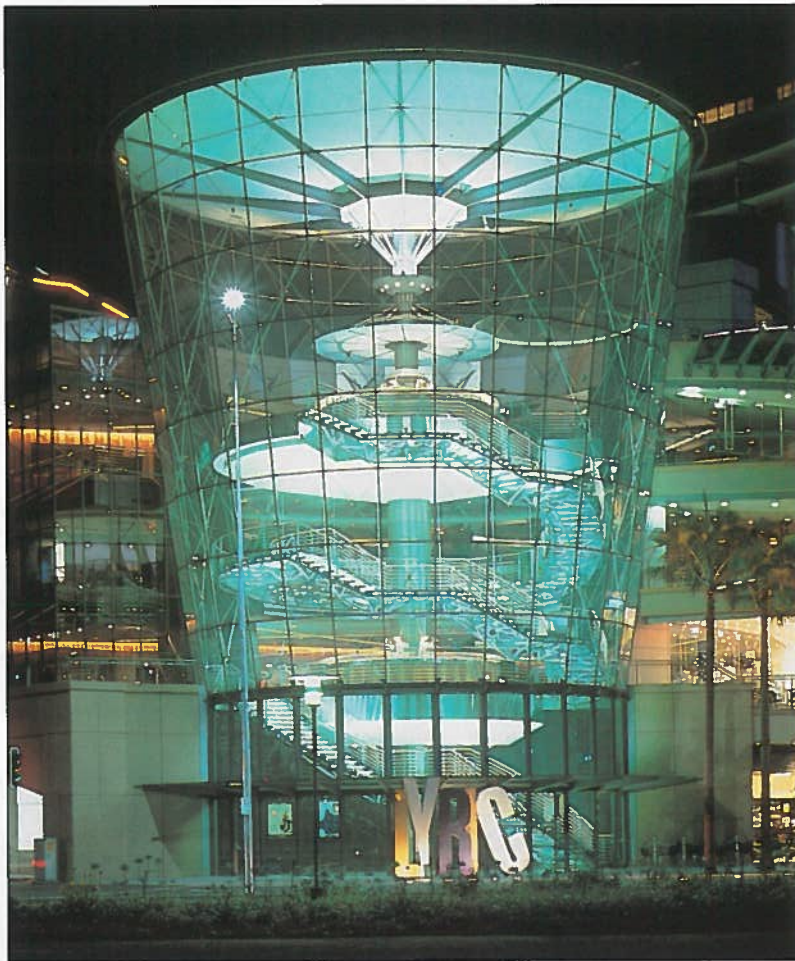


The complex's Lightning Ridge Bar.

the Lyric on their behalf, have opted for a 'simple as versatile' policy, aware that a theatre as well suited to large-scale musicals as this one should be able to roll with the precise demands those shows bring.

The 15m wide, 9m high pros' arch opens onto a flat, demountable timber stage floor. There is a large (16m) wing on stage left, and a smaller, but not unreasonable, (5m) one on stage right. The stage right wing is stopped by the 95-way single-purchase counterweight flying system, this last item subject to a surprising level of debate in the unlikely forum of the Sydney Morning Herald newspaper. I don't think I've ever seen a paper like The Guardian arguing the merits of manual versus automated flying at the ROH, say, in a main feature article! The flying system was installed by Showquip.

Upstage is a 16m-deep rear stage, with a concrete floor and a sound-proof door capable of sealing it off from the main stage. The stage is three floors above street level, but a goods lift can raise 40-foot trailers up to rear-stage level to ease get-ins. Downstage is an adaptable



The 2,000-seat Lyric Theatre's foyer almost manages to give visitors the impression that they are walking on air.

two-section orchestra pit mounted on scissor lifts.

The rest of the theatre's equipment list is very sparse. A mains wiring infrastructure has been provided for stage lighting, but there are no dimmers - visiting production have to bring in their own. The same is true of sound equipment - and of crew, come to that, since the theatre has just a head electrician and a head mechanist on its permanent staff. Here the complex as a whole seems to have made an odd policy decision: the staff in the theatre and the staff in the Showroom are technically employed by different people, are paid different rates and are therefore not interchangeable. Which, given that the theatres are perhaps two minutes walk from each other, seems a little strange.

Around the outside of the theatre are packed dressing rooms, administration offices and even a rehearsal room, though the first production to make use of it, the Peter Hall Company's *An Ideal Husband*, which will be the first theatrical production at the venue when it opens in January, seemed to

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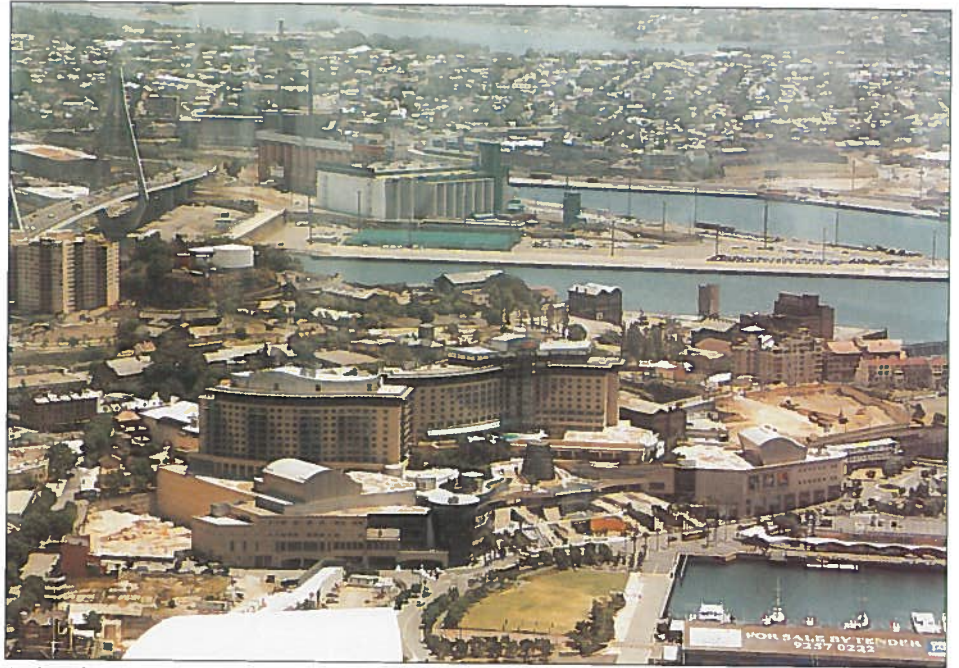
Keeping an eye on the future



be finding it too small. And though the stage and auditorium seem finished, it is the bare concrete steps (and the lift that no-one trusted!) that gave away the fact that things were running a little behind schedule in the run-up to the opening. Work will no doubt be continuing into the new year!

One suspects that the whole Casino complex owes its existence to the Lyric Theatre; Sydney has been just a little short of large stages, and this must have proved a tempting sweetener to the local authorities. That the theatre's design is so clearly distinct from the casino's is a testament to architect Philip Cox, who seems to have had a falling out with Landmark Design, the company responsible for the plastic rocks, waterfalls, fibre-optic ceilings and giant fish tanks that make up the rest of the casino, but who seem to have been kept quite carefully away from the Lyric. The theatre is a better place for it. It will be a great place to come and watch shows - though it will be interesting to see whether it really can cope with both the delicate comedy of *An Ideal Husband* and the epic scale of the Broadway production of *Showboat*, which sails into town later in the year. Unusually, it just might. It will certainly cope with the *Showboat* set far more easily than any venue in London, where the show is also due during 1998!

The trick now will be pulling in the audiences. The free buses will no doubt help, but theatre and casino audiences seem like strange bedfellows: especially audiences to *Showboat*, a show in which, I seem to recall, no great good comes of gambling. Perhaps the New South Wales authority insisted on the



A view from the air of Star City - built on a formerly derelict site.

show as part of the 'support system' (including anonymous telephone helplines) that the casino has to have in place to be allowed to operate!

It will succeed though: the complex is too visible and too high profile for any of it to be allowed to fail (even though neither the fireworks nor the multi-million dollar advertising campaign had succeeded completely: the morning after the big launch, my taxi driver still had no clue what Star City

was!). It isn't a match for any of the Vegas casinos: it doesn't have the one big theme that unifies the design of those giants, and there isn't any local competition to keep it on its toes. But it has given Sydney two new venues of very different character, without recourse to the public purse.

Maybe, as lottery funding for the arts in the UK starts to wain, it is something that business and government in this country could learn from . . .

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# No Comment . . .

Tony Gottelier

Not so much to go on this month - the Christmas and New Year break, which in the UK this year reached epic proportions, leaves such a big, black hole in the memory. My own was blighted by two adjacent funerals (but no wedding), though we managed a few days across the Channel for the actual Yule festivities. In fact, France is not the place to be on the 25th of December, it's just any other day off, our native festivities being largely an invention of the Victorians.

Now, what the French go in for in a big way is the New Year, or Réveillon as they call it. The only reason for mentioning this is that, in the spirit of the EU and the Brit's year of Presidency, couldn't the BBC consider Paris as somewhere else, other than Edinburgh, to go at midnight on New Year's Eve, when millions switch on just to confirm that it's time for another drink?

My esteemed editor, she of the sharp blue pencil and the ruthless deadlines, suggested a New Year wish-list this month, but I think that I am probably in enough trouble already. Besides, I have difficulty conjuring up my Fairy Godmother these days, so that idea will have to remain wishful thinking. Ho! Ho!

Somehow, I didn't think that it would be too long before we would be looking at a sequel to the Martin Professional story, which first appeared in this column in the October issue. If you remember, this was the one where a Danish financial magazine had got its teeth into MP's financial statements suggesting that they might not be all that they were cracked up to be. This surfaced publicly during the PLASA Show, at which point the Press were told officially that Peter Johansen, Martin's founder, blamed the entire thing on satanic, outside forces which shall not be

named here again for the sake of not perpetuating the myth.

This story was still simmering at LDI when, in an extremely ill-judged public utterance, on accepting an award no less, doubt was cast about - to be delicate about it and in deference to the intemperate language actually used - the fragrance of the 'champagne'. Needless to say, it was Methode anyway, but the inference was clear. It could have been better and, just to prove it, it was said that Martin would provide the Champagne next year. I trust that LDI will hold them to that promise, for there were several hundred embarrassed witnesses to the diatribe.

Then, just as we went to press in December, came a profits warning to the tune of £1.77m (DK20m) related to the Martin Group's US subsidiary. I can imagine what a bitter pill this must have been for the helmsman to swallow, and it led to a further drop in the value of Martin's shares where they languish at 40% below August values. Cynics will, no doubt, ascribe dubious motives to the fact that Johansen had previously off-loaded nearly half his personal holding in the company at those higher values to a number of investors including a pension fund. I prefer to think that this was just a fortunate (or unfortunate, depending on your position) piece of timing.

Of the losses forecast, 50% are ascribed to 'strong competition in the American market and to restructuring' there, 30% to stock write-offs and provisions, while 15% is attributed to 'a series of deals which it has been necessary to retract'. For some time now I have been hearing, as yet unconfirmed rumours, that certain US rental houses have returned their leasing stock to base - could this latter part of the Martin statement be a different spin on the same thing? Incidentally, once again, the blame for these doubtful transactions is placed at someone else's door, in this case 'a former leading sales person'.

Personally, I would see this as a euphemism for 'ruthless marketing' for, as has been pointed out by a past, close Johansen associate, "It was Martin's policy from the top to win market share at any price."

The balance of these unusual costs, incidentally, is mysteriously bound up with the original Tracoman deal, in which Martin acquired the stock and goodwill of their US distribution arm for \$7m, partly in deferred payments. In their commentary, following Martin's recent statements to the Danish stockmarket, Børsen's Nyhedsmagasin continues to cast doubts over the viability of that deal, citing a lack of proper information about what was actually being paid for, and inferring a possible connection between that agreement and the stock write-offs.

I spoke to a representative of Flemings, a City of London merchant bank who have previously published financial research about the Martin Group, for an objective view: He offered the opinion, though nothing much would change until after the full year's results are known, that it was all a bit of a storm in a teacup, and that investors were overreacting somewhat due to the nature of the beast. Since this year's adjusted results would show no growth, though probably no reduction in profits either, he conceded that this could prove to be unpopular with the sort of investor that, typically, backs speculative stocks. Meanwhile, the bank would be keeping a low profile.

I got the impression that, like most of the rest of the industry, the banker hoped that 'world domination' would become less of a crusade for Martin during 1998 and that a somewhat different New Year's resolution should be adopted in the upper echelons of the executive in Århuus.

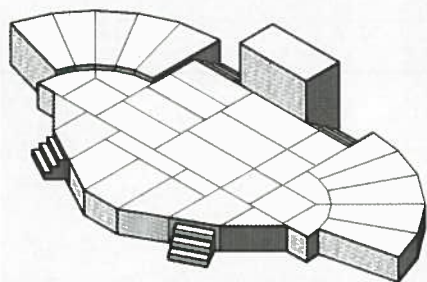
Now that the Cameron Macintosh spectacular has been unceremoniously dumped by the Millennium Experience people, one has to question whether the infamous Greenwich Dome will turn out to be the bonanza for our industry that it originally promised to be. Mind you, one might also have to question the potential pulling power of Macintosh's planned production, bearing in mind that it would have needed to attract 12,500 ticket sales at each sitting - not one of the reasons given by the MEC for its early bath. Nevertheless, it certainly would have needed to be some spectacular!

