

Lighting & Sound INTERNATIONAL

March 1999

The Entertainment Technology Monthly

Making Music

- Sheffield's National Centre for Popular Music

Surgical Cuts

- the BBC's Holby City

Lord of the Rings

- Tolkien's fantasy in Berlin

Pure Entertainment

- Robbie Williams and Garbage

Passion & Betrayal

- Tosca at the Royal Albert Hall

Best of British

- The Brits at London Arena

PLASA

PROFESSIONAL LIGHTING
AND SOUND ASSOCIATION



423 PLASMA

*The flames of the falling meteor
turned night into day.*

*Whirling, twisting, threatening
to swallow all that came near.*



422 VORTEX



442 SCRATCHES

*The earth lay torn and savaged
by passing battles.*

*Primitive the carpet may be,
it covered the dirty floor well enough.*



441 WOVEN TEXTURE

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Lighting & Sound INTERNATIONAL

March 1999 Volume 14, Issue 3

Lighting & Sound International – published monthly by the Professional Lighting and Sound Association.

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CONTENTS

NEWS

International News Round Up 6

REGULARS

No Comment Tony Gottelier 50

Second Take John Watt 58

Asleep in the Stalls Ian Herbert 64

In Profile Steve Moles talks to video director Blue Leach 82

FEATURES

Ticket to the Stones 39-42

Steve Moles visits the The National Centre for Popular Music in Sheffield - the world's first interactive exhibition to celebrate contemporary music

Lord of the Rings 45-48

L&SI Special Report on a unique staging of Tolkien's epic fantasy adventure in Berlin

Surgical Cuts 53-56

Louise Stickland visits Elstree to link up with the crew working on the BBC's new medical drama Holby City

Entertain Me 61-63

Steve Moles has a night with the enfant terrible of British pop - Robbie Williams, and the thrill of his life with Garbage

Best of British 67-68

L&SI parties at The Brits

Passion & Betrayal 71-74

Opera purists are up in arms, not because Raymond Gubbay's production is not faithful to the spirit of Puccini, but because the staging flaunts its use of modern production techniques

DIRECTORY 75-79

INTERNATIONAL DIRECTORY 80

CLASSIFIED including full recruitment section 80-81

Lighting & Sound INTERNATIONAL

The magazine is available on annual subscription: UK £50.00.
Europe and rest of world £65.00 (US\$135.00) Airmail £90.00 (US\$135.00).
Single copy price £3.50 plus postage.

EDITOR Ruth Rosington - ruth@plasa.org
DEPUTY EDITOR Lee Baldock - lee@plasa.org
ASSOCIATE EDITOR Tony Gottelier
ADVERTISEMENT MANAGER Barry Howse - bam@plasa.org
PRODUCTION MANAGER Nicola Evenden - nicola@plasa.org
INTERNET MANAGER Jo Boyd - jo@plasa.org
SUBSCRIPTIONS Sheila Bartholomew - sheila@plasa.org
ADVERTISING CO-ORDINATOR Jane Cockburn - jane@plasa.org

Lighting & Sound International is published monthly for \$100.00 per year by The Professional Lighting and Sound Association, 38 St Leonards Road, Eastbourne, East Sussex BN21 3UT. Periodicals class postage paid at Rahway, NJ. Postmaster: Send USA address corrections to Lighting & Sound International, c/o Mercury Airfreight International Ltd, 365 Blair Road, Avenel, NJ, 07001.

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Published from the PLASA office:
38 St Leonards Road, Eastbourne, East Sussex
BN21 3UT England.
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Vari-Lite Serves Writ on Martin Pro

As promised, further details about the writ Vari-Lite has served on Martin Professional.

Vari-Lite International Inc has initiated a patent infringement action against Martin Gruppen A/S and Martin Professional A/S. The suit has been filed in the US Federal District Court of Sherman, Texas, and Vari-Lite is seeking damages, as well as an injunction, against distribution of Martin's MAC 500 spot luminaire, MAC 600 wash luminaire and the MAC 250 spot luminaire in the United States. Vari-Lite is charging that these products violate a patent held by Vari-Lite.

As the writ only relates to three products in the American market corresponding to no more than 10% of the company's sales, Martin Professional feel that the case will not negatively affect the company in any way other than costs associated with legal fees. "It is our - and our legal advisor's opinion - that this case is without real merit and that the patent in question is based on invalid grounds as stated by Vari-Lite." If, however, Vari-Lite decides to proceed with the case, it is expected to first reach court at the beginning of next year.

It's not that long since Vari-Lite International and High End Systems announced a preliminary settlement regarding their ongoing litigation relating to Vari-Lite patents. At the time both parties expressed a wish to put the lawsuit behind them.



PLASA Joins Training Initiative

PLASA, in conjunction with the PSA (Production Services Association), the AETTI (Arts & Entertainment Technical Training Initiative) and Loughborough College, has embarked on a joint BTEC training programme which should bring more than a dozen BTEC awards related to the live entertainment industry into existence before the end of the year.



BTECs are suited for people with a wide range of capabilities; Level 1 offers a basic entry level of training, while Levels 2 and 3 give current practitioners the opportunity to establish their level of competence. The awards consist of a classroom course followed by on-site practical assessment. The announcement of the joint scheme was made at the two-day AGM and conference of the PSA, which was held alongside the recent Live! Show (see full report, page 13).

Under the scheme, PLASA and the AETTI will assist in identifying training needs in their role as Principal Training Affiliates to the PSA and Loughborough College, who are responsible for structuring the courses. The launch of the new BTEC awards will provide a much-needed platform from which to raise standards within the live music and entertainment industry, and rationalise practices across the UK. The courses will cover areas including general awareness of being on an event site, lighting, moving lights, sound, video, pyrotechnics, special effects, staging, rigging, crowd control and stage production. The courses will initially be held at Loughborough, although it is planned to make them available across the country, according to demand.

