

Lighting & Sound INTERNATIONAL

March 2001

The Entertainment Technology Monthly

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Tantalus

- Greek tragedy writ large

Texas

- The Spiteri Roadshow hits town

Changing Light

- Exclusive interview with the iLight Group

Eric & Albert

- Eric Clapton at the Royal Albert Hall

The Road to Wembley

- Wembley Loudspeaker turns 30



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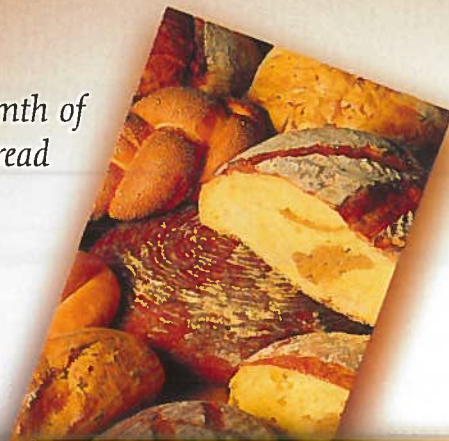


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Lighting & Sound INTERNATIONAL

March 2001 Volume 16, Issue 3

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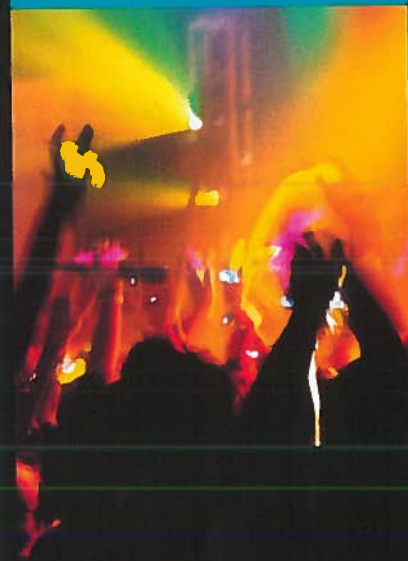
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EDITOR Ruth Rossington - ruth@plasa.org
 DEPUTY EDITOR Lee Baldock - lee@plasa.org
 ASSOCIATE EDITOR Tony Gottelier
 ADVERTISEMENT MANAGER Barry Howse - barry@plasa.org
 PRODUCTION MANAGER Sonja Walker - sonja@plasa.org
 SUBSCRIPTIONS Sheila Bartholomew - sheila@plasa.org
 ADVERTISING CO-ORDINATOR Jane Cockburn - jane@plasa.org

PLASA - Managing Director: Matthew Griffiths - matthew@plasa.org
 PLASA - Financial Controller: Shane McGreevy - shane@plasa.org

Regular Contributors:
 Steve Moles, Rob Halliday, Louise Stickland, John Watt,
 Ian Herbert, Jacqueline Molloy, Mike Mann, Phil Ward.

Published from the PLASA office:
 38 St Leonards Road, Eastbourne, East Sussex BN21 3UT, UK.
 Tel: +44 (0)1323 418400 Fax: +44 (0)1323 646905

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Gearhouse Group in Receivership



Just two weeks after our February issue had gone to press, we learned that the Gearhouse Group plc and a large number of its subsidiary operations had been placed in administrative receivership. A legal notice posted on the company's website stated that AR Bloom & AJR Wollaston (Ernst & Young) were appointed joint administrative receivers on 23rd February 2001.

The news will come as a major blow to the industry since Gearhouse was one of its larger players. Over recent years, the Group, a supplier of professional presentation and event production equipment, had followed an ambitious programme of growth, acquiring a number of complementary companies and rebranding them under the Group banner. However, at the end of last year, the writing appeared to be on the wall when the company's shares were temporarily suspended from trading on the London Stock Exchange. The suspension followed the company's announcement that it was working with its bankers on a major debt rationalisation programme which involved the disposal of parts of the group. In mid-January, it appointed David Hargreaves as group chief executive, replacing John Napier who remained with the group to manage a number of projects.

At the same time Gary Davis, MD of Presentation Services Ltd, resigned as a director.

Ironically, the announcement came at the same time as research company Plimsoll identified Gearhouse (Manchester) as one of the 10 most profitable sound equipment companies in the industry. But it wasn't enough to protect it from being listed in the line-up of companies placed in receivership. All the Gearhouse subsidiaries across the UK - Gearhouse LED Screens, Gearhouse Lighting, Gearhouse Special Projects, Gearhouse Structures, Gearhouse XTC, Impact Rentals, PPL Event Services, Presentation Services, Proquip Gearhouse, Scenaset and Set 'N' Stage - were listed.

As disposal was part of the company's stated agenda, it was no surprise as we were going to press to find that a number of buyers have already staked their claim to parts of the Group. The management team at Presentation Services Ltd (PSL), has purchased the assets and business of Gearhouse Group PLC's Southern UK operation, together with the company's North American operations. These include PSL and PSL Central, Lighting Unlimited, Set 'N' Stage, Proquip, Presentation Graphics,

Gearhouse Multimedia, ConferenceCast and Quorum Travel. In the US, both the Los Angeles and Nashville companies have also been purchased. We understand that equity funding has been secured for the new company through 3i, with Barclays providing debt funding.

The new Group is to be called Presentation Services Group Ltd; all of the companies will be relaunched under the PSL name and will continue to focus on the rental, staging, exhibition and concert touring markets. The buy-out has been led by Gary Davis with the new management team consisting of Chris Scadding, Darren Glossop, Irene McLean, Janet Smith, Stephen Rhodes and Nasser Abbas.

In a separate move, Avesco PLC has acquired the Midlands and North division of Gearhouse Group PLC for £4 million. The business and assets acquired include the operations in Birmingham, Manchester, Glasgow and at the NEC. In the first interview you'll read in the trade press, L&SI met with Avesco chief executive David Nicholson and Graham Andrews, MD of Avesco's Creative Technology, to discuss their future plans for the company.



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Avesco Complete Gearhouse Purchase

Avesco's acquisition of the Midlands and Northern AV rental staging interests of Gearhouse shouldn't raise too many eyebrows since it's a natural step for this fast-growing multi-national, and one which will make it the UK's largest company operating in this sector of the market.

Avesco moved quickly to secure Gearhouse's larger branches in Birmingham, The NEC, Manchester and Glasgow, and negotiations were concluded on March 3rd, when Avesco's offer of £4m for the assets and staff was accepted.

Avesco chief executive, David Nicholson, told L&S: "There were clearly difficulties with the Gearhouse Group. But we had always indicated an interest in the Midlands and Northern business, where Tony Cant runs a good operation. This was unquestionably our preferred acquisition out of Gearhouse in the event of the Group being placed in receivership."

Following the acquisition, Graham Andrews, managing director of Avesco's Creative Technology, has been promoted to run the newly-created Audio Visual Services Division, while maintaining his involvement with all the North American businesses - now rebranded Creative Technology. "This development will provide us with immediate national coverage," he stated. Strategically the timing could not have been better, complementing the start-up this month of Media Control (Europe) Ltd, the company's new dry-hire, one-stop shop. The Gearhouse acquisition will expand Avesco's



Avesco's chief exec David Nicholson (seated) with Graham Andrews, who will head up the new division

workforce in the UK by around 50%. However, both Avesco executives admitted that it was too premature to make any decision on Gearhouse brand retention until the businesses had been fully assimilated.

A further boost to CT's multimedia activities is provided by the arrival of Steve Rowan, who previously ran Gearhouse Multimedia. After initially approaching Graham Andrews, within the space of three days his division's entire staff of 18 had followed Rowan across to the Surrey-based company. "We envisage that this team will now form the core of Creative Technology's multimedia department - serving our London-based exhibition business and working closely with Gearhouse NEC," forecast Andrews. "While we will focus MCL on providing full event services, we can now push CT further into the exhibition and specialist video market."

Summarising, David Nicholson said that the expansion would consolidate Avesco's position in the UK market. "The acquisition fits well with our strategy, which is to develop our AV rental staging activities in the major markets of Europe and North America."

Bids Rise at Dome Auction

News reaches us that the recent Dome auction turned into something of a bidding war and, in so doing, laid to rest fears that there would be a flood of cheap second-hand product hitting the market.

Word has it that whilst there were some bargains to be had - top end lighting desks normally worth £15,000 upwards going for £7,000 and a whole batch of intelligent lighting going for a song to one lucky buyer - there were also numerous instances of bidders paying way over the list price for items. A 24-channel lighting control desk, for instance, the list price of which is £525 (never mind the real price), was actually sold for £700, and this before the 10% premium buyers have to pay on all items. We also understand from our mole at the auction that numerous other items were attracting slightly higher than, or close to, list price, and one can only wonder at who has pockets so deep that price is not an issue. The most expensive item purchased was a projector which sold for £35,000, whilst the cheapest piece of Dome memorabilia was a wall panel from the Mind zone which was snapped up for £5 - bargain!

Despite the fact that not everything promised in the auction actually made it to the sale (the NMEC withdrew 1,000 items at the last minute on the basis that it didn't wish to prejudice the future use of the Dome), by the time the auction ended on Friday 2 March, more than 15,000 items had gone under the hammer. The eventual proceeds, however, fell some way short of the hoped for £5million - rounding out at just under £3.5million.

With the auction out of the way, attention is now turning to the future of the Dome. Since the Government made the decision to remove preferred bidder status from Legacy plc, the battle for who gets to do what in Greenwich has intensified. In the blue corner, we have the Experience consortium (which counts well-known promoter Harvey Goldsmith amongst its number), which has joined forces with the four-company consortium of Quintain, Lend Lease, Stanhope and Grosvenor. The latter has already been in talks with the BBC and the Tussauds Group, which may spur the revival of a 10-year-old plan for a giant theme park at Greenwich, put forward by Tussauds long before the notion of a Millennium Dome was ever conceived. Any BBC involvement in the bid could involve turning the Dome into a theme park inspired by classic programmes such as *EastEnders* and *Walking with Dinosaurs*.

In the red corner is the former chief executive of the Dome, Pierre-Yves Gerbeau, whose bid is based on a platform of retaining the Dome as a visitor attraction.

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Lightfactor Host UK Launch of Apogee Sound ALA-9

Lightfactor Sales, UK distributor for Apogee Sound products, fired Bovingdon Airfield in Hertfordshire for the UK debut of the Apogee Sound ALA-9 Line Array touring system.



Lightfactor's Paul de Ville and Bill Jones with Apogee's John Adams and the new ALA-9

Despite freezing temperatures and high winds, a steady stream of audio professionals made the trip to the once thriving World War II USAAF base. As well as offering the facility to crank the system up to high volumes, the Bovingdon site was also ideal to demonstrate the quick rigging and de-rigging capabilities of the ALA-9.

Judging by the number of line array launches at the recent Frankfurt MusikMesse, one could be forgiven for thinking that this is an emerging technology, but line array is nothing new. In fact, examples are common from as far back as the 1950s and The Grateful Dead were using the principles of line array in their 'wall of sound' in the seventies. However, advancements in electronics and transducer technology, coupled

with the use of processors to effectively crossover, equalise and align various types of processor-based speaker systems, has allowed line array to exploit its full potential. Through its ALA-3 and ALA-5, Apogee was one of the first companies to develop processor-based line array systems. The ALA-9 is the natural successor to these and the largest line array system yet produced by the company. During the development of the system, Apogee's R&D team focused on the needs and wish-lists of the touring industry.

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available in a ready-to-tour package, optimising the principles of 'link and lift' and using quick release aircraft pins for speed and ease of rigging - referencing the demanding and tight production schedules of the 21st century. Its footprint (4 ft x 2 ft) allows it to be stacked within a standard truck, either two across the width, or four across up-ended.

One of the benefits of line array is the way in which lower frequencies are projected forward, and the ALA-9 maintains a high SPL output with tight pattern control, right down into the lower frequencies, thus maximising the system's directionality. Off-axis rejection eliminates feedback to mics behind the speaker line, allowing lower SPL of monitoring systems.

Those not able to brave the hostile conditions at Bovingdon need not worry. Lightfactor, which announced its UK Apogee dealership at PLASA last year, is currently putting the finishing touches to a new showroom and demonstration facility at its Greenford HQ.

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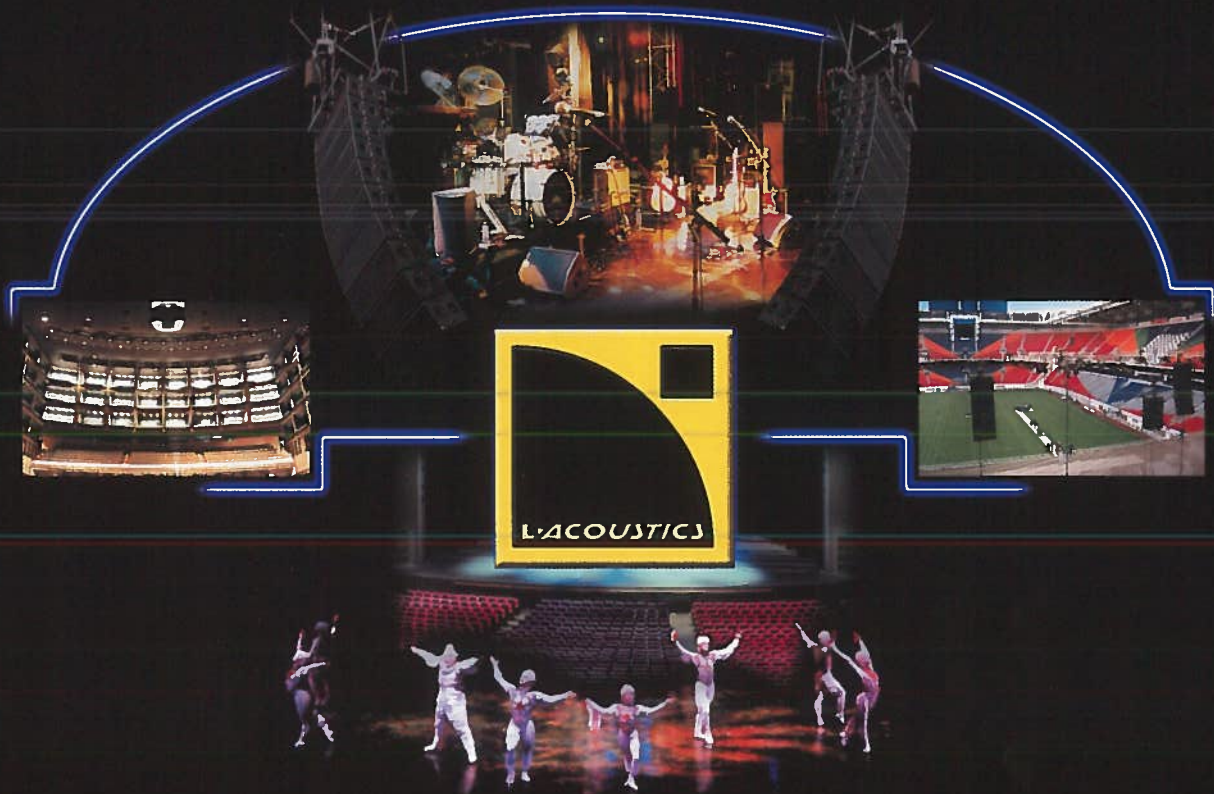
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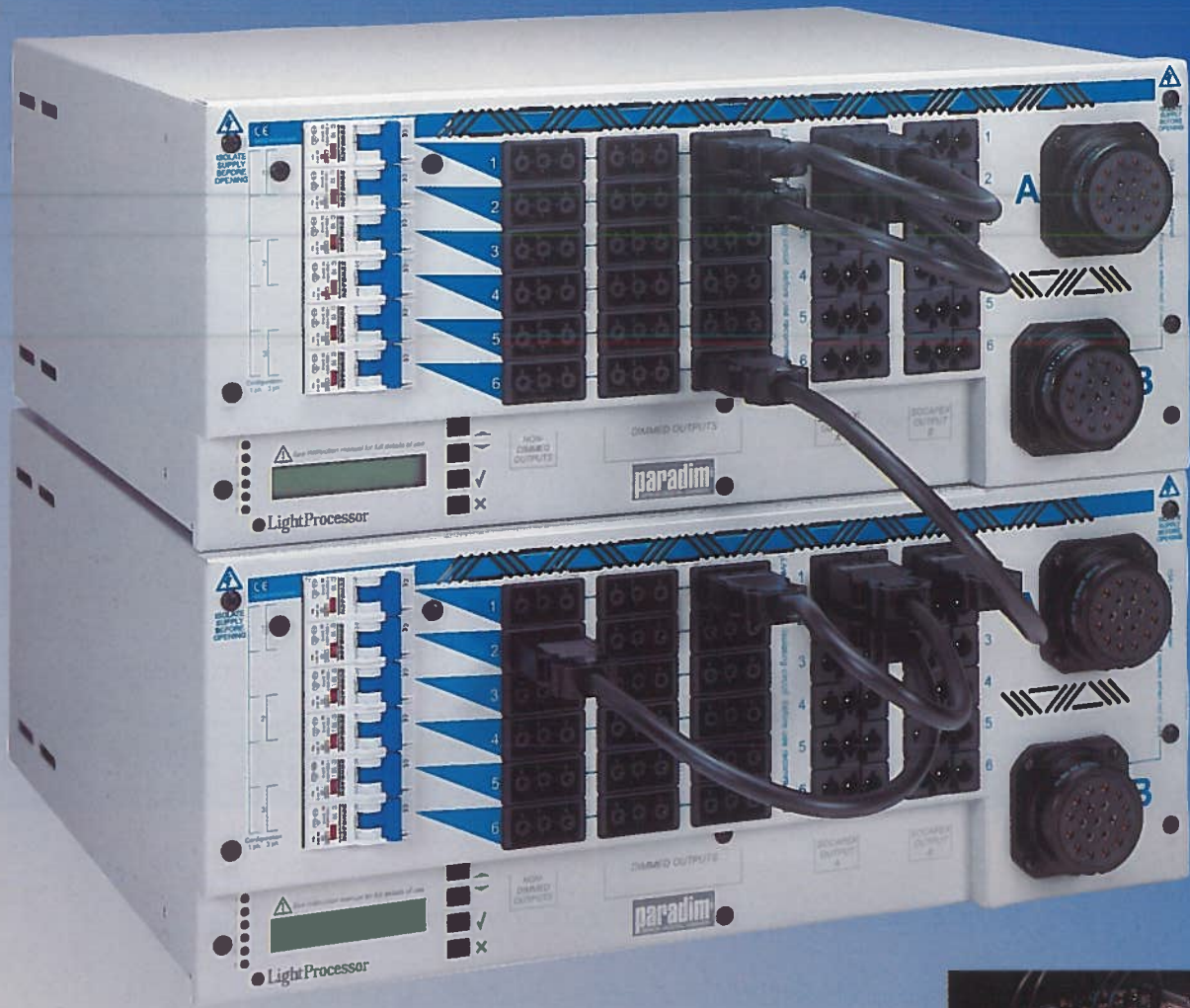
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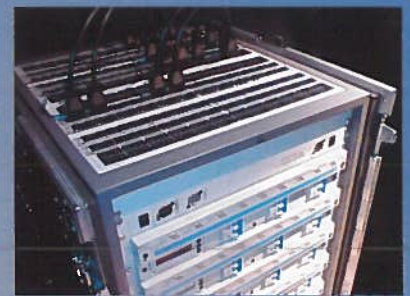
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New Faces Join PLASA Show Team

Following recent internal re-organisation at Clarion Events, the PLASA Show organising team has undergone several changes of role, as well as several new additions.

James Brooks-Ward is now Group Exhibition Director at Clarion, responsible for eight trade shows and 30 staff. Part of his new responsibility will be the development of new business areas for Clarion.

Sue Silsby now takes on the role of PLASA Show Director. She has worked at Clarion Events for the past eight years, most recently as Show Director for The Royal Smithfield Show. Stephen Ingram comes in as the new senior sales manager for the Show. He too has a great deal of experience, having worked on events including The Royal Smithfield Show and The Sunday Times Environment Show.

Julie Haddow joins the team as marketing manager, and will take responsibility for marketing all of Clarion's trade shows, including PLASA. Over the past year, she has been working as venue marketing manager for Earls Court & Olympia. Another new face to the team is Rebecca Perry, who has been at Clarion Events since 1996, and has worked on The Royal Smithfield Show and The London Motor Show. She

*Top row left to right:
James Brooks-Ward, Lisa
Ellis, Goli Vossough,
Rebecca Perry,
Stephen Ingram.*

*Bottom row left to right:
Julie Haddow, Sue Silsby,
Sophie Matthews*



now joins the PLASA team as marketing executive.

Sophie Matthews joined Clarion in June 1998, as a show administrator for both PLASA UK and PLASA Presents Light & Sound Shanghai. She is currently the operations manager for both shows. Goli Vossough joined the PLASA team in December 1998 as a sales executive. After a year she made sales executive for the PLASA Shanghai show, and is now actively involved in selling for both.

Lisa Ellis graduated last June with a Business Studies & Marketing degree, and in September joined Clarion Events as sales and marketing assistant. The final member of the new team, not pictured, is Simon Beck, who takes on the role of sales manager. He has worked for Clarion for the past three years, notably on the Exterior Design exhibition.

AETTI Restructures

Following the re-structuring of the AETTI (Arts & Entertainment Technical Training Initiative) on January 31st 2001, Matthew Griffiths, managing director of PLASA, has been elected as AETTI chairman for 2001. He joins Joe Aveline (secretary) and Henrietta Branwell (treasurer) on the AETTI's panel of officers.

Last year, the AETTI helped to develop the first BTEC qualifications for stage technicians, in association with Loughborough College and with the assistance of funding from the European Social Fund. On 31st January this year, the existing steering committee of the AETTI wound up and a new constitution was adopted. As part of the restructuring, Griffiths, Aveline and Branwell were chosen as the organisation's new officers. The newly-restructured body has signed a formal agreement with Loughborough College for a three-year continuation of the development and delivery of BTEC qualifications. In addition, the possibility of running a theatre technician foundation course during the PLASA Show this year is currently being investigated.

AETTI's Joe Aveline told L&S: "The AETTI has come of age. The support for this move from members bodes well for the future and the enthusiasm and hard work surrounding our effort on the BTEC Awards is still present. We now have a solid foundation on which to go forward."

PLASA AGM 2001 Speaker Announced

PLASA has now revealed details of the first of its two speakers booked for the 2001 AGM and industry dinner, which takes place on June 14th at Coombe Abbey.

Paul Zenon (pictured right), is a magician and comedian who is well known for more than 100 television appearances and is a regular at the Comedy Store . . .

Details of the second of the evening's speakers will be announced shortly.

All PLASA members are encouraged to attend this enjoyable event. Contact Helen Kneale at the PLASA Office for details, or visit: www.plasa.org/events/agm.asp





People

The month of February started with an avalanche of stories about people not only departing companies for pastures new, but in some cases returning to previous employers. In fact there's been so much news this month that we've had to grease down the old shoe-horn to make it all fit. So let's start at the top . . .

Frank Gordon, High End Systems' CEO, is to leave the company. Gordon originally joined HES in 1998 with the closing of the equity investment by Generation Partners of New York, and will remain at HES until a new CEO has been found to replace him. In the UK, **Ian Brown**, formerly with G.E.T.com, has joined the HES Europe team in London as the regional sales manager for the UK and Ireland.