Besides, the options don't seem to be so exciting either: First we have Peter Mandelson speculating about 'Surf Ball' - the game of the 21st century - which, if it exists at all and there is considerable doubt about that, already sounds more like a lead balloon than a high roller. Then we have this giant sphere (maybe this is the aforementioned lead balloon) which will apparently drop through the roof - well that will be roughly 15 seconds of arse tearing terror won't it; and now, wait for it, . . . Damien Hirst!

Now, don't get me wrong, I do not take sides in the 'What is art?' argument, but I can't fathom what half a dead sheep in a tank of Formaldehyde has to do with entertainment on the scale envisaged. The closest most of the punters, whose profiles match the volume of traffic required to justify The Dome as an attraction, will want to come to a dead sheep, is when it is served up on their plates as the Sunday roast. And, on top of all that we could have religion too!

The MEC recently issued a list of the first 10 design firms to be appointed to the project. I recognise five of them as real 'event' designers (and incidentally, whatever happened to the much-hyped involvement of

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Imagination, about whom we hear nothing in this connection anymore?). The Dome has to attract 20m visitors in one year to justify its existence. That is one third of the population of the entire United Kingdom. Excluding the probability of foreign visitors, though they will doubtless have their own fish to fry, that's a lotta people.

**B**y coincidence, it is roughly the same number which visit Orlando each year, but just consider the incalculable financial and creative investment over many years which has gone into generating the combined pulling power of Disney World, Epcot and Universal Studios, to say nothing of the on-site accommodation, and the massive annual promotion budget.

When Peter Mandelson made his much-publicised visit there over the New Year, he must have been wincing behind his plasticised smile. The UK's top tourist attraction, Blackpool Pleasure Beach, gets in the region of 7.5 million visitors annually, though how many of them visit the adjacent Pleasure Beach theme park I am not certain, whilst the British Museum attracts 6.8m, though what all that says about the Dome I am not too sure either, except that combined it doesn't add up to nearly 20m.

**I**f you bring into this the time scale, poignant in view of the Dome's location, it is just another major factor the designers will be seriously short of - two years is simply not long

enough for the invention, design, development and build of attractions of this scale - the potential of the disappointment comes into sharp focus.

**O**pen warfare has been declared between the Minister and Stephen Bayley (this article was actually written prior to Stephen Bayley's resignation), the exhibition's creative director, with both parties openly contradicting each other and bickering in public. This might be a good thing from a PR viewpoint, at least it keeps the interest up, but actually it is just a symptom of the chaotic thinking surrounding, what is factually, a politically motivated fandango.

On the other hand, perhaps 'Surf Ball' will be an on-screen, interactive, 3D, full colour, virtual reality, 21st century version of the enduring Punch and Judy show featuring the dark, demonic Doctor Spin-Mandy, versus the cuddly Creative with the big imagination, Stevie Baby?

**T**he spectre of Peter Stringfellow running for Mayor of London is not an attractive one. Actually, I am a great admirer of Peter's, but as an operator of nightclubs - in that sphere he brooked no equal, and he is an attentive and charming host and knows exactly what it takes to make a place work. His saga with his Cabaret of Angels is not, particularly, in issue either - chacun a son gout.

The problem is that Stringfellow is going to make even more of a prat of himself - not

something that has ever bothered him up to now, I grant you - but he has to remember that he is also seen as a self-appointed ambassador for the club industry. OK, so he can don the Dick Whittington persona, though Peter Pan might be more appropriate, but he simply does not have the gravitas for the job.

Entertainers should stick to what they do best. I know that we have had the late Sonny Bono as Mayor of Palm Springs, and President Reagan for God's sake, as well as others too numerous to mention. However, leaving aside any comment on their individual performances, there is one major difference - these guys had all made an attempt to shed their previous image and reinvent themselves.

Stringfellow has never done that and is still trying to look and behave exactly as he did in the seventies. If you look at past distinguished mayors of other cities, such as Brandt and Koch, they all had a flair for publicity but also they conveyed an aura of sincerity and earnestness which commanded respect. (Koch only became an entertainer later.)

**S**tringfellow is not a Raving Monster Loony, but I am afraid that his campaign, which is already not so subtly underway in the press, could denigrate the intended status of the post and will, anyway, be seen as a cheap publicity stunt.

I sincerely hope that he has second thoughts on the matter and decides to stay with the moniker he acquired through his biography as 'The King of Clubs'.

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# DISNEY ON RAILS

*The latest touring extravaganza from Disney's prodigious publicity machine is making tracks around Europe. Steve Moles stepped aboard in Brussels*



One of the more disturbing aspects of the Hercules show and, above, some skeletons.

Just before departing for Brussels to meet the Disney train I took the precaution of calling Kim McCarthy, the show's production manager. "Kim, I'll be arriving in Brussels Thursday night. Should I pop down to Station Midi that evening to sort out my pass for the exhibition tomorrow?"

His reply very aptly defines why the Disney organisation elect to use a train as a mobile exhibition platform to tour Europe. "Oh no," he said, "I'll be in another city. We don't pull into Brussels until about 1.00am Friday morning."

"But that's the day of the show," I spluttered. "Yep."

The whole process of getting this show on the rails began for McCarthy back in January 1997. "I'd done the Hunchback train the previous year, but this is by far the biggest one ever to tour Europe, both physically and in terms of the number of cities we've visited."

But despite the increased scale of presentation, the important lessons for touring this way had all been learnt the previous year. "The big concerns are about managing people, or 'guests' as we call them."

Yes, the Disney ethos is strictly adhered to; punters are 'guests', backstage is concealed from all but those working the show and nothing is allowed to interfere with the perception that all of this is for real. For my sins, this was my first ever encounter, other than at the movies, with anything remotely Disney. Having arrived with a preconceived cynicism about the validity of such an ethos, I can now see its justification. Watching small children respond to, and interact with, fantasy characters as spontaneously as they would with any normal human, is enchanting to say the least.



But what of managing the guests? "The two big things are handling large numbers of people in railway stations, and the overall health and safety issues. Railway stations are not geared up for having large numbers of people hanging around. They're all about quick turnover, getting people on their way. What we had to learn was how to queue up to 2,000 people on a platform. And people take different amounts of space. The Austrians are very laid-back about it, only four or five people might occupy several yards. The Italians are in much more of a hurry. They'll crush up really tight."

These national characteristics are also reflected in the way people view the Hercules experience. You'll be interested to know the Swiss-Germans are by far the slowest and the Italians the fastest; the average guest spends

just 10 minutes on the train. "Planning for an emergency evacuation of the train when there's a couple of thousand people on the platform requires some preparation. To draw up the whole health and safety plan I referred to several organisations. I looked at the practices of Disneyland Paris, who provide the welcome staff, and used that to set the standard for managing the guests. Then, because of the nature of the show, I based the safety standards on those of the Pop Code which I know well from my work in rock and roll. Finally I consulted UK fire and rescue experts that specialise in railways."

But just when you thought McCarthy had it all taped, there's another element to this tour that most production managers never have to deal with. "The big problem is not the four coaches that house the show, it's all the accommodation carriages. Whereas on a normal tour you'd just check into a hotel, and all those H&S issues would be their concern, here you have to manage that aspect as well."

To give you some idea, the whole train comprises 11 carriages. All are provided by France Rail. The four exhibition cars are purpose-built units made in the 1960s and to all intents and purposes they look like fully enclosed, windowless passenger cars - similar to those used by the Post Office to carry and sort mail en-route. The rest are a fair mish-mash. The restaurant car is an old Orient Express job, resplendent in original blue and cream livery and complete with free-standing brocade upholstered chairs.

Comfort-wise things are looking pretty good so far for the 38 people who travel with this tour, but it doesn't last. Almost everyone has to double up; basic Wagon-Lits are home for most of the entourage during the September 24th to December 14th tour. There is just one lounge area which everyone shares - a standard railcar with seats and tables, plus the added bonus of a TV and video. (On the day I visited, the mother of one of the cast members was visiting from the UK and brought with her a video of the omnibus Eastenders show. Such are the high moments of the tour). This car is also the only place you can smoke, again for reasons of safety. Because the show is so linear, and the 20 core members who constitute the production could be spread anywhere over 300 metres, McCarthy has devised a monitoring system. As is the practice at coal mines, every member of the entourage (including catering staff etc) has a tag. If they step out of the accommodation backstage side of the train they tag off, specifically so that no firemen waste their lives looking for someone in a burning accommodation car who isn't actually there.

The other carriages are taken up with production office, dressing rooms, storage, two generator cars and a VIP coach. The storage coach carries spares (pretty modest as you'll

see later) 300m of their own police barrier and a walk-in fridge for the foodstuffs.

Despite what you might think, and taking into account that in an eight hour day the exhibition can receive 8,000 guests, health and safety officials around Europe seem remarkably non-plussed about the train. "Only the Scandinavians were really thorough and always looked," said McCarthy. One assumes that Disney's reputation precedes it, but it does demonstrate worrying complacency on the part of the authorities. However, McCarthy is nothing if not scrupulous. Before the tour commenced he conducted a fairly rigorous recruitment campaign. "All the tour personnel are from Disneyland Paris and most can speak three to four languages. I interviewed them all and made them aware of the less glamorous aspects; for example, having to share berths for several weeks with people they don't know. Once selected I then ran a two day health and safety course for everyone before the tour."

In fact, McCarthy does rotate 15 members of the core 20 (the exceptions being himself and other key production personnel) but it's still a fairly intense period together, though as he cheerfully admitted "No one's gone mad. Yet". Must have been those Eastenders tapes.

But these are long, hard stints. The train averages six days on, one off, and although it's effectively a simple case of drive it onto the platform and park, the show days are long days. At Brussels, for example, the platform wasn't long enough for the entire train. McCarthy was roused at 2.00am to oversee the separation of the "backstage facilities", as he likes to call them, from the exhibition carriages. "Then I went back to bed. But breakfast starts at 7.00am and runs to 9.00am, production call is at 10.00am and it takes between two and three hours to set the platform. Doors are at 1.00pm and we often don't close until 9.00pm although the ticket states 7.00pm just so we can clear the existing queues."

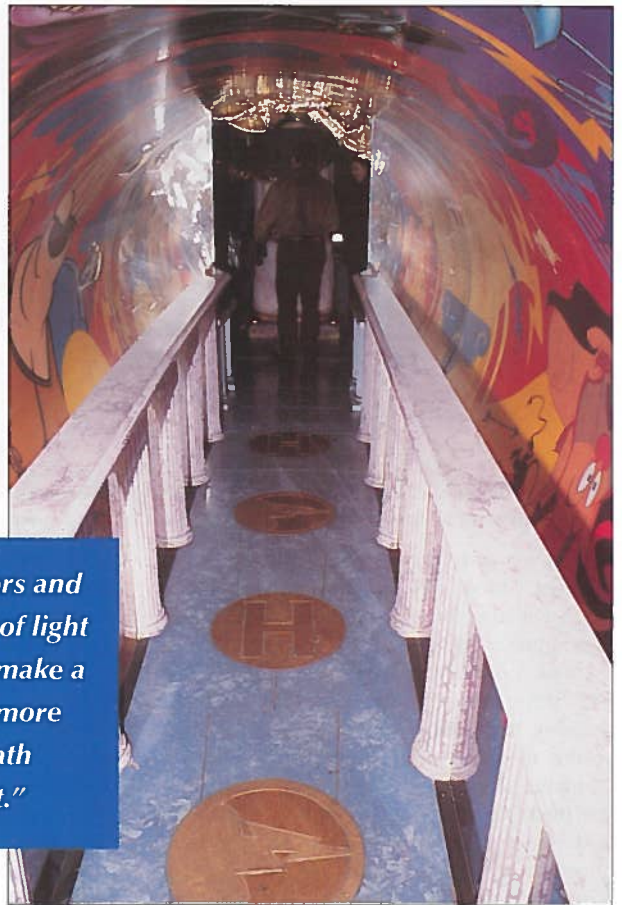
With one show day per town it's a slick operation. The exhibit will have been seen by almost half a million people by the time it ends "and the value in terms of marketing far outweighs the cost," according to McCarthy. "Some estimates were done after the Hunchback train last year, and in terms of media coverage, newspapers, magazines, radio and TV, the value was put at £80million."

Because the show is on the move visiting each town, it is inevitably a big local event. McCarthy reports that it is not unusual to have live OB done from the platform to a regional TV news show. "When we play the smaller towns we even get marching bands, carnivals and beer tents. Somewhere in Denmark we had a London Double Decker bus turn up, and at one place the Lord Mayor appeared in a vintage fire-engine to open the show."

Such is the kudos of the event that the exhibition proves mutually beneficial to both parties. Disney get the exposure, while the towns get a special event: "And there's a synergy for the stations too," adds McCarthy. "Generally they are not considered attractive places. Not the sort of venue you'd bring your family to. This helps improve their image as a family place."

So what exactly is it that draws these hundreds of thousands in, and why should the

readers of L+SI be interested? In essence, the train is a walk-through of the major scenes that constitute the movie's plot: Hercules' birth in Olympia, his visit to earth, the gaining of his strength, the Labours of Hercules and his eventual triumph. Buena Vista (the movie arm of Disney) own the show whilst the conceptualising and outline design has been handled by STE - one of the world's leading corporate branding specialist. As McCarthy points out: "They will over-see every aspect of the way this is presented, from the design of



*"Extensive use of mirrors and meticulous positioning of light and shade combine to make a 300m corridor seem more like the tortuous path through a stage set."*

the carriages to leaflets and even on to the basic stationery."