Thankyou

Thanks for all the hundreds of letters, faxes, e-mails and calls in praise of the redesign of LESI. Being compared to Vogue was a little more flattering than we were aiming for, but we didn't mind the elevation! We still have many plans for the magazine over the coming months and to ensure that you continue to receive LESI, could you please complete and return the reader registration cards which were mailed with the magazine last month.

Please date, sign and return these to the address on page 5 as soon as possible - thanks.

This year the ABTT TRADE SHOW celebrates its 21st birthday. Artistic Licence are proud to announce that once again, they will sponsor the bar! In fact each visitor to our booth -which is also in the bar - will receive a free glass of beer!

In addition to the beer, we will be showing our wide range of products including: Virtual Lighting, PC Based DMX Control, Workshop Test Equipment, Tracking Backup and Motion Control.

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Illuminating Harrods

Harrods, the "Top People's store", London's largest department store and undoubtedly the capital's most famous shop, launched its 150th anniversary year with a visual spectacular, featuring a lighting and fireworks rooftop extravaganza, on Valentines Day.

The gauntlet of the highly challenging task of lighting Harrods for the occasion was thrown down to outdoor lighting and laser specialists Illuminatum. The distinctive skyline of Harrods features a large hollow decorative dome with porches on the roof. The structure looked stunning, illuminated from the outside in saturated red by 10 City Colors, and from the inside with contrasting white Pani beam lights and 4- and 8-lite Molefays. Blasting up into the sky beyond were four WWG RazorHead 7kW mega-searchlights, two 6.5kW Studio Due Dominator moonflower-style effects and several 12K HMI's. Lighting design was by Illuminatum's Mark Powell who operated the entire show from an Avolites Pearl console situated on the roof.



The get-in itself was galvanising for the Illuminatum crew which consisted of Mark Powell, Marcus Goddard and WWG's James Eade. It commenced on the Friday afternoon, with all equipment having to be hauled up to the roof via Harrods' service lifts, the larger pieces of kit being dismantled. It was then manoeuvred into the requisite positions, distributed across the huge roof expanse. On the Sunday night of the show, roof conditions were near freezing and tipping down with rain . . . but this didn't affect the performance of a superbly eye-catching show.

The 150th celebrations were launched by Harrods' owner and chairman, Mohamed Al Fayed, who made a speech to assembled Harrods directors and on-lookers at the front of the store on street

level. The end of his speech was greeted by a fanfare which also signalled the start of the fireworks display (all from devices rigged on the roof), produced by Le Maitre. This was followed by a 50-minute light show.

Harrods has staged special events before, but nothing as high profile or with as comprehensive a production as this.

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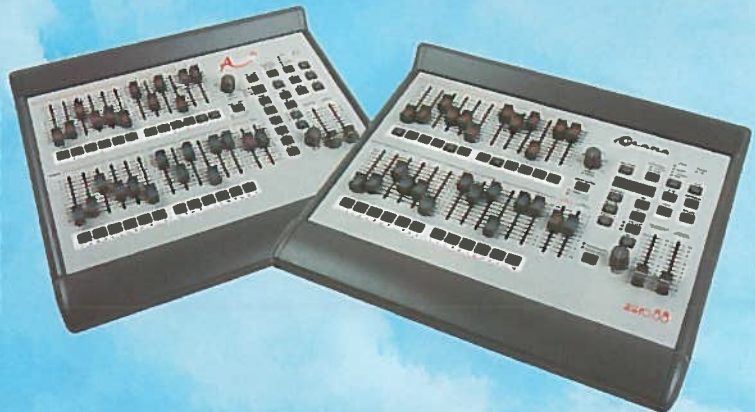
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High End Systems GmbH: Tel: 49.8122.9903-0, Fax: 49.8122.9903-33



Mackie in the UK

US professional audio manufacturer Mackie Designs Inc recently announced the creation of a new division - Mackie Designs UK - to create a better structure for the management of sales and marketing specifically in the UK and Ireland. The strategic move follows the company's acquisition last year of RCF Electronics.

Tony Williams, former managing director of Key Audio Systems (UK) will be responsible for Mackie's UK operations. Phil Price, managing director of RCF Electronics UK Ltd, commented: "I am delighted with the possibilities that this new Mackie division will offer. Tony's long association with Mackie will reinforce our total

commitment to the UK market and will allow the already well-established Mackie dealer base to work directly with Mackie as complete business partners."

Pictured are Phil Price (left) and Tony Williams of Mackie UK (centre) with Roy Wemyss of Mackie Designs Inc.



Motivforce Launch New Division

Performance development agency, Motivforce has launched a new specialist production division.

The new division will strengthen the company's ability to provide a one-stop-shop for corporate and live event organisers planning business theatre projects including product launches, conferences and exhibitions.

A strong team of production and event managers along with in-house producers will handle everything from concept design through to post-production review. All technical aspects of lighting, acoustics, AV, health and safety, entertainment and logistics will be produced and managed within the team at Motivforce, providing a comprehensive package for any aspect of business theatre.