Ian Brown

Another former G.E.T.com employee, **Stuart Fenwick**, has joined audio facilities company Envo-Tech, to head up its expanding leisure division following the opening of a new dedicated professional audio showroom in London.

Linton Smeeton has left Mackie/RCF UK. Smeeton, one of the founding directors of RCF UK, was pivotal to its success in the early years and had more recently been active in the introduction of Mackie products to the marketplace.

BSS Audio has made two key appointments. **Tim McCall**, previously of Marquee Audio, has moved to BSS to look after Middle East and Asia sales, whilst **Dave McKinney**, formerly with Gearhouse, has taken on the role of UK sales engineer.

Continuing its recruitment campaign, AC Lighting has announced a number of new appointments. The Northern Region sales office, located in Leeds, has been further expanded by the addition of **Graham Bassett** and **Dave Hartley**. Bassett, formerly with Lighting Technology, takes up the position of Northern Region sales coordinator,

whilst Hartley, most recently with Lightfactor Sales, joins as Northern Region sales rep. At the High Wycombe HQ, **Steve Dean**, who has an extensive background in management, marketing and sales, has been appointed to the newly-created position of marketing manager.

The recently merged Blackout Triple E has appointed two well-known industry names to its management team. Industry veterans **Eric Porter** and **Simon Chandler-Honor** have joined as project managers and will help the company develop its range of national and international projects. Another new member of staff expanding the sales division, is **Jonathan Langlands**, who has joined as technical hire and sales manager.

Elissa Getto has joined Theatre Projects Consultants as senior theatre consultant. She will be a principal member of the team conducting performing arts feasibility studies and advising on a wide range of issues.

Bill Gallinghouse is rejoining ETC in the newly-created role of vice-president of business development responsible for special projects and the coordination of international sales efforts. Gallinghouse originally joined ETC in 1990 as vice-president of sales, and subsequently served as managing director of ETC Europe between 1996 and 1998. For the last three years he was with Fourth Phase (previously PRG Lighting).



Bill Gallinghouse

Total Audio Solutions has recruited Canadian **David Anthony Otañez**, formerly of Yamaha Commercial Audio and Denmark Street Studios, to spearhead the company's sales into the UK post-production and studio markets.

French PA system manufacturer L-Acoustics has recently restructured: financial manager **Hervé Guillaume** has been appointed managing director, to allow **Christian Heil**, the company chairman, to focus on the development of a global company strategy. **Sandrine Fessard**, formerly a

sales assistant, is now in charge of customer services, whilst **Paul Bauman** has been appointed technical support manager. **Melanie Cerveaux**, who joined the team in 1999, now heads up the marketing side of the company.

Stardraw.com has appointed **Rob Robinson** as operations manager. Formerly with Shuttlesound, Robinson oversaw the launch and development of ShuttleCAD, the predecessor to Stardraw Audio, and was instrumental in the adoption of Stardraw technology.

Doug Fleenor Design has recruited **Milton Davis** to its engineering team. Davis, a 23-year veteran of the entertainment industry, will head Fleenor's network-based lighting control department.

After entering into an agreement to establish a joint company with local Chinese partners late last year, **Raymond Wong** is to head up Martin Professional's new Hong Kong office. The new operation - Martin Professional Hong Kong Ltd - took over distribution from Martin's former Chinese distributor and has been fully operational since the beginning of February 2001.

Allen & Heath has welcomed a new PR coordinator, **Alexandra Pratt**. Alexandra has spent much of her career working as a freelance journalist and author, and will be working alongside Debbie Maxted and David Kirk (who is returning to the company at the end of March) at A&H's new premises in Penryn, Cornwall.

Brian Henshall is the latest new face to join the Lightfactor team. Having enjoyed a varied career in the pro lighting and sound industries, he will be working as Northern Area sales representative.

David Aldington

Stockport-based PA specialist Audio Design Services recently announced the death of its chief engineer, David Aldington. Aldington, who died of cancer at the start of February in his mid-50s, was a well-known face to many in the public address sector.

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Siel 2000 ²⁰⁰¹

Siel kicked off the trade show season in style when it returned to its established home at the Porte de Versailles in Paris in early February. Some measure of its growing stature on the trade show circuit can be gauged by the fact that it now attracts nearly 300 exhibitors from all sectors of the industry.

Its widening appeal as an industry showcase is underlined by the fact that just about every major manufacturer from the audio, AV, lighting and staging worlds, had a presence at the Show, despite its proximity to both Namm and Live. Since most have appointed local distributors, the profile of the show remains distinctly French, and the visitor figures underline the fact that it still plays predominantly to its home market (of the 23,497 who attended, less than 6% were from overseas).

That said, even 6% constitutes a fairly considerable amount of international visitors, and Paris is a city which will always manage to attract. So what news did we find on the show floor?

Behind the scenes, **ADB** has been making some key changes. The Siemens-owned company has spent the last few months restructuring, revising the reporting structure so that the French and German operations now report directly to the central ADB operation in Belgium. Alfons Fahrtnann, a Siemens man for the past four years, has been brought in as the new general manager and will work alongside the established team of Mike Musso and Raph Janssens on a range of new initiatives, including a number of new products which will be rolled out in the coming months.

Right, the team at ETC Europe celebrate 25 years in the business. Inset, Sandrine Fessard and Paul Massiani of L-Acoustics with the MTD1018a. Below, ADB's new general manager Alfons Fahrtnann (right) with Raph Janssens. Inset, Paul Dodd of Fal with the Three Sixty³

It's now a year since **Blackout** and **Triple E** announced their intention to merge and 12 months on, there's still plenty to talk about. Not only is the new company now firmly bedded into its new London HQ, but it was recently appointed the UK distributor for the ShowLED starcloth manufactured by Amelia in Belgium. This new string-and-socket system works in combination with a lightweight DMX-compatible 8-channel controller, to make the building, maintenance and reuse of starcloths easier. Industrial strength velcro fixes the LED sockets and cables in place, but allows their easy removal for later use.



And the compact controller supporting 256 LEDs, offers 10 pre-set chase patterns.

German loudspeaker manufacturer **d&b audiotechnik**, made its debut at Siel this year. It was there to officially launch d&b France, an operation entrusted to the very safe pair of hands of respected sound engineer Didier 'Lulu' Lubin, which the company established in August last year to support a growing French customer base.

DHA found in Siel a perfect platform from which to announce the appointment of its first French



distributors - **Dimatec** and **Lighting Technology Durango**. **Dimatec** will now handle the **DHA Gecko**, gobos and moving effects, whilst **LTD**, who we featured last month, will stock a range of gobos and moving effects.

At **PLASA** last year, **Fal** demonstrated a prototype version of a new intelligent light. At Siel we got to see it in the flesh; the **Three-Sixty³ Colour** projector features true colour mixing for an almost infinite range of projectable colours. To further enhance this new addition to the family, the pan and tilt now have a dramatically improved low noise movement, which is also self-correcting. Another prototype at **PLASA** that became reality at Siel, was the **Fal Night Colour Pan** - an outdoor image projector that has already been spec'd on a number of high profile projects.

L-Acoustics had a prototype version of a compact monitor system - the **MTD1018a** - a coaxial passive two-way speaker system. The company is on the move later in the year to a new purpose-built production facility

The final word must go to **Zero 88** for you have to admire the nerve of a company that has the audacity to launch a product called **Frog** at a French trade show. But **Graham Eales** at **Zero 88** wasn't sporting any black eyes, so the successor to the **Sirius** range of lighting desks, can't have upset too many. You can read all about **Frog** and its **FatFrog** mate in our profile of the **iLight Group** on pages 71 and 72.

Siel will be back next year from the 3-6 February, 2002.

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Top Marks for The Academy

A cutting-edge club sound and lighting system is now a central feature of the new 2,300-capacity concert and dance venue, The Academy, in Birmingham.

Opened by the McKenzie Group - owners of the Brixton Academy and Shepherds Bush Empire - £600,000 has been spent converting the former Rank-owned Hummingbird into a leading mid-sized concert venue.

Following a competitive tender process, McKenzie MD John Northcote awarded the contract to Marquee Audio. The brief was for a quality club system in both the major auditorium and 400-capacity auxiliary room, which could also be plugged into by bands. "I wanted a good, permanently-installed system so that every time there's a club night we don't have to bring a lot of extra equipment in," explained Northcote.

A computer-controlled Turbosound sound system, in excess of 30kW, is spread across the



basement, balcony, VIP room and bars, to keep the venue throbbing throughout the night. The main dancefloor system consists of six Turbosound Floodlight Skeletal Install TFL-760Hs, with six install versions of the TSW-718 2 18" sub, and the TSW-124 24" sub. Handling the delay sound further back in the venue are a dozen Turbo TCS-59s.

The system is driven by a combination of 15 MC2 MC-1259 and three MC-750 amplifiers, and digitally distributed through a pair of BSS

9088LL audio matrix devices, with a Soundweb 9010 Jellyfish remote providing local access. DJ equipment comprises a pair of Technics SL1210 turntables, an Allen & Heath Xone:464 mixer, with an ART 300A bi-amped powered reference monitor from RCF. A further 11 Turbosound TCS-59 passive two-way speakers and six TCS-118 18" subs are employed in the balcony, while around the bar area six Turbosound TCS-35 8" speakers are distributed. The main PA in the second room features four THL-811S skeletal HiLight enclosures, with four THL-828 cabinets reinforcing the low frequencies. A Turbo TCS-56 provides the stage fill while the DJ console is similarly configured to that of the main club.

As for lighting, Marquee supplied eight Optikinetics Solar 250 projectors, four Deathstar strobes, four Martin MAC 500s, eight Martin Destroyer X250 multi-rotating beam effects, 12 Martin PRO 918s and two MAC 250s on the rig - working with a four-head Martin Techno Haze smoke machine - all run from an Avolites Azure 2000 desk. In the secondary room a further four Opti Solar 250s, eight Martin Destroyer X250s and four Martin MX4 intelligent light projectors form the rig, controlled from from a Light Processor OCommander.

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PROFESSIONAL SHOW LIGHTING



MAVCO Shows Spirit

MAVCO has been awarded the contract to install the audio equipment for all public areas on Carnival Cruise Lines' Carnival Spirit.

The 960ft, 84,000 tonne Carnival Spirit is destined to go into service from Miami in the spring of 2001. Onboard, MAVCO is involved in the design and installation of audio systems in a total of 23 venues, headed by onsite project manager, Nick Gibson. Work on the project started in Turku last October, where Gibson and his team built 56 racks within six weeks - currently being installed in Helsinki. In the main theatre, MAVCO is installing two LCS LD88 audio processors to provide room surround effects, and 90 EAW loudspeakers, together with 60 Renkus-Heinz and Macpherson loudspeakers. Processing will be via a Peavey Mediamatrix, whilst 54 Crest CKS amplifiers will be controlled by Crest's NexSys system. The theatre will also have a Midas XL4 mixer together with a Midas XL3 side wing mixer.



Interactive Club Experience

Mobile phone company Orange has kicked off its largest ever Student Union club tour.

'Enjoy Music on Campus' is a high-tech clubbing production that transforms student unions into impressive clubbing venues. Orange is taking leading DJs and the latest technology to universities across the UK. The first event took place in February at the De Montfort Student Union in Leicester and throughout the coming months will visit universities from Belfast to Plymouth. The line up for the events include the Freestylers, Jon Carter and talent from Grand Central Records. The club nights are designed to support the launch of 'Orange on campus', a mobile phone package specially designed for students.

Install Expand

Installation and service subcontractor Install recently completed the relocation of its head office.

The new premises, situated within three miles of the M6 in a newly-built business complex, boast an 8,000sq.ft warehouse, an electronics workshop, a purpose-designed training and conference suite, and extensively equipped offices.

The rapid growth of Install over the past year has meant that the premises are not the only part of the company to have expanded. The 12 strong workforce has increased to 22. The most recent addition to the team is John Elves, who becomes the company's new general manager. Al Brown, Install's managing director, has promised further expansion during 2001. The first area to receive attention has been the service and repair department resulting in the company becoming an official service centre for a number of manufacturers, including Martin Professional and Denon.

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OPTI Expands US Operations

Following an impressive year's trading, the US operation of OPTI has announced a move to larger premises.

Based in Virginia, the business has set up home in a new building which will combine office and storage space and provide scope for future expansion. The new space is 25 per cent larger than the company's previous premises, and according to Andy Silver, VP and general manager of OPTI's US operations, "the move was needed because business plans call for increased space for new product lines and additional staffing." The new facility will continue to stock the full range of UK-manufactured OPTI Kinetics lighting products, as well as OPTI Trilite for the rental market produced at the company's plant in Carp, Ontario, Canada. With responsibility for sales, marketing and distribution throughout North, Central and South America, turnover for the year is set to grow by 20 per cent.



Universal Audio

A new company has been formed that will continue to manufacture the Refleka and Spektra brands, previously manufactured by Acoustic Sound Systems.

The new company will add its own range of cinema speakers, whilst also offering an OEM facility to other manufacturers. A brand new touring system is going through development at the moment and should be in production by mid-summer. The new company can be reached on +44 (0)1702 613321

'Scouser' Going Live

Soundcraft has announced a new event in its successful series of Going Live seminars.

The 'Scouser' Going Live, which will run in Liverpool at the end of July, will feature a panel of engineers who all started their careers in the city.

The formula of Going Live is a simple and proven one. Soundcraft provides comprehensive and professional PA equipment for the students to work on, including a wide variety of mixing consoles for front-of-house and monitoring. All the course tutors are working engineers who tour with the biggest acts in music today. All the usual topics from how to operate front-of-house and monitor consoles, to microphone placement and outboard electronics, will be covered in the three-day agenda. There will also be a special class on digital mixing in a live situation. PA systems and tech support for the seminar will be provided by Liverpool's Adlib Audio.

- ▶ Dates: 27-29 July 2001
- ▶ Venue: Liverpool
- ▶ Contact: Soundcraft - +44 (0)1707 665 000

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Further Arrests in Dome Fraud Investigation

Police have arrested two more people in connection with allegations of fraud at the Millennium Dome.

A man and a woman were recently detained in Liverpool, but were later released on bail, and ordered to return in June this year. The arrests arise from an internal audit ordered last August by the then newly-appointed executive chairman David James. This latest incident follows an earlier case that led to the arrest of four people last autumn, and focuses on alleged fraud

involving lighting, engineering and electrical contracts at the venue. We understand that they include at least one claim of a 'kickback' being paid. As a result, there are now four separate enquiries being conducted by the fraud squad.

The original four individuals were bailed to return to police stations last month, but no news has yet emerged of whether the police intend to press charges. Enquiries to Scotland Yard and Merseyside Police have thus far yielded no response - if anybody out there has anything to tell, give us a call.



Showlight Pulls in Top Names

Paula J. Dinkel, Peggy Eisenhauer and John Rayment will be the keynote speakers heading a formidable array of 21 top-class speakers at Showlight 2001

Paula J. Dinkel, principal lighting designer for Walt Disney Imagineering, is currently leading the lighting design teams at Walt Disney Studios in Paris. Her paper 'Theatre to Theme Parks' owes much to her 20 years' experience with Disney theme parks and retail projects, amongst them DisneyQuest in both Orlando and Chicago, the Port Discovery Children's Museum in Baltimore and Club Disney.

John Rayment, the man responsible for the exciting lighting design of the opening and closing ceremonies of the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games, will discuss this experience in his paper 'Olympics'. Beginning his career in seventies London, Rayment went on to become associated with the Sydney Dance Company, and was also one of Australia's first lighting designers to go freelance and get an agent, allowing him the freedom to work on projects which have included drama, opera, musicals and events such as World Expo 88.

Peggy Eisenhauer, the only lighting designer to receive two double-nominations for lighting design, is talking about 'Design Philosophy'. With partner Jules Fisher, she runs the successful Third Eye studio, a provider of innovative lighting design for some of America's top shows, the most recent being the musical production of *Jane Eyre* which opened on Broadway in December. Her partnership with Fisher began some 15 years ago and they have gone on to collect many design awards, including five Tony nominations.

Other speakers over the three days include Tristram Oliver, director of photography on Aardman's first feature film, *Chicken Run*; Ian Dow, a resource manager with BBCTV Outside Broadcasts, whose triumphs include lighting the 1999 Eclipse "without spoiling the effect," and Graham Festenstein, senior designer for Sutton Vane Associates, where his projects have included Wildscreen and Explore@Bristol. As well as the papers, there is also an exhibition of 40 companies and associations.

Registration is currently underway and over 100 delegates have already signed up to participate. If you would like a registration form telephone +44 (0)1323 418406 or e-mail sheila@plasa.org. A full programme can be found on the website.

- ▶ **Dates:** May 21 to 23
- ▶ **Venue:** Edinburgh Festival Theatre, Edinburgh
- ▶ **Website:** www.showlight.org.uk

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Live! Show 2001

L&SI reports from the Live! 2001 exhibition at Alexandra Palace.

Midas introduced the new Venice console, bringing the high-quality Midas brand to smaller applications such as conferences or live band applications, for effects returns or additional inputs in large multi-console applications, in

installation/contracting work, or as part of a small mobile system. It also provides an ideal feature set for live acts who need to mix their own FOH and monitor sound from on-stage. Three versions are available, and will be available in the UK from

Shuttlesound. Midas also made it two wins in a row by again picking up the Live! Best Audio Console award for the Heritage 3000. **Allen & Heath**, meanwhile, were delighted to pick up the Silver award for the ML5000 mixing desk.

Fuzion has recently taken on distribution of Camco amplifiers, and the impressive new Camco Vortex units were shown for the first time by the company. The Camco Vortex is a very high-power (6000W into 4 ohms), yet lightweight 2U amplifier product which offers complementary advantages to the Crown range of amplifiers which Fuzion also distributes in the UK. The microprocessor-controlled amplifiers control and monitor all functions and internal 'housekeeping' tasks. Each has a three-stage switched-mode universal power supply, with reliable over-voltage protection up to 400 volts.

Soundcraft had the first UK showing of its Spirit M Series of consoles, seen for the very first time



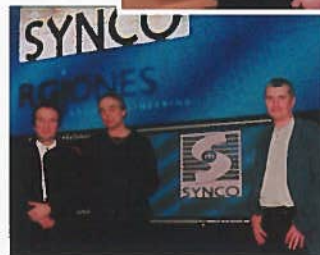
recently at NAMM in Los Angeles. The Spirit M4, M8 and M12 are a range of compact mixers available with 4, 8 or 12 mono input versions respectively, and all feature four stereo inputs, four stereo returns, 100mm faders and an S/PDIF digital stereo output.

Another important audio development was the announcement that **RG Jones**

has become the first UK-based member of the **Synco Network** of production rental companies. **RG Jones** has

purchased 50kW of the Renkus-Heinz Synco Touring System (RH-STS), along with amplifier racks, rigging equipment and 12 Synco CW121 stage monitor wedges. **RG Jones** joins five existing Synco Network members: Ampco Pro Rent, PAS Audio, Puro Audio, DEE Sound & Light and Flashlight/APR. Synco now carries over 1 million watts of RH-STS PA systems.

Vari-Lite introduced to the UK market the new Virtuoso DX console and the two new luminaire configurations first seen at LDI in Las Vegas in October last year. In addition, the first UK rental company to offer the new 2000 Series Vari-Lite fixtures - **Set Lighting & Sound** - was also at the show, demonstrating the new VLs, as well as examples of its extensive stock of Martin Professional MAC luminaires.



Martin Professional, meanwhile, were showing previously-launched products including the award-winning MAC 2000 (winner of the Lighting Product of the Year Award) and Exterior 300 luminaires, alongside their **Mach Sound** and **Jem Smoke** products.

Pulsar provided visitors to the show with an excellent chill-out area in a room away from the show floor, where **Clay Paky's** Stage Line of intelligent luminaires were shown to good effect. Pulsar also picked up the Live! Award for Training in Excellence, presented for the company's range

of both Clay Paky and Pulsar technical seminars held at their Cambridge base, as well as for their involvement in the World Light Jockey competition and the Student Lighting Designer Award.

Top to bottom:

Midas' **Bob Doyle** and **Dave Webster** with the newly-launched Venice.

Guy Heselden and **Simon Allan** of Set Lighting & Sound with a newly-acquired VL 2000 Series luminaire.

Fuzion's **Mick Butler** and **Graham Pope** with Camco's Vortex amplifiers.

Stuart Russell of Soundcraft with the M4.

Simon Honeywill (left) and **John Carroll** of **RG Jones** flank **Fred Heuvels** of Ampco Pro Rent.

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Paul Rogers

"You know you're in trouble when there's no music playing, just the bass player talking to the audience, and you've got feedback." So says Don 'Dodge' Dodger, house engineer for Paul Rogers, explaining why he had to dash out to the console during the set of opening act, Asia.

Frankly, their set was a travesty; not only did their sound engineer need new ears, the band only had one original member, Geoff Downes, and it seems that 20 years later, he still has nothing new to offer musically. It would have been funny if it hadn't have been so sad, to listen to the bass player, trying to pitch songs written in a key suited to John Wetton, his illustrious forebear, and failing like a bathroom lothario.

Thankfully, Paul Rogers was an altogether more professional presentation. While much of his set harked back to an era that pre-dates even Asia, it was at least firmly rooted in the blues heritage that epitomises rock music. Classics from his time with Free and Bad Company, peppered a set sprinkled with his own more recent output, and the muddiest of obscure swamp blues.

Not surprisingly, LD Steve Finch plundered the Art of Darkness warehouse for every Par and ACL he could find. "It's what they wanted," he said. "The only other specific request from management was spot calls." Finch has snuck in a few bits of modern technology though: eight Technobeams and four MAC 600s, but otherwise this rig is true to the seventies oeuvre.

While the automated stuff was questionable (I was overwhelmed by the sensation of 'why bother?' as the audience were firmly over 40, and even Finch agreed, "this is not a lighting spectacle as such,") what he did with colour was spot on - 180, 106, 135, 181, 119. I almost felt a tear of nostalgia roll down my cheek as he reeled them



off. Aided by a fair battery of ETC Source Four profiles, and a pair of Lycian Starks out front, he deftly avoided this being a totally saturated colour fest. Dense, yes, but a lightness of touch on his Avolites Pearl 2000 for the pick-ups. Finch, as one of the 'new young bucks' of lighting, had done his homework and knew precisely where and when to tease out the musical nuances.

Don Dodger, thank goodness, was equally in tune, but then he's in the same age frame as Rogers, and has been mixing for him for the last four years. His system was an EAW KF750 from Canegreen; not his PA of choice (he really wanted an 850), but that didn't stop him finding the sound he liked. Looking at the Klark Teknik system graphics, it was obvious he was not a fan of the honky, siamesed 12"s on the low mid, and said as much. However, he's lucky to have a touring system: "In the US, we mainly tour through the Shed circuit and multiple band events, where we use whatever PA is available in that location." Rogers, it would seem, is one of the leading artists in a Classic Rock revival that is sweeping the States.

This is not a rocket science show; Dodge is charged with keeping the distinctive Rogers vocal

prominent in the mix, for which he uses a Shure Beta 87 wireless with a C capsule. "I do have to compress him a fair bit, but it gives me everything I need - if only Paul wouldn't keep pulling the microphone away." Rogers does indeed have a weird technique, deliberately pulling the mic all over the place. But stage levels are

modest, to say the least, and even with the kit immediately behind him, the power of his delivery has not diminished one dB in 35 years: "The voice of rock," as the rather pompous intro announced.