Michael Whiteley Associates (MWA) are the main contractor, with Scott Fleary overseeing the scenic construction, whilst Howard Eaton Lighting Ltd (HELL) covered everything electrical. "We were asked to tender for lighting, effects and video following a meeting with Scott (Fleary) on June 19th," recalls Howard Eaton. We met with Shane Greaves, the main designer, a week later, and following discussions with him we submitted our bid on the 26th. After a meeting with Buena Vista we were awarded the contract on the 9th of July."

This may all seem calm, considered - reasonable even - until you see the build schedule. "Scott began work on the drawings the next day and MWA began carving the set." (The scenic elements are mainly carved blown

**Over 500,000 people will visit Disney's Hercules exhibit.**

foam that is then coated to give a hard carapace making it tolerant of the thousands of tiny hands that push and poke it). "We first visited the train in Paris on the 16th of July - which was a little worrying. Up to this point we had really been flying blind, and this was our first encounter with the site and rail regulations that applied to the actual train. The people from France Rail were very helpful; they basically told us we could do what we wanted provided the train was returned in its original condition, and that we didn't use more than 7kW per carriage."

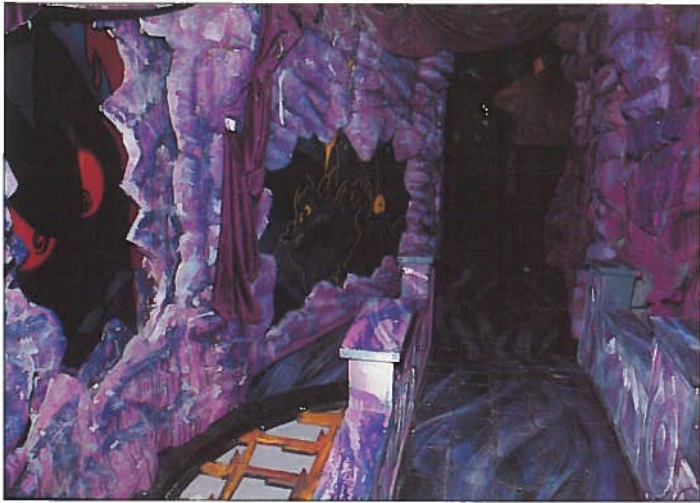
As noted earlier, these carriages were built specifically for exhibition work, so restoration is really a case of carefully removing everything installed. "Our biggest problem was contained in Shane Greaves' brief. He didn't want any light sources or speakers to be visible. Whilst it was possible for some of the scenic elements to be altered to accommodate technical requirements, MWA and Scott Fleary had to build a carriage every 10 days to meet the schedule, which didn't leave a lot of time to design in every detail."

Fit-up started in Paris on the 20th August, with the train being launched a month later at Disneyland Paris. HELL sub-contracted Mark Huffington to design the sound and video elements. He produced all the sound effects and soundtrack clips at Autograph's studios, working together with Shane Greaves to translate the final edited video onto CDIs.

Scenes from Hercules are recreated through faithful reproduction of the setting, with complementary soundtrack, usually highlighting a specific event. For example, you hear the sound of arrows flying across the carriage in the section portraying an archery scene. Throughout all the scenery, video monitors are



**Disney's Kim McCarthy enjoying the Hercules experience.**



Some of the more scenic elements of the Hercules train which, in essence, is a walk-through of the major scenes of the Disney film.

tucked in, and carry loops of the thematic element lifted directly from the movie. Extensive use of mirrors and meticulous positioning of light and shade combine to make a 300m corridor seem more like the tortuous path through a stage set. Within seconds of entering the exhibit you quickly forget that you're in a train - a feeling enhanced by elements like a real water pool and fountain, and the false glass floor (14mm) that allows the visitor to look down upon the earth from an Olympian perspective. The final carriage is a pastiche of a Disney store, carrying the inevitable branded goods - everything from toys to games and books. It was here that I was on most familiar territory, and can confirm that STE's efforts are faultless. If I hadn't known better, I could have sworn I was in a store on Oxford Street. Ambience, lighting, layout and presentation was as familiar as the underpants counter in Marks & Spencers.

AV-wise, most of the CD and CDI players were inherited by HELÉ from BVI (who had built the previous Hunchback train themselves). For lighting, Eaton chose, for obvious reasons, low voltage MR16s and MR11s, and made extensive use of fibre optics to get into the really awkward parts of the scenery. "Lighting control was handled by our own Bytesize 483 dimmers, each being

programmed with on-board presets or automatic sequences," Eaton continued. "We used the fibre optics to light the models of earth dwellings below the glass floor as once installed this was sealed, so bulb replacement had to be facilitated externally. All the carriages have an AV rack, stored in a cupboard, at each end. The biggest problem for us was positioning speakers. In certain areas we used Bose Acoustimass systems which are easy to hide and worked incredibly well. But for the arrow or squeaking cogs effects, where source position was critical, we used a wide range of ceiling and open speakers. Creating the audio effect was often more important than the quality of the speaker - if it could physically fit in the right position then that was the determining factor for using it."

McCarthy reports very low maintenance requirements for the whole system: "We change gels and the occasional bulb every week, just like any other production, but mostly the technology takes care of itself. We do have to repaint the floor every month or so, but that's hardly surprising in view of the pedestrian traffic."

When each town is visited, the local Disney BV marketing machine is pressed into action to capitalise on the opportunity. "This is what they do best," explained McCarthy. "The local team will have promoted the arrival, giving away tickets through their own stores, or local outlets. They also supply the dressing for the platform and I advise them to hire in a modest PA system to provide the appropriate sound track to the waiting queues, in addition to a

small amount of lighting for the train's exterior."

The wall of the carriages has an extensive mural painted along its entire length. Where the show area ends, or where backstage facilities need to be concealed, portable screens on in-built wheel dollies (purpose-built by Brilliant Stages) are used to maintain the illusion. "It's a great occasion and everybody gets something from it. Sales go up everywhere we go." It is the element of mutual benefit, more than the speed and cost-effectiveness of the production, that this tour is all about. It supports both mass market media (the movie) and primary source marketing (the local stores and product sales).

It may seem a tenuous connection, but it's not beyond the wit of man to make a direct link between this type of promotion and the rock music/new album industry. Instead of this desperate splurge to batter the poor band around 20 European countries in as many days, just to coincide with the album release, why not take the Disney approach? They only do it because the average shelf life of a new album is about three nanoseconds. Hercules was released simultaneously in all European markets, but local promotional effort is reserved until the major marketing vehicle arrives - i.e. the tour.

This might be one strategy to combat what Harvey Goldsmith was at pains to point out in a recent interview - the chronic imperative for a quick buck and lack of long-term investment in music by the record industry. £80M in marketing value! Worth thinking about? I should cocoa Hercules!

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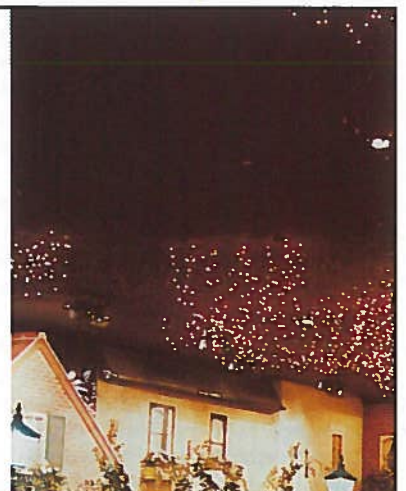
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# Abbreviated in the Stalls . . . Ian Herbert

**M**y thoughts on what to ramble about this time were concentrated when my proofreader looked at the text of the Stephen Daldry profile (see p. 74) and asked what a 'barfoh' was - was it anything like a vomitory? I explained that what I'd meant to type was a bar FOH, i.e. a place to hang lights front-of-house. 'So FOH stands for front-of-house?' Well, it usually stands for filthy old hall, but front-of-house is the technical term.

It then struck me that there are lots of strange words in the official section of this journal that may be mystifying younger readers - they certainly baffle me. Time to offer some help with the Alphabetical in the Stalls glossary of technical theatre terms and abbreviations:

**ABTT:** Astonishingly Beery Technicians' Thrash - held for some strange reason in the Horticultural Halls. It should, of course, be in a large tent in Munich.

**Aliscaff:** noted Indian tea room near Tottenham.

**ASM:** always saving money (DSM - doesn't save money).

**Avolites:** bright flashing things on the wingtips of Boeing 707s at night.

**Barndoor:** one of those very slim minibars you get in German hotels, where a mineral water adds 1% to the GNP.

**Cadac:** the opposite of a stretch limo - a foreshortened Cadillac.

**Clay Paky:** not a racist's description of a Tandoori oven, obviously, but what is it? Seems to be rather bright and shiny, not at all the way it sounds.

**Cyclorama:** place at the back of the stage where stage management leave their bikes.

**Dimmer:** compared to whom?

**DMX:** I think it's some kind of mountain bike - see cyclorama.

**Flightcase:** where the sound staff keep their sarnies.

**Follow Spot:** something to do with either Gel or Gobo - see below.

**Gel:** is it that stuff that leaks out of dead batteries?

**Gerriets:** rather attractive but temperamental furry pets, a cross between a gerbil and a ferret.

**Glantre:** never mind what it means - how do you pronounce it? Does it rhyme with planter or Braintree?

**Strand Lighting:** those rather tasteful strings of assorted 60-watt bulbs you get along the beach at Skegness at Christmas time (the Blackpool version is called **Northern Light**).

**Thyristor:** (original spelling thigh-wrister) Unconscious reflex movement made in an attempt to keep awake during sales presentations.

**Trussing:** nothing to do with surgical supports - it's that rather dinky scaffolding with crossbars, isn't it?

**Triple E:** Edelstein's Excellent Export - probably the strongest beer brewed in Manchester.

**Vari\*Lites™:** lights that keep going on and off unexpectedly, possibly because of those little light-switches they seem to have with them everywhere. On close inspection one seems to say TM - Totally Meaningless?

**WYSIWYG:** worn only by clowns in Cirque du Soleil.

*"Cyclorama: place at the back of the stage where stage management leave their bikes"*

This column very nearly didn't happen as I woke up from a post Christmas dream that I'd written this month's Asleep in the Stalls only to hear your esteemed editor telling me that I hadn't. Why not use the paras you cut from last month's, I thought sourly, but held my peace - I get paid whether they're printed or not. All the same, I'll stick back one of them since you may (if you were being particularly observant) have noticed a strange reference to Ralph Koltai last month that didn't seem to belong anywhere. It belonged after this paragraph:

Did you get to the Ralph Koltai retrospective at Central? Quite a lot of punters did - it was the most successful exhibit they've ever put on. And how well it was mounted, from those magnificently-plinthed models to a full-scale rebuild of the back wall set (so that's where it started) for the RSC's 1979 *Baal* at The Other Place. I missed the designs for the elemental ENO Ring he did in the seventies, but lots of other favourites were there, notably those glorious trees from his peak season with the RSC in 1982-3, all mirrored 2D in *Much Ado*, all leafy 3D in *Cyrano*. 1983, too, was the year he did the shocking Lyons *Die Soldaten* for Ken Russell, featuring the biggest pair of plastic tits ever seen on stage. If you missed the exhibit, there are some super photos (including the Ring) in the handsome Lund Humphries book (its cover a silver mirror) published at the same time, and edited by Sylvia Backemeyer. Only quibble - you have to keep checking the chronology to see where the shows illustrated were staged.

So there. Nobody cuts the masked critic and lives.

**Gobo:** something that has to be cleared from the floors of the Horticultural Halls (see ABTT).

**Gottelier:** a rather better thousand-word column not far from this one - as in 'Gottelier than thou'.

**Hardware Xenon:** a harmless gas emitted from the storerooms of old ironmongers' shops (**Denon** smells similar, I believe).

**Iris Diaphragms:** isn't she that Welsh girl on the Zero 88 stand with the incredible - probably not; no relation to Drop In Iris, of whom the less said the better.

**LD:** lucky devil.

**Light Curtain:** easier to draw than a heavy one.

**MIDI:** used to mean the South of France, but now seems to have something to do with sound - Muffler for Infuriatingly Deafening Instruments?


**Par can:** one of those wastebaskets that hang from city centre lamp-posts, usually vandalised by having the container removed.

**PLASA:** Photos of Large Amiable Salesmen and Anoraks. An annual event at Earls Court for the hard of hearing, immortalised in these pages (and pages and pages . . .)

**Rosco:** rather good American abstract painter. Or is it Rothko? Must get these teeth seen to.

**Sennheiser:** a cross between Rennies and Sennapods, washed down with Budweiser - solves all known stomach disorders.

**SIEL:** French for sky.



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# MIDLAND 97

*For three weeks in December, life returned to the derelict site of Battersea Power Station for a pre-season series of concerts. Jim Evans reports*



**"Billed as '18 days of the hottest music, comedy and interactive entertainment', the event was bankrolled by Midland to the tune of around £1 million"**

Battersea Power Station has long been a London landmark of world renown, album sleeve fame and not a little controversy concerning its future. There have been plans to turn the site into a theme park and a conference centre, or alternatively a housing development. To date, nothing of a permanent nature has come to fruition. The machinery and generating equipment has long gone. All that remains is the building's shell, its distinctive chimneys and a lot of coal dust.