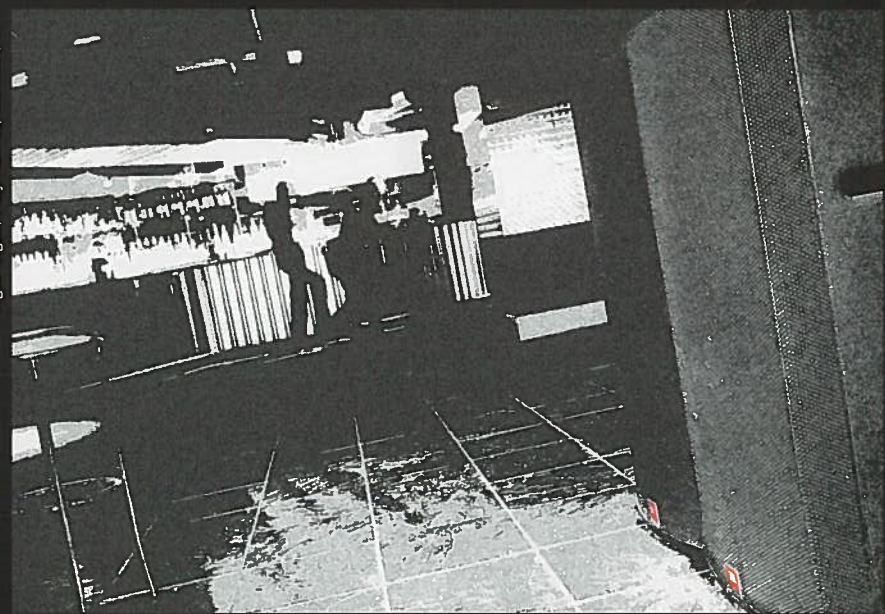
Hands-Free Testing

Whilst doing the rounds at the AC Lighting North Open Day (see separate report, page 37) Bob Hall of Anytronics drew L+S's editor to one side to highlight an interesting fax he had received from Gulf Prestige Systems based in Dubai.

The company is a regular client of Anytronics and wanted to know how much they had to spend to get a free Anytest One DMX tester from the Horndean-based manufacturer since somebody had stolen their own DMX tester. As the penalty for theft in the United Arab Emirates is the removal of the said guilty party's hands, Bob Hall of Anytronics is delighted that somebody was prepared to take the risk...

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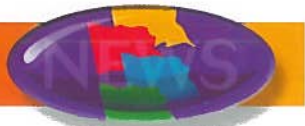
However our research has shown that this effect is due entirely to pretty pink writing on the side of the units.



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Live! Show & Awards

The 1999 Live! Show kick-started the international exhibition season with visitor attendance up 33% on last year.

Located for the first year in the West Hall at Alexandra Palace, the show layout mirrored the in-the-round format that proved successful at The Roundhouse. Light & Sound Design constructed the central bar area that served as the social hub of the show.



PCM's John Jones (centre) presents a cheque for £2,500 to the PSA Welfare Fund. Pictured left is Rick Wakeman and right, Brian Croft of VLPS

Several important product launches took place, including that of the latest automated luminaires from High End Systems, the Studio Color and Studio Spot 250. Midas showed their brand new Heritage 3000 mixing console for the first time in the UK, and Martin Professional reveal their new MAC 300 wash fixture. Numerous other high profile exhibitors were showing new kit, including Soundcraft, Pulsar/Clay Paky, PCM, Allen & Heath, LMC Audio, VLPS, Cadac, et al.

The Show was accompanied by other major events organised by bodies involved in the live industry. These included the PSA (Production Services association) two-day AGM and conference, attended by over 120 people. Key legislative issues such as the new Structural Engineers Guidelines, the revised Pop Code and the LOLER regulations were all addressed.

The PSA, in conjunction with PLASA (The Professional Lighting & Sound Association) and The AETTI (Arts & Entertainments Technical Training Initiative) launched their BTEC training programme which is already in progress. Some 15-20 BTEC awards relating to the live entertainment industry are expected to be on-stream by the end of the year.

The PSA also officially launched their Welfare and Benevolent Fund at the Show. A donation cheque for £2,500 from PCM, the UK distributors of Columbus McKinnon Lodestar hoists, was

presented at The LIVE Awards to the PSA. This initiated a sponsorship programme for the Fund that involves a donation of £10 for every Lodestar hoist ordered in the UK through PCM.

The ALD (Association of Lighting Designers) chose the Show to hold their Conference and Seminar. This was well attended by people from all facets of the live and performing arts industry, including a strong contingent from LIPA (The Liverpool Institute of Performing Arts). The seminar addressed how lighting designers with theatrical backgrounds could utilise their creative and design skills in other areas of entertainment and presentation.

The Soundcraft Monitoring Masterclasses, a ticketed event which was an extension of the Going Live series, were completely sold out. This represented a major new initiative, highlighting the art of monitor engineering.

The 1999 Live! Awards at The Royal Lancaster Hotel paid tribute to some of the most successful people, products and services to the live production and events industry over the last 12 months. Nearly 1000 high-spirited individuals crammed into the central London venue to see the presentation of 35 awards covering all aspects of the live industry by Rick Wakeman, and naturally, to party on and indulge all night!

Live! Awards

PLASA Members dominated the Award-winners at the recent Live! Show. BSS Audio picked up the Silver award for New Audio Product for SoundWeb, New Lighting Product awards went to Martin Professional (Gold) for the Trackpod, Avolites (Silver) for the Focus Finder and WWG (Silver) for the Razorhead. Lighting Fixture Awards went to Clay Paky's Stage Line (Gold), High End Systems' Studio Spot (Silver) and Vari-Lite's VL7 (Silver).

Avolites won Gold and Silver in the Lighting Console category, for the Diamond III and

Sapphire 2000 respectively; the other Silver award went to ETC's Obsession II. The FOH Console awards went to Amek's Recall RN (Gold), Soundcraft's Series 5 (Silver), and Allen & Heath's GL2200 (Silver); monitor console awards went to Soundcraft's Series 5 Monitor (Gold) and Midas' XL250 (Silver).