Dodge mixes from an XL3: "Midas are the Rolls Royce of consoles," he



Above, Don Dodge, house engineer.



Left, Steve Finch, lighting designer

declares, though he does throw in a good word for the Yamaha PM4000, but doesn't see how "anyone can expect you to mix a live show on one of those digital consoles". (If you're reading, he'd really like to try out a Paragon). Signal is largely uncoloured; a bit of delay for Rogers' vocal from a Roland 3000, and a touch of reverb from an SPX1000, but otherwise Dodge lets everything sing untouched, teasing out guitar and bass flourishes with the same deft touch as Finch on the lights.

Overall, I wish Rogers would visit a bit more of his more recent output, but probably his set is biased towards what his US audience expect. Still, stirring stuff for the over forties.

Steve Moles

EAW

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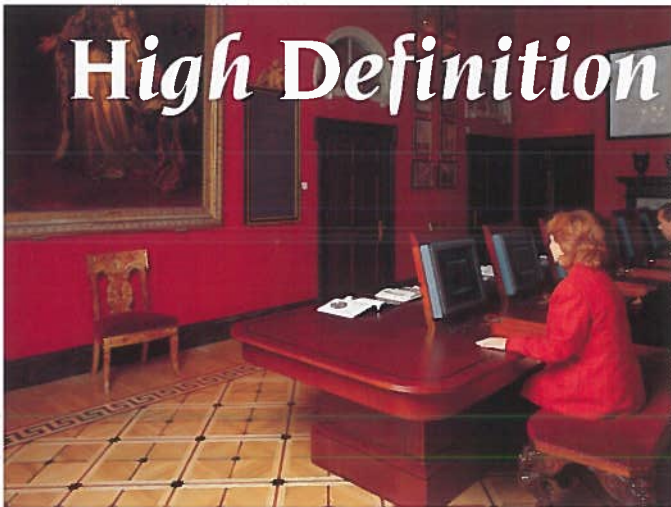
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High Definition

at the Hermitage Rooms

A magnificent exhibition of Treasures of Catherine the Great has been staged to inaugurate the new Hermitage Rooms at Somerset House. The State Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg has loaned more than 500 works of art and paintings, which will be on view to the public until 23rd September 2001.

The décor of the Hermitage Rooms recreates, in miniature, the imperial splendour of the Winter Palace and its various wings which now make up The State Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg. This imperial shell will provide the backdrop for rotating exhibitions from the collections of the Museum in St. Petersburg and other Hermitage-related activities, providing London with a window on Russian art and history.

Although the Hermitage Rooms at Somerset House have been designed to be a palatial backdrop for important works of art, they also feature the latest in high technology display. The technology is discreet: it is used to enhance the visit in a subtle way and most visitors will be unaware that the latest web technology, high definition video, video conferencing technology, flat screen displays, MPEG compression and MP3 audio are all being used.

Electrosonic was appointed to design and build the audio-visual system for the Hermitage Rooms, and the aim throughout was to ensure that the hardware system was completely unobtrusive. The audio visual elements include a film of the interior of the Hermitage, produced by Mosaic Films and presented through a high definition video projection system. There is also a live image of the exterior of the Hermitage, presented on a 40 inch plasma display panel, supported by BSKyB, eight touchscreen interactive displays giving access to the Hermitage website, presented on 18" high resolution (SXGA) LCD touchscreens, and an audio guidance system based on MP3 technology (supplied under a separate contract by Antenna Audio).

The challenge for Mosaic Films was to ensure that the quality of the original film could be maintained when shown to an exhibition audience, with a requirement that the show system be suitable for continuous running. A Digital Projection 5000GV DLP projector was selected for projecting the film on to its 2.2m wide screen. The projector is only half the story. The film itself is stored on a high definition video

ABTT Theatre Show 2001

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server as an MPEG-2 file. The Hermitage Rooms exhibition is the first UK installation of Electrosonic's HD server (many are already installed in the USA). This device has been specially developed to meet the needs of permanent exhibitions and continuous running shows.

As for access to the Hermitage website, the plan was to integrate the facility into the furniture so that the gallery did not resemble a computer showroom. Jasper Jacob Associates, the exhibition designer, designed furniture to accommodate the display screens but not the associated computers. It is already practice for museums and exhibitions to separate computers from their displays and input devices. Electrosonic has developed

techniques that allow the computer to be centrally rack-mounted, and the display and input devices (in this case touchscreen monitors and a full keyboard/mouse complement) to be sited up to 300m away. The connection between the two is done



using low cost CAT-5 cable, already standard in the office environment.

It is expected that the majority of users will home in on a limited subset of the information held on the website; so this information is held locally. Each computer holds high quality images and details of the Hermitage collections in St. Petersburg, carried on hard disk, but loaded from CD-ROM. However, there is still a need to have direct access to the St. Petersburg site, and the only practical way of achieving this for multiple users is through a direct link. Fortunately, there was another reason why such a link should be available. The Netvista computers are linked to the proxy server by 100Mb Ethernet. The server has IBM WebSphere software installed, providing caching of web pages from the Hermitage site. When a user requests access to the website, the proxy server determines whether the page is held locally or whether to retrieve it across the web.

Geraldine Norman and Professor Mikhail Piotrovski, director of The State Hermitage Museum, were determined that visitors to the Hermitage Rooms should have a sense of the 'real' Hermitage. Apart from the exhibits within the rooms and the incredible 'Hermitage' floors that have been made by Russian craftsmen, it was felt that a sense of immediacy would be ensured by a live image of the Museum.

This has been achieved by placing a camera in a building opposite the Hermitage, on the other side of Palace Square. The final display of the live image is on a Pioneer 40 inch 4:3 plasma screen.

Antenna Audio was awarded the contract to provide the audio guide system. Their latest audio guides are incredibly compact and they achieve this through the use of MP3 compression. In Gallery I, the commentary carried on the Antenna Audio MP3 players is synchronised to the HD image on the screen. To achieve this, the Electrosonic show system is arranged to trigger an infra-red transmitter that transmits a timecode to the portable MP3 players.

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Sheer Bliss



Bliss is a highly-sophisticated new bar/restaurant in Bournemouth conceived by experienced leisure entrepreneur, Richard Carr's Future 2000 plc (the team behind the phenomenally successful Slinky dance nights).

Having owned the art deco building in Bournemouth's town centre for several years, they contracted local interiors company, Design Mode, to convert the bottom two floors of the former Maples department store into the heavily marbellised Bliss, at a cost of £1.25 million. For the sound reinforcement, Future 3000's head of technical services, Lee Price, stuck with the Martin Audio catalogue, which dominates the company's other venues, as well as providing the touring sound for Slinky.

One of his prime considerations was the acoustic isolation necessary from the five storeys above the ground floor and basement, which the landlord has converted for student accommodation. This required an elaborate, acoustically-treated ceiling, with suspended, soundproofed flexi air-conditioning ducting, while the columns were given the same acoustical cladding. Most of the music (funk and soft jazz) is computer-driven, while in the evening a DJ takes over. Price has selected 26 of the EM26s divided into six zones. There are no bass bins and the whole sound is fed through a pair of BSS Soundwebs which routes the CD, DJ and band sources to their respective destinations.

A separate sound system carries 1970s kitsch film themes to a pair of Martin C516 recessed ceiling speakers in each of the Gents and Ladies lavatories. All inputs are separately EQ'd and a BSS Jellyfish remote panel, loaded with all the presets, is locked away in the manager's office at the end of the bar, so that the musical route-map can be overridden by authorised personnel at any point. The house system is all powered by QSC amplification, while Price took the unusual step of installing a RED mixer.

The result is a timeless, aspirational European venue, favouring natural materials and neo-classic design values over two floors linked by a stunning staircase. Don't expect this to be the last we hear of this brand.

Flame Goes Out for Unique

The Unique Flame Light Co, manufacturer of the Flame Light effect, has gone into liquidation. The company, formed in 1997, had patented a system which created realistic looking flame effects using tiny MR16 lamps, an electric fan and a piece of silk. This time last year, Unique appeared to be on an accelerated pattern of growth and, having collected a number of awards for its Flame Lights, had been promoting itself heavily on the trade show circuit. It had also built up an impressive portfolio, counting among its clients MTV, BBC, Ministry of Sound and the Royal Opera House. Crawley-based Baker Tilly has been appointed liquidator.



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Traditional brewers Fuller, Smith & Turner, have entered the burgeoning London leisure suburb of Shoreditch - the trendiest colony in the capital - with their new brand, Katabatic.

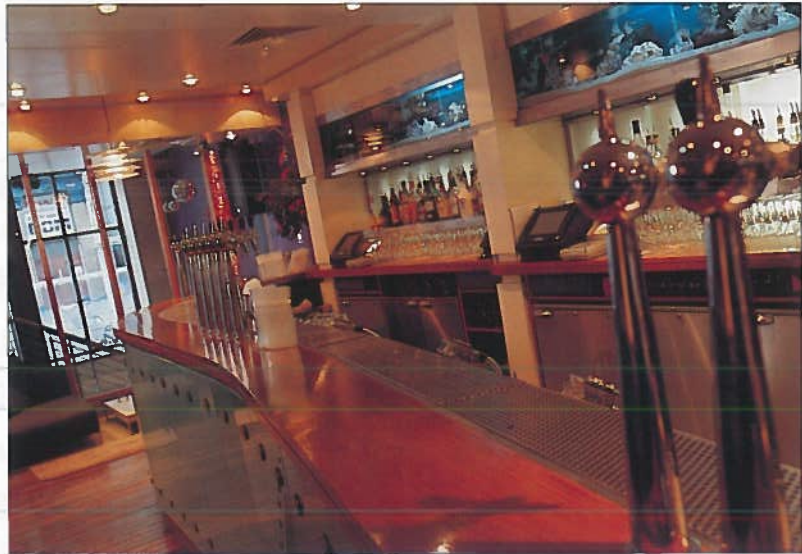
With 3,200sq.ft offering a capacity of 480, and a late license inherited from the previous incumbents (Propoganda), this is prime real estate. The late night venue will eventually have cost £1.2 million to develop - a proportion of which has gone on an inspired sound, lighting and vision scheme across the two floors.

As well as offering views of the DJ practising his craft inside, the exterior design shows off the encased foyer decor of AVR Colourchanger beams refracted from a cluster of tiny mirrorballs, with the campest of light sculptures providing an artistic backdrop. The colour-changing spots from Abstract and Martin Pro, working with the fibre optics, bring Katabatic (a meteorological word meaning the downward flow of air) alive at night.

Marquee Installations' Mark Brown was given a brief to develop two distinct

environments - a high-quality midground sound upstairs and the latest London club spec in the basement that could hold its own alongside the best. To accomplish this, he was given all the freedom he needed.

RCF Monitor 5 loudspeakers, fed from a C-Burn Revolution 100 hard disk player, take care of the upstairs, while a pair of compact, flown EAW JF290Zs for the top end, and matching EAW SB330s for the sub-bass, handle the dance sound, augmented by eight RCF PA281 Vision Series for bar area infill. The audio is all driven by QSC amplification and the sound is digitally



Katabatic

processed through BSS Audio FDS-366 Omnidrive Compact Plus

modules. The DJ mixer is a Cloud CXM modular chassis, the neat flight-case fitted with a Numark dual CD unit. The DJ will monitor his Technics-generated sound through an RCF ART200 powered speaker.

But the new ethos of Marquee Installations is also one of system integration. A key element supplied by the company is a pre-programmed touch screen computer which changes the environment of all the house and effects lighting - and the architectural fibre optic lighting that Marquee has also supplied for use in the recessed areas.

The touch screen computer also handles the dancefloor lighting, which comprises Martin Pro Mini MAC profiles, further CX2 colour changers - and kitsch ropelights and mirrorball. Marquee Installations has integrated a computerised wall menu into the visual display - projected from Powerpoint via a Davis DLS 8 (800 ANSI lumens) projector. Elsewhere, RCF Monitor 4s have been sited in the top stairwell, while in the Mezzanine area, Monitor 5s provide the sound reinforcement.

Despite the competition in the area, Fullers are optimistic about their chances in Shoreditch. They have created a truly independent feel, and sense that the day customers start referring to this place as the Kat, they will know they've succeeded.

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L&S Eye

"Staff Discount available."

The end-of-year scheme that was to net one enterprising member of the Dome staff a nice little profit when he bought all the remaining £5 commemorative coins specially minted for the Dome at a knock-down price. Since these were actually legal tender, he pocketed the difference.

"God is not afraid of the latest technology . . . it's time for the church to step out boldly to harness the resources available to us to change lives and communicate the Gospel."

'Bishop' Jakes, apparently on a hotline to God, at the dedication ceremony for the Potters House nondenominational church in Dallas, Texas. (see separate news piece this issue).

www.plasa.org/news

Sound Department Returns to Market

Directors of the newly-constituted Sound Department chose the Frankfurt Musikmesse this month to unveil their plans for the future.

Following the demise of the former Sound Dept, the new company will commence trading from an operating base in Banbury, Oxfordshire, at the beginning of April, under the executive management of Steve Smith (MD), Andy Simmons (sales and marketing director) and Peter Nicholls (FD).

The new company has consolidated its position with all the premier brands previously represented, and will act as exclusive UK distributor for Crest Audio, Community



Professional Loudspeakers, Sound Advance, Level Control Systems (LCS) and Australian Monitor Industrial (formerly Audio Telex).

Other key members of The Sound Department team are technical support manager, Steve Badham, along with Bruce Francis, who will now run the service department from a self-contained unit in north London, in an endeavour to provide the utmost in customer service and support for the world class brands that the company represents. Steve Smith commented to L&S: "The

past few months have enabled us to fully analyse our business, and in some areas change our operating practice to become a more cohesive and efficient unit. On this basis we have approached all our suppliers with our new blueprint, and without exception it has been met with absolute approval."

Andy Simmons added: "With the full support of our suppliers we are looking forward to an exciting future, sharing in the many new product launches that are in prospect, and once again becoming a leader in audio distribution and systems solutions."

The new company can now be reached at Mewburn Road, Banbury, Oxon, OX16 9PA, UK. Telephone: +44 (0)1295 817625

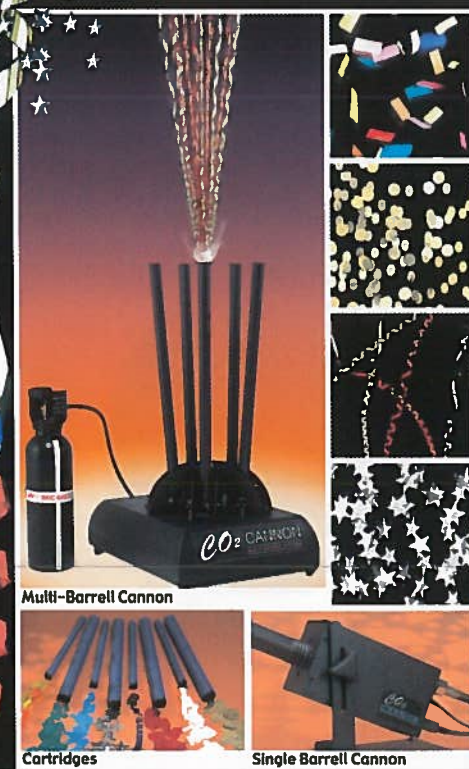
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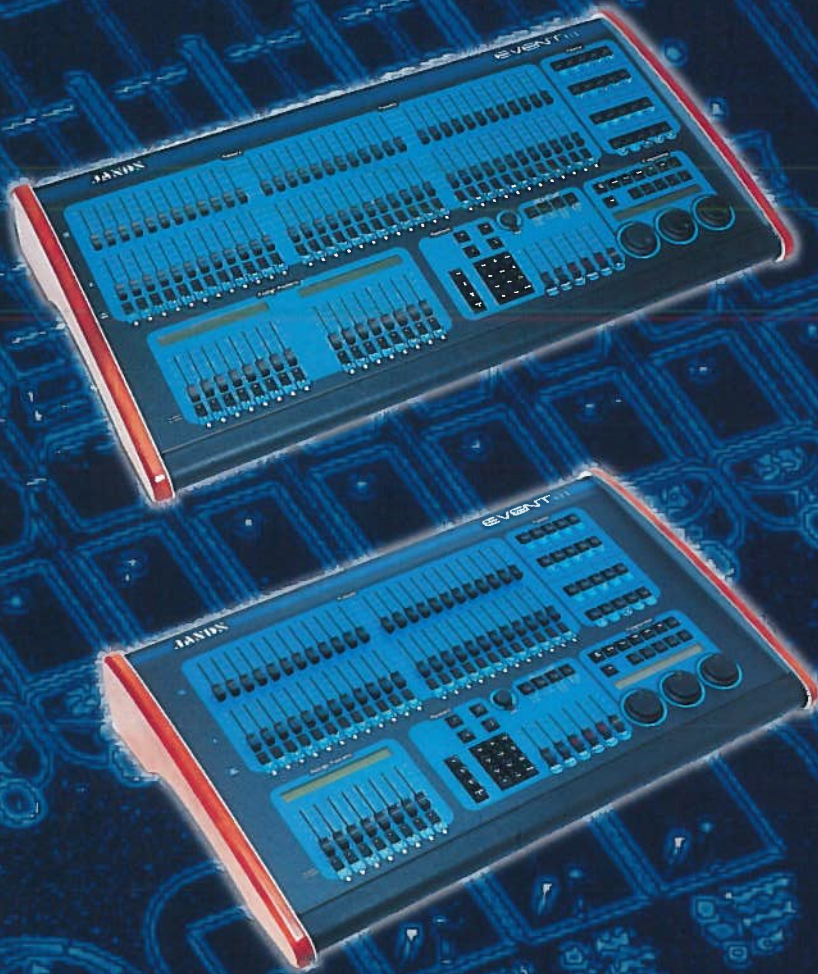
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SSE Audio Group Launched



Pictured at the Frankfurt MusikMesse are SSE's Heather and John Penn (centre) and Chris Beale (left) with Thierry Trenchant of Melpomen

Audio rental companies SSE Hire of Birmingham, England, and Melpomen of Nantes, France, have announced a move to merge, with the formation of the SSE Audio Group.

The announcement, officially made at the recent Frankfurt MusikMesse, comes at a significant time for both companies: this year sees SSE celebrate 25 years service in the entertainment industry, whilst Melpomen has been operating in the French market for almost 20 years, recently adding office and warehouse facilities in Paris and La Rochelle to the main Nantes-based organisation.

John Penn, managing director of the new group explained the plans: "Over the past few years we have been actively looking for ways to develop the business. The trend for sound companies is to expand purely by buying more and more stock. However, we have seen a steady decline in the amount of work undertaken by UK rental companies in Europe, through a combination of the strength of sterling and the fact that there are now many strong European rental companies who provide a good service. For any tour manager working in Europe, the Euro has simplified the budgetary process. As a consequence we have seen an increasing number of tours that we would have previously expected to carry our production into Europe using mainland European suppliers."

Thierry Trenchant, director of operations in France added: "We are extremely happy that we have been able to put this deal together. We have always respected SSE and what the company has achieved and we have co-operated on a number of projects in the past very successfully. It's great news for Melpomen's clients as we now have immediate access to an enormous pool of equipment and with SSE's support can take on the largest shows with absolute confidence."

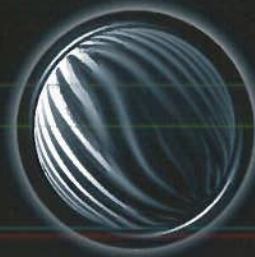
Chris Beale, who will be the sales director of the new group, said: "The formation of the SSE Audio Group is a very significant development for us because we now have the opportunity to function as a truly European company. It is important to us that both SSE Hire and Melpomen maintain the personal service for which both are well known. At the same time we are creating an international sound company which can offer comprehensive facilities to our clients from Europe and the United States. We will shortly develop a range of new hire products and services which will be especially appropriate for the European market, making the SSE Audio Group a clear contractor choice for touring, event and corporate projects."

Heather Penn, financial director of the new group, concluded: "We are confident that the group will bring benefits to both companies and clients. In one leap we have increased our equipment profile and widened our resources and support systems."

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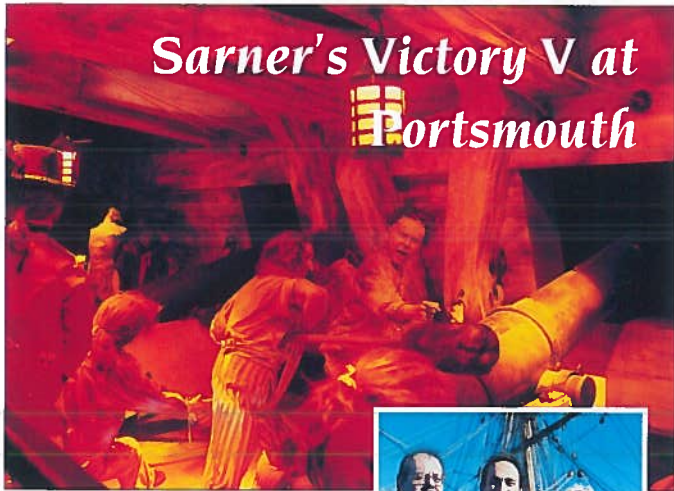
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Sarner's Victory V at Portsmouth



The latest phase in the development of Flagship Portsmouth, home to Nelson's Victory, has been completed by Sarner International. Mike Mann reports.

Above, the Gun Deck. Inset, the Sarner team of David Dempsey, Ross Magri and John Griffin

The project, which involved several months of in-depth research, in collaboration with the Victory's curators and crew, led to the installation of a shore-based 'mood theatre', which takes a personal view of the battle of Trafalgar in October 1805 - Nelson's greatest, and final, triumph.

Using Alcorn McBride control and playback systems, Sarner's David Dempsey, Ross Magri and John Griffin devised a four-scene experience, with an independently-controlled waiting area and several interactive elements. David Dempsey explained that in the case of the Victory Gallery, technology was used to make the story of Trafalgar more accessible, without trivialising this pivotal piece of naval history. "There was a huge amount that we had to leave out of the experience - but as both creative and technical people, we had to make sure that we didn't 'dumb down' the story. We couldn't lose sight of the fact that the Victory Gallery is a platform for educating people, rather than technology for its own sake."

Colin White, the museum's deputy director and Peter Goodwyn, curator of the Victory herself, were keen to depict the human side of naval warfare, as well as presenting the strategic overview. To this end, individual mannequins were commissioned to man the replica cannons in the gallery's 'gun deck'; stock models were deemed inadequate, and members of the Victory crew posed for photographs at an original gun, so that Sarner's modelmakers could show the extraordinary strength and stamina required to take part in a day-long sea battle.

New video footage, which is projected in the 'Briefing Room' (set on the deck of an English warship) was shot onboard the Victory in Portsmouth harbour, and to involve all the sensory organs, custom-mixed aromas have been introduced, such as Copenhagen tar (used for 'caulking' the hulls of wooden vessels) and spent gunpowder, provided by Fred Dale Air Conditioning. Audio content is a mixture of voice-over and effects, played from a pair of MPEG 2 video servers and an Alcorn McBride PCMCIA-based Bin Loop unit. Other controlled elements include motorised screens, replica cannons and all connecting doors.