However, for three weeks in December, life returned to the site with the advent of Midland '97, a concert season sponsored by the

Midland Bank and featuring a range of artists including Paul Weller, Jamiroquai, Boyzone, Peter Andre, Cast, The Saw Doctors, The Prodigy, Morrissey and comedian Frank Skinner. The season also included the Concert of Hope which featured former Take That members Robbie Williams and Gary Barlow plus Boyzone and Damage, with all profits going to the Diana, Princess of Wales Memorial

Fund. There was also a 'village/exhibition area' with space taken by retailers such as Nescafe, The Carphone Warehouse, Thomas Cook and Sega. Billed as '18 days of the hottest music, comedy and interactive entertainment', the event was bankrolled by Midland to the tune of around £1 million.

Announcing the event, Midland's chief executive Keith Whitson stated: "Midland '97 is an exciting and ground-breaking project. In developing this new concept we have sought to initiate an event with the widest possible appeal to our customer base and the public at large." Corporate hype aside, it was both



different and at the same time a mega achievement on the organisation front. The cornerstone for the whole event was a vast temporary mobile arena, probably the biggest such item in the world. Conceived and designed by Edwin Shirley Staging (ESS), it is a portable building with a loadbearing roof, a 6,000 seated auditorium and specially designed flooring and walls. It requires no foundations or other ground works and can be built on any relatively level site.

The structure measures 170m by 60m with an overall height of 29m. Amazingly, it incorporates over 2,500m of steel truss, 6,000m of steel cables and 25,000 bolted connections. Its 18 100ft high towers are each anchored with two eight-ton weights, while the building - including ballast - weighs in at a modest 700 tons. It takes 400 man days to build and 200 to take down.

The design team for the structure included FTL Happold, based in New York, who are a full service architecture, engineering and design firm with expertise in high-tech

construction systems such as tensile fabric structures, cable nets and air structures. Also involved in the design were Paul Staples and Dan Fish. The latter is a fabric structures designer with Tension Ltd, while the former has designed shows for bands such as Queen and Take That, whilst in the corporate field has provided designs for the opening of the Channel Tunnel and the Handover ceremony in Hong Kong (extensively reported in L+SI).

Midland '97 was co-ordinated by Aztech Productions' Tony Wheeler who admitted that, out of preference, he'd have preferred to erect the 'venue' and stage the event on a concrete car park rather than "a derelict piece of land." He added: "the bank chose the location for its visibility - it was a major slice of branding for them and to that end it worked spectacularly. Neg Earth's exterior lighting worked particularly well." Indeed, few travelling the well-used commuter routes around the old Power Station in the run-up to Christmas could have failed to notice Midland's logo shining brightly across the river.

"A great deal of planning and scheduling was involved. Co-operation between the various parties involved was essential. Despite the conditions, it was all very positive and friendly. It was rather like running a venue as a construction site," added Wheeler.

The shows - not surprisingly considering the calibre of the artists performing - attracted good crowds that appreciated top quality productions. Of particular note were the performances of Paul Weller, The Prodigy and Jamiroquai, while Morrissey's return to the live stage which drew mainly on the *Maladjusted* and *Southpaw Grammar* albums with a smattering of Smiths' material, was little short of triumphant. The *New Musical Express* critic was moved to report "the atmosphere at Battersea is electric, the throng ecstatic . . . He's been away too long."

The sound was taken care of by SSE and their Nexo Alpha system. The nature of the building affected the design parameters for the PA: the portal frames supporting the roof had a weight capacity below that usually encountered in a permanent venue and SSE and the different bands' engineers involved were faced with strict limits on noise levels leaving the venue. Eight full-range Alpha loudspeaker stations were employed - six flown and two at ground level, with a further two sub-bass groundstacks: "We had to be very careful in configuring the system and defining the directivity of the clusters," explained SSE's technical director Chris Beale. "We were able to achieve SPLs of around 104dB and a 1 minute LEQ of 97-98dB at the console which was very pleasing, given the constraints.

"We were forced to attenuate fairly drastically below 63Hz so reduce the amount of low frequency energy leaving the site. However, the excellent mid-bass performance of the flown Alpha still delivered a warm, full sound. Without the rigging versatility and the directivity control of the Alpha our job would have been far more difficult.

"Many of the engineers were apprehensive and would have preferred to mix their shows considerably louder. However, to a man, they appreciated the situation and engineered to a high level of competence and responsibility. In situations such as this it is so easy to be pessimistic. It is far better to be creative, to accept that the levels have been imposed and work to see just how good the sound can be at those levels. In most cases the results were fine - Jamiroquai, Paul Weller and the Prodigy particularly sounded excellent. We all understand that energy is important, but there's a fine line between being loud enough and being too loud - sometimes we do overstep that mark and shows like Midland 97 help to recover our perspective."

The Prodigy performance - the final show of the Midland 'season' - was outstanding both aurally and visually. A futuristic set, reminiscent of Jules Verne, which could have been tailor-made for the venue, was stunningly lit. "We had to try to give every ounce of power, yet stay within reasonable levels," added Beale. Nick Warren played a very careful hand and kept the sound to an acceptable level."

SSE's manifest for the 18 concerts included: 36 Alpha M4 Mid-Highs, 46 Alpha B1 Bases, 18 Alpha B2 Subs, eight Alpha TD controllers,

eight Alpha SUBcontrollers, four Crown MA2401s, eight Crown VZ3600s and 12 Crown VZ5000s. The house console was a Midas XL4 48/16/2, whilst for monitors there was a Midas XL3 40/16. The monitor system cabinets comprised 24 SSE 12pm low profile wedge monitors, four Alpha M4 Mid-Highs, six Alpha B1 Bases and two Alpha B2 Subs.

The lighting for the event - both inside and outside - was installed and operated by Neg Earth Lights. "Overall, it was a mega project for us," said Neg Earth's Dave Ridgeway. "We were pleased with the way it went, and importantly, so were the bank." The set-up for the spectacular outside/gateway lighting featured 16 bars of six Par 64s, 40 single Par 64s, 32 8-lite Molefays, 60 1k floods, 16 blue sodium floods, five 5k Rainbow colour changers and a handful of ARRI 5k Fresnels. As you will see from the accompanying photographs these were put to stunningly good use.

As those who attended will know, the event went extremely well, though there were some complaints from local residents about the noise, but not as many as some have suggested. "The most we had on one night was 11 complaints," says Tony Wheeler. "SSE had a difficult job to do, but they did it well." The negative vibe that attracted the most press coverage concerned the opening night fireworks display upsetting the residents of Battersea Dogs Home and prompting one tabloid to suggest that Midland's customers were closing their accounts in protest. The Bank, while "deeply regretting any upset caused to the Dogs Home," were more than happy with their sponsorship of Midland '97 and are understood to be on the point of confirming a repeat performance in 1998. "Ultimately, it's about what the punters think that counts," said Midland's head of promotions Belinda Furneaux-Harris, "and to date that feedback has been great."

Edwin Shirley Staging's Tim Norman reports that there has been considerable interest in the facility. "Shed loads of people came to see it



and we're taking stock of the situation. A lot of ideas are being bandied around." He's not giving much else away at present, but you can rest assured there will be some major concert announcements involving the ESS venue in the coming months. Speaking on completion of the take-down, Norman said: "Now that it's all down, we can say that we were very pleased, thrilled even, with the way it all went. It went up and came down exactly as planned, though we were slightly hampered by the weather. Battersea was a pig of a place to build in, there were so many conflicting requirements.

And the location really was like a building

site; a lot of money was spent trying to make it user-friendly." And on the topic of unfriendly neighbours, Norman suggested that one of the reasons why there were vociferous objections was the previous publicity concerning the power station's future as a theme park or convention centre. "Once we'd explained that our venue wasn't permanent, it was not such a hot issue."

Battersea Power Station is an impressive monument to the past. ESS' venue and similar structures will surely play a major role in the future of live music productions, though not necessarily in London SW11.

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

So it's 1998 before we know it and like the rest of the breed I wonder if it will bring early retirement (yes, early - I had never planned to give up lighting and get a proper job until I had cracked this one), signalled by the phone failing to ring except from my Wiltshire correspondent telling me of his latest high brow production of De Flounderhouse or Cosy Van Totty. He's keen that my musical education should expand ever since I admitted finding the Spice Girls quite melodic and tuneful compared with a lot of Pop. It's a pity they aren't earning enough to all wear the same frocks like a proper group though - maybe they surmise, quite reasonably, that you hardly ever see them clearly enough through the obligatory flare, glare, flash and smoke for it to matter. Anyhow, a change in musical direction is being forced on me by the untimely deaths of George Chisholm and Stephane Grappelli. The latter made one of those landmark remarks that one never forgets when we once worked together - floor manager to Stephane: "Can we rehearse now, Stephane?" Stephane in that unforgettable accent: "But why? I know it." And he did.

But before moving on, forgive me for looking back to Christmas Eve, when good fortune and a production manager with impeccable taste and legs to match brought me to a venue that, in my ignorance, I had never heard of, namely the Chicken Shed in Southgate. Yes, Yes, I can hear the cries of 'found his real forte at last', and 'not the first time he's been in deep litter' etc, etc, but read on. This was a remarkable job in many ways, not least because I found a use at last for those very dark Blues that only pass about three per cent and therefore are about as effective as a bit of blackwrap on most set-ups.

It also gave me an opportunity to develop my inbred ability to lie, honed over the years, i.e. 'Yes, I think this pilot we've just shot against tatty blacks in a disused lock-up is just what the network are looking for Ducky'. 'Having numbered Dung Beetles race around a map of the West End looking for the honey pot is a really off-the-wall idea, I think'.

But I digress: the Chicken Shed, founded over 20 years ago, is a theatre for young people - all young people, regardless of any disability they might have. They believe that through theatre they can expose abilities and talents that less enlightened, less brave observers could hardly imagine. If you get the chance, go and see for yourself and, like me, be uplifted, entertained and simply amazed.

We were there to do a This is Your Life based on Chicken Shed's powerhouse founder/director Mary Ward MBE, a very hands-on director who invariably sits out front next to the lighting control for every performance. To retain the surprise element, which is the hinge-pin of this long running show, a yarn had been spun to this lady (and nearly all of the staff) that we were there to 'film' a

documentary. But it bothered me from the outset that Vision's big truck, three generators, chuck wagon and 150kW of lighting might cause our victim to smell a rat!

We managed to get most of the lighting in place before the world woke up (it's that heap of cable and lights coming off the truck that always looks so daunting, I think. Well, it daunts me anyway) and so by the time the lady was in the building I was focusing (at a set level of three!) and starting the longest day's lying in my life saying: 'You know what these young TV directors are like these days, can't make up their minds, don't know where they're going to shoot it from (hence eight cameras - for a documentary!).'

Somehow I keep a straight face. Having set as much as we can, we colour up with Rosco 85 Deep Blue (transmission 3%). We record the matinee by way of a cover story. With the dimmers set at about four, no light of any consequence hits the stage, but from our vantage point at the back of the stalls with our victim installed beside us, plenty of light leaks through the ventilation holes in the lamps, creating the illusion that they are doing something.

Actually, I'm fairly taken aback at the pictures coming out of Vision's truck (Phillips LDK 20s - they bought 30 four months ago) - absolutely cracking, as my old crew chief used to say, even with quite a bit of gain in. No Head of Money it doesn't mean you don't need lighting designers 'cause they try to point it in the right direction too.

Ian Penny, my console op' on this occasion, did stirring service as deputy liar when I was stuck for words. It seemed to come naturally to him and we were so convincing that we managed to keep up the game until 'the hit' at 10pm, a long time since our six o'clock start. In the turnaround we re-focused, took off the Blue and shoved up the dimmers to that satisfying level where you can feel the heat through your string vest, about 1500 lux and hey presto, we had a show. A good way for an old ham to start Christmas.

But all good things come to an end and Christmas Day was next in the diary. I noticed a news item where, to add to the holiday hold-ups at airports, safety checks had taken longer than usual because the explosive sniffer machines couldn't differentiate between Semtex and Christmas pudding! Don't think mother-in-law can either - I prefer a sixpence to a fuse in mine. Never mind, she compensated by buying non-flam brandy, so no harm was done. Was she trying to tell me something?

I know it's a bit late for New Year resolutions but just pretend you have been sticking to them since January 1st and impress your friends.

1) Give up eavesdropping: especially on groups of ex LWT cameramen, as they will be discussing their 'rate' and it will upset you for the rest of the day, especially as you noticed them being dropped off about 11.30 (lighting started at 7.00) by a P-reg Merc driven by a Joan Collins lookalike on her way to Harrods for a spot of tiffin.

2) Start eavesdropping: especially on conversations between directors and designers - it's the only way you've any chance of finding out what the show is supposed to look like.

3) Stop attempting to operate pole-operated lamps with a pole: (Yes, on last year's list I know, but try to stick to this one. Don't be fooled by those colourful little cups - they are only there to relieve a rather bland exterior and to differentiate this piece of equipment from one of similar technical complexity left behind by the builders, viz, a wheelbarrow. Maybe it's unfair to make comparisons, because whilst it's a pig of a job wheeling a few dozen bricks up a scaffold in a 5K, a wheelbarrow fitted with a suitable lamp will out-perform any open face fitting on the market and be easier to take back to the truck.

Lastly, I would like to wish a belated but heartfelt Happy and Prosperous New Year to you all: may your mobile never stop ringing with interesting jobs with bottomless budgets - though preferably not ones previously lit by me.