Brilliant Stages won the Gold Set Fabrication Award, and Litstructures and Total Fabrications the Silver. Wigwam received Silver for Audio Production Company of the Year, whilst Bandit Lites picked up Gold for Lighting Production Company of the Year and Sreenco received Silver for Video Production Company of the Year.

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Maltbury Launch



Staging specialist Maltbury has announced the launch of its manufacturing division, which sees the company take control of the manufacture of the steel frames for its products: *Steeldeck 7.5*, *MetroDeck*, and a new product to be launched at ABTT this spring.

Maltbury's managing director Philip Sparkes (pictured) commented: "Bringing manufacturing in-house is great news, not only for Maltbury, but for all our customers too. We can now cater for those clients with a greater need for custom-made work, have greater control over the quality of our products and maintain competitive prices."

Expansion Forces Orbital to Move

Expansion has forced theatre and conference audio facilities company Orbital to vacate their Clapham base for a new HQ in Brixton. Celebrating their fifth year - and fired by the success of the long-running West End musical *Chicago* - Orbital have purchased the freehold at 57 Acre Lane, London SW2 5TN.

"We have moved from 5,000sq.ft in Plough Road to a four storey Victorian building which offers us 13,000sq.ft," explained managing director Chris Headlam.

"This gives us the facility to expand in terms of both our human resource and stock, with three times the amount of warehousing space. At the same time, it keeps us in touch with the West End and allows us to offer the best possible service to our clients, with increased prep and work space."

Mindful of the fact that the vast majority of leading-edge audio equipment uses extremely advanced electronics or computer control, the 1,200sq.ft sub-ground level has been earmarked as a state-of-the-art technical support area for London's theatre industry. This will be developed during the spring.

Orbital (UK) +44 171-501 6868.

Databeat Advance

Sound Management Services have launched the latest Databeat digital music system for licensed premises, retail and leisure outlets.

The computerised system provides appropriately-branded music and video, as well as point-of-sale advertising and product information. The system uses advances in hard disk capabilities and data compression to dispense with external devices such as CD autochangers and video players. All the data is now stored on the hard disk, and the Databeat software filters the available audio, video and graphic information according to a pre-determined program.

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You must be qualified to at least ONC/HNC standard in Sound Engineering or Electronics, computer literate and fully conversant with Microsoft Office and knowledgeable of Desk Top Publishing. You will be expected to take responsibility for the engineering of customer solutions from concept design to implementation and installation. Working closely with internal sales and marketing team, you will handle complex installation projects including the co-ordination of equipment.

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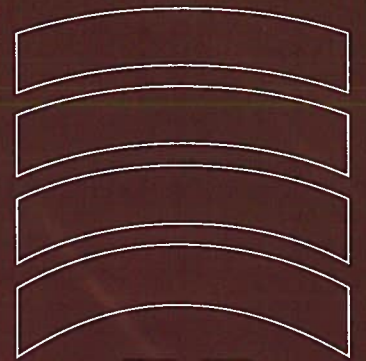
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A Sign of the Times



Coca-Cola calls it the 'non-neon revolution' and the 'billboard of the future', while London design house Sedley Place has called it 'Street Vision'. But whatever you want to call it, the new Coca-Cola sign that you can now see in London's Piccadilly Circus has ushered in a new era in outdoor advertising.

The date-, time-, weather- and light-sensitive sign comprises three elements: still gobo image, moving video display and a motorised shutter carrying the traditional painted version of the sign, with each element selected according to environmental conditions.

Lead consultant and design house Sedley Place commissioned Vision Re to work with it on the

three-year project. The system was developed by Paul Simson of Enliten for AV and control systems integrator Vision Re. Coca-Cola provided the artwork and Enliten used a detailed line-up grid from DHA Lighting, plus digital photography, to generate the exact size details of the projection screens.

For the gobo projection, 36 specially-created dichroic Spectrumgobos from Rosco were used, projected by 36 cool-running ETC Source Four luminaires - each with specially-adapted 42° beam angle lens tubes to suit the projection distance - onto a matrix of 9 x 4 rear-projection screens. The Source Fours feature a 9,000-hour architectural lamp developed for the fixture by Enliten and each Source Four is accurately fixed in its position by means of specially-designed brackets developed by Vision Re's engineers. Rosco tiled the artwork into components for each of the 36 screens, and each piece of the 'jigsaw' was imaged and produced as a single gobo. At night, the Barco video projectors come to life and the video is back-projected onto each screen. The projectors are constantly monitored and if a fault develops, the system automatically switches to the gobo projection until the correction can be made. The beauty of the video format, however, lies with the famously changeable English weather: when the wind blows above a certain strength, the sign can be seen to flutter in the breeze, and when it rains, droplets can be seen running down its surface.

The launch of the new sign was marked with a global blackout of other Coca-Cola signs and a light show. VLPS provided lighting designer Simon Anderson with 10 VL5Arc luminaires: eight were used on a circular truss suspended above the new sign, whilst the remaining two were used to back light the truss.

Ministry's Bar - Ministry of Sound is looking to the regions for the first time with the launch of The Ministry of Sound bar at a former church site in Birmingham. The bar will be opened in April this year, and the music policy will be based around the Ministry's club nights such as Rulin', Move and Frisky. The venue has been designed by Keith Hobbs of United Designers, who gave London the Met Bar and the Titanic.

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Changing Names



In the early part of this year Action Lighting Manchester changed its name to Lighting Technology. To re-launch the new office, Lighting Technology gathered a number of suppliers, reading like a who's who of lighting and associated entertainment technology, into a huge marquee in Salford.