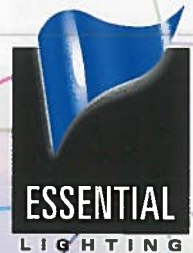
David Dempsey points out that the Victory Gallery was the first of three armed services projects undertaken by Sarner; since its completion the company has received commissions at the RAF Museum in London and the Army Museum.

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News
Round-Up



UK Crowd Management Association Launched



UKCMA inaugural members, with chairman Mark Grant third from right

The UK's first ever grouping of crowd management companies took place recently, at the International Live Music Conference (ILMC The 13th) in London.

The UKCMA aims to raise standards within the industry and promote awareness of crowd safety issues among legislative bodies in the UK, as well as to foster co-ordination of training and operational standards. The lead is being taken by the inaugural members of the UKCMA, which represents the major players in crowd management. The need for recognised industry standards and a responsible approach to training has been a subject of much discussion within the security and crowd management industry. Whereas currently companies can provide personnel not trained in crowd management, whether it be pit work, minimum force, or response work, the recognition and call from the industry for nationally-accredited standards is one that can no longer be ignored.

Recent tragedies at major events from Denmark to Australia have re-focused the crowd management industry on the desire for a leading organisation. The UKCMA aims to set the wheels in motion to raise awareness of the importance of recognised training and operational standards, and in so doing, help prevent such tragedies happening again.

In the late 1970s, the crush-death of an audience member at a David Cassidy concert at White City Stadium in London led to the first Greater London Council code on crowd safety (the forerunner to today's Pop Code). Since then, standards in the security industry have been driven higher year-on-year by the professionalism of its most experienced practitioners.

"Co-ordinating training standards and a pan-industry approach is now more important than ever," said UKCMA chairman, Mark Grant. "That is our primary aim, and we hope that by coming together as reputable competitors in one association we will create a climate of much greater co-operation for the benefit of our ultimate customers - every single person who attends a public show, be it a music, corporate or sports event." Showsec's Mick Upton, treasurer of the UKCMA adds: "Forthcoming new standards concerning crowd safety in the UK will have a significant effect on how all of us, as specialists in this industry, work, and it is important that we have a voice in how those standards are set."

The UKCMA is seeking to create links with associated companies, venues, local authorities and organisers to further these aims. It will work with legislative bodies throughout the UK. Membership will be determined by a strict range of professional criteria, including turnover and track record.

This year's ILMC was the 13th annual conference of the major players on the business side of the live music industry. Held over the weekend of March 9-11 at the Royal Garden Hotel, Kensington, London, it brought together nearly 600 international delegates. The conference's keynote session on Saturday was a two-and-a-half hour debate on crowd safety issues, chaired by Roger Barrett of Star Hire and Roberto de Luca of Concerto di Milano.



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CT Take Watch at Summit -

A two-day, technically-groundbreaking CIO Summit was recently staged by a major internet networks and applications multinational at the Grimaldi Forum in Monaco.

Situated within the Prince Pierre Theatre, the event provided the opportunity to introduce enabling technologies and methodology in a unique fashion. The organisation briefed production company Project Worldwide to design an adventurous set on a grand scale. They conceived a massive, rear-projected 17-metre screen as the entire backdrop, with the aim of turning the theatre into a giant internet site.

To help them, they asked Creative Technology to devise a projection system based on the

new Dataton Watchout soft-edge system. The keynote room and stage thus became the website page, with the proscenium arch as the web page header, enabling them to present streaming video alongside flash animation and basic Powerpoint and video feeds on a conference scale.

The 17m display was created by three screens, joined by a soft-edge blend created by Watchout. The three projectors were each fed from a G4 Mac, into which were loaded the pre-designed graphics. These were connected to three Christie 10k Roadie projectors on an Ethernet network, and attached to the end was a production PC, with a standard interface, controlling the three-MAC system. All the elements created externally were imported into Watchout, and



once time-lines and sequences had been worked out, this was updated into the G4s. A further pair of Christie 7k units were responsible for the Powerpoint data inserts and live camera i-mag. Avesco plc stablemates, Dimension Audio took advantage of the in-house Meyer system to route the speech and spot FX, reinforced by some of their own L-Acoustics ARCS to provide screen sound. Dimension also provided processing racks, Chevin amplification and stage foldback.

Martin USA Moves

Martin USA has recently moved to new modern headquarters in Sunrise, Florida.

The new facility is located in the Sawgrass International Corporate Park - a large, master-planned business park with retail, hotel and recreational facilities. Constructed around an 'open' design with plenty of room, the new building is ideal for a staff with a solid teamwork philosophy. At 45,000sq.ft, Martin US's new office is effectively twice as big as its previous facility and houses a large, dedicated showroom in which to showcase Martin products and conduct Martin University classes.



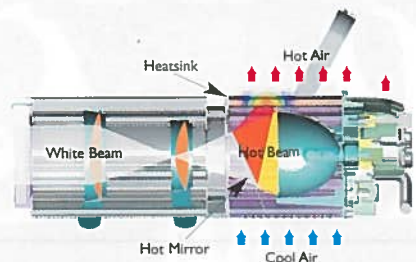
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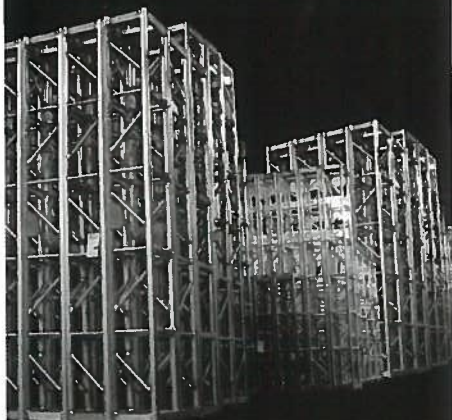


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News Round-Up



If proof were needed that entertainment technology crosses all boundaries, then here it comes in the story of the newly constructed Potter's House worship centre, home to one of the fastest-growing churches in the United States.

This 26,000 member nondenominational church in Dallas, Texas, led by Pentecostalist minister, author and entrepreneur T.D. Jakes, set out to build the country's most technologically innovative church facility yet. \$32 million later they have created a 300ft by 300ft, 8,200 seat venue, dubbed a 'Smart Church'.

Power and data terminals installed at 200 seats allow attendees to download sermon notes and power point presentations onto laptop computers. Altar attendants are equipped with handheld PDAs to allow immediate input of new member data and 'prayer needs'. An associated language translation centre features translation rooms with the capacity to simultaneously input and output up to six language translations.

Dallas-based consultants Acoustic Dimensions designed state-of-the-art sound, lighting and MATV systems. They worked with PRG company SPL on the installation of the audio and video systems, the centrepiece of which is a sound reinforcement system similar to the one recently installed at the Tennessee Titans football stadium in Nashville.

With a footprint on the main floor the size of two football fields, no one on the design team wanted the space to feel like a sports arena. A number of acoustic and audio strategies were utilised to make the 8,000+ seat venue feel like a smaller church. Not only did the audio system need to provide rich, warm speaking tones, it also had to deliver concert quality music at very high levels. To generate the energy needed for congregational involvement in the large space, tremendous sound pressure levels were needed and to achieve this, Acoustic Dimensions opted for the EAW KF900 series to provide the main LCR clusters. EAW ASV 7652ix were used for front fill ceiling speakers and EAW MK 5194s were specified for the front fill floor speakers. Speaker specialists Bag End custom-designed 10 subs for installation under the platform steps, with a further four Bag End Quartz subs placed at either end of the main stairs and eight EAW BH822E subs flown from the ceiling.

A Peavey MediaMatrix digital signal processor platform has been installed to allow full LCR matrixing, as well as the individual configuration and control of each of the speaker zones. QSC and Rane amplifiers are controlled by a Crown IQ system, allowing the operator to regulate amp levels and monitor the amp system. Both this and the Peavey are controlled from an audio control area located on the main floor. The 450-seat choir is picked up via 12 Schoep MK-4 preamp with CMC-6 capsule microphones suspended from the

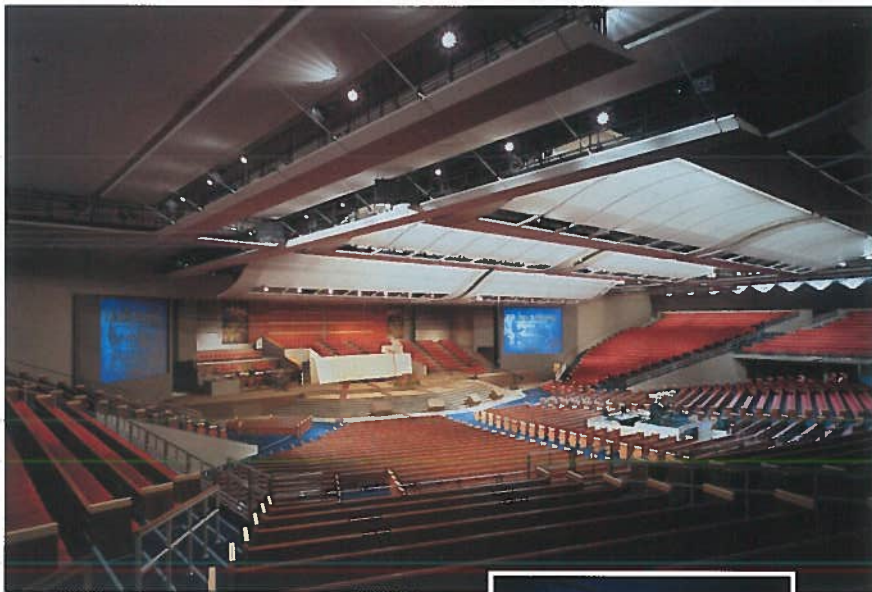


The House That

overhead catwalks, whilst the onstage monitoring for the band is primarily in-ear by Garwood. Signal Perfection Ltd provided the frequency coordination necessary to eliminate potential RF interference between the in-ear monitors, wireless mics and future RF intercoms.

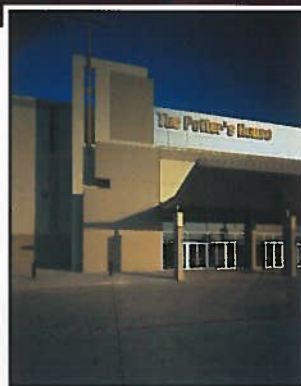
In the final configuration, three Yamaha PM1D consoles will be installed so that all mixing and audio processing functions can be performed completely in the digital domain. The Control Surface (CS1D) operates the digital audio engine which can be located with the control surface or 'remoted' to the stage or other convenient location. The monitor console and FOH console receive a full split of all the mic lines using QSC Rave and Rane pre-amps through a CobraNet distribution system.

The AV system in the church is just as sophisticated. Since T.D. Jakes is a particularly charismatic figure, it was important that those in the congregation had a visual connection with him. As a result, his platform was raised to eye level and an IMAG video system was installed. Stuart Reynolds of Acoustic Dimensions used computer modelling to determine the 'worst' seat in the house, then calculated how large a screen would need to be to give optimal sightlines for each person. Stewart Filmscreen custom fabricated two Lumiflex I80 screens and Digital



The prototype 'Smart Church' which has stepped into the contemporary challenge of applying high-tech tools to high church worship

Photos: Mark Trew Photography
Design and Construction: The Beck Group



Jakes Built

projection's Lightning 15sx was chosen for its onscreen detail and clarity.

Various programmes of the church are aired several times a week by the Trinity Broadcasting and Black Entertainment Networks, which reach hundreds of thousands of people. This, of course, requires an extensive entertainment lighting system to operate in conjunction with an equally extensive house lighting design.

PRG company Fourth Phase supplied the equipment, design engineering, project management and installation for the entertainment lighting system. The \$600,000 entertainment lighting package includes seven ETC Sensor SR48 dimmer racks, an SR24 rack and three UnisonDR6 racks, 320 dual 20A enhanced rise dimmer modules, 11 D50AF single 50A and 14 D100AF single 100A dimmer modules. This is fronted by an 800-way ETC Expression 3 control console which can be used from any of 16 console receptacle stations, 18 Unison stations and one Fourth Phase custom control rack that houses the Unison processor, DMX patch panel, ethernet patch panel and DMX merger.

Entertainment fixtures included a range of Source Four ellipsoidals, 312 Altman 1000W Par 64s, 34 Desisti 5kW and 10kW Piccolo fresnels, 15 Altman 1000W scoops, 17 Times Square 6-12 light

mini X-ray borderlights and a pair of Lycian Midget 575W followspots.

Fourth Phase project manager Howard Glickman was onsite to oversee the lighting installation and integration with the house lighting design, which was to be controlled by the entertainment lighting system, providing an unexpected challenge at the last minute. Glickman recalls: "The electrical engineer who circuited the house lighting didn't circuit the system like a typical theatrical lighting system and the electricians received little guidance when the house lighting was installed, as there were no accurate circuit plots or hook-up charts of the house lighting. When we brought the system up, no one knew which of the 500 fixtures were circuited where, and many had never been circuited at all. Fortunately, we were ahead of schedule with the system commissioning, hang and focus of the entertainment equipment, so we were able to work with the electricians and Acoustic Dimensions to work through the house lighting and create a circuit plot, hook-ups and load schedule." In fact, Glickman was given an 'Excellence in Construction' award by the Associated Builders and Contractors for his work on the project.

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Audio ReStyle for Fabric -

London superclub, Fabric, has commissioned loudspeaker manufacturers, Martin Audio, to supply a new sound reinforcement system to be installed into the club's two famous dance rooms. The upgrade takes place just a year and a half after the club first opened.

For the prestigious Room One system, designed by Fabric's technical manager, Dave Parry, and Martin Audio's Richie Rowley - in collaboration with the Fabric sound team - eight Martin Audio W8C compact enclosures were specified, formatted in a quad array around the dancefloor and underpinned by eight of Martin's WSX monster sub bass units, which feature a single 18" drive unit on a 7ft S-shaped folded horn.

The sound design for Fabric's Room Two incorporates the flagship products of Martin Audio's Blackline range - the H2s and H3s. The H3s are placed in a quad array format around the dancefloor, supplemented by a further four H2 cabinets providing satellite fill down the length of



the dancefloor. This system will also augment into a multi-channel spatial zoning arrangement with an OutBoard Electronics TiMax system. Adding the low frequency are eight S218 bass units. A pair of Blackline F12s will also be installed in the DJ booth to provide the monitoring.

The full system upgrade was spurred initially by a demonstration of Martin Audio Blackline F12 DJ monitors, which are proving popular amongst a number of the country's DJs. Richie Rowley set up

a demonstration of the monitors in Fabric's Room One and the monitoring system was consequently installed into Fabric's flagship dance area. Dave Parry explains: "What Fabric is trying to achieve is the best possible sound system. People come here every week to hear music; we want to give them the most perfect sonic experience we can and we feel that the Martin Audio system is going to enhance the clubbing experience for customers."

Following the high praise courted by the new DJ monitors, a decision was made to renovate the sound system in Room Two. This remit soon expanded to incorporate the entire club

system. Richie Rowley emphasised: "Before any decision was reached, Keith Reilly arrived with his record bag and spent four hours listening to track after track through the system - walking around the club and hearing the system and its effects in all the different areas."

Fabric placed the order through Shepperton-based audio specialists Marquee Audio. The system will be fully commissioned by mid-April and installed by the club's technical team.



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... Audio File

How big should a professional audio manufacturing company become? Depends what you mean by professional audio, and what you mean by manufacturing, of course.

DETERMINING WHAT PROFESSIONAL AUDIO MEANS is not easy. Most people, dipping their carrots in houmous before engaging me in 'so what do you do?' conversations at weekends, conclude, after my well-rehearsed explanation of concerts, recording studios, broadcasting and disc formats, that I'm in hi-fi.

THERE'S NOTHING I can do to alter this perception. Look, I say, before the CD arrives

in the shop there are some really interesting things which happen to the sound, and many of these are recreated in all public performances and broadcasts. Really, they say. And how much should I pay for a Bang & Olufsen?

FAIR ENOUGH. There's nothing unprofessional about making, selling and servicing entertainment technology for the home, unless your R&D department does its 'R' on Tottenham Court Road and its 'D' in Borneo. But something else is happening. Thanks to the idea of Home Theatre and the expansion of licensed and themed

entertainment venues, some of what I try - houmous-stained and unsuccessfully - to explain as pro audio is creeping into public awareness.

THEY MAY STILL BE for the rich, but the best home systems would put many a studio to shame. Elsewhere, there is a spreading culture in which playback systems in general are mutating into specific strains, adapted to hotel lobbies, or art galleries, or rollercoasters. Put these two things together and you have at least some excuse for using the execrable word 'prosumer', the worst hybrid noun since 'edutainment'. Still, you can understand why 'confessional' didn't catch on.

THE MOST STRIKING EXAMPLE from recent years of audio hardware environmentally reinventing itself is NXT's flat speaker technology, aiming to achieve the impossible by recreating full bandwidth from something shaped like an ironing board. Or a notice board. Or a faithful print of Turner's 'Fighting Temeraire'. Whichever incarnation, it seriously validates the great empiricist David Hume's assertion that the laws of nature are a habit, not carved forever in stone, or even plywood.

THE ADVANTAGES for many applications don't need spelling out, and various licencees of NXT have invested a great deal in launching flat products. The mystery, then, is why the company's shares have just dropped by 5%, wiping over £25 million off its market value. Turnover has fallen from £8.9 million to £2.6 million, and founder Farad Azima has stepped down as company chairman.

IN AN OPPOSITE MOTION to Technomad, whose Flintstone-like loudspeakers came to be mounted in and around tanks and other military vehicles, NXT's transducer magic began in tanks

and found civilian uses beyond. Apart from talking signs, the technology can be put to use in laptops, hi-fis and mobile phones, all on a licensing basis leaving NXT with nothing to design or build and just royalty cheques to collect.

FINANCIAL ANALYSTS have reacted cautiously to the news. They say it's early days; the management team has an impressive pedigree, the technology has clear promise. They also say that NXT has to get a sizeable percentage of worldwide loudspeaker sales to justify its £500 million market capitalisation. In The Times, the figure of three billion is put forward as an estimate of annual loudspeaker production.

TO A THIRSTY INVESTOR, the implication of this analysis is that NXT's flat loudspeakers will give you a good return as they replace more and more of the world's normal, corporeal loudspeakers. The understanding is that this is a revolutionary technology, so eventually that huge loudspeaker market will capitulate, sector by sector, as flatness takes root.

COULD IT BE THAT THIS OVER-SIMPLISTIC view of the loudspeaker market is behind an over-estimation of NXT's global worth? If so, what's happening is that the consumerist perspective on this new technology is not only misrepresenting, but actually harming, its enormous professional potential. Because the analysis refuses to acknowledge the important differences between one application and another, and sees only a giant cake made up of slices, risks are taken which have the potential to backfire in a way that would never be contemplated in a vertical approach.

AND THAT'S JUST THE PROBLEM. NXT is a technology that bestrides both consumer and professional definitions of audio, so the professional leg will dangle precariously every time the consumer one sinks into the stock exchange above its Hunter wellies.

SO, HOW BIG DO YOU WANT TO BE? The higher you fly, the blunter your instruments of navigation become. Perhaps the root of the conundrum lies in peddling wares which everyone can relate to. Unlike cardio-encephalograms (the March issue of 'What's New In Cardio-Encephalograms' is out now, by the way), loudspeakers make a noise everyone can understand. No matter how professional, there's a little bit of audio that will always have investors - and houmous-dippers - with carrots poised.

"If so, what's happening is that the consumerist perspective on this new technology is not only misrepresenting, but actually harming, its enormous professional potential."