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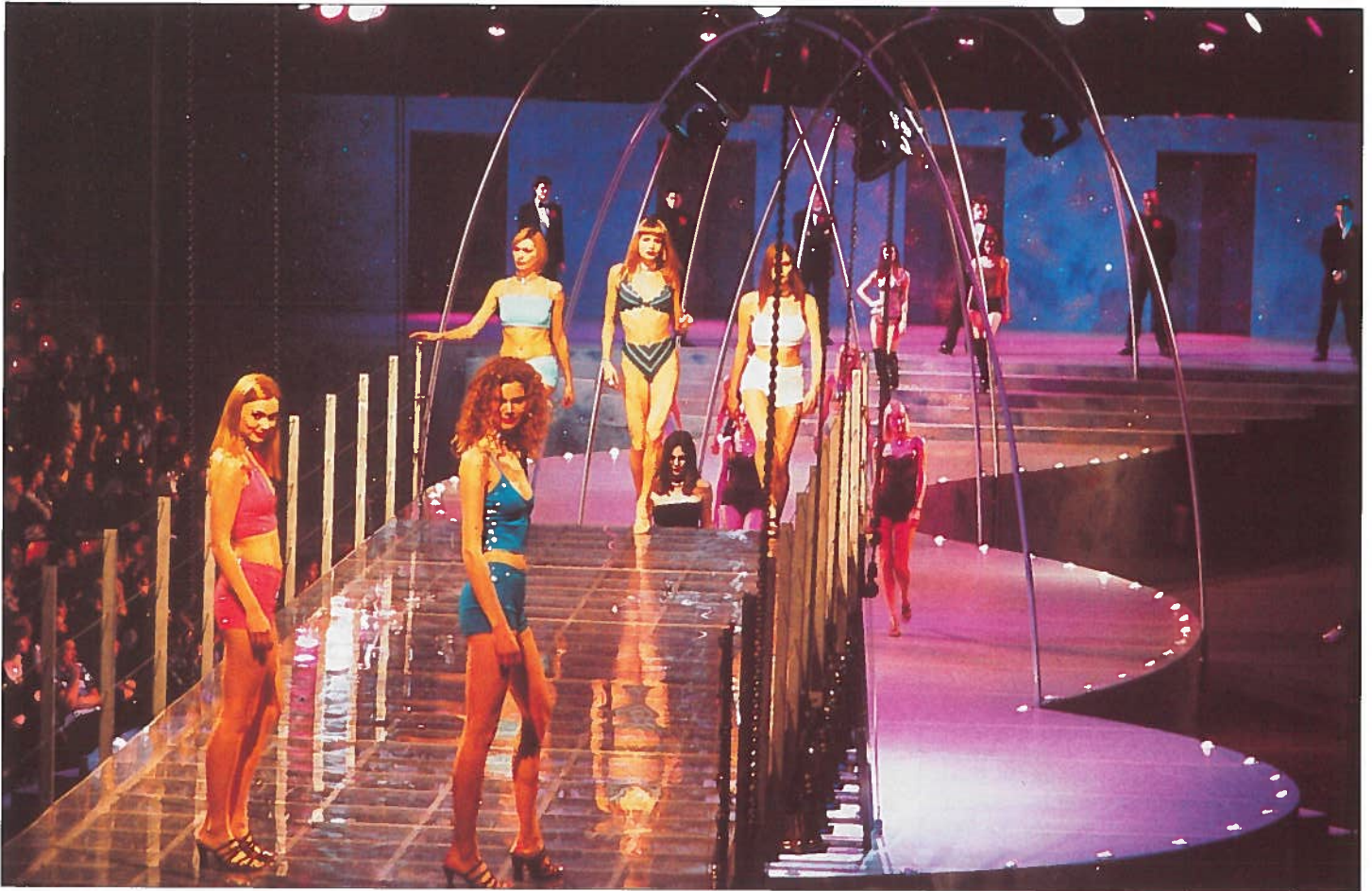
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**SELECON**

# CLOTHES SHOW LIVE

*Steve Moles visits the Clothes Show's annual outing at Birmingham's NEC for some fashionable entertainment*



Above and opposite, the 'Snakewalk', designed by Jonathan Park.

It's rather a sexist thing to say, but for your average male crew member, this has to be a great gig. As James Tomlinson on the Vari-Lite crew said: "There's more buttocks to see than points in a Rugby Test Match score." It looks good on paper too. Set up in one of the NEC's enormous exhibition halls - loads of room, great house staff, easy rigging - and then sit there for eight days watching 48,000 punters a day, mainly girls, pour through the doors.

Well, it would be if it wasn't for the punishing schedule. Eight shows a day, each show lasting an hour. Where do you get the time to relax? I turned up on only the fourth day and already the control position was beginning to resemble a bunker on the Maginot Line during a major siege. Everywhere there were trays, cold cups of tea, half eaten meals. "We just get a 30-minute break between each show," said Nick Jones of Vari-Lite. "Not quite enough time to go and eat, so everything has to be brought up to us."

But after a heavy front-end of pressure and tight rehearsals, everyone seemed relaxed. They'd reached the stage where the show was becoming routine enough for them to contemplate mischief.

## SET AND LIGHTING

"Compared to last year there was one day less for fit up," said lighting designer Durham

Marengi. "Fortunately we [Marengi and his assistant John Sinden] spent some time at CPL about a month earlier programming as much as we could on WYSIWYG."

The setting is a Jonathan Park design. A development of the conventional catwalk, this one snakes out through the audience like a tongue and is appropriately named the Snake Walk. "Geoff Grainger at LSD drew up a precise truss pattern based on Jonathan's idea, using elements from several of their circular trusses. Jonathan then transposed this to his CAD programme and drew up the Snake Walk to conform exactly to the grid above."

The effect is very striking: the look is of a custom production, yet with the grid assembled from stock parts it has none of the inherent special fabrication costs. The set itself, built by Blackfriars, looks simple, but this is a deception: with hardly a straight line in it, the fabrication must have been a headache to say the least. Park has always had a special liking for curves and this set is no exception; hoops of two inch aluminium pipe bound the Snake Walk like the ceremonial sword arch of a wedding procession. (Park, incidentally, was also involved in the Fashion Circus, a new venture created and directed by respected choreographer Micha Bergese which ran alongside the Clothes Show. Park's company, Studio Park, enclosed the arena with shapely

gauze sails evocative of the big top and depicted the theme of heaven and earth with brightly painted and applique scenic materials and zodiac signs - typical Park styling which never fails to stop people in their tracks. The lighting designer for this particular element was Cologne-based Leo Kieven.) For the Clothes Show, Park's design is appropriately clean - arches apart, the only other intrusion into what is a flat walkway are the eyeball lamps (regular domestic light fittings) set along the boundaries of the walkway. "They're there initially to stop the models stepping off into the darkness," said Marengi, "but we've worked with Leslie Goring (choreographer) to get the models to use them."

Thus during one scene, a couple of the male models writhe on the floor and put their faces right into the lamp's beam. Watching the show, it's refreshing to see a troop of clothes-horses do other than the usual pouting perambulation - it's a fashion parade with a touch of real showbusiness to it. "But that's one of the conflicts," said Marengi. "The producers want it moody and dramatic, but the clothes designers want their work to be seen in the conventional way."

So it was that fit-up Tuesday went to focus and programme Wednesday, dress rehearsal Thursday and re-programme all Thursday night for the first show Friday morning. John Sinden

remembers the dress rehearsal as rather stressful. "We did the run through and waited for the feedback from the 'committee' of clients (his inverted commas). This show started as a compromise and has been building compromises ever since."

Despite which, both Marengi and Sinden were left pretty much to their own devices when it came to modifying what they had built. As Marengi noted: "After we'd done the run-through and discussed the changes, I said to them that we would be ready for them again around 9pm, and that it would then take until midnight or possibly later. Curiously, none of them was quite so bothered then, and none came."

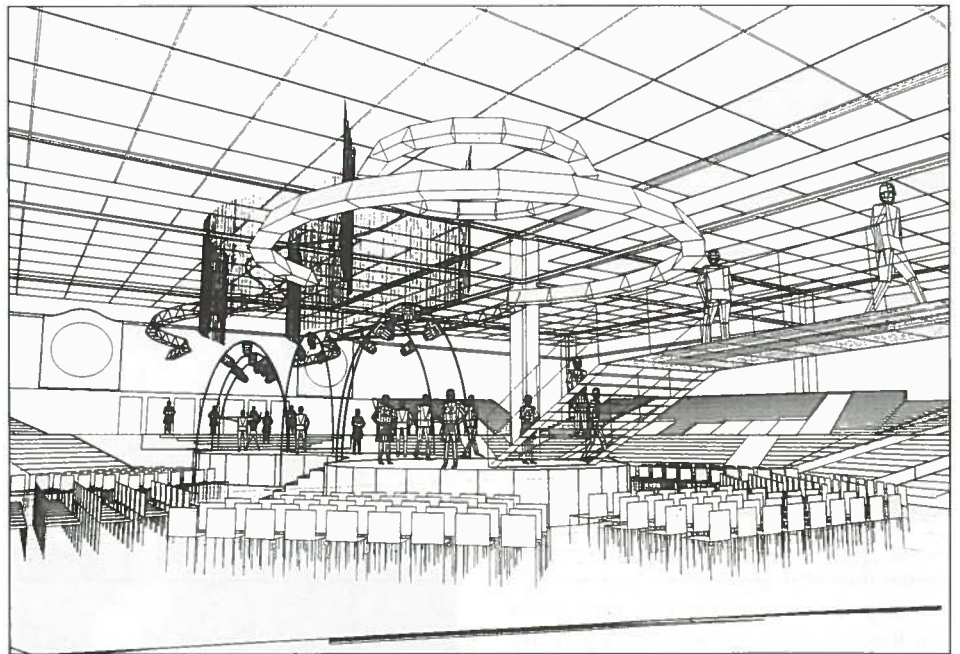
The lighting system (a CPL/Vari-Lite production) falls into two camps, featuring a large amount of wash instruments - Molefay and 5kW Bambinos focused across the walkway and out in the audience - and moving lights for effect and colour. In fact, with the exception of 12 Cyberlights, nearly all the moving lights (all supplied by Vari-Lite) are VL5 washlights, but they function as live effect. "We start by being over-lit and then pull it back," said Marengi. "For the BBC cameras it has to be lit from every angle and there has to be a background. Thus a lot of the 5kW's spill into the front rows of the audience, but this is actually an advantage. Most of the front row seats are taken up by people who want to be seen. They're as much a part of the show as the people on the walkway."

However, although this is ultimately a BBC event (run on their behalf by Haymarket with direction from Barker, Brown) the cameras only came in on the weekend and recorded enough footage for about 10 minutes of airtime on the Sunday night Clothes Show programme. The rest of the 48 performances are purely live. Thus, since Sunday night, Sinden had studiously been re-building elements of the show to allow the more dramatic lighting to show through. "We spent a lot of time programming in things like big peel downs - time-consuming effects we could only have done in advance, and now we can actually let them be seen as intended."

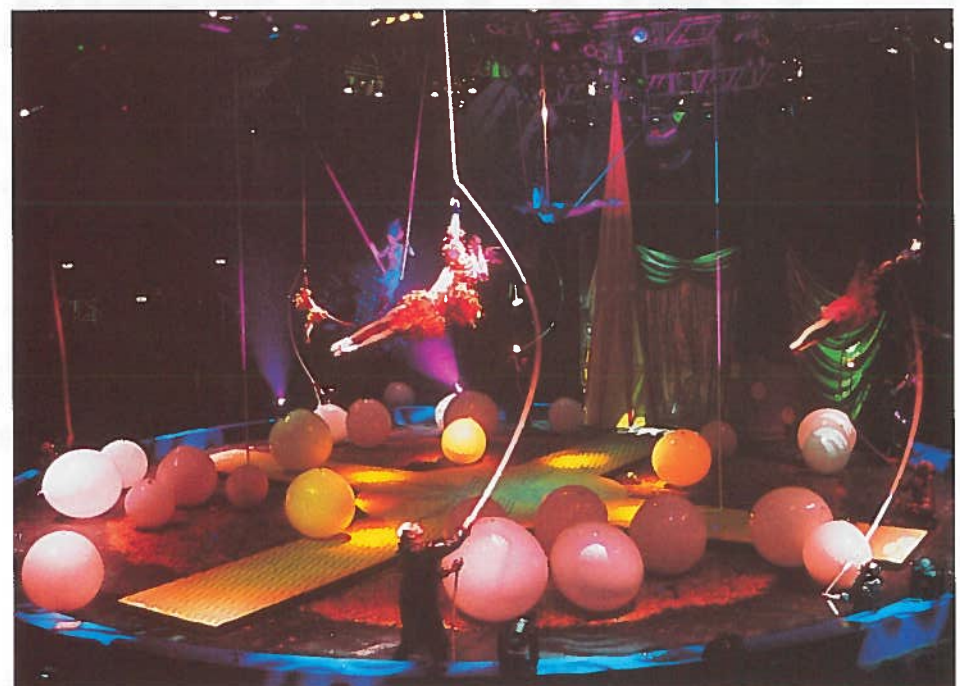
Which is rather to their credit, as it's undoubtedly good live entertainment. Park's set does give some target area for colour and gobos, there's some Kabuki banners and diaphanous drapes for the opening sequence, and the back wall entrance is great for some strong gobo looks from the Cyberlights. But it's the smoke in the atmosphere that takes most colour, and an occasional liberal painting of the audience with the 94 VL5s (24 of them Arcs) and 34 VL6s. The fashion itself provides some very powerful colour signposts - big red collections, repellent chequered fabric not fit for the most egotistical golfer, and quiet, sandy summer wear. All of which are taken up, enhanced or contrasted, and finally spat out in suitably dramatic ways.