Above, part of the Manchester team, inset, David Morgan of Lighting Technology (left) with Julie Harper and Louise Robson-Tester of DHA

With pies, gravy and Boddingtons for sustenance, customers and suppliers came from far and wide to celebrate the new image and name. On display at the **Cerebrum** stand was the full pro range of Rainbow colour changers and MA Lighting's range of consoles, including the recently launched grand MA. **Zero 88** was exhibiting its collection of low-end products for the education and small theatre market. On display was the Level Plus Series, **Elara** and **Alcora**.

ELX was showing the Selecon range of luminaires including the MSR, launched at LDI '98. Next door at **Doughty** were a number of trigger clamps, which also had their first showing at LDI '98. **Lightfactor Sales** was showing the LightProcessor range of lighting control kit including the Paradime Digital Dimmer and Q-Commander console.

Le Maitre exhibited its range of smoke machines, pyrotechnics and theatre effects, including air cannons and magician's illusions. Also on show was its Neutron Pro Hazer which won the TCI award for best lighting product at LDI '98. **MAD Lighting** was showing its full range, from entry level product using halogen light source, through to the Q-Scan range.

ARRI was showing its range of Tungsten and HMI film and studio lights. The centrepiece was their 12kW Par lamp, which was recently used to illuminate an entire ship a mile out at sea. **DHA** had a strong presence at the entrance to the marquee showing a range of moving effects, controllers, fibre optic light sources and just some of its 900 different gobos.

Rosco was exhibiting a huge range of products for the theatre, club and television markets. Of particular interest was Colorcoat, a new durable

water-borne acrylic enamel for use on most surfaces. Also of prominence were Permacolor glass filters. **Lee Filters** was interested in talking with lighting designers having just launched its designer range, a new series of 13 filters, each designed at the Lee Filters factory by lighting designers. 60 new gobo designs were also on show. The main piece from **CCT Lighting** was its Freedom 800W Reflector Optic, part of a range developed to be flexible. Also being shown was the Silhouette MSR discharge lamp range for architectural applications.

James Thomas showed its range of trussing and Pars, whilst at **ETC**, **Nigel Sadler** was demonstrating the Express LPC (Lighting Playback Controller) first launched at last year's PLASA, as well as the Source Four Zoom, also launched there. In a hazy corner, **JEM's** Jon Petts, was successfully demonstrating the Stage-Hazer, which recently went into production at the company's manufacturing plant in Lincolnshire.

The Color Kinetics range was being demonstrated by **Lighting Technology's** own Graham Thomas demonstrating the TIR (Total Internal Reflection) Light Pipe, which is currently being installed on Canary Wharf. Also on show were the Irideon AR5, the AR500 architectural exterior colourwash luminaire and the AR6 recessed luminaire.

Overall, the support from both customers and suppliers was phenomenal. As well as those exhibiting, support was also shown by the attendance of **GE, Phillips, Osram** and **Strand**.

The change of name at Action Lighting is intended to formalise the business relationship between the Lighting Technology London office and Action Lighting in Manchester. The Manchester office has been acting as the northern branch of Lighting Technology and offers the same range of equipment and services as its London counterpart.

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- Fast strobing shutter, up to 23 Hz
- Full-range mechanical dimmer

Pan and Tilt

- Pan = 540°
- Tilt = 289°
- Automatic pan/tilt correction feedback system

Light source

- Philips MSD 250/2 lamp
- 250W, 6500K, 3180 lumen
- 2000 hours rated life

Optics

- Highly efficient optical system with precision coated lenses
- Ellipsoidal aluminium reflector
- User-configurable lens system
- Standard 17° focused beam angle
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- Remotely controlled motorized focus

Control

- Standard DMX 512 and Martin RS-485 protocols
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- Modular, service friendly construction

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- Preprogrammed variable or random color effects (incl. Color Bump and Color Spin)
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- Preprogrammed variable or random strobe and dimmer pulse effects
- Combined rotating prism/rotating gobos macros
- 3-speed random color change
- Addressing, 3 personality settings and effects calibration via LED control panel or serial link
- Readout of lamp and fixture usage, DMX values
- Comprehensive maintenance and testing menus
- Remote lamp on/off
- Easy software updating over the serial link with the MPBBT Uploader Box

Rigging and Handling

- Ergonomic carrying handles
- Mounts horizontally or vertically with 1 or 2 clamps or with bolts (fixed installations)
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- Height, head horizontal : 460 mm (18 in)
- Weight (without clamp) : 21 Kg (46 lb)