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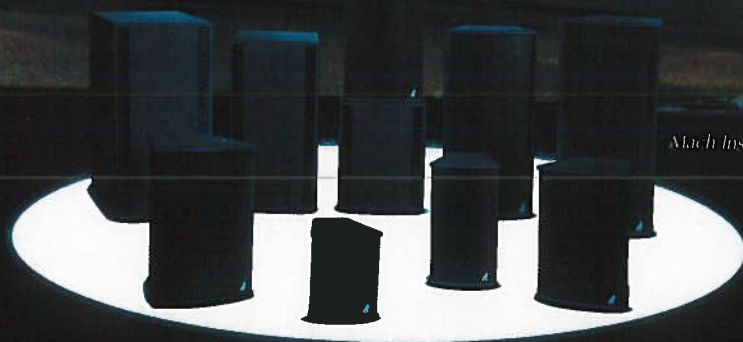
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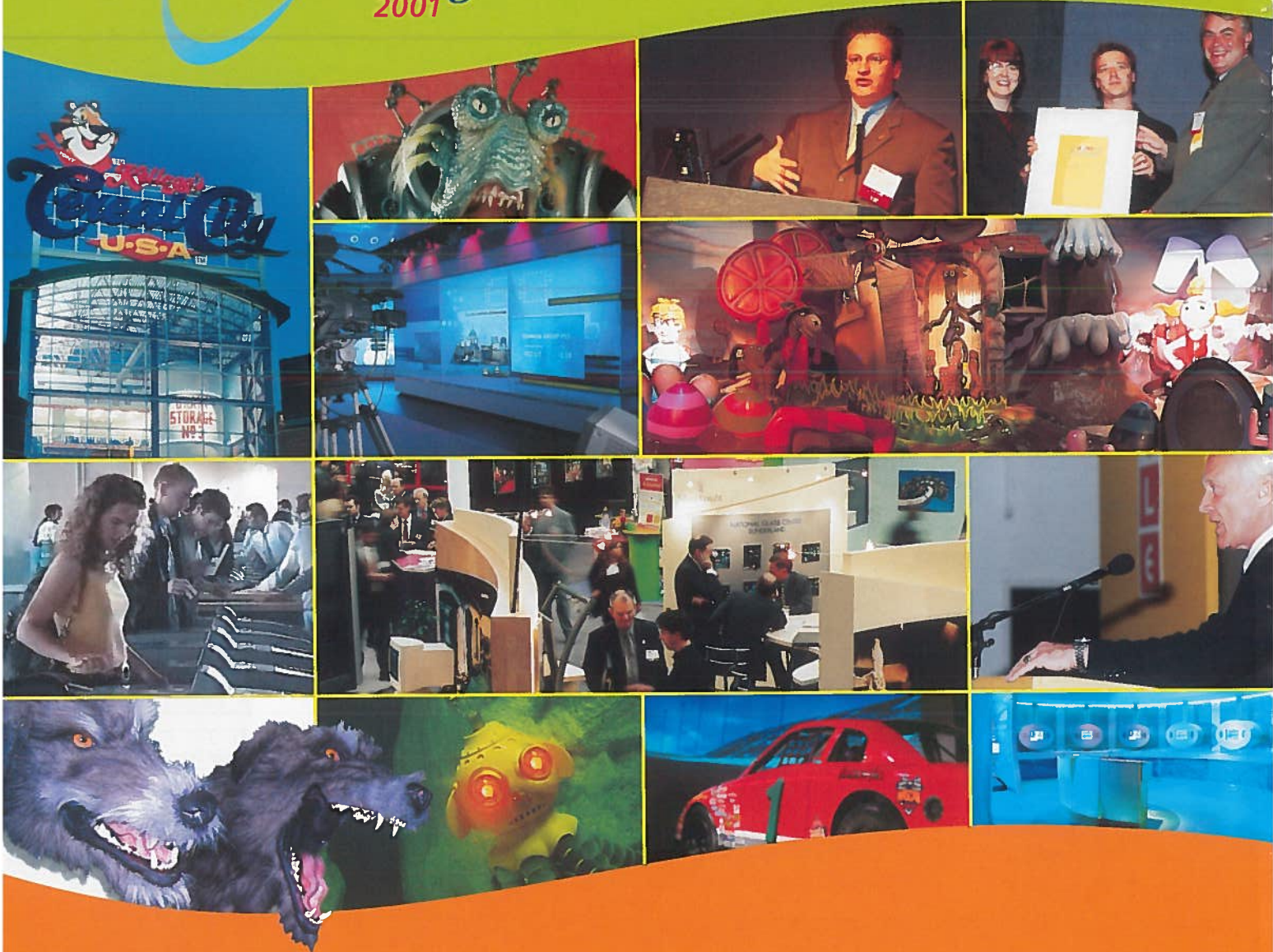
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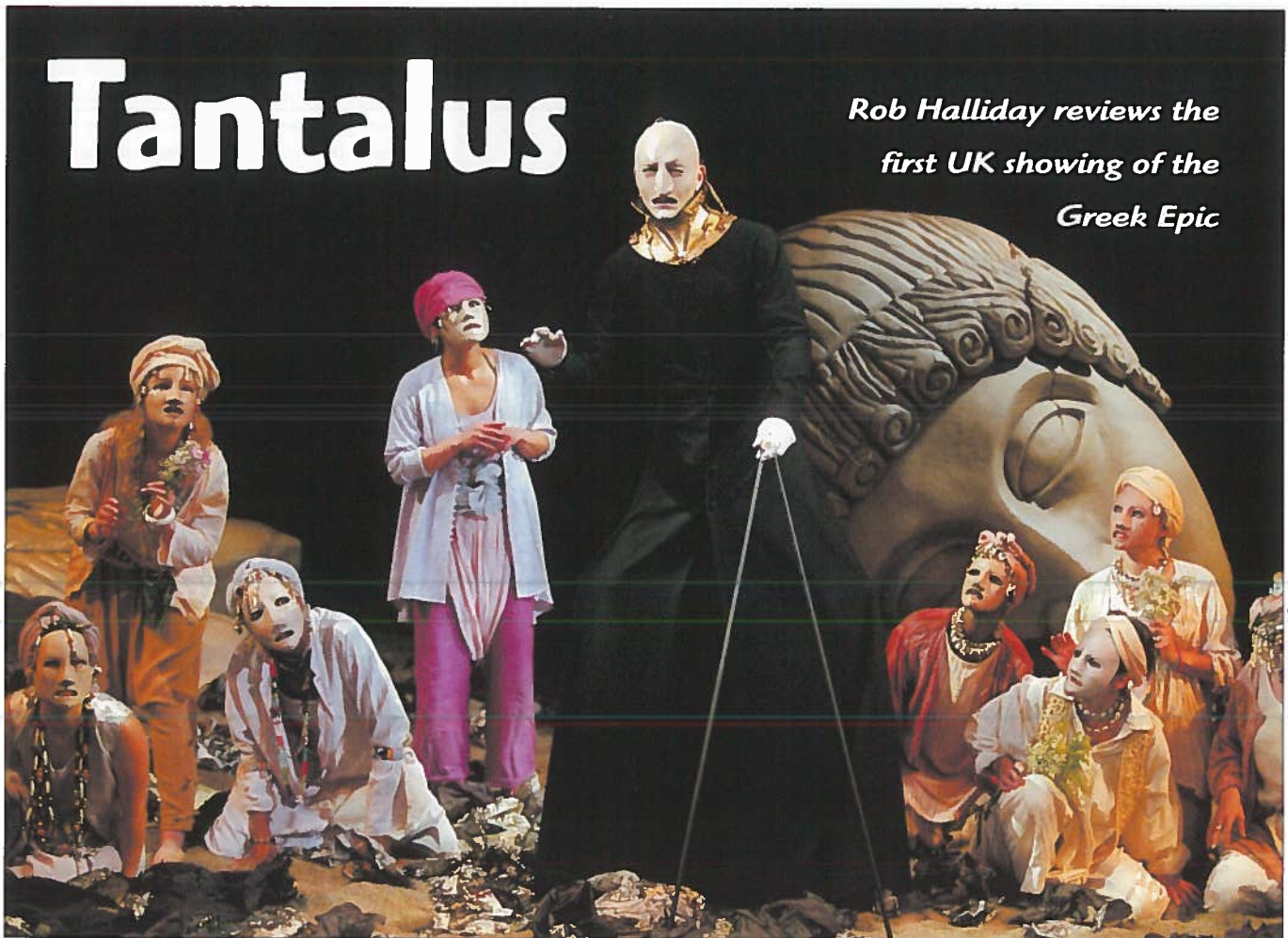
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Tantalus

Rob Halliday reviews the first UK showing of the Greek Epic



10am is a strange time to be going to the theatre - at least, if you're a member of the audience rather than one of the crew. Yet that was the time that a capacity crowd gathered at the Lowry Centre in Manchester one Saturday late in January, for the first UK performance of *Tantalus*. The reason for the unusual start time? Well, that's about as late as you can start when the show runs for 13 hours, including intervals, lunch and dinner!

It's a show that's epic in length; it's also epic in scope, a history cycle charting the Trojan War and its aftermath, newly constructed from fragments of original Greek material by acclaimed Royal Shakespeare Company writer and director John Barton.

Barton has been working on the project since completing his previous Greek trilogy, entitled simply *The Greeks*, which was performed by the RSC in the early eighties - a time when the company gained something of a reputation for the epic scope of their work through both that production and the landmark *Nicholas Nickleby*.

Barton finally presented *Tantalus* to the RSC in 1997, and the expectation was that, having commissioned and supported the work through its long gestation period, the company would then bring the show to the stage. It wasn't to turn out that way, though: arts funding in this country is notoriously epic-shy, and the RSC's finances wouldn't run to creating a show that was, at one point, 16 plays long (in its final form *Tantalus* is three three-hour plays, each of three acts of about an hour; you can see the three plays over three nights or opt for the all-in-one-hit experience on a Saturday).

And so the work made its debut in America, when Donald Seawell, an RSC Governor, offered to produce *Tantalus* for the Denver Center Theatre Company in a production directed by Peter Hall with a truly international cast and creative team including actors from England and America, a Greek set and costume designer (Dionysis Fotopoulos), a Japanese lighting designer (Sumio Yoshii), and an American sound designer (the Denver Center's David R White). The production opened there in the autumn of last year, amidst some controversy around a falling out between Hall and John Barton, but to general acclaim at the success of the achievement.

Now *Tantalus* has reached the UK, with the Lowry Centre opening to be followed by an RSC-managed UK tour that will take in Nottingham, Milton Keynes, Newcastle and Norwich, before the show arrives at the Barbican for a London season; visits to mainland Europe and beyond are under discussion, but not yet confirmed.

Design

The centrepiece of Dionysis Fotopoulos' design is a giant, circular sand-pit, the sand thickened with a secondary material (from bags labelled 'abrasive slag', much to the amusement of the crew!) to add texture and make it easier to walk on. Upstage left is a pool of water, home to Thetis, divinity of the sea and mother of Achilles. The sand also covers a centre-stage trap from which characters appear, and other elements - the giant head of a shattered statue, the entrance to a house, shreds of clothing and other debris, bonfires and flame jets (these sharing the same mechanism, created for the UK tour by Any Effects) - are added during the course of the show.

The sand-circle reveals something of the way the design worked in Denver, where the audience wrapped around the performing





area; for the UK tour, the set is pushed back behind the proscenium line. Upstage, and on either side of the sand, are giant semi-reflective plexi-glass walls that allow the audience to see the performers from every angle - and also to see glimpses of themselves. The re-configuring work for the tour means that the angled side panels also provide a home for the two-piece band, who live upstage of the first stage-right panel and can constantly be glimpsed during the day. And the upstage wall can open up, to reveal a field of spears for a scene set on a battlefield, dramatically uplit entrances from upstage and, most spectacularly, the arrival of the giant wooden horse into the City of Troy: the wall opens to reveal first one then two giant wooden wheels being pulled across the stage, clearing holding something much larger yet out of sight. As in the best of theatre, just enough is suggested and the imagination fills in the rest.

Placement in time is achieved largely by the costumes, from the bikinis of the chorus on their first appearance (the show wins around an audience slightly fearful of being dropped in at the deep end of Greek drama by opening on a beach in present-day Greece; a peddler slowly draws a group of women sunbathers into the ancient legends) through to more abstract creations such as a long black robe worn by a

stilted performer as Priam, King of Troy. The central feature of the design, though, are the masks - predominantly full face masks worn by all of the characters in 'ancient' Greece; the chorus acquire masks about mid-way through the day as the 'present day' is finally forgotten. Each mask is an individual creation full of the personality of a given character; their power, and the power of the performers who wear them, is that you quickly forget that they are masked - making moments of the show when the masks are revealed all the more powerful.

Lighting

In creating the initial lighting design for the show in Denver, Sumio Yoshii, perhaps best known in the UK as the Olivier-Award nominated lighting designer for *Tango at the End of Winter*, had the luxury of seemingly unlimited amounts of time, with the show being created on stage and with the lighting evolving over those rehearsals. Without having to worry about the practicalities of touring, the rig could also be huge and intricate, with large amounts of side- and cross-lighting - some of this demanded by the thrust format the show was presented in there.

For the UK tour, the RSC brought in Jon Buswell to re-create Yoshii's work, but also to consider the extra practicalities the tour would

enforce - particularly the need to have the show up and running for a Tuesday opening, having not started a get-out until Sunday morning. Having been flown out to see the show in Denver, he quickly realised that some rationalisation was needed. "They had around 900 cues, many containing different positions for the moving lights, these not always based on preset-fociuses. I quickly did the maths; allowing a couple of minutes per focus, we would still be trying to re-focus the moving lights at the end of the week!"

Buswell did, however, have a starting point: the way the show looked, and the core of the rig used to create those looks. Reflecting the completely different approach that the Americans take to arts accountancy, the Denver Center simply purchased the major elements of both the lighting and sound rigs. That meant *Tantalus* arrived in the UK with 31 High End Studio Spots, six Studio Colors and 13 City Theatrical AutoYokes with ChromaQ colour scrollers, as well as the Flying Pig WholeHog 2 that had run the moving lights.

The moving lights are spread around the rig, with the Studio Colors and wide Studio Spots as pipe-end crosslights and the narrow Spots and AutoYokes giving wash or special cover from an advance truss (eight Studio Spots and four AutoYokes, with no conventional lights to minimise access requirements for focusing), a first-electric position, the centre region of each bar and then an upstage backlight bar. The remainder of the rig is based around Par cans with scrollers, ETC Source Fours, 5k fresnels, custom Par 36 battens (by Howard Eaton Lighting) lighting the falling rain water curtain, and Coda floods and L&E battens used to dress scenery upstage of the glass wall. House profiles are lightly used from front-of-house, but the principal face lighting comes from the three Pani followspots the show tours, electing to carry all of their followspot needs to ensure closely matched output; touring electrician Phil Supple runs one spot and calls the other two, while Craig Shepherd looks after the on-stage electric cues. With the exception of the equipment brought from America, the touring rig came from Vari-Lite Production Services in London, who also supplied Avolites dimmers and a Strand 530 console to run the conventional lighting.

To light the show, Buswell opted to effectively start from scratch since he was dealing with a smaller playing area and a smaller rig. He also knew, however, that he wouldn't have time to actually work from scratch in

The lighting team from left to right; lighting designer Jon Buswell, moving light programmer Jim Beagley and show electrician Sherri James



Above: The sound team from left to right; Chris Dunkin sound operator, Greg Clarke sound designer, Suzie Hills, sound assistant and Jem Kitchen, sound engineer.

Right, the Yamaha O2R and O3D mixers controlling the sound effects and band mix



Manchester. He and moving light programmer Jim Beagley therefore set themselves up at The Moving Light Company with a Hog, WYSIWYG and a video of the show in Denver, spending a fun week running into scenes, pausing the video, analysing the lighting and then focusing the automated part of the rig to approximate the cue using the WYSIWYG/Hog AutoFocus feature. This and Buswell's notes from Denver ("I watched the show, and when I actually noticed a lighting change I wrote it in the script,") gave a good starting point to a much more clearly organised set of cues and preset focuses. The conventionals were then added in Manchester and the show is now run by head electrician Sherri James on the 530, which triggers the Hog via Midi Show Control.



The result - still undergoing finessing during and after the first preview - is a well executed piece of work. Buswell admits to having gone through quite a learning curve on the show, particularly with regard to lighting the masks - something that Peter Hall has very particular ideas about, which always has the central figures at any given moment lit in followspots and with the followspots at an angle that allows light to reach through the mask to the performer's mouth and eyes. What also becomes noticeable quite quickly, though, is that performers peripheral to the action need less light: the traditional rules about seeing the face to hear the voice apply less because the face is concealed anyway. Buswell and Beagley exploit this, running light off at the edge of the sand circle or just leaving chorus members there dressed in gobos crisply rendered by the StudioSpots; the sand takes this kind of light quite beautifully, and the light's visibility in the air is modulated by a Unique Hazer and Smoke Factory Enterprise and Spaceball smoke machines. The lighting navigates you clearly through a long day, yet still feels fresh and precise by the end of it, whether lighting a scene, punctuating a battle or storm (the reflective set adding to the punch of Buswell's photoflash units), or adding ripple or water effects.

Sound

Jon Buswell's equivalent for sound (though with slightly different billing, 'sound re-created by' as opposed to 'lighting re-designed by') is Greg Clarke who, like Buswell, spent time in Denver learning the show and talking to the team there. As with lighting, scheduling of other shows in Denver meant that sound designer David White couldn't make the trip to London and Clarke therefore had to both re-create the sound design 'as was' (albeit with allowances for the different format of stage and band) as well as packaging the system to tour quickly.

Again, as with lighting, the heart of the system arrived from Denver - a 40-channel Crest VX mixer purchased for the show. To this, Clarke



added Yamaha 02R and 03D automated mixers and a Richmond Sound Design ShowMan show control program; he also moved the sound effects from mini-disk to an Akai S6000 sampler. "The sound effects were put together on ProTools in Denver, but then run from minidisk, where David White operated the show. For the UK, I felt we had to automate it - David had grown up with the show yet at times he was very, very busy indeed and an operator here wouldn't have the time to learn that. I also knew that the change in the stage layout and the band positioning meant that the operator would have to work harder on getting the reinforcement right, so I needed to free him up as much as possible."

The 02R collects the sound effects while the 03D handles the mix-down from the band, though in fact, Clarke and operator Chris Dunkin have found that the desk "is really just setting up a state for a particular piece, rather than automating band fades, because for the most part the band were so used to having to set their own levels in an open environment in Denver that they actually play the show." Clarke has also "pointed a lot more

microphones at them than they had in Denver so we've got a great deal more control over their sound," which is created by a huge assortment of percussive, wind, reed and keyboard instruments that adds subtle underscore to much of the day. Mics used include MKH40s and C414s; these feed through active splitters to the front-of-house consoles but also to JBL Control 5 loudspeakers via Spirit Folio mixers that give the musicians control of their own foldback, to their delight.

Also brought across from America was a Sennheiser EM3032 receiver/SK3063 transmitter radio mic system, which has required careful consultation between the show through Clarke and production manager Matt Towell, and JFMG to ensure suitable frequencies were available. "It's a four-band system, and one band is out of use because it's all over digital TV frequencies! We therefore re-jigged the way the radios work and rationalised the whole thing to 16 frequencies." Mics are worn by all of the principal characters, with the mics - an assortment of Sennheiser MKE-2 Gold and Countryman B6 heads - built into the relevant masks and the performers then carrying transmitters. This does leave the chorus un-mic'd, something which initially worried Clarke. "I was concerned because of the tonal difference across those who have and haven't got mics, but it was a creative decision that the chorus would sound different from the principal characters."

The principals also presented challenges, though, particularly with the somewhat 'boxy' sounds the masks could introduce despite careful mic placement, sometimes on a mask's hairline and sometimes actually inside its nose. In fact, in Denver Peter Hall made a decision to accentuate that sound in a somewhat artificial way. "What we're doing is in direct contravention of anything you'd ever want to do in a 'vocal' rig," Clarke explains. "We run the vocals very deliberately through the sub-basses - four Meyer USWs. It's something they did in Denver,



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where Peter wanted to make the sound a little less brittle and maskey. So they put base units under their stage; it made the stage vibrate, but because their stage was quite open it was effective. Here the pits are typically quite closed in, so we've had to find other positions. But the effect is here," and the actors are aware of it, particularly leading man Greg Hicks. "He, in particular, makes use of it; he has the most incredible vocal control, and he's kind of tuning himself, beginning to pick up the sweet spots on stage."

The bass vocal system is backed up by a cluster of three Meyer UPAs on each pros boom that formed a combined vocal/band system. "We've tried to create a single point source, with the horns towards each other, base down to base up, to tie the sound back to the stage and also to make the system quicker and easier to set-up on the road." The pros system is complemented by a delay system of 24 JBL Control 1s and two Meyer UPMs feeding the circles, though no front fills are used, and by a surround system of six Meyer UPMs used most noticeably in the replay of sound effects.

"We've also found that it's very easy to ride over the on-stage vocal level with the band," Clarke notes, "so we also gently reverb or delay them and put them into the rear speakers, to give us texture without necessarily sound pressure, so we're adding depth to the sound." All of the touring sound equipment is supplied by Autograph, with the loudspeakers driven by Amcron 1200/2400 and Crest 7001 amplification, and the system also including BSS delays, Lexicon PCM80 and Yamaha SPX990 effect/reverb units and Varicurve and Klark-Teknik EQs. The installation is overseen by production sound engineer Jem Kitchen, with the sound then run by Chris Dunkin and sound assistant Suzie Hills.

Clarke also echoes comments made by the lighting team about the logistical problems peculiar to *Tantalus*: "Normally, you do a two-and-a-half hour, a three-hour show and, even if it's a busy show, you come in the next morning and give yourself three hours to re-program, do notes, whatever. If you imagine a dress rehearsal of this, that's nine hours of notes! It's been tricky, and we've had to organise our time very carefully." Dunkin also commented on the length during the dinner break of the first full day. "That was six hours of mixing, more than I would normally ever do in a day - and I've got three more to go!" Despite that, praise for the vocal clarity overheard amongst the audience shows how well the team and design were performing, even if their notes for things requiring attention (some involving work to overcome a peculiar acoustic reflection caused by the curved walls at the rear of the Lowry's stalls that will plague every show to visit the theatre) were copious.

The audience themselves survived pretty well, too, all still there at the end and all enjoying the event. It is a strange experience leaving a theatre after 13 hours of spectating: something akin to jetlag, though the huge distance covered is mental rather than physical. But the three shows work as such a coherent whole that it's hard to imagine the experience being great if they were seen over three nights. Epic is an overused word, but one that is apt here - in terms of the show, and the achievement of all those involved in mounting it, and now running it.

Photos - Manuel Harlan

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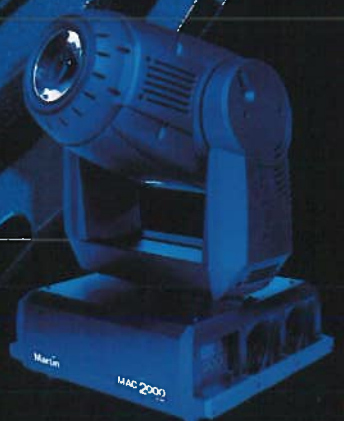
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Tony Cottelier

No Comment...

The announcement that Frank Gordon was quitting his post as CEO of High End Systems came as a bolt out of the blue. Appointed by the venture capitalists, Generation Partners, Frank had only been

at his job for around three years, yet despite a disparate background, he had won the hearts and minds of both staff and customers of the company.

FRANK WAS SO enthusiastic about the future of High End that he had even moved house to Austin. He had also steered HES out of the shark-infested seas of patent litigation with Vari-Lite and put the business back into shape. Good enough shape for Generation Partners, the venture capitalists, to believe that they could sell their substantial stake last year at a good profit.

WHEN THIS IDEA was dropped it seemed to be 'business as usual', but apparently not as far as

Generation are concerned. Since the announcement, they have apparently been putting it around that the company now needed a CEO with more production experience: however, I can't help thinking that Frank may have become a scapegoat for Generation's disappointment that last year the company failed to make their reserve. Coming so soon after Bob Schacherl's departure, this announcement could hardly go unnoticed and consequently it has set the tongues wagging. Generation will have its own agenda and I just hope that their short-term

ambitions will prove to be in the best long-term interests of the business.

IT STRUCK ME AS distinctly odd that Martin Professional should have parted company with Torben Johansen, their erstwhile production director, almost within days of announcing the building of a brand new factory. I always had a lot of time for Torben and was immensely impressed by what he had achieved over the years in building the Group's production facilities virtually from scratch into a fully automated factory, and the most high-tech I have ever seen in this industry. And all of this done with a close eye on the welfare of his production workers and with genuine concern for the environment. For example, at the end of every assembly line Torben Johansen had even installed a tree to keep the carbon dioxide to oxygen cycle going, for the benefit of staff!

A FAR GENTLER SOUL than his brother Peter, Torben was clearly a highly valued member of Kristian Kolding's strategic triumvirate. While no-one is indispensable, Torben Johansen would come closest to that epithet in my book. So why the falling out at such a critical time for the company? Perhaps Johansen had got too close to see the wood for the trees.

IT'S AN UNUSUAL EXPERIENCE when theatre critics and impresarios are at one in their criticism of the same target. Yet, that has certainly been the case of late, and the target? London theatre management and the infrastructure!

I STARTED FOLLOWING this story when I spotted an article in The Times of January 13th this year, by theatre critic Benedict Nightingale. In waspish prose, he deplored the entire West End theatre experience - its very high cost, its over-priced and largely irrelevant programmes, its

expensive bar drinks, its antiquity, its consequent lack of facility, its poor access - in short, the money lenders in the Temple. This was a theme picked up in last month's L&SI by our own theatre critic in residence, Ian Herbert, in his description of a visit as a paying punter with some young American friends to the Strand Theatre. Aren't we on the ball? (Now I know why Ian's column is called Asleep in the Stalls - it must be lack of air conditioning in British theatres. However, he was certainly wide awake on this occasion.)

ALL OF THIS culminated in the Theatre 2001 three-day conference in London, at the beginning of March, at which the luvvies literally queued up to trash their own trade. Clearly, panic is setting in following poor audience statistics, because this conference was sponsored by, among others, the three leading theatre management companies. While some of us would relish the possibility of a spate of refurbishments or even re-builds to solve these problems, the consequent headlines from the three days of navel scrutiny cannot have done anything to improve matters: 'Theatre is a rip off', 'Has theatre lost the plot?', 'Theatre can be bowel-churningly bad' etc, etc.