#### SOUND

For Barry Bartlett on sound this is rather a perfunctory role, or it could be. All that's required is a playback facility - what could be simpler? SSE have installed a pretty extensive rig of their Nexo Alpha system. For an audience of approximately 5,000, effectively in-the-



Above, the Clothes Show Live and below, the intriguing Fashion Circus.





round, there are eight hangs. Six nine-box clusters (four M3s and five B1s), and two four-box hangs (two M3s and two B1s), while for the real low-end there are a dozen S2s dotted around under the seats. Bartlett's not going to run out of headroom with that lot, in fact the big thing here is not power delivery, it's treading that fine line between loud enough for excitement and full-on rock show SPLs. "It's about 90dB in the mix position and around 86-87dB down in the audience," explained Bartlett. "I'm an Amcron man myself, but the Crests driving this system are producing a good sound at this level."

In previous years, the BBC have always provided front-end control (a Yamaha PM4000) and their own engineers, with SSE



**Above, John Sinden at the Wholehog II console and top, the fruits of his labours.**

simply providing a PA system as a direct dry hire. This year, SSE have been contracted for the lot and have put in an Amek Recall which Bartlett spends most of his time perched at the

end of, using just a dozen channels. "It is all playback. Even the boy bands who make a guest appearance every show (and who are changed every day) play to DAT. I've got two DAT machines and a Mini Disc player. Mainly I flip-flop between the two DATs and there's a couple of radio mics for presenter Dani Behr and whoever co-presents at the opening of each show."

But there's that committee lurking back there, the one Sinden referred to earlier. "Oh yeah. It's not unusual for someone to pop up 45 seconds before the show starts, hand me a tape and say 'oh, by the way' . . ."

Such changes to the routine must help keep the adrenaline flowing, and there's always the occasional poor quality recording he has to nurse through the playback process, like the on-the-edge tape of Led Zeppelin's Whole Lotta Love that has to be coaxed along every time for the leather and PVC display.

That aside, Bartlett and system engineer Andy Yates have a pretty steady time of it. The chances of anything breaking down system-wise, when driven like this, are slim to say the least. Monotony is the biggest problem, and Omnidrive haven't worked out a curve to correct that yet.

For the punter, the end result of all this is rather exciting. I watched for the full hour what is, after all, just a bunch of people parading in clothes most people would never wear and I was thoroughly entertained. After two shows I'd had enough - I don't envy any of them the full 48.

**Photos: Steve Moles and Jonathan Park**

## **BBC Resources**

# **SCOTTISH LIGHTING EXHIBITION**

## **16TH & 17TH FEBRUARY 1998**

The Scottish Lighting Exhibition, organised by BBC Resources in Scotland will be held on Monday 16th and Tuesday 17th February 1998 in Studio A, Broadcasting House, Glasgow.

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The entrance fee is £10 for one day or £15 for two days.

For more information or to book your place please call Moira Kaprot on 0141 338 2269, Room G51, BBC Resources Scotland, Queen Margaret Drive, Glasgow, G12 8DG, <http://freespace.virgin.net/t.franklin/scotlight/>





# EQUIPMENT NEWS

## JEM Power Performance



JEM have introduced the ZR22 DMX smoke machine, a high performance unit offering the control options of DMX, as well as analogue, via the removable remote panel. The new style remote offers an enhanced 8x mode which multiplies the operate and delay times by eight. The controller also offers a 0-100% smoke output adjustment.

For further information contact JEM in Spilsby, telephone (01790) 754050.

## Spirit Folio FX16

Spirit have introduced the Folio FX16, a flexible 4-bus mixer capable of producing digital sound quality for live and recording applications. It features a specially designed 16 program Lexicon Effects Section with dual effect capability and fully editable and storable programs and parameters.

The console includes 16 mic/line inputs and 26 inputs to mix in total. In addition to the mix outs, two sub-buses allow groups of instruments to be sent to multitrack, to additional speakers, or sub-grouped to mix. FX-16's 16 Direct Outs are individually fader pre/post switchable so they are equally useful for recording in the studio or at a gig.

For details contact Spirit by Soundcraft in Potters Bar, telephone (01707) 665000.

## Titan Tough

CP Cases have produced a new range of economic, lightweight protective cases and containers. The Titan cases are moulded from tough polyethylene and a moulded tongue and groove construction with rubber gasket provides a watertight and vapourproof seal in all conditions.

For further information contact CP Cases in Isleworth, telephone 0181-568 1141.

## DMX Kit from HELL

Howard Eaton Lighting Ltd (HELL) have introduced the DMXinspect, a compact DMX transmitter, receiver and data analyser designed specifically for rig checks, automated fixture testing, cable testing, emergency data buffering and flicker-finding tasks. An internal library of fixture data is included, which allows automated testing of the functions of many popular luminaires.

Also new from HELL is the DMXpatch 1/5, an optically isolated data buffer for use in lighting installations requiring multiple outlets of DMX512 or similar data.

For further details contact HELL in Cooksbridge, telephone (01273) 400670.

## W5 DMXPALS

London-based design house W5 have launched a new product to enable older Strand PALS automated luminaires to be successfully integrated with modern lighting control systems.

The DMXPALS module connects directly to the PALS yoke, providing full DMX control of all attributes, including double precision pan and tilt. DMX-in and DMX-through connectors are provided for daisy-chaining.

The product has already been supplied to the Royal National Theatre, and will also be of interest to theatres and studios with Galaxy PALS installations who wish to upgrade their control systems.

For further details contact W5 Limited in London, telephone 0181-922 7778.

## DeSisti's New Range

A brand new name and range of theatre and show lighting is now available from DeSisti Lighting (UK) Ltd. The range, manufactured in Italy by Luci della Ribalta comprises Fresnels, PCs, profiles, Pars and Cyclorama/flood lights.

For further information contact DeSisti Lighting in Norfolk on (01842) 752909.

## Sinking Feeling

Among the new products to be launched at the Live! Show in February will be the Sink from AC Lighting. This adaptor allows the user to replace an HPL575 lamp with any of the less expensive HX 600/GKV family of lamps. The Sink accepts C9.5 base lamps, but wattages should not exceed 600W. The adaptor is completely reusable and gives the option to standardise on some of the lamp types used.

For further details contact AC Lighting in High Wycombe, telephone (01494) 446000.

## New Executioner Series

Gemini Sound Products has launched a new line - the Executioner Series of mixers. Two models, the Executioner Ten and Executioner Nineteen offer separate kill switches and rotary kill for the low, mid and high on each channel. The Executioner Ten has two stereo channels, one mic and two line inputs, a combined XLR or 1/4" DJ mic jack, plus punch in and out for each channel. Additional features are master, booth and record outputs; plus low, mid, high, gain and balance controls.

The Executioner Nineteen offers three stereo channels, four line, one aux and two mic inputs; gain and balance controls for channel; one and two, punch in and punch out for channels one and two, balanced and unbalanced master output, plus booth and record outputs.

For further details contact Gemini UK in Waterlooville on (01705) 591771.

## DHA Add to Effects

In response to customer demand, DHA has developed a quiet, reliable double gobo rotator with the durability of fixed speed motors. The unit runs directly from the mains and needs no dimmers or controllers. The two-way motor system allows independent control over the direction of each gobo, via switches on the motor housing. Each motor is available in five speeds, giving a total of 15 possible speed combinations to accommodate the needs of most designers. The new unit fits all lanterns currently capable of housing the DHA Varispeed double gobo rotator.

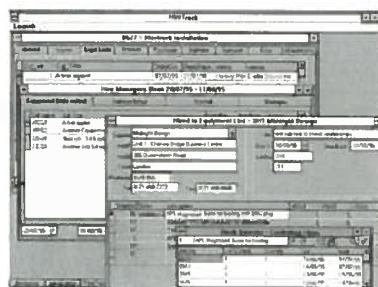
For further information contact DHA in London, telephone 0171-771 2900.



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# JOY AT THE ALBERT

*As the Royal Albert Hall was making ready for the tenth and final Joy to the World concert, Steve Moles talked to the team behind the show*



"Of course, you realise there are Princes and Prime Ministers in the line in front of you?" said Unusual Rigging's Simon Garrett. So it was that L+SI's humble reporter was only able to witness the dress rehearsal of Joy to the World. I say this not through any sense of bitterness or resentment, but to underline just how important is this seemingly modest event at the Royal Albert Hall.

A happy mixture of carols and whimsy, the performers range from the world class, to those from the classrooms of the world. "I had this idea that it would be wonderful to get thousands of stars together for a charity concert. At the same time I was invited by Joy to the World to attend their carol concert at the Royal Albert Hall. It was a happy coincidence, and as a result of which we've made a great deal of money for them."

£1.7million pounds over the past 10 years to be exact, Major Parker. Now there's a name that's frequented these pages more than once: The Royal Tournament, VE and VJ Day, and the sadly abandoned Pageant of the Horse last summer. Undaunted, Major Michael Parker CVO CBE, to give him his full title, is in bullish mood backstage just hours before the curtain goes up on the 10th anniversary and final performance of Joy to the World. "This is the last year. It seemed a suitable time to bring it to a close, but watch this space."



See? Irrepressible. No wonder Unusual Services never turn down the chance to produce his events. "I have in mind something bigger to replace it. Perhaps a cast of 2,000," he said with gusto. You can't help but be infected with his sense of enthusiasm when in his presence. "Hmmm. By the time Christmas comes around next year we'll have that down to 200," said a laconic Alan Jacobi.

Of course, the relationship between the two impresarios is not so terse. Jacobi's company, URC, have been producing the event for the

past five years and have an even longer standing association with Major Parker. Imagination originally had the brief for 'Joy' (let's keep it to one mouthful), and indeed for this final show Imagination's lead man Gary Withers himself appears.

I mention this because one of the more remarkable things about this show is that everyone gives of their service, even Mr Withers metaphorically rolls up his sleeves. It's

rather a terrifying concept - always that potential for inertia through a committee of well-intentioned people - but the show actually swings along with a remarkable sense of purpose. "It's lovely. It's zips by of course," said an enthusiastic Sue Banner, who calls the show, "but it's very emotional. It's difficult for me not to cry during some parts." And this is typical of the endorsement from all members of production, Banner herself leading a team of four stage managers who are needed to marshal this heavily populated extravaganza.

Sitting backstage in the production office talking with Simon Garrett of Unusual Services it becomes immediately apparent how this mammoth show is pulled off with such aplomb. As we sit and chat, Rachel Squire and Catie Bland spin from phone to walkie-talkie to coffee-maker, with all the practised poise of ballet dancers. "Oh yes, they do all the work," joked Garrett nervously. More seriously, the lack of tension in the production office was remarkable, more like a show that's been on tour for eight months than a one-off.

Anthony Andrews - yes that Anthony Andrews - pops his head around the door. "I don't want to be a pest, but do you think there's enough food for me to have a bite with the production crew next door?" Humility, modesty and a Boy Scout campfire muck-in-and-make-do spirit. It's quite obvious where the oil comes from to smooth these great cogs.

Why do it? I asked Garrett. "It is worthwhile. It's just such a fantastic opportunity for us to do something." (Meaning, for non-commercial reasons). "And we get to meet and work with people we might otherwise not encounter."

In delivery, the show has a simple but stout thread running through it, providing the cohesion that such a complex variety show so desperately needs. "Major Parker comes to us with a sketched concept," explained Garrett, "which Malcolm Burkett, one of Unusual's in-house designers, draws up. The show always has a look, themed by the set. This year it is a gothic cathedral, something Major Parker has always wanted to do. The show is a mixture of the sacred and festive for which the cathedral setting is most appropriate. This year being the tenth and final show, the thread running through it is the appearance of everyone who's ever been in it before."

A total of 800 performers in all, from Dame Diana Rigg to the varied talents and abilities of the children from Chicken Shed, take to the stage. I don't have adequate words to describe what Chicken Shed is and does, suffice to re-emphasise Sue Banner's words quoted earlier: "it's difficult not to cry" are only too apt when applied to Chicken Shed, and not in a cloying over-sentimental way. The set, dominated by huge stained glass windows, covers almost one quarter of the hall up to the promenaders gallery. All the construction was undertaken by Bob Fitzsimmons and obscuring the organ position is a larger-than-life altar piece. Similar to a medieval triptych, it splits in the middle to provide the surprise reveal of the Holy Family, something of a Joy tradition apparently. Up above, designer Robert Ornbo's huge lighting rig is also suitably masked with gothic masonry detail - a scenic border - stretching across the full width of the hall and concealing much of the truss work.

The lighting rig, though vast, is essentially a very broad brush wash system: with such a large cast, how could it be anything else? With the event also recorded by the BBC for broadcast over the festive period (it actually went out live on December 16th) there is a greater need, uniformity of light level being the biggest. As chief electrician Ian Bagshaw underlined as we sat watching the afternoon's dress rehearsal: "This is the first time any of us have seen it. Including Robert!"