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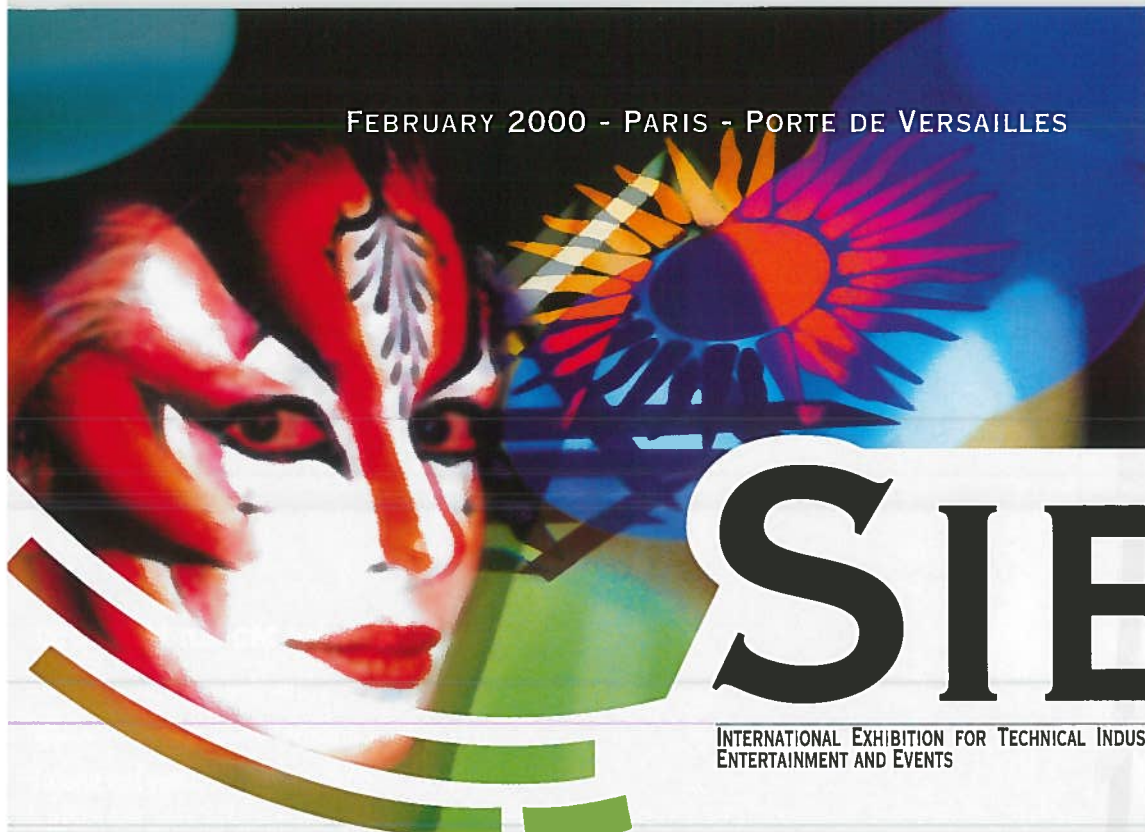
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Nd:YAG Lights London Skyline

The streets of Notting Hill and Ladbroke Grove saw the evening sky turn green for two hours on March 3rd with the launch of the world's most powerful display laser. Recently purchased from



America by Laser Grafix for the forthcoming Millennium events, the 200W laser diode array-pumped Nd:YAG laser system had crowds and cars stopping in the streets.

Paul Ballard of Laser Grafix positioned the Yag laser five storeys up on the roof of Peters and Beach Event Production in West London and once the launch began reports fed in of people seeing it as far away as Crystal Palace. Tests in the US have shown that the beams can be visible up to 50 miles away.

Live '99 - The Music Show

Sound Control and Mammoth Events have announced the return of a music making show in Scotland.

The show will have many major names exhibiting and will feature live performances and interactive seminars. DJs and Remixers can visit the Groove Centre, chock full of the latest decks, samplers and mixers, and meet some of the leading deck-meisters in the country. Most importantly, visitors will be able to see the latest technology from a range of manufacturers and participate in hands on clinics with celebrity PAs. Sound Control Live '99 - The Music Show is on Saturday 29th and Sunday 30th May 1999, 10am - 5pm each day. Tickets cost £5.00/£4.00 concessions.

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No Vision - Just a quick update to our feature on Rod Stewart in the February issue. The screen supplied by Screenco was a SACO Smartvision screen and not a Serco product as stated. Apologies to all.

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Company Sued for Deafening Party-Goer

When club, lighting, sound and staging company ABC Entertainments supplied a mobile disco to a party in January 1995, they couldn't have imagined the consequences. The company, based in Mill Hill, London, were sued for deafening a person attending the party. The plaintiff claimed £25,000 in damages, plus costs, which, had she been successful, could have cost the company well over £50,000.

ABC had supplied a sound system consisting of two Bose 802 speakers, a further pair of Bose 302 speakers and an OMP MXF 900 (910W RMS) amplifier. The plaintiff's case was that as she walked past a speaker, the music was suddenly turned on and thus deafened her. However, she recently dropped the action during the proceedings at Milton Keynes County Court

after testimony from ABC Entertainments' expert witness Andrew Colthurst of Stranger Science & Environment, an audio expert, previously employed as an environmental health officer.

Colthurst testified that during testing, the highest sound level he achieved with the speakers was 118dB peak and 103dBlaq. He went on to note that all guidelines state that 140dB peak is the starting point of concern and the equipment supplied by ABC was not capable of producing these levels. The plaintiff also included her former employers (CPM), party organisers (Unique Production & Design), ABC's agent (Hamiltons) and party sponsors (Mars) in the action. In withdrawing from the case, the plaintiff was ordered to pay costs to ABC and the other defendants, but ABC are still currently trying to retrieve these costs. As ABC weren't insured at the time, they have had to cover the costs of their own legal bill which, to date, has amounted to £20,000.

EAW KF700

EAW have launched the new EAW KF700 Series - the first three-way concert touring array modules that act as a true point source, according to the company. The key to the development is Acoustical Singularity Technology, which creates a unified space/time origin over the entire audible spectrum, eliminating temporal smearing. The series builds on the advances made by the KF850 series, which reduced interaction between arrayed modules on the horizontal plane, and brings the same level of control to the vertical plane.