WHAT HAS ALL this to do with the price of fish? Nothing, but it may say something about why rental rates for entertainment lighting in theatre in this country are so gut-wrenchingly depressed at present. Consequently, I do hope there were some bargains going at the Dome auction despite the story on the PLASA daily news website at the time.

BY THE WAY, now that ESTA has announced that USITT DMX512-A is available for public comment - the announcement of which was made concurrently with last month's piece on that very subject - presumably we will not have long to wait before we get to find out what Vari-Lite's intentions are in that direction.

I WAS PLEASED to see that my old friend Robert Bell has found gainful employment at Rosco following his hasty departure from Cast Lighting, the WYSIWYG people. Product manager of Horizon, Rosco's PC-based control system, was probably not quite what Robert had in mind when, all those years ago, I found him and Gil Densham slaving over a hot computer at CBC in Toronto. My subsequent article in L&SI led to a sequence of events that made their design software a 'must have' for most lighting designers.

I WOULD LIKE TO THANK lighting designers Robin Carter and, doyen of the craft, Michael Northen MBE, for their generous donations to Light Relief. Northen, who is currently suffering from poor health, has made his gift to celebrate the granting of the extra suffix to his name in the New Year's honours list.

"It's an unusual experience when theatre critics and impresarios are at one in their criticism of the same target. Yet, that has certainly been the case of late, and the target? London theatre management and the infrastructure!"

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In the heart of Texas



Buoyed by the massive sales of their recent 'Greatest Hits' set, the Texas roadshow hits the venue circuit once again. Despite DJs on stage, Steve Moles finds that they haven't betrayed their roots

The night before Texas' Sheffield gig, Sharlene Spiteri cricked her neck. At the chiropractor on the day of the show it was several minutes before the bone manipulator recognised her. "Elvis!" he exclaimed, referring to Texas's latest, and most compelling video. "Bloody hell," she replied, "I went through six-and-a-half hours of make-up for that, and you can still tell."

Such are the foibles of life, and all the more remarkable because Spiteri does have one of the more ordinary faces of the pop hagiography (no slight intended. Pretty? Yes. Distinctive? No).

It's a telling indictment for another reason; despite the addition of disc spinners, and the plundering of multiple musical influences, Texas remain essentially what they always were, a bloody good guitar band. As Spiteri led the band back to 1989 and their first hit - I don't need a lover - I was reminded of the Doobie Brothers in their twin lead-guitar heyday. Partly that was due to the two excellent backing vocalists, and in no small part to house engineer Andy Docherty, who, at the required moment, brings them very forcefully into the mix, so you get a balanced three-part harmony, not just a lead with support.

Truth is, however they choose to dress themselves up, even as Elvis, Texas are a mighty force in the MOR rock firmament. Yes

there were youngsters down the front, but this sell-out 11,000 audience was comprised mainly of 40 somethings having a bop. Crikey, I bumped into two of my wife's colleagues from the WI as I cruised the hall checking out the PA coverage.

SOUND

And there's another thing - coverage. Andy Docherty has chosen to try a new approach to presenting this band in arenas. "On the last tour, I mixed from about 25m in front of stage, and I still felt the Tops were struggling to reach me. But walk down towards the stage and there was too much." I checked my review from Oct '99: yes, too hot close to stage, and Dave Kay, Docherty's system engineer, had dialled down the low-mids to let the tops through. So how did Docherty approach this problem? For those of you who think Ad Lib Audio (Docherty's company) are Second Division players, sit up and pay attention.

"I had this idea of using the newer Martin W8 long throw boxes, as coupled devices, to produce a line array in the middle of my two main stage clusters; to cover the area between 20 and 40 metres." This was not to the exclusion of a delay cluster: "I'd never consider doing a hall like this without delays, and the long throws are precisely to cover that mid floor area, up to the delay cluster."

Docherty told me this several days before I attended the concert. Thinking about it then, I was concerned - would there be some combing

between the long throws and their adjacent standard cabinets? The answer in part, presented itself as soon as I entered the arena. Docherty had the main stage PA hung from MAN's Install Bars, a more hard-set version of Mick Nash Devillier's tricky, but magnificent, Transformer system. As such, the two hangs of standard cabinets that flanked the so-called line array, were physically as far from the long throws as the fly-bar would allow. Visually, I estimate two metres at cabinet face, and aimed well off axis of the linear hangs.

"I did call in the people from Martin to consult, Richard Rowley and Jim Cousins particularly, and they've been really helpful." Docherty did at least get to work out how to set the fly-bars in his warehouse which was just as well with one technical rehearsal day at Newcastle Arena before the tour started. The line array is simple and true: each W8 CT (top) cabinet contains 6 x 1" in a vertical line, with 3 x 6" in a vertical line beside them. The W8 CM (mid) has a pair of 12"s also in vertical line. With six cabinets stacked in the centre of the main cluster, three CTs alongside three CMs the line is affected.

"You need to keep the hang low," explained Docherty. "What you see is what you hear," - a reference to the line's behaviour, 55° in the vertical, but zero in the horizontal, straight out from the top and bottom of the box. "I'm a firm believer in proximity - you need speakers in your face to hear them. We're not rocket scientists at Ad Lib, but we know what works."



Including control to time-align the subs, Docherty ended up with seven zones for his PA, all controlled from BSS 366 Omnidrives. As mentioned above, I walked the room extensively during both the opening act and Texas. His idea works; in the floor area the mid-high's were clear and even, and by dint vocal separation was excellent. But inevitably there is a price to pay. In the centre of the floor, imaging is great, but anywhere remotely off-centre, in the field of the long-throws, and the high end information becomes decidedly one-sided. This is ameliorated by the low-mids to a degree, always omni-present in these halls. Besides, with Spiteri's voice and lyrical content at a premium for the punters, this seemed a small price to pay.

There was another benefit, and you could clearly see it in the crowd. Normally there's a thinning of the audience between the fall off from the main system, and where the delay coverage begins, usually that area just to the rear of the FOH riser where intelligibility falters. With this configuration the transition was almost seamless, and this was reflected by crowd density, consistent right past the desk and almost to the rear hockey dasher.

As for the show, Docherty, mixing from a Soundcraft Series Five, puts no EQ to speak of on Spiteri's voice. "This board is three years old," he said, "and not one problem with it. I wish people would give their [Soundcraft's] top end product a little more credit." And no, he's not on an endorsement deal.

He runs her vocals through a 901, in opposite mode in the lower frequencies, around 110 and 315, "as her level builds the compression lessens, the benefit being that when she's singing quietly, or talking to the crowd, it keeps out that low end rumble." At the other end of the scale, he does use a touch of compression on



2.5 and between 6-8kHz; and beyond the 901 he has a DBX160S as a brick wall.

A rack-full of 160As handle compression on an ad hoc range of requirements - all the cymbals and high-hat for example - and besides the odd gate, little else, certainly not much in the way of effects. Like I said, a band that are true to their roots.

Marc Peers handles monitors from a Series Five M, using Ad Lib's own proprietary bi-amp wedges (containing a 15" and 2" RCF driver) with a pair of Ad

Lib's own PA cabinets, DF2s, flown as side-fills.

Of most significance is the acquisition of a DBX drive rack system, reputedly the first in the UK. "We have had a slight problem with it," admitted Peers, "but DBX have been really good in their support. It's just a communication thing; when you PFL a monitor send at the desk it should automatically go to that channel's EQ on the display, and it doesn't. When I contacted them they immediately worked out how to get me through it."

One detail perhaps, but it's not really feasible to access manually in the time-frame that a monitor man requires. "With it all being open on stage (in-ears were tried and dropped way



Above, house engineer Andy Docherty and right, lighting operator Wally Lees

back in the sands of time when Garwood first introduced the world to the concept) I do need that listen facility. She [Spiteri] has unbelievable hearing. If she comments to me about something she can/can't hear, or doesn't like, then it's worth listening to what she says."

That aside (and DBX have promised Peers to have the problem sorted in a couple of days with V3.0 software) Peers is happy with the system. "It's a full system processor - EQ, comp'

everything you want, in a 2U module, all fully networkable. Accessibility is generally a piece of cake," and for the accountants out there, Docherty praised it as comparable to anything similar on the market, "and a lot cheaper."

Peers' main task is putting a clean vocal sound around the stage, and although Docherty has Spiteri on a Beta 87A to capture every nuance of that lovely voice, that's not too demanding a task. "Fortunately, stage levels are not that loud, and I don't have to drive the monitors that hard." Though inevitably her mic picks up a lot from the stage, kit especially, but that's more a problem for Docherty. "Oh, one final comment on the drive rack," added Peers: "I'm only really using the limiting to any degree. When we time-aligned the wedges, and were listening to them, there was certainly an improvement in audio quality. I don't know whether it's the units themselves or the software that makes them sound that way."

VIDEO

Video is a limited commodity on this show, not that it should go without mention. There's a surprising amount of gear, some a great financial indulgence by the band. Nocturne Europe supplies the kit, a pair of DSP 10SX projectors for scenic projection onto a white scrim that masks the stage for the opening. Two huge projectors for a four-minute clip while the band mount the stage, and then the scrim is Kabuki'd away. Not cheap if you work out the per minute used cost.

There's a 16ft by 12ft screen each side of stage that director Phil Woodhead uses for live stage work, image coming from three cameras (two Digital Sony D30Ws on tracking dollies in the pit, a third hand-held onstage) and two POV mini DV cams. Projectors for the side screens are Barco 92 Realities, providing just the right balance of brightness for what is, in concept, an entirely stage-based performance. This is visual support for the people in the cheap seats, not a video integrated show, and that's just fine.

LIGHTS & SET

Fine because LD and set designer Roy Bennett has produced a show of panoramic scale. It's not vast in the sense of a monster Rolling Stones Voodoo Lounge set, but it's extremely wide, giving the stage a Wide screen feel. At over 60ft, definitely cinematic.

And that's where the Neg Earth lighting crew have their work cut out. It was show five when I visited and a thoroughly exhausted bunch they looked, though Bennett's show operator, Wally Lees, was full of praise



for them. "They put the whole thing in everywhere. They've been fabulous, above and beyond the call of duty. I haven't worked with such a good crew in the UK for a long time." And this from a Brit', even if he has lived in the States for the past 10 years. He was a lowly lampie here, once upon a time. That said, God knows what they're going to do with a 64ft



wide truss grid when they get to the CCH in Hamburg? Bennett's design is elaborate, but in a subtle way that isn't at first obvious. Grid apart, the stage appears fairly utilitarian, low band risers, no huge walkways, and just a small collection of nine, admittedly tall, columns encircling the rear of the band.

But that's just the beginning: "When Roy and the band first started talking about the tour, the theme they wanted was for the show to develop, to visually build and build," explained Lees. "Roy's concept was to reveal the show in layers, through drapes and colour. He starts with a black drop, and works through to an overpowering white." To say the drapes (All supplied by Dave Perry) are elaborate would be an understatement. There's a black backdrop with ovals cut into it, and another black immediately behind, so it first appears solid, then the rear of the two blacks is drawn to reveal the oval holes, with a white bounce cloth behind. Then there's a chequered drop made from four different textures of fabric (surely one of Bennett's frequent touchstones) and behind that a system of six kabukis, and six semi-circular drapes that form vertical columns of red. Like a tortured onion, they're peeled off layer by layer throughout the show.

"Apart from a pair of Source Four lekos for the BVs it's an all-moving light rig," continued Lees. "Well, almost." And here's the interesting part. "Roy has an entire back wall of vertical, dimmable fluorescents." No wonder the lighting crew look knackered. "54 channels of 3200° tungsten colour fluor's, and another 54 of 5600° daylight tubes." The fluorescent system is all built by LSD/Fourth Phase; there are also three panels in the grid above centre stage that descend for a tender wrap of the mid show acoustic numbers. There are further fluor's built in behind the risers' frosted Perspex fronts, and in the aforementioned columns - again all built by Perry's. When the whole lot are all full on, they provide a dazzling, overwhelmingly bright finale.

Lees' main system consists of Studio Spots and Studio PC Beams, plus Vari*Lite VL4s (when was the last time we saw them?) spread roughly 30/70 betwixt floor and flown. "We've built the lighting for each song in layers too," explained Lees, who programmed the Hog II as Bennett directed the five days of lighting rehearsal (audio eat your heart out) in Newcastle.

"It's a very structured show. Put simply, we've gone from dark shades to light. Because of the peel off of the drapes there's not much room to change things around." Not often these days that a band, outside the contrivance of the boy/girl format, agrees to be confined to a fixed set list each night.

"There's Roy's usual iridescent colours; particularly that nasty lime green he likes, you know, the Chartreuse tint? And he chose the VL4s particularly for the honeycomb effect, where you see the colour mechanism when projected at very close range onto the back of the drapes." There's also a 'nasty' amber, a 'nasty' magenta, and a weird blue, but somehow Bennett always contrives to make these colours, summed with something else, into an attractive whole.

This is altogether a big show, as I said, cinematic in scale, and it's not cheap. The punters get great value for the cost of their ticket, and the band didn't have to spend it all on production. But they did, and more power to them. For Texas this is just the first 12 years in what I suspect will be a lengthy career.



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Ian Herbert, Asleep in the Stalls...

Try this for size: nine theatres, over ten days, presenting a fresh production nearly every night, usually for two back-to-back performances. Add in some open-air shows and street theatre, and you have a total attendance of a quarter of a million souls. Any volunteers for technical manager?

THAT'S THE SCALE of Iran's Fajr International Theatre Festival, which has just finished in Tehran. It's the nineteenth of its kind, and the third to which overseas companies have been invited. I'm still getting my breath back from dashing from one hall to another, escorted past heaving crowds of young Iranians all fighting to get in to the shows.

THE STANDARDS of performance, of venues and of equipment vary wildly. Major productions were

staged in the Vahdat Hall, a fully equipped 900-seater opera house built in the time of the late Shah and still in fine condition. It has an ADB Tenor lighting control board (the previous manual dimmer board is still there beside it), and a reasonably recent mixing desk for its sound. It was able to cope with the most difficult of the visiting companies, a Peking Opera Company complete with full orchestra, and it also showed off some of

the versatility of its stage machinery in a home-grown production which split the stage into three levels, raising and lowering them for the various scenes. The Egyptian company El-Warsha (whom we have seen in London at LIFT) managed to seat a substantial audience on the Vahdat's stage alone, for their performance of a traditional Egyptian epic.

NEXT IN ORDER of size is the main hall of the City Theatre, a 600-seater, with some rather less satisfactory kit. There is a computerised board, but Jill McBryde, late of the Gate in Notting Hill and visiting Fajr with an Italian-Iranian collaboration, couldn't find anyone in the building who knew how to work it. Jochen Pasternacki, lighting man for the Portuguese group Chapito, had a different problem, that of lighting a show for the same big stage that had been designed for a small tent in Lisbon. On the other hand, he probably had more lanterns to light the tent. Both Jill and Jochen had to make do with the City Hall's idiosyncratic spot-bar focusing system: there's no tallelescope, so you have to lower the whole bar, guess at your angle and beam for each spot, and raise it again until you have the coverage you want. It wasn't until the final show I saw in this hall, a demonstration by students from the workshop run by a British team, led by the anglo-Iranian actress Roxana Pope, that there was real evidence that someone had discovered the secrets of its sound and lighting system: suddenly we had a working cyclorama and some impressive effects, created in the Vahdat's sound studio.

THE SPIRIT OF IMPROVISATION that enables technical teams to fit a production into a space for which it was not designed, using equipment they may see only the night before the show (get-ins for Fajr tend to be from 11pm to 3am) increases my respect for you lot considerably. A similar spirit infuses the Iranian technicians and designers, who performed superhuman feats of make-do-and-mend over the festival.

MOST OF THE LOCAL SHOWS (68 of them, from all over Iran) were played in the festival's smaller venues. There was a good conventional theatre, the 350-seater Sangelaj, built in 1960 and dedicated to a programme of the previous year's successes, and a slightly smaller student theatre, the Molavi Hall, which had an in-the-round capability. (The production I saw there, a rather static *Medea*, was staged in a Greek-style amphitheatre, with Iranian custom ironically observed by seating the men in the audience on one side of the auditorium, the women on the other.)

BUT THE BULK of the festival's home-grown productions were staged in the various studio theatres that sit beneath the City Theatre. The building has a very distinctive drum shape (less kindly visitors likened it to a gasometer, but the locals regard it as a fine example of Iranian architecture). Running round its perimeter, in the basement, are a whole series of little halls, each slightly curved, where the happening things were, well, happening. Built for audiences of around a hundred, they usually had to shoehorn in twice that number of eager punters.

IN ONE OF THESE, on successive nights, I saw a beautifully designed conventional set (for an equally conventional play) followed by a production which managed to find two acting levels in a room barely 5m high and populate them with a cast of a dozen (plus a small band) for a satirical romp called *The Pirate*. A set of steps centre stage brought actors down from the upper floor, and the production was regularly punctuated by the painful banging of heads on the concrete beam above it, but the show moved briskly along. The hall next door, equally, was transformed overnight from conventional end-stage to traverse, with the acting area covered in sand.

BUT WHAT WAS ESPECIALLY striking about these shows, apart from their generally high standard of acting, was the standard of lighting they were able to achieve using tiny old manual boards and usually no more than a dozen lanterns. A show which ran to 20 lights was a luxury item. This didn't stop their LDs from achieving some very satisfactory effects - Francis Reid would have been proud of them.

IF YOU THINK life's hard for the techies, try being an actor: the same strict rule that forbids members of the opposite sex, even man and wife, from touching one another in public, applies on stage. Yet I saw some convincing wife-beating, even the odd rape, staged with great ingenuity by clever actors and actresses. The art of the pulled punch has been raised to a high level in Iranian theatre.

"But what was especially striking about these shows, apart from their generally high standard of acting, was the standard of lighting they were able to achieve using tiny old manual boards and usually no more than a dozen lanterns."

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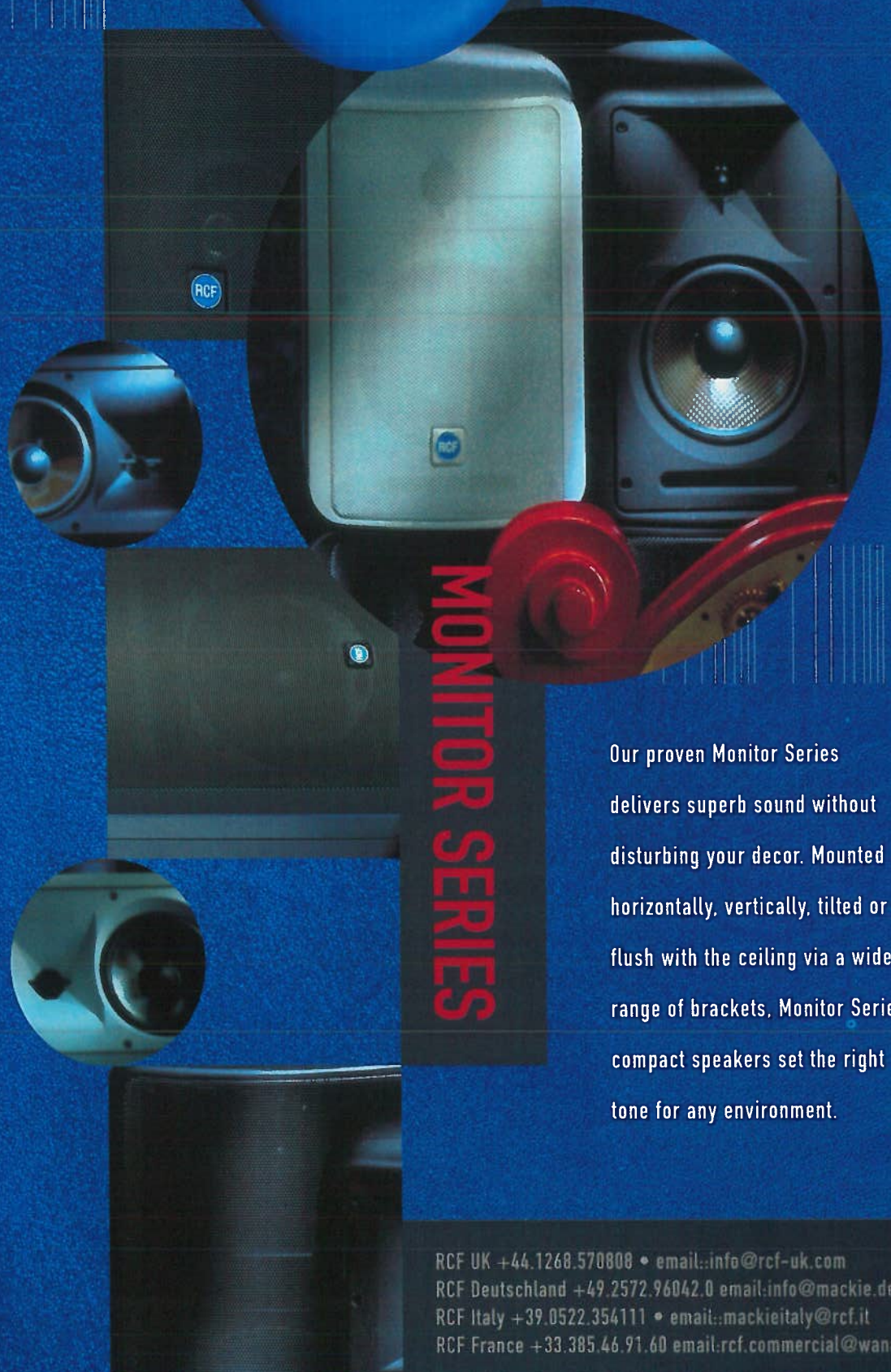


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New Lights from Coemar

Coe-tech, UK distributors for the Coemar range of stage, effects and architectural lighting fixtures, have three new portfolio additions.

The Coemar Supercyc 2.4 is the first ever cyc light offering 425 degrees pan and 212 degrees tilt. Making the most of Coemar's patented Twin Lamp Technology (TLT), the Supercyc 2.4 utilises two powerful 1.2K MSR lightsources, giving an incredible 110,000 lumens output and a colour temperature of 5,900° K. The Panorama Cyc Power is a CYM cyc floodlight designed for exterior use, again taking advantage of Coemar's Twin Lamp Technology and an optical system that multiplies the luminous output, while minimising power consumption. Finally, the latest addition to the company's award-winning CF7 luminaire is the CF7 HEX. The HEX version features enhanced optics with a 30% brightness increase, 21 channel mode for very precise movement and a glass front lens to filter incoming smoke, dust and other potentially troublesome elements.

Coe-tech - tel +44 (0)1604 741000

ACN Standard

The Advanced Control Network (ACN) project, has moved from feasibility status to an official project to draft a new American National Standard.

The scope of the project - **Standard: BSR E1.17, Entertainment Technology - Multipurpose Network Control Protocol Suite** - is to define a new control protocol suite comprising network management, device management, a device description language and device control with reliable multi-cast transport on standard data networks. ESTA is seeking feedback from individuals who have an interest in the project. For more details visit . . . www.esta.org/tsp

Lee's Designer Colours

Lee Filters is continuing apace with the production of more Designer colours for its 700 Series.

Leading lighting designers have been invited by the company to create a colour or colours of their choice. One of the designers to make the trip to Andover recently was David Whitehead, owner of Stage Electrics. He is pictured holding one of his finished creations, watched by Paul Topliss of Lee Filters. Over the coming weeks, several lighting designers will be spending time with the company on the creation of the new range which will be officially launched at PLASA 2001 in September.