But you only have to look at Ornbo, nursing



***"Anthony Andrews pops his head around the door. 'I don't want to be a pest, but do you think there's enough food for me to have a bite with the production crew next door?'"***

a bout of the flu that could slay a German Prince, to see how much he's enjoying it. 'Rebecca' this and 'John' that, he says to the two board operators, with the heartfelt engagement of someone conducting an orchestra, if not quite the usual baton waving swagger. (Rebecca Hughes and John Harris, the two operators worked from an Artisan and Arri Imagine 500 respectively.)

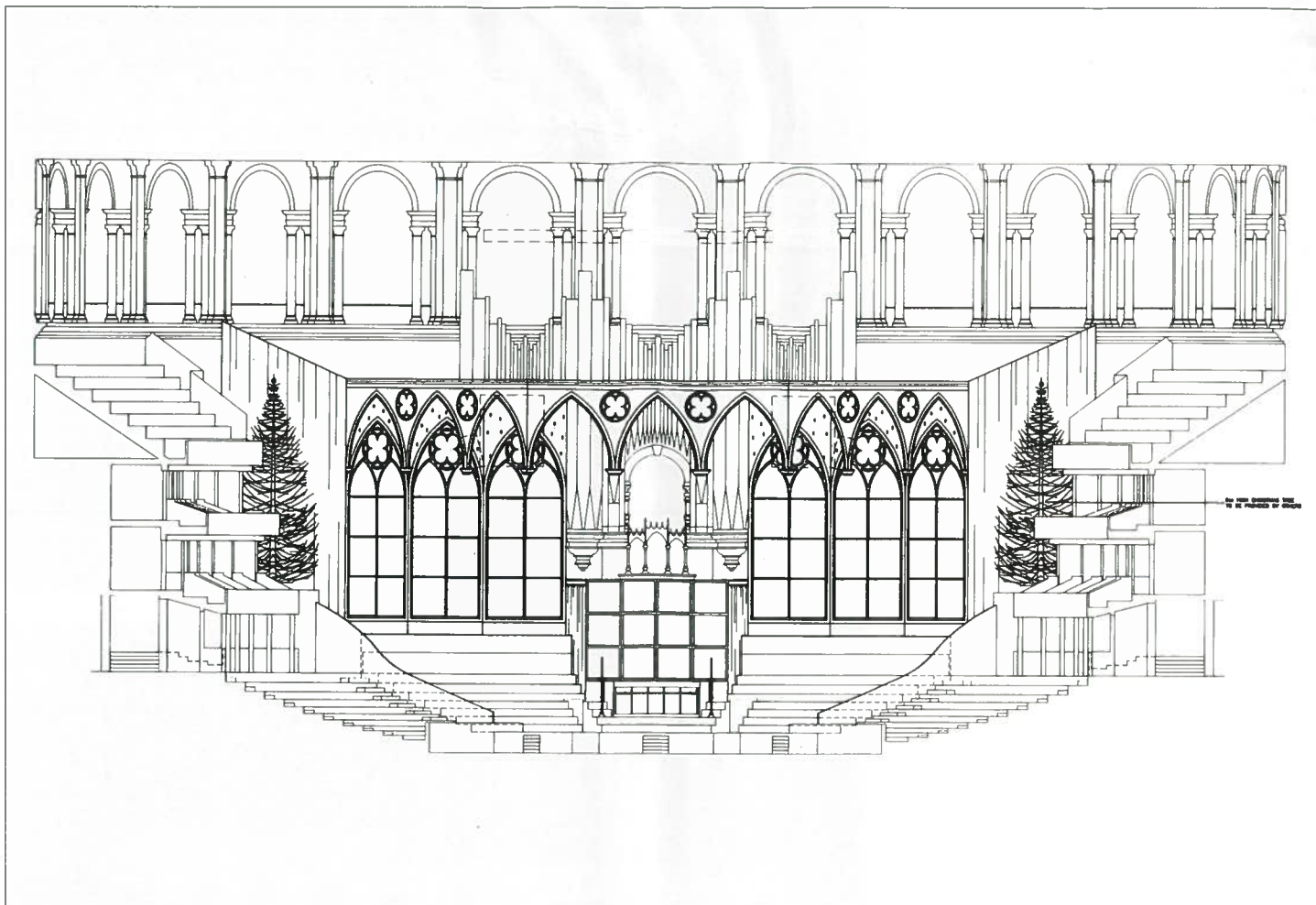
Theatre Projects and Vari-Lite provided the rig, and 200 of the RAH's own Pars are also linked in to light the audience. As said, a huge system, 500 Pars in all, 40 Sils, a dozen

Molefays and yet just two dozen Vari\*Lites - 12 VL2Cs and 12 VL4s - but if you saw the show you'll realise it looked like a lot more.

There were inevitably a couple of oversights: "Oh, by the way . . ." asked Ornbo of Bagshaw, "when are we going to see the Pea-lights in the set working?" to receive the reply "What Pea-lights?" So it was that an intrepid team, fitted with harnesses and gas soldering irons, spent an afternoon rappelling down the back of the set, wiring up hundreds of tiny lamps.

For the PA system things are a little less ad hoc, in the set-up at least, but no less pressured on the day. The system is supplied by Paul Dobson Sound, and sound consultant Chris Hey pointed out that the installation was identical to last year's. With so many musicians and singers it is often the case that little more than gentle audio embellishment is required. This is the subtlest of live shows, but image positioning is everything when trying, in an audio sense, to be so unobtrusive.

The whole system was d&b, as seems to be the prevailing fashion for this niche of the market. Two hanging clusters of 20 402 cabinets as main system, with three 602s in a column filling to the sides of the choir stalls and



Unusual Rigging's CAD drawing of the front elevation of the Joy to the World set.

a legion (24 to be precise) of the little E3s around the stage rail for near fill. There was also a pair of 602s on stands set in the ground floor box facing towards the stage to project a more natural image of a solo chorister as he proceeded through the audience.

But, as it turned out, his own powers of projection proved satisfyingly more than adequate. Sound designer John del'Nero runs the show assisted by Richard Sharrat and Steve Luttlely, operating from a pair of Midas XL200s. Planning for all contingencies in what is an acutely telescoped programme is del'Nero's biggest challenge. "Yes, exactly that - a sound designer has to know about his system. I've used the d&b to pull the image down, as planned, but you have to be in there from the start. You have to get to know the performers ahead of time, even the little kid from Finchley

playing the violin." Who, incidentally, del'Nero went to the trouble of mic'ing with an MK2 in the hairline just to make the visual composition more natural.

But primacy of the event must go to Unusual: "We co-ordinate and contract where necessary," was the slight understatement from Garrett. Modesty prevented him from saying how Unusual draw on their bankroll of favours to assemble a team of consummate talent: Fizz Jones, costume designer "... for everyone not in a dinner jacket, he does create a very theatrical look." Rosemary Anne Sisson, "... takes Major Parker's idea and writes it into a coherent themed script." Colin Keys "... a fantastic arranger." Jonathan Rathbone, "... same."

Leading roles go to Dougie Squires who directs and choreographs the show, while

Julian Biggs is overall musical director. "He's our musical consultant," said Garrett. "He really co-ordinates the whole thing, and he decides the tone and colour. What sets this show apart is that it's not all 'off-the-shelf' music, it's a more coherent whole.

The ecstatic mix of choirs, for example; Biggs will bring in the classical Oriana Choir on some of the Gospel songs being done by the Kingdom Choir, and vice versa. That's very exciting, and not something you'll get to hear that often."

There are many others left unmentioned, sponsors alone could fill a page, but this is essentially a charmingly amateurish show with a very well produced gloss. If you managed to video the show over Christmas and haven't yet watched it, sit back and be prepared to shed a tear or two.

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# ON TOUR

by STEVE MOLES  
AND PRODUCTION NEWS

## Elton John

Birmingham NEC

LD: Steve Cohen

SD: Clive Franks

After what seems an age, the Schubert of contemporary music has finally returned to the UK. Elton John is, after all, the most prolific songsmith and, like Schubert, is nothing if not a writer of popular songs. Excepting a mild contrempts with the Guardian, he also appears in robust good humour. As for the National Press, who gives a tinker's cuss if his hair looks funny? He's a musician. If a broad-sheet of the Grauniad's stature can avoid reviewing the actual musical performance in preference for a poisonous fashion critique, there seems little point in them bothering. To make amends, I will state publicly I believe him to be a genius amongst musicians, nay, a God. If you look at the consistency of his record sales alone, there is no one to touch him for the last 30 years.

As for the sound and lighting, what can I say? Steve Cohen's goatee is as trim as ever, his hair a triumph of style and serenity. As for Clive Franks, he looks every bit the picture of Australian good health. But the way he arranged those two Yamaha consoles was a travesty. Imagine - both of them facing the stage in a dull, linear symmetry. Elton deserves better.

### SOUND

With sound there was a major problem. I've worked many shows at the NEC Arena, and witnessed many more, and the relatively low roof has always caused trouble. With a bulky Clair Brothers S4 system, as was the case here, the problem was exaggerated. The show is an in-the-round performance. In the absence of a coherent backdrop and framing device to focus attention on the stage, an elaborate construction above it is designed to give the stage some form. In this case curved and scrolling trusses decorated in quite lavish scenic elements. Now the fact is that even a couple of clusters of the smallest systems - Flashlight, Nexo Alpha or d&b 402 - would still have obscured part of this element. With middle-size speakers - F2s, Wavefronts, EAW KF850s - the problem would have been even worse, but the S4s completely covered it.

This is nobody's fault except the venue - such physical restrictions are not the case in Sheffield, Manchester or London. Birmingham deserves better. The tour rigger, Michael Wisman, is no slouch, but there was nothing more he could do. Pull the cabinets any higher and you're projecting into the top steel - not a great idea. I'm not having a go at the NEC per se, when the Arena was first built it was a dream date for any road crew and production, providing some of the most amenable and able house riggers in Europe. But now, where quality of audience experience is everything, it's time for a re-think, and for God's sake don't let the architects determine internal trim.



Elton John at the NEC. Veteran LD Steve Cohen takes a lead from the late Versace.

Visual aesthetics aside, the sound itself was great. Hours spent by Franks in the afternoon, particularly focused on eliminating the familiar standing wave peculiar to this house, was time well spent (t.c. electronics' 1128 automated EQ being of particular use). It's not the biggest, busiest mix in the world - in fact, the band is a fairly straightforward rock and roll one. But the songs are so well imprinted on the consciousness of his audience, that the pressures for perfect rendition are great. There's no real secret to the array: four two-wide bumpers per side. Starting from the middle, four, four, three and two deep, with long throws at the top. The delay cluster was way back, at the very start of the tiered seating at the opposite end from the stage. Whatever else Franks may have done, his attention to deployment and system EQ gave a nice hi-fi consistency of level throughout the room.

### LIGHTING

The story of how Steve Cohen arrived at this design is entwined in history, making this show a little more significant than most. It's an instructive tale, giving an insight to how tenuous and insubstantial the origins of design can sometimes be, and how significant is the designer's rapport with the act: "I had designed something completely different - something I could morph' into the Elton/Billy Joel tour in '98 (Cohen has been Joel's designer for over 25 years, Elton's a little less). Then Versace died."

Cohen was holidaying in France at the time and as he slept on the flight home he had an insight. "That's how it always comes to me. Sometimes just a piece, sometimes all of it. To draw on Versace . . . I didn't know if it was proper to do so, but I saw these shapes. I wanted it to be subtle, but there's nothing subtle about what Versace did. He was wonderfully derivative of classic design - I wanted to take the Greco-Roman key and extend it into curves."

The realisation is a combined effort from main lighting contractor LSD and set builders All Access,

plus the teamwork of Cohen and Tom Strahan at Scale Design. Three shallow, curved trusses, decorated with classic motif on Plexiglass and perforated metal fascia, swirl in from stage right like waves onto a beach. To stage left more ordered circles, stood vertically, punctuated the rig. "I did not want it to look like 'Cohen does Versace'. I asked John Reid (Elton's manager) what he thought and he told me to go for it. I took the model out to Monaco where Elton was performing at the International Red Cross show and he just looked at it and gave me a big hug."

Interestingly, both Reid and Elton contributed to the design, suggesting to Cohen that he include the Versace 'Medusa' logo within the circles stage left, something Cohen had avoided, fearing it would be too much of a direct association. As it is, the 3D Medusa reliefs are, at the suggestion of Cohen's assistant Robert Cochran, mounted behind black gauzes at the bullseye of each circle. Judicious use of side and front lighting allows the image to be rendered invisible or to appear ghost-like from within. "We often have people come up at the end of the show and ask how the Medusa holograms are done," reported Cochran.

Overall, the set is very bright, both light and eye-catching. "It forces you not to make it look like mud," was Cohen's very apposite description, and backs his allusion of 'Versace dripping in Cartier'. That might sound pretentious nonsense, rock and roll being what it is, but when it came to colour and composition it could, on occasion, be very evocative of expensive jewellery.

At a nuts and bolts level this is a pretty big system, as is necessary for in-the-round performances. LSD, besides providing all the truss, mains, dimmers etc, also have 20 Icons and 47 Washlights in the system. The Icon console is operated by Pat Brannon as Cohen (who likes to operate both consoles - and does so adroitly) eases himself out to prepare for the Joel/Elton double-header. There's also a big system of Vari\*Lites, 113 in total, a mixture of VL2Cs, VL5s and VL4s. It's a mix Cohen exploits, simply - like the three different sources of open white for the



drum roll in *Tiny Dancer* - to more complex effects like the subtle transitions from gobo to gobo. Cohen is not afraid to draw on the obvious visual imagery of the lyrics in some songs - as he says "Elton's work can be very cinematic."