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Millennium

You can find out more about the plans for the Millennium Dome at Greenwich by logging in to the website at www.dome2000.co.uk. The site contains details of the brief for the Dome, the current building programme, what will feature in the 14 zones, the plans for the Millennium Show and the national programme of events organised by the Millennium Experience planned around the UK

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www.kisstheguy.com
4. Gearhouse's new website is a one-stop shop guide to the company.
www.g-media.com
5. The patent office on-line has full details on patents, intellectual property, special projects, legal discussions and commercial searches.
www.patent.gov.uk

Make sure you also visit the PLASA website where there's a host of information on the entertainment technology industry.
www.plasa.org.uk

5

PLASA Show Forum

The Professional Lighting and Sound Association (PLASA) has introduced a new Exhibitor Forum aimed at expanding the domestic and international audiences to the PLASA Show.

The significant growth of the Show and the diversification of its appeal, has led to the need for a more formal channel of feedback from exhibitors to the PLASA Executive Committee. The Forum has been created to actively encourage a broad span of opinion on the future strategic development of the Show, and consists of exhibitors from all sectors.

The 1999 Show will run between the 5th and 8th September and is regarded as the leading international exhibition for entertainment, leisure and

environmental technology professionals. At the PLASA Show in 1998, 324 exhibitors and 13,574 visitors attended - 22% of which were from overseas.

PLASA aims to open the floor to constructive suggestions which will enable the PLASA Committee to make informed decisions about both the future direction of the Show, and allied to this, the future role of the Association.

The long term aim of the Forum is to make sure that the PLASA Show increases its quality audience and maintains its worldwide focus as the launchpad of the industry. The first meeting was deemed to be a great success by all attendees.

Matthew Griffiths, managing director of PLASA, was keen to emphasise the long-term view: "We want to make sure that our

visitors and exhibitors get the best out of being at the Show, and the Exhibitor Forum is an ideal place to listen and act upon the key issues." The second meeting of the Forum takes place on May 11th where the first stage of the new marketing initiatives will be discussed.

Members of the Forum are: Brenda Dunsire (ADB), Richard Wear (Celestion), Amanda Webster (Dataton), Simon Curtis (Denon), Fred Foster (ETC), Mick Hannaford (Lightfactor Sales), Paul de Ville (Lighting Technology), Rick Wilson (Le Maitre), Paul Hinkly (LMC), Ian Kirby (Martin Professional), Nigel Cunningham (Metro Audio), Justin Gawne (Mondiale), Damon Crisp (Numark UK), Alison Brett (Soundcraft), Alan Wick (Turbosound) and Bryan Raven (White Light).

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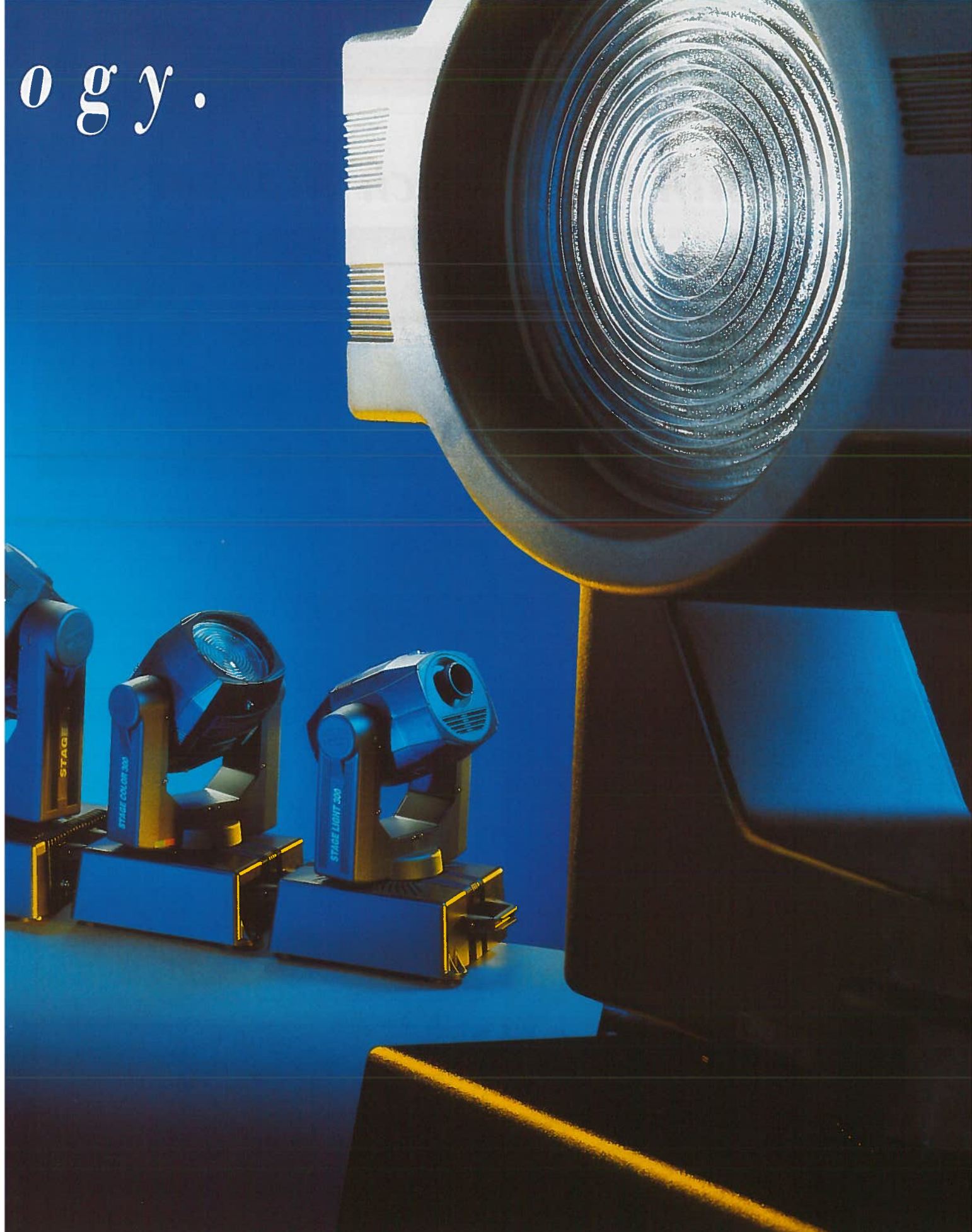
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SIEL Within the French Market