Lee Filters - tel +44 (0)1264 366245



City's Range of New Releases

City Theatrical, which won praise last year for its AutoYoke system, has released a number of new products.

These include the AutoYoke for PARnel - an automated variable beam spread washlight for use with ETC's Source Four PARnel. Users can control the width of the beam and drive colour scrollers using remote DMX. A second new product, the Event PAR, is aimed squarely at the trade show market. A 575W MSD or MSR cold restrike lamp is incorporated into a Source Four Par, the result being a bright, high output washlight with a colour temperature of around 5,600° K. The third key new product is the Image Multiplexer - a multiprism device that turns any ellipsoidal with a six inch colour frame slot into a multi-image projection device. Also new from the company is the range of SlipWay taping cables.

City Theatrical - tel +1 718 292 7932

Constella Control

Constella has launched a number of new products. These include the Commando 2 - a DMX512 lighting controller capable of controlling four intelligent Constella heads. Manual control of the heads via joystick is available with a scene setting feature during spot light control. 16 preset programmes are offered, each with selectable chase

speed, sound sensitivity for internal microphone and automatic speed select button. Also new from Constella is a small battery-operated unit designed to blackout the Constella intelligent DMX units when operating in stand-alone mode.

Constella - tel: +44 116 235 7219

Bose for Le Meridien

Bose has been appointed an approved supplier of sound systems to Le Meridien Hotels and Resorts following a two-day Techno Forum in Dubai. The Forum was part of a company conference for Le Meridien's general managers and aimed at introducing the latest technologies. Bose were among nine companies invited to make a presentation, and as a result, the company's Wave Radio/CDs and Acoustic Wave Music Systems are now featured on Le Meridien's approved product list.

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TMB DMX Data Lynx

TMB Associates has been appointed exclusive worldwide stocking distributor for the DMX Data Lynx from Upstaging Inc. DMX Data Lynx is an all-in-one DMX router, tester, and disaster recovery unit. It allows instant switching between two lighting consoles with up to four DMX universes per console.

TMB - tel +1 818 842 9652

Rosco Colour Plus

Rosco has added 24 new colours to its redesigned e-colour+ range, which has been enhanced with a new design swatchbook, colour guide and poster. The swatchbook includes full SED curves, transmission values, and cross references to other Rosco filters.

Rosco - tel +44 (0)20 8659 2300

US Rigging Seminars

Harry Donovan and Jay Glerum are presenting a series of seminars on principles and practices of arena and stage rigging. The four-day courses also feature a day's session with Rocky Paulson covering personal safety and fall arrest. The next round of courses will run in Orlando from May 6-9 and in Chicago from June 25-28. Donovan and Glerum are nationally recognised in the industry for their knowledge of stage and arena rigging, and this is the ninth year they have conducted the seminars. Full details online at...

www.riggingseminars.com

Cerwin's Double Blast

Cerwin-Vega! has made two significant additions to its Pro series of installation speaker systems.



Following the success of the V-152, the Californian-based company has now released the V-252 - a dual 15" two-way, full range system. It has also reinvented its legendary 'earthquake' sound in the form of a 'compact tremor' - an 18" folded horn known as the LR-36. The V-252's twin 15" woofers share space with a bi-morph HF driver mounted on a proprietary spherical waveguide horn. Designed as a stand-alone, it does not require bi-amping with a subwoofer, and features a proprietary spherical waveguide tweeter horn flare, which provides high HF output that can 'keep up' with the low end. The LR-36 utilises a newly-designed 18" woofer, with clean output at 35Hz, and a bias control system for improved linearity and accurate punch.

Lamba plc - tel +44 1727 840527

Indy 575

To meet the demand from television and theatre designers for a lower colour temperature version of the Studio Color, High End Systems has introduced the Indy 575, a patented incandescent lamp that gives designers the ability to match the colour temperature and colour rendering of a conventional lighting rig.

At a lower colour temperature of 3200K, the new lamp source allows designers to create deeper reds and warmer ambers with colour mixing. Users of the Studio Color S or Studio Color 575 unit (with electronic ballasts) can simply remove the MSR575/2 discharge lamp from the unit and plug in the Indy 575. No adjustments or modifications to the fixture are needed, not even for the voltage. Indy 575 uses a patented filament design constructed to maximize efficiency with the reflectors in the Studio Color 575 fixture. Dimming is currently mechanical and will also be electronic in future fixture software versions.

High End - tel +1 512 836 2242

Theatre Patents

In 1996, the second edition of British Theatrical Patents 1801-1900 was published in response to the runaway success of the first edition.

Such was the interest and fascination with the subject that authors Terence Rees and David Wilmore, embarked upon the mammoth task of consulting several million more patents to compile a database of theatrical patents for the first half of the twentieth century.

As a result of five years work, the first release of the database is now available covering 1901-1950, and includes many fascinating technological developments relating to moving lights, projection, dimming and control, as well as staging, illusions, and a myriad of



other technical theatre subjects. It reads like the Who's Who of entertainment manufacturing, and many famous names appear in the database including Stelmar, Siemens, Furse & Co, Blau-Vogel, Holophane, Coliseum Syndicate, Hall

Stage, Burkitt, British Thomson-Houston, Schwabe, Waagner-Biro, GEC, Kirby's Flying Ballet and even Frank Matcham!

There are currently almost 1,000 patentee entries on the database, and purchasers will receive free updates as new entries are discovered - but as the entries increase so does the price, so the earlier you buy, the cheaper it is.

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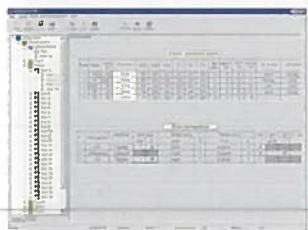
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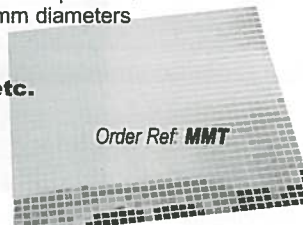
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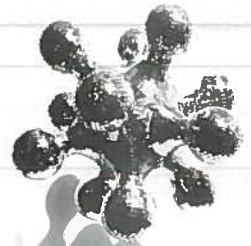
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Changing Light



The men behind iLight - Andrew Glossop, Ashley Goddard, David Kerr, Graham Eales and Peter Brooks. Overleaf, Zero's Welsh facility

In an exclusive interview, Ruth Rossington talks to David Kerr and Peter Brooks about the motives that prompted their decision to form the iLight Group

The recent news that two lighting companies - one from the architectural world and one from the entertainment world - should pool resources to take advantage of the growing synergy between the architectural and entertainment markets will probably surprise few people. After all, the trend of the last few years has been very much about the boundaries coming down between these two disciplines. What will cause onlookers to sit up and take notice, however, is the identities of the two companies behind the move - Dyalnite Ltd and Zero 88.

And this is not because either had stood up and actively declared they would never consider such a move, but because both seemed established in their own fields and were clearly very successful companies. So why fix what ain't broke? Well, perhaps it has something to do with the old maxim that if you're not going forward, you're going bust, and it's pretty obvious that both Dyalnite Ltd and Zero 88 had reached a point in their respective histories where both were looking for change. Since technology presented them with a common denominator, it seems entirely appropriate that the two should get together to create the iLight Group.

I doubt if there are too many people reading this who don't know something of the background to both companies, but looking back on the history of each, you begin to see why it made perfect sense to lock the two together.

David Kerr, the driving force behind Dyalnite Ltd, has been a major player in the lighting controls industry for over 25 years, much of that time spent as sales director for Electrosonic. He is credited with developing the first standard lighting console for the 'live' entertainment market - the Rockboard - and later became involved in the first Daylight Linking project in 1974, before going on to pioneer the Scene Set concept of architectural lighting control. In 1993 he founded Dyalnite Ltd, primarily to act as the exclusive UK distributor for the Australian-made Dyalnite range of lighting control systems and energy management technology.

By adhering to some fairly simple tenets - a strong engineering base, matched by a very client-focused approach - Kerr and his team have built the company into a multi-million pound concern, making it the largest supplier of architectural lighting control systems in the UK. Along the way it has earned a reputation for innovation: it was the first architectural company to introduce DMX512 into distributed data processing for automatic lighting control systems. When the iDB control system was developed for major projects such as Bluewater and the Millennium Dome, it was further confirmation of the company's ambition to move towards a standard control product that provides both connectivity and network integration.

Zero 88, by contrast, was very firmly entrenched in the entertainment and education markets. Founded in 1972, it made its name manufacturing its own range of control products, a process kick-started by the first ever microprocessor-controlled disco controller - the MDC. Within a matter of years, Peter Brooks and the team were producing industry-standard products such as the Betapack dimmer range and the Sirius 24/48 desk (over 7,000 of which have now rolled off the production lines). Having

iLight Range

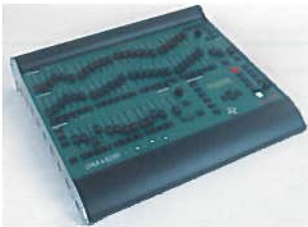
The first fruits of the partnership can be seen in the new iCAN architectural lighting control range.

Design being a prime concern in architectural applications, the first priority has been the look of the new control panels, which have been designed to not only look stylish, but provide a simple interface to the control system.

Within the range is a radical new adaptive series of source controllers. These can automatically detect what type of lamp source is connected and then apply the appropriate dimming method. The company has also designed a new protective circuitry - 'iProtect' (patent pending) - which provides real-time protection for both lamps and units.

Thanks to the iCAN network, more than 10,000 devices can be supported on just one CAT5 cable network. Completing the system is a powerful and simple software programme, developed in partnership with one of the UK's leading CANbus experts.





Frog . . .

The Frog range of control desks builds upon the foundations laid by the Sirius and XL families and will eventually replace them. The Frog can control up to 48 generic channels, which may be manually or automatically patched to any of the 512 DMX channels. It is fitted with a floppy drive for loading and saving show data, a remote 'Go' port and the option for a monitor.

Memories can be recorded as scenes or chases, each having its own fade times and modifiers. Memories may be played back with the crossfade master and the 'Go' button for sequential, pre-programmed shows. Extra flexibility is afforded through the 108 submasters allowing for the creation of lighting effects for more spontaneous shows.

Also new is FatFrog, which operates from a very similar spec sheet, but which offers the option of controlling 12 intelligent fixtures. The movement effects engine allows for simple and rapid programming of commonly-used effects, whilst the inbuilt fixture library enables simple selection and manipulation of the moving lights.

And why the name? Because the desks are 'fixture random output generators'.

rationalised its operation in the mid-nineties, through relocation to Wales, the emphasis moved firmly to control and a succession of desks - the Alcora, Elara and Illusion (the latter picking up a PLASA Award for Product Excellence in 1999) - have been recently brought to market.

Despite the obvious successes of both, it's clear they had found themselves at the same crossroads - though having approached from entirely different directions. David Kerr was suffering the business equivalent of a seven-year itch; highly successful and with money to invest, he was keen to break free of the constraints imposed by distributing another manufacturer's product and develop his own range.

Zero, by its own admission, had still to fully exploit the potential of its R&D expertise and its facility in Wales, and had been actively debating its next move.

Both had independently reached the conclusion that the answer lay in a strategic partnership: David Kerr recognised that Zero 88 had the system expertise and

design knowledge to allow him to develop his own line of architectural control systems, whilst Zero 88 saw the move as a way of translating their engineering skills to new markets. After initial discussions, Kerr proposed a business plan for a new joint company - the iLight Group. Both companies would operate under the group umbrella, but whilst Zero 88 would continue to trade with its established brand name, Dyalite Ltd would be renamed iLight Ltd. Once the deal was signed, the two companies set about the process of developing a range of new products to coincide with the Group's official launch - earmarked for 2001.

To create the infrastructure for this, over £1 million was invested. The first priority was a major upgrade to Zero's ISO9001-accredited manufacturing site so that it could produce not only Zero 88's new and existing products, but also iLight's new range of lighting control systems. At the same time, the Group was actively recruiting new members to the team and the ranks of both management and research departments were swelled.

On December 31, 2000, the iLight Group acquired Zero 88 and Dyalite and turned them into wholly-owned

subsidiaries. In January 2001, they began to pre-empt the announcement by running a series of teaser ads in this magazine and a number of architectural titles. Cloak and dagger in approach, the ads promised a new lighting company that didn't make the distinction between architectural and entertainment lighting, but refused to reveal more.

Then Zero 88 turned up at Siel with a completely new product - the Frog - and it was immediately clear that something was going on in the Valleys. (The Frog was actually first shown at PLASA, though none of us knew it at the time, as the company was conducting behind-the-scenes feedback sessions during the Show). All that

was left was to actually tell the industry at large what it had been planning . . .

Now, of course, the wraps are off on the whole venture, and the Group has blitzed the industry with a major promotional campaign to announce its formation. The immediate gains are fairly obvious and what we have now in the



iLight Group is an organisation that is more than the sum of its parts. The management teams of the two companies have been amalgamated. David Kerr, as the major investor in the new company, heads up the organisation as iLight Group plc chairman - he also remains managing director of iLight Ltd, though the plan is to delegate that role as soon as possible. Peter Brooks of Zero 88 is the managing director for the Group, with Mike Prior and Andrew Glossop, both Dyalite men, taking the roles of finance and technical director respectively. Zero's Chris Fenwick is the Group's new design director, whilst Richard Thornton-Brown, also of Zero, is project director. Working alongside these is a massive team of engineers, designers, sales and admin people who count amongst their numbers, sales director Ashley Goddard, Zero's general manager of operations and development, David Rosen, and Graham Eales, now responsible for all sales and marketing of the Zero 88 brand on a global basis.

Zero 88 and iLight Ltd, whilst benefiting from all the obvious economies that scale can bring, will operate as independent companies and will continue to develop and promote their individual brand identities. Since the

intention is to reinvest 15% of all sales revenue into product development, as well as to develop bespoke software solutions for clients, the months ahead should be interesting. Indeed, Zero has already committed itself to launching a complete new product range over the next 12 months.

With the emphasis on reinvestment and product development, it's pretty clear that the long-term goal is to take the Group to a 'one-stop shop' position. There is also another long-term goal that David Kerr has set himself; he is determined that the Group will be a £25m concern within five years. Since he strikes me as a man who achieves what he sets out to, I'll happily drink his champagne when the time comes.



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& Albert



Eric Clapton's 2001 world tour kicked off last month at the Royal Albert Hall in London – which, as the UK's oldest large-scale auditorium, is a very different venue from the typical arena. Mike Mann reports.

Front-of-house sound engineer Robert Collins may have Mr. Clapton's repertoire ingrained into his memory after handling his output for ten years (five of which included lengthy residences at 'London's Village Hall', but he has decided to ring the changes for this year's European outing.

Not content with taking Yamaha's brand spanking new PM-1D digital console on its maiden tour, Collins was also putting the recently-launched EAW KF900 Phased PointSource Technology loudspeaker system through its paces. This latter element was chosen by Collins and Concert Sound after trials in the UK last year, and is intended to remove the need for delay systems in Europe's largest indoor venues. As a 'steerable' long-throw design capable of throwing in excess of

200 metres, the KF900 rig verged on overkill for the Albert Hall, where the venue's cylindrical layout meant that 'long throw' would have provided ideal listening conditions somewhere near the middle of Hyde Park.

Deep Throat

Even so, the horn-loaded centre-cluster configuration, which was in the care of system tech Rusty King, did a manly job of projecting Clapton's every note to the deepest niches of this complex auditorium. One of the toughest challenges at the Albert Hall is to create a coherent image for the stalls, boxes and upper balcony (known as 'the Gods'). Though the sheer height of the KF900 array matched that of the building, without the system's unique pattern control software, this would have directed almost all the array's output into the middle tiers. As it was, having the power to widen or narrow coverage in both planes proved vital, and resulted in an even coverage without noticeable hotspots or shadows. Similarly, the lack of upwards spill increased the overall intelligibility since the hall's infamous seven-second reverberation was minimised – not an easy task with conventional systems, and the cause of many a disappointing show in these otherwise impressive surroundings.

Main picture, Clapton & co on stage, and inset, the man himself

The Albert Hall system used a five-deep, eight-wide configuration; this comprised a row of KF930 LF cabinets, a row of KF920 mids and three rows of KF913 medium-throw/downfill boxes. King and the Concert Sound team were able to benefit from the fact that the enclosure (containing three 2" compression drivers on EAW's SimplePhase horns) has an asymmetrical vertical coverage. Inverting the topmost row of KF913s immediately increased the array's natural vertical spread by giving it an upwards-firing section, leaving the lower two rows to handle the coverage from horizontal to the stalls seating below.

High Flyer

Because of the extreme sightlines in the Albert Hall (where the audience in the balcony looks down on the stage from an angle of nearly 45 degrees), the main speaker system is almost always flown higher than any engineer would like – leaving noticeable holes in coverage around the stage thrust. To access those hard-to-reach areas around the front and back of the stage, conventional KF750 backfills and sidefills, as well as JF80 frontfills were employed. These were



Main picture, system technician Rusty King (left) and Andy Cooper (right) of Yamaha

Below, Robert Collins at the Yamaha PM-1D



given separate mixes from auxiliary sends on the console, as they were required to redress the balance between vocals, acoustic guitars and the backline output.

"This one single array, which is broken up into a series of 'cells' of the same driver/horn type, is being fed by no less than 33 discrete audio feeds," explained King, who added that all the required DSP manipulation was performed by a bank of 10 BSS Soundweb digital processors. "Each feed is separately equalised, filtered (to limit and correct the device's narrow-band response), delayed and level-controlled," he said. "The multiple horn cells interact with each other to shape each other's coverage pattern, which lets us steer the output pretty much where we need it." While the Soundweb-driven user interface could hardly be described as intuitive, King pointed out that an experienced operator can judge the effect of a particular 'tweak' on the overall pattern. King was using

SIA Software's Smart Live measurement package - though he pointed out that a multi-microphone analysis system like Meyer Sound's SIM II would have been more helpful.

Spoilt for Choice

Robert Collins, while taking a keen interest in the results of the KF900 installation at the Albert Hall, was content to leave a detailed examination of the system's abilities until the larger arena dates - in any case, he had enough on which to concentrate, as the first on-the-road user of the Yamaha PM-1D digital console. An engineer known for his distrust of unnecessary technology, Collins surprised everyone by agreeing to take the new design on its first full-scale production, saying that life would be too safe without a few risks. With the almost constant presence of Yamaha R&D's Andy Cooper, Collins was in safe hands and could concentrate on the ergonomics of the highly sophisticated desk. "That's the thing with this board - there's so much of everything!" he commented. "At the moment

I'm trying to make it work the way I like to - in very much the same way as a traditional analogue console." Collins explained that this would ultimately allow him the confidence to use the console's more revolutionary features. "I want it to educate me - but for the moment, the jury's out."

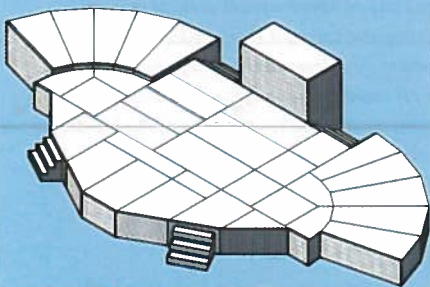
The configuration for this tour was jointly decided by Collins, Concert Sound's Tim Boyle, and Yamaha, and includes such goodies as digital interfaces for a 48-track Mackie hard disk recorder, AES/EBU aux sends and returns for reverbs and other effects, as well as conventional analogues ins,

outs and inserts. The whole lot is handled by a 9U DSP 'brain', which can handle up to a staggering 320 inputs and 192 outputs - though in this case it is configured to provide Collins with exactly the required 50 inputs, assorted pre-show playback devices and a master stereo mix to the Soundwebs.

Outboard Overboard

Because of the Yamaha's comprehensive on-board processing facilities (which include full-spec gates, compressors, input and output delays, parametric and graphic EQ, in addition to the eight assignable effects units), Collins' outboard rack was very sparsely populated; a handful of DBX 160S compressors provided most of the dynamic control. A series of digitally-connected effects processors were in use, including a TC Electronics DSP7000 and a Yamaha S-REV1. Onboard gating was used for the drum kit; "again, the jury is out until I get this lot into a bigger space," commented Collins, who admitted that he had been greatly impressed by the clean-sounding results when running acoustic instruments through the PM-

Alistage

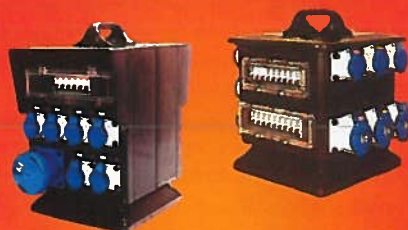


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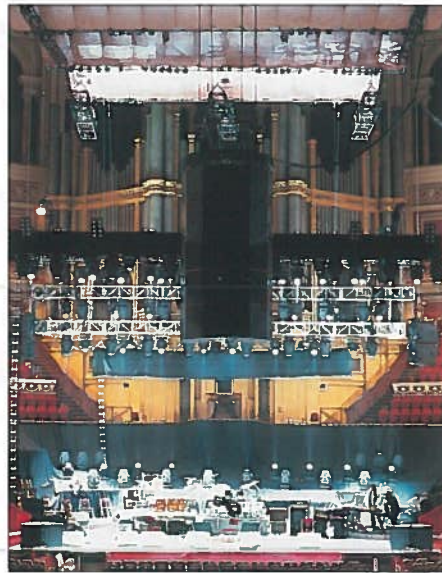


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1D. Ironically, as he pointed out, the virtues of such a high-powered digital system were not stretched to the full by the Clapton production. "I'd have loved to have had this board for Dire Straits," he commented. "Their style was much more complex and used a lot more processing and effects. On their tours I always had to use two consoles to do a job that this board would do by itself. At the end of the day, Eric's sound is much simpler and needs less doing to it - which is why it makes sense to try this out in this situation."

EAW takes centre stage at the Royal Albert Hall



With no generic lighting whatsoever on the production, Maxwell's only other tools were a clutch of Super Troupers as front-of-house followspots, backed up by three Lycian Starklites in the truss. A half-dozen DF-50s complete the kit list; not a strobe or laser in sight for this laid-back, traditional show. Maxwell's lighting style exactly suits the performance style of Clapton, his band and guests - which in the plush surroundings of the Albert Hall was even more laid back than usual for this 'cooler than cool' artist. Despite the performers' insistence on remaining in their seats through a large part of the show, a feeling of movement and rhythm was reinforced by the snappier lighting cues, which never attempted to distract the audience's attention from the star of the evening.

Lightweight Production

Clapton's LD for the past four years has been David Maxwell, who was frustrated at the limitations placed on him by the Albert Hall's unique geometry. "We're missing a large part of the lighting here," he explained, "mainly because of sightline issues. Even though we're at the Albert Hall for six nights, the show sells so well that we have audience in the choir seats round behind the stage. This, and the fact that the rear of the platform is quite narrow, means that I can't hang the main feature of the set." This, it transpired, is an 18m x 12m custom cyc, fabricated from a number of concave panels.