But he will then studiously avoid the obvious, using only pastels to light 'I guess that's why they call it the blues' for example. But it was the combinations of colour and gobos, almost gilding the metal flats, that were most striking. Like Knightsbridge window dressing, what he contrived to appear careless and indifferent, in fact had great style.

Two things occurred during the show of significance. Firstly, the audience didn't get to their feet until Elton sang a song from the latest album - which to me proves that they weren't a sad old bunch just there to hear his greatest hits. Secondly, he implored the audience to "Kill a journalist for Christmas." I was extremely grateful they were too busy watching the show.

## Dr Feelgood

### Kelly's, Leamington Spa SD: Martin Cure

From the sublime to the ridiculous. While Elton might have been a celebration of lighting, set and art, with only functional attention to sound, Dr Feelgood is quite the opposite. The set is non-existent and the lighting is there, but hardly decorative. There is no LD and the driving force behind this show is sound.

Kelly's, for the many of you who've never been, is a typical pub-based live music venue; the kind that seems to be regaining its place in the musical lexicon. You might have seen beatniks here 40 years ago, in the bad old days before they let these ugly rock 'n' rollers into reputable establishments like town halls. Kelly's appears to be a converted barn which has slid down the hill and collided with a public house. Both inside and out it's crooked, with oak beams everywhere. Capacity is around 300, it boasts real ale and tart's drinks, and is a great place to see a live act. The 'Feelgoods', much to my surprise and delight, still enjoy a good



Gigging at Kelly's in Leamington Spa - Dr Feelgood.

living gigging around the UK, despite the loss of Lee Brilleaux and not having had a charting record for what feels like two decades. The replacement vocalist is Pete Gage, who has that perfect, gravelly voice and the slightly aggressive on-stage demeanour that makes the band such fun.

#### LIGHTING

Hardly worth the heading. The rudimentary system comprised two short pipes with four Par 56s between them. Not red, green, blue, but not far off it - pink, yellow and blue, fixed focus, permanently on, no dimming. As noted, rudimentary. However it was bright enough to see by (and photograph) and considering the confines of Kelly's, why waste good ticket money on anything more?

#### SOUND

Martin Cure has been mixing the Feelgoods for the last seven or eight years. He wasn't exactly sure how long - such vagaries are normal in this beery atmosphere. He has his own PA company, Cable Music, who, needless to say, are the audio contractors for this tour. The system is Martin FR3 (full range three way) - a twin 15" bass (JBL loaded), the old faithful 'Phillishaves' and 2226

horns above. The low end is driven by Amcron with C Audio for the highs, and system crossover from BSS. It may be a bit long in the tooth, but it's none the worse for that. After all, Elton's performing beneath a system designed 20 years ago. (However, Cure is contemplating pensioning it off soon and his eyes are currently lingering on some blue-ish boxes).

Pride of place in Cure's system is taken by his brand new Allen & Heath GL2000. "The perfect desk for this type of work. Lots of facility, individual Phantom power, six auxes - all switchable - pre and post. I just don't see how they do it for the money." The system is EQ'd via a Yamaha GEQ 231 graphic nestling in the rack above a couple of Drawmer gates and a reverb unit.

This is not rocket science land - the Feelgoods are the epitome of straight ahead, blasting R'n'B. The Martin system suited them perfectly. The back line was totally shielded by the band - let alone the audience - so the PA did all the work, and Cure's workmanship in driving it was not found wanting. A good environment, if a little humid, his main occupation was shifting the emphasis back and forth between the vocals and guitars.

Cure sends two mixes of fold-back to the band, into four wedges loaded with RCF 12"s and EV CD highs - basically a rhythm mix and a vox mix. Despite playing two sets of over an hour (pretty good value for a fiver entrance), the level never once strayed into distortion or compression, yet Cure wasn't shy in letting the solo's rip when necessary. "The biggest problem with this place is keeping the beer off the desk," quipped Cure. "The band are no problem, they are all seasoned musicians who know that in a small place like this they need to keep the back-line low. I have played this room myself (Cure has his own band) and it is actually very loud in that corral they call a stage."

As David Attenborough might say, it's always best to witness wild animals in their natural environment, and Kelly's is nothing if not natural.



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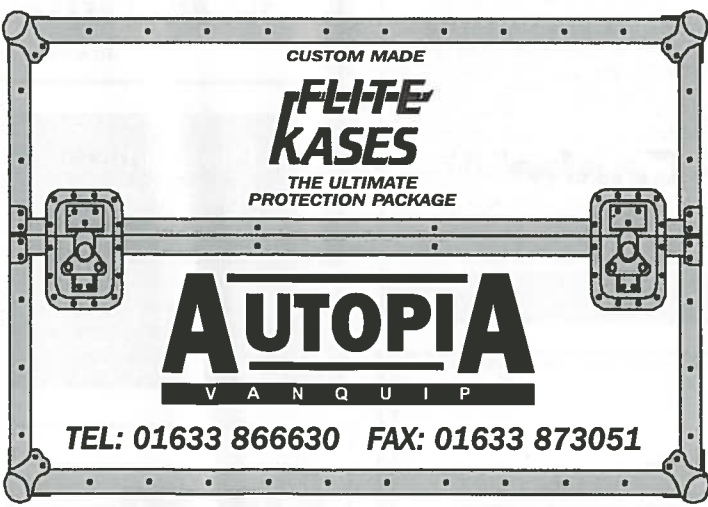
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## Ian Herbert talks to theatre director Stephen Daldry

It's a brave man who'll build himself a theatre and then walk away from it, but then, Stephen Daldry's a brave man. In early 1999 an almost brand-new Royal Court theatre, with its attic Theatre Upstairs, will reopen in Sloane Square after a £16 million rebuilding programme, at which point Daldry will fully hand over the reins to Ian Rickson, already getting his feet under the table as the Court's next artistic director.

Right from the days when he was squeezing huge casts into tiny pub rooms above the Old Red Lion and the Gate, Daldry has been straining theatre spaces to their limits. He built over the stalls of the old Royal Court to create a highly realistic restaurant kitchen for his 1994 revival of Arnold Wesker's 1950's hit. At the National Theatre he first opened up the wings of the Lyttelton as far as the eye could see for his production of *An Inspector Calls*, whose collapsing mansion has since surprised audiences all over the world. Then he appropriated the theatre's service machinery for an astonishingly high-tech take on Sophie Treadwell's 1928's drama *Machinal*.

When the Court decamped to St Martin's Lane, where it holds five-year leases on both the Duke of Yorks and the Ambassadors until Sloane Square is ready, one of his first acts was to convert the traditional, chocolate-box Duke of Yorks into a theatre-in-the-round for Ron Hutchinson's boxing match of a play, *Rat in the Skull*. Up the road, the Ambassadors has become two Theatre Upstairs clones, one on the former stage, the other built into the circle.

The move has been very successful, as the stream of bright new plays and packed revivals shows no sign of diminishing. "We're doing 70% business in old money terms," Daldry confides. Which means that the three stages are achieving 70% of the old Sloane Square capacity. With 50% more seats available now, this means a slightly lower 'new money' percentage, but still one which would satisfy a lot of West End theatre owners.

The building programme means that Daldry spends rather more time at the moment in construction management than artistic direction, but it's a job that fascinates him. From the moment the Court's production manager, Bo Barton, pointed out that the fly



Stephen Daldry.

tower was falling down and the building was likely to be condemned within 18 months, he has worked tirelessly, both to plan the new theatre and to find the money for it. "On top of the Lottery cash we've raised £2.2 million so far, but we can't slow down. We have to pay our share as building continues, otherwise it simply stops."

Plans for the rebuild were developed at what were, at first, called 'Flying Pig' meetings. When the successful Lottery bid introduced a little more meaty reality, their title was changed to Pork Chop sessions. As a result, the Royal Court's staff - every one of them - has had considerable input into the planning of the new theatre, which Daldry describes as 'middle-tech'. The architects, Howard, Tompkins, are not, in fact, theatre architects, but their building will be a user-friendly response to as much thinking ahead as possible from practitioners. "At some point in the future, some lighting designer is going to want a bar FOH to hang some lanterns. We want them to find that it's already there."

Daldry has always been closely involved in the set design for his shows, working with the likes of Bill Dudley and Mark Thompson, as well as his regular partner (and the designer of *An Inspector Calls*) Ian McNeil. It's not surprising, then, that he has strong ideas on set design, which, as he says, is "there to release the heart of a play, not decorate it."

When McNeil was busy and Daldry was directing a new American play by Howard Korder, *The Lights*, in the Theatre Upstairs, he turned (uncredited) designer himself to produce a coup as theatrical as any in *Inspector Calls*, when the small theatre's entire ceiling descended to become a bar counter. "Every designer has a director in him, and every director is a bit of a designer," laughs Daldry. He's a guy who laughs often.

What is perhaps surprising is that he is very happy to leave his lighting and sound entirely to the experts. He's worked with the sound-composer Stephen Warbeck ("a genius") since his first show, an Arts Council placement at the Sheffield Crucible in 1983, and for almost as long with Paul Arditti, at the National and the Royal Court. "On *Machinal*, Fiona Shaw was quite startled at first to find Stephen even taking some rehearsals."

His favoured LD is Rick Fisher, with whom he has worked since the Theatre Royal, York in 1988, and now he also works with the Court's resident, Johanna Town. He likes to bring his lighting and sound associates in on the design process as early as possible in rehearsal, and they've all four been deeply involved in planning the new Royal Court. "They're all excellent," is the judgement of a surprisingly modest team leader, who should be able to walk away (into an exciting new career as a film director) from a successfully commissioned building before the millennium arrives. "Otherwise, I would have had to stay longer than nine years, and that's quite long enough to be in one job."

Even his predecessor, Max Stafford-Clark, very happily running his Out of Joint company, would now probably agree.

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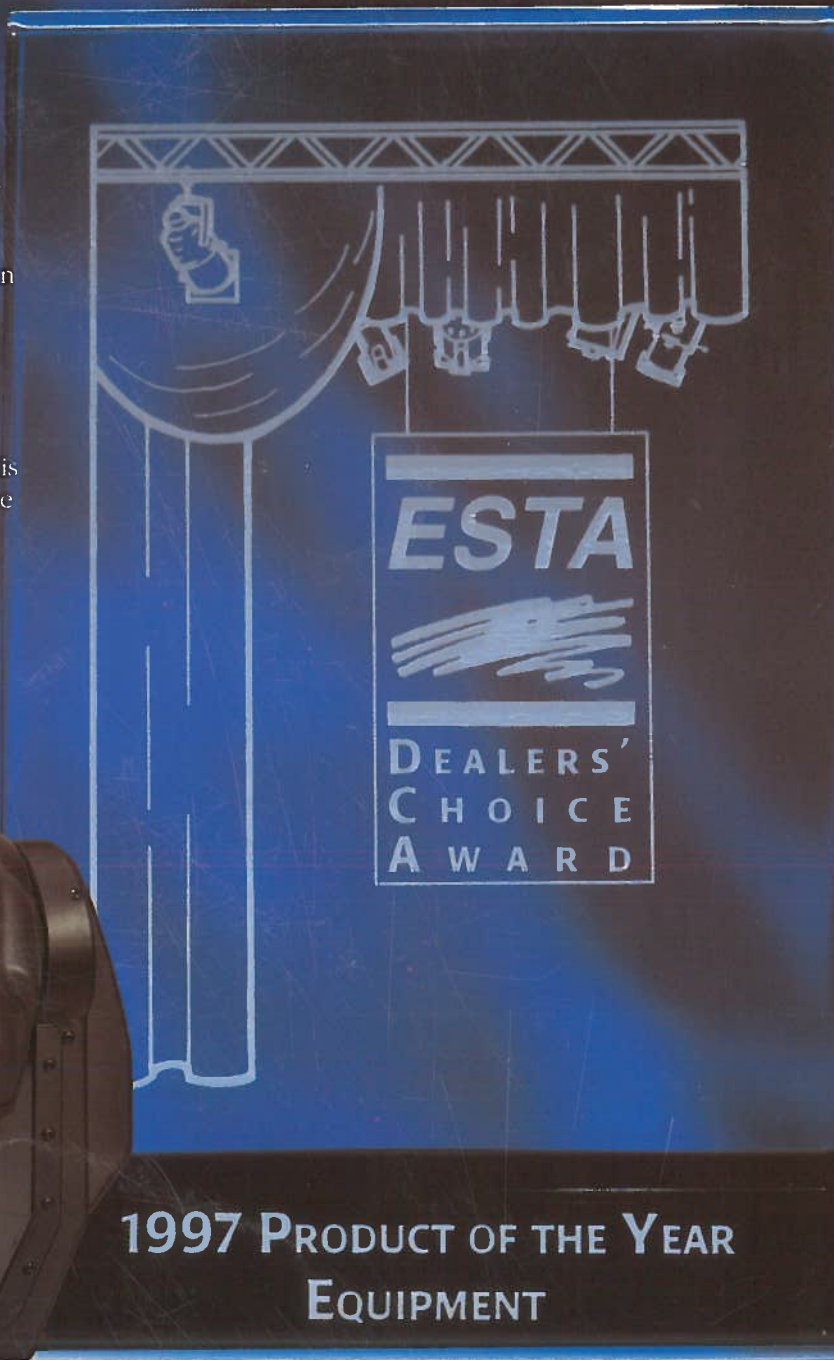
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