"When we get to the arenas, this will be a totally different show - the cyc will do a lot of the work, as I can light the convex panels from the truss or the floor," promised Maxwell, who explained that in the absence of a backdrop, most of the Albert Hall's lightshow was performed by the 60 LSD Icons and 12 Washlights supplied by the Birmingham-based outfit. These were distributed around the four main trusses and also on the tiered walkways behind the Albert Hall's stage. "Other than that, I have a dozen Moles fitted with scrollers

on the stage to light the band, and a further six in the downstage truss for the crowd," he pointed out. Also missing from the Albert Hall shows was Maxwell's 'Austrian Blind' - a roller-based black cloth that will be used to create three distinct looks for the arena shows, in combination with the cyc and a heavily stepped truss layout, which brings the upstage bar to within four metres of the stage floor.

Pebble Dash

Because of the compressed stage layout, several units (including 12 more Wybron colour scrollers) had to be left in the truck; though Maxwell did get a chance to use his latest favourite, the High End Studio Beam PC, of which there are no less than 50 in the rig, and which he describes as 'the brightest thing around'. The PC (Pebble Convex) design reputedly allows better soft-edging and a wide zoom range (14° to 30°) for this nippy little 20,000 lumens fixture.

Prince Among Venues?

The Albert Hall forms an integral part of the UK and European arena circuit, yet has a very different atmosphere and a unique set of limitations and benefits. The opulent Victorian décor provides a backdrop of its own for the right kind of show, be it opera, classical music or the more sophisticated end of rock and pop. The current improvement programme (due for completion in two years' time and encompassing production access, accommodation and acoustic treatment, as well as public area works), though long overdue, will remove some of the most obvious shortcomings of the venue without, hopefully, losing any of its special character. While front-of-house engineers may curse its cathedral-like sound, and lighting designers berate its limited capacity and odd shape, there are those who maintain that 130 years of music has left a mark on the venue that inspires every musician who plays there. Eric Clapton certainly does.



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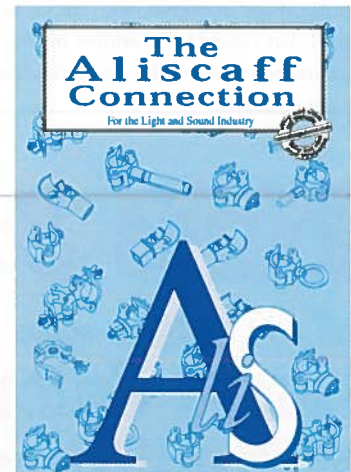


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John Watt

Second Take...

John Watt's view from beside the camera

If this starts to read like an editorial from 'The Tailor & Cutter', a must on the breakfast tables of the old brigade at LWT, I can only apologise. But I must continue to report on things that matter.

I HEAR THAT John Pomphrey has given up on waistcoats - too much competition at Teddington I suppose - and switched to designer cardigans. Do I detect a Welsh influence, or is it that like the first lady spark I ever met, he's to be seen

sitting atop the dimmers during tea breaks with a couple of size 10 needles doing the old two pearl, one plain routine, creating something trendy in angora? I hope so - I could get a job holding his wool and I would rather be stitched up by him than the legions that have gone before.

OF COURSE, the old maxim that 'clothes maketh the man' was never more true than when applied to the

lighting fraternity, as any STLD meeting will bear witness. Taking a lunchtime walk around the lock at Teddington last week, I bumped into Chris Clayton doing the same, casually elegant as usual in trademark black. I wish I had established something like that when I started out on the road to fame and obscurity. Not only would it have removed all the decision-making out of getting dressed in the morning (not my best time of day), but I could have satisfied the request of the director who wanted a silhouette, "but leave the presenters lit"!

I HAD MEANT to drop in on Chris later to steal a few ideas, but the afternoon evaporated as the director casually remarked: "Did I mention the Bazooka band and sword dancers in part two?" Out comes the rubber, red pen and BBC stencil; the latter works well as a coaster for your coffee mug, but don't try using it as a stencil unless you need a lot of hexagons to represent a limestone pavement, Fingals Cave, M10 nuts or whatever.

RUMOURS PERSIST of a new facility at Pinewood which apparently is going to amaze us all. Well, the invitation hasn't arrived yet, so comment must wait until that unlikely event. It will be interesting to see how they've tackled the eternal problems of providing a flexible and efficient rig suited to the production methods of the 21st century. With the over-capacity in studios in the UK, no proper new ones have appeared since Nottingham I guess, so there are plenty of innovations out there for anyone brave enough to try. Hope they are getting the right advice.

TALKING OF MY OLD STAMPING GROUND Nottingham - this has now largely disappeared under the rising flood of Crossroads. I expect there's tighter security round that operation than at the Royal Mint, though come to think of it Carlton probably has more in its coffers than the Royal Mint anyway. "Don't care if you are Clive Jones, you can't come in without a pass." Again, comment had better await the launch to a grateful nation (you will have been glued to the screen before this appears in print), and the inevitable invitation to yours truly for a royal visit. After all, I do know where most of the bodies are buried in that far flung outpost, so it can only be a matter of time.

HAVE YOU NOTICED the trend for graphics designers to drift in to set design? I think it's a money thing; even the most tightly-manned news operation needs a graphics designer to pad out

thin stories that didn't justify sending a camera, and thereby fool the viewers into thinking they are watching a dynamic, fast-moving newscast, when actually they are watching fast-moving wallpaper. Anyway, these people are on the payroll, and being considered arty types by the front office, can obviously knock out a design for a new set with the aid of their trusty paint box. Much better than getting Richard Plumb to apply 30 years of hard-won knowledge, which would cost a few bob.

THE TROUBLE IS that translating graphic images in to canvas and timber ain't that simple, and putting the resultant cock-up right is usually twice as expensive as the aforementioned Mr Plumb. No, I'm not on a percentage and he doesn't recommend me, though I have to admit to having been in receipt of a very distinctive coffee mug that he designed on an off-day and which resists the scouring attempts of our dishwasher to obliterate his logo. Just as immovable is the cross that all lighting men have to bear. I've just re-lit a news set-up where the presenters now all sit at 30 degrees to the desk in order that the cameras can frame up on some features on a cloth that the designer got in the wrong place.

I BET ALAN BIRMINGHAM knows why a key light is so called, but I don't. I only wish we could stick with 'modelling light', the translation given in most books, but not used much in real life. 'Key' doesn't really give any clue to its purpose and is possibly responsible for widely-held misconceptions. This week, as in most weeks, I've discovered cameramen making well-intentioned efforts to actually position themselves beneath the thing!

FORTIFIED WITH A WEE TALISKER, I find myself musing, when is a key light not a key light? I think it's when it is less than 10 degrees away from the camera, at which point it becomes a floodlight. What do you think Bill Lee? Rather in the same vein, I'm told not to worry about the artist's shadow on the chroma key backing as they can crab round until it disappears behind his body, but doesn't that mean you are lined up under the key? Oh forget it Watty, just take the money and run.

Apologies to Richard Waiting and Andy Newton at Teddington. The Editor gets so used to correcting my wilder grammatical errors that she lost the gist of what I was banging on about last month and inadvertently converted two people into one! The result was that a) neither gentleman was credited with their correct talents and b) neither I nor the Editor can ever set foot in Teddington again!

"Fortified with a wee Talisker, I find myself musing, when is a key light not a key light. I think it's when it is less than ten degrees away from the camera, at which point it becomes a floodlight."

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The Road to Wembley

As you probably know, we have rather a nice little niche here," says Paul MacCallum as I arrive at the premises of Wembley Loudspeaker. It is too - perhaps one of the nicest little niches in the business, as we'll see.

Wembley Loudspeaker is one of those companies which seem to have been an ever-present fixture of the industry - always in the directory pages, always a member of PLASA, always present on the trade show circuit. On top of this, managing director Paul MacCallum - one of the industry's best-known figures - plays in his band every year at one of the PLASA Show's most popular out-of-hours fixtures, at the 100 Club in Oxford Street. What's more, the company's loudspeakers grace, among other places, another long-standing industry fixture - the Rose & Crown Pub in Rimini, a popular industry watering hole during the Italian SIB exhibition.

Many will know Wembley Loudspeaker as a manufacturer of good quality, value for money steel chassis drivers and loudspeaker systems. The company produces the B-Line 2820 18" bass enclosure and the PTP range of drivers, as well as the Spyder and Tarantula 2-way trapezoidal cabinet systems. The Spyder, says MacCallum, is a no-compromise system which he believes beats the trapezoidal competition hands-down (or at least zip-down, in his metaphor of choice). Wembley counts the Leopardstown Racecourse in Dublin among its list of Spyder installations.

But when MacCallum refers to his 'niche', he doesn't mean Wembley's manufacturing, but its loudspeaker repair business, which constitutes the greater part of the company's activity and sees between 70 and 100 professional, semi-professional, rare and vintage loudspeakers pass through its workshop each week. At the time of my visit, a customer arrived with a pair of small, twin 4" wedges which looked as though they might have caught the rough end of a 1970s pub bomb. However, a relatively inexpensive repair would see them fully restored to their former high quality - the point being, says MacCallum, they're irreplaceable.

What makes the niche so nice is that no serious competitors to Wembley exist in the whole of the UK. A few here and there dabble in loudspeaker repair, maybe turning round a few units per week, but no-one holds the range of spares, or competes on anything like the same level with its main business. How many companies can say that?

The key to the company's success is the happy combination of supply and demand - Wembley has the unique stockholding and the years of expertise necessary to supply the huge demand for refurb'ed, older loudspeakers. MacCallum believes strongly that really high-quality loudspeakers - of the sort that used to be made once upon a time - are simply no longer available to realistic budgets. Most of today's manufacturers, he says, use low-quality components, plastic boxes as compact as possible and the cheapest manufacturing facilities to produce large volumes of what are - relatively speaking - essentially low-quality units. According to MacCallum, if you want to get hold of something really special, but don't want to pay the earth for it, then the only way to go is back in time - 20 years or more if possible. By way of demonstration, he shows me a pair of sturdy wooden

Wembley Loudspeaker celebrates its 30th anniversary this year. Lee Baldock went along to catch up on a bit of history . . .

cabinets, clearly of a certain age, but still proudly carrying their JBL badges. These, he tells me, were made in 1974, and cost a small fortune new. Once restored, the pair could change hands for a few hundred quid - and sound as good as anything else available, and far better than most. "People just don't understand what they're missing," he says.

Demand aside, Wembley's niche position in the repair field also stems from its unique stock of spare parts, purchased from manufacturers over many years as product lines have been discontinued. An example which was on hand when I visited was an original 15" driver from a 1948 Wurlitzer jukebox which had been carefully re-coned with an original spare - stocked only by Wembley.

The team at Wembley Loudspeakers has consisted for a number of years now of Paul MacCallum, Tony Collins and Paul Mansfield, but 30 years ago when the company was started there was just Arthur Lampkin, an ex-service engineer from Goodmans. Lampkin set up his own company at Goodmans' vacated Wembley headquarters (hence

the name) when the company relocated to Havant in 1971. A year later, when the bulldozers arrived, Lampkin moved to Shepherd's Bush, where 'Wembley' has remained ever since.

Lampkin started out by selling Marshall 12" bass/guitar speakers. One day in 1973 a young musician customer asked him if he needed a hand - Paul MacCallum started the following Monday. MacCallum says it was a fascination with loudspeakers that drew him to the company. "I found it amazing that this basic construction of paper cone, chassis and magnet could actually reproduce music," he says. It's an interest that has certainly endured, and today his knowledge of loudspeakers - engineering and performance, makes and models - is second to none.

Many in the industry will have heard of MacCallum's pro musician credits - part of Mike Batt's original Wombles line-up in the early 1970s, he played bass guitar in Wembley costume for two reasonably lucrative years. Fewer people will know



"The workshop at Askew Crescent is an Aladdin's Cave of loudspeakers of all types, sizes and ages, many of them awaiting repair, others just awaiting a rainy day"

This page . . .

Main picture: the 2001 Wembley line-up of Paul MacCallum, Paul Marshall and Tony Collins

Inset: Tony Collins carrying out some loudspeaker repairs

Following page . . .

Paul MacCallum holds a newly-repaired 1948 Wurlitzer driver, while at his elbow is the 15" Volt Radial driver utilised by Wembley's Spyder

The Manufacturing Line . . .

Wembley's first loudspeaker, the Deuce, appeared in the late 70s. A 2 x 10" unit, it produced "amazing bass reproduction" says MacCallum. Wembley's B-Line 18" bass speaker was developed in 1988, in response to demand from the company's reggae customers. The product, says MacCallum, was heavily based on the Cerwin Vega 'Earthquake' bass unit, which his customers greatly admired, but couldn't afford. "It was basically a copy of the Cerwin Vega," says MacCallum, in his typically frank manner, "with certain improvements - a heavier cone, and a double-stacked magnet. It's funny, but Cerwin Vega used the same improvements in their next model . . ."



The Deuce (as featured in the Rose & Crown, Rimini)



The B-Line bass driver, as advertised by Linford Christie in 1982

The 2-way trapezoidal Spyder, developed in conjunction with Volt Loudspeakers, is designed for permanent installation, touring or mobile use. The innovative design of the Volt Radial speaker uses the chassis itself, mounted over the front of the cone, as a heatsink, providing a very cool-running unit and eliminating long-term power compression.

The PTP range of steel chassis drivers (named after the three members of the Wembley team, Paul, Tony and Paul) was introduced in 1993 in conjunction with Joe Olenski at Ohm, offering a range of drive units at very affordable prices. When the PTP range was reviewed by Ken Dibble as part of his 'Speakercheck 2000' series of lab tests in Sound &



The original 2820 cabinet loaded with the B-Line bass driver, 1986.

Communication Systems International magazine, he repeatedly praised the PTPs for their exceptional value for money performance, often measuring up well to far more expensive products from top-end manufacturers.

Utilising PTP components are Wembley's 15-300 full-range box (right), aimed at karaoke, mobile disco and live PA use, and the Tarantula 2-way trapezoidal cabinet for fixed install, mobile or touring use. New this year is the 15-400 Pro Cabinet, aimed at professional use in fixed or mobile applications, either as part of a larger system or stand-alone.

that prior to this he had backed such 1960s stars as Billy Fury, Sandie Shaw and Helen Shapiro. It was while working with the latter that he toured Romania in 1968 - only the second foreign act to visit the country. There, he recalls, they would perform to audiences of up to 20,000 with a 200W WEM system.



MacCallum took over the company when Lampkin retired in 1977. In the same year, he opened a rehearsal studio above the premises, offering a much-needed space for a large number of aspiring young bands to practice their developing genre. It was a big hit, and the busy studio witnessed the likes of X-ray Specs, The Adverts, The Damned, Billy Idol and Generation X, The Police and Elvis Costello making regular use of his facilities. An added bonus to this new flow of income was that these bands brought new work to the loudspeaker repair business, as did MacCallum's own continued involvement with live music: business was good. He recalls fondly: "That was back in Callaghan's administration - the biggest capitalist society we'd ever seen. Everything was cash!" Some customers he particularly remembers: one was a heavy metal mobile DJ who was "continuously blowing up his speakers" - Rick Wilson, now of Le Maitre. Another was a "spotty" young musician called Ian Jones, who later founded a company named after his group 'Half Human Band' or HHB, itself celebrating 25 years in business this year.

In 1980, MacCallum was joined at Wembley by a new business partner, Brian Gillece, ex of speaker manufacturer ATC. He and Gillece began producing loudspeaker recone kits, cheekily tagged 'Analogue Transducer Coils', much to the annoyance of ATC. In 1983, MacCallum and Gillece began sharing the Shepherds Bush premises with the front-of-house sound engineer from London's Embassy Club, Paul Hinkly, who wanted to begin selling microphones from the premises, something he saw as a gap in the market at the time. This he did successfully for two years, before moving the London Microphone Centre to its own premises, where it was to expand very successfully under the name of LMC Audio. Hinkly remembers: "They were great days. Without Paul and Brian, I couldn't have done it. They've helped a lot of people out over the years." Gillece later parted company with MacCallum and Wembley Loudspeaker in 1989.

Wembley's expert repair service has been responsible for saving a number of skins. MacCallum remembers re-coning no less than 16 15" JBL speakers twice in two days for German rockers The Scorpions, when they toured the UK back in the mid-1970s. After asking some probing questions about their amplification, MacCallum was able to offer some invaluable advice on the use of transformers, thus saving the fresh young band from the utter panic they had been enduring. Other Wembley customers over the years have included the Rolling Stones, Eric Clapton, Oasis, Blur, The Police, Dire Straits, B B King, UB40, Simple Minds, Genesis and Pink Floyd.

Repair jobs have often stretched to more than simple re-cones, as in the early 90s with Canned Heat, whose complete backline of vintage

Fender and Gibson amps, although flightcased, was smashed almost to matchwood in transit. Wembley was able to rebuild the entire backline - cabinets and cones. A similar repair job was carried out recently on a vintage amp owned by a well-known musician - who probably still doesn't know anything about it.

The Askew Crescent premises is an Aladdin's Cave of loudspeakers of all types, sizes and ages, many of them awaiting repair, others just awaiting a rainy day. It's the company's extensive stock of spare parts, the hundreds of old units, and of course three decades of expertise, which maintains Wembley's unique position as a company without competition in its own nice little niche.



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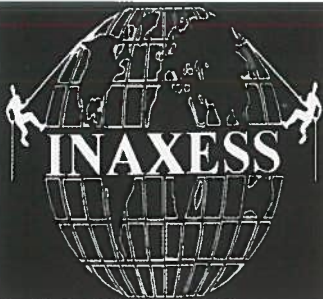
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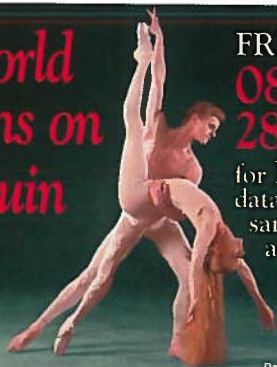


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In Profile...

L&SI Talks to the Industry Trend-setters

Lighting designer Jeff Ravitz is best known for his work with Bruce Springsteen, but his heart hasn't always been in rock and roll. As a young man he had what he describes as his first epiphany at the theatre. "We lived in Jersey, and my dad took me to see *The Music Man* on Broadway. That really knocked me out."

He was lucky to have had the experience at all, his father passed away when Jeff was just 12, and things became pretty tough in the Ravitz household. At High School, a teacher supported and tested Jeff when he expressed a desire to become an actor: "He auditioned me and saw I had some ability. When I graduated High

School I knew I wanted to be an actor, but I felt I needed a primary career as a back-up. Then I spoke to a careers advisor who said 'Diluting your primary interest is exactly that - dilution.' So I applied to schools that had good theatre programmes."

Ravitz went to North Western University in Chicago: "They have a fabulous reputation - I was very fortunate - NW was like striking oil. Frankly, I never thought I'd be lucky enough to get in." These were turbulent times, right in the middle of the Vietnam War. Jeff arrived at his new school six weeks after the democratic convention that prompted the US student riots, and after all, Chicago was the home of the infamous Mayor Daley. Candidly, Ravitz admits to contributing little in terms of direct positive action: "We did a lot of political drama, we weren't much good at anything else," but then that's the essence of theatre, the sublimation of the human condition, so no bad thing.

Despite the distractions, not least a fear of the Draft, Ravitz graduated with a BSc in Science and Speech, a branch of a theatre degree that saw him study public speaking, oral interpretation, speech pathology and speech disability, skills that have doubtless stood him in good stead when it comes to interpreting the wild allusions of rock stars. "We did have to put in hours in other departments: we did lighting, scenery, costume, and of course acting."

He describes it as a time of transition. "My college roommate was into lighting design." Some room mate - Craig Miller is now a well-known Broadway designer: "He really made me sit up and pay attention." This led to Jeff working as a lighting technician during the summer vacations. "By the time I came out of school, I knew there were going to be lean times as an actor, but I already knew that while actors starve, technicians always work." Despite which, he started his own theatre company, The Chamber Theatre Ensemble, with Lou Stein and a few other friends. "With your own company you get to do triple duty - publicity, directing, adapting shows, everything." Although none of this contributed directly to his future career, the experience was to prove pivotal.

"When the group broke up a year later, an opportunity appeared. A local rock star with national fame, Bill Quarterman, needed an LD. I saw the ad in a little local arts rag and applied. I arrived at the Columbia office and they put a form in front of me. When I filled in the second line under the heading 'experience', they grabbed it from under me and said, 'you're the first person in three weeks who has any experience!'"

Armed with just six Fresnels, two lekos, and a few household dimmers, he embarked on his new career, and eventually worked with Quarterman's band for three years. Then came his second epiphany. "Bill opened for Frank Zappa and the Mothers, who had a really wild show with lots of lighting. When I saw all this bump and flash, at first I was horrified. I'd been trained that lighting must not intrude, unless it was a special effect. Here it was part of the music." Now hooked, Jeff immersed himself in the business: a year spent



with the Coronne brothers, Bob and Gary, at the fledgling Upstaging, saw him end up as crew chief for Kiss. But it was when Styx called that his potential was realised. "When I joined them I saw this tremendous variety; three singers all with different influences, a heavy metal guitarist and a histrionic keyboard player. They could go from hot and racing, through slow ballads, to operatic compositions." Not without talent, though they never really made it in the UK, Styx were the classic kind of self-indulgent, noodling, pomp rockers that fomented the punk explosion of the late seventies. That said, they provided just the dramatic canvas, the concept album, on which Jeff could really stretch himself. "I ended up using everything, motorised drapes, painted backdrops, pyro. I was lucky, they gave me so much latitude."

Although the band's career eventually imploded, Ravitz's reputation was established. Since then he's gone on to light most of the great and good, not least Springsteen since 1984. But these days TV is proving to be a strong draw. "I got the bug a few years ago. I want to preserve the richness of the live show for the TV medium. Because of the advent of HDTV they are getting more filmic in their approach. I like taking everything I've ever learned and using it in combination, to create great television." ■

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**Steve Moles talks
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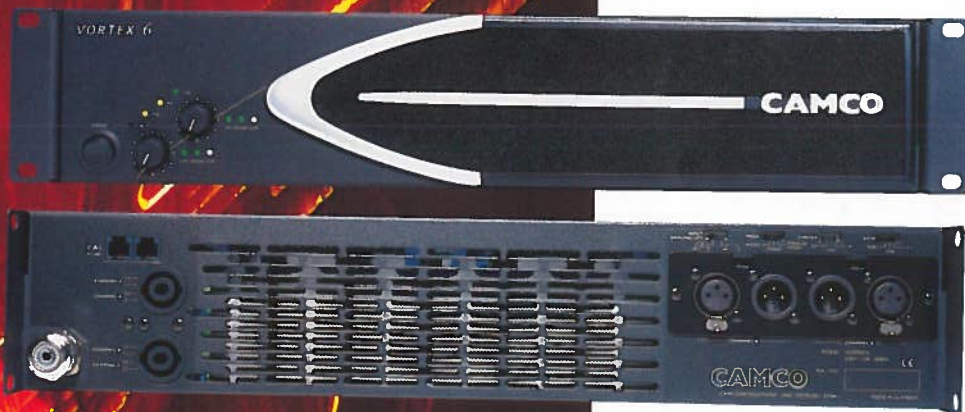
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