True to form, the seventeenth SIEL event in Paris in February was busy, noisy and colourful with 26,560 visitors through the doors over the four days of the show - the largest number in the show's history. The event organisers, Reed OIP in Paris, are working hard to turn the show into a more international event as the French market is rapidly shaking off its closed shop past, opening up the possibilities for foreign manufacturers to gain a foothold.

Since the emergence of digital technology, the French appear to have accepted that whilst their venue and event industries are burgeoning, they are lacking French-designed and manufactured equipment to serve them. Enter the rest of the world. In all probability, however, five years down the line, France will have gone some way to rectifying this situation, once again choosing French products over others. Which means that the next few years will be crucial for foreign companies aiming to make their mark in France.




Of course, the show is, and will always be, primarily a national event; however, the international visitor statistics over the past two years suggest that Reed's efforts to open up the overseas visitor profile are starting to pay off. The official audited figure for international visitors is not yet available, but first indications are that there has been an increase of over 11% on last year's figure of 1,800. Talking to some of the British

PLASA's UK Missioners (from left to right). David Wilkins (Lancelyn), Paul McCallum (Wembley), Mark Thompson (SES), Nigel Stewardson (DTI), Bill Trent (Reed), Leon Pieters (Ampetronic), Anna Pillow (PLASA), David Mayo (Unusual), Mike Smyth (Northern Light) and Alex Livingstone (British Embassy - Paris).

exhibitors, it still seems that the show's greatest strength lies in the fact that it is THE launchpad into the vast potential of the French market. Research carried out by Reed makes interesting reading.

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The 1999 show was grouped into three sections. The show was originally very much theatre-based, broadening out to encompass disco/club, and this year for the first time a new Event Section was created. Of the three sectors, club was by far the busiest (and loudest), with theatre and event sectors also well attended. Ironically, the quietest stands seemed to be the audio distributors.

Whilst all the big names were present, including Clay Paky, Le Maltre, CCT, Artistic Licence, Pulsar, Avolites, Anytronics, Turbosound, SCV, Zero 88, Optiknetics and Allen & Heath, virtually all were on distributors' stands. The handful there in their own right included Blackout, AC Lighting, CM, MartIn Professional France/JEM Smoke, Lighting Technology, ETC Audiovisuel, and Hardware for Xenon. So what new products did they bring to SIEL?

Hardware for Xenon showed off its eye-catching new inflatable balloon with 7000W rear-projection system inside it. A hemispherical image is projected onto the surface of the balloon with Hardware for Xenon's new hemispheric lens. Also being demonstrated was a new 77mm high definition lens which enables the user to achieve an image of 20 metres wide at a 10 metre throw, while still complying with the normal ISO 2910 with regard to luminous distribution standards.

Mad Lighting majored on its new IMP family of projectors. The IMP 2.6 scanning projector is aimed primarily at the retail and architectural markets and features an on-board controller, six interchangeable E size gobos, a separate colour wheel with six colours and clear, Fresnel soft edge flood, and an optional wired remote DMX controller. Also on show in prototype form was the Slide IMP intended for retail applications - the full range should be on sale by the end of the year.

AC Lighting introduced its new M-range units to the Chroma-Q range of colour changers. The new units retain all the original Chroma-Q features, but fit a much wider range of fixtures.

Lighting Technology unveiled its Image Plus MKII - the first in a new family of projectors for Par 16 cans, which offers both metal and glass gobo projection with framing facilities. Also making its debut was the Color Kinetics range of full spectrum digital lighting fixtures.

Siel also saw the first ever collaborative offering from three of the industry's most respected service companies, **Edwin Shirley Staging**, **Stacco** and **Screenco**. This unusual combination forged new links last year largely as a result of the involvement of ESS in France's biggest selling rock show of the year; two sell-out concerts by Johnny Halliday at the Stade de France in Paris.

French-based **Case** brought their own brand of originality to the proceedings with their attempt to make sound visible. The software, Eureka 3-D, produces sound generated animated 3D images transforming in time to the music on a plasma screen. Most probable applications would be in the club realm.

New from **ETC Audiovisuel** was the PIGI Rotating Double Scroller, a projector with a head that can move from horizontal to vertical scrolling and create rotating effects. The head is free to rotate through 360 degrees with a limitless number of rotations.

AVAB Transtechnik demonstrated its new Solaris model - reputed to be the only completely modular lighting console in the world. The modular concept helps to eliminate the usual problems associated with expansions, modifications and reinstallations.

MartIn Professional France, exhibiting with **JEM**, launched its MAC 300 yoke-mounted washlight. Using the same ballasts and yokes as the MAC 600 it is fitted with a 250W MSD lamp.

Artistic Licence staged a world premiere through its distributor ESL with its No Worries rackable real-time back-up unit which provides eight hours of storage for consoles with memory and automated projectors.



PLASA's Anna Pillow with Phil Price (RCF), John Lethbridge (Cerebrum Lighting) and Andy Blackwell (Dial).

French manufacturer, **RVE Technologie**, presented its new range of theatre luminaires. This included Profils 1000W and 2000W with three or four lenses with single/double optic condenser, and Fresnel 1000W and 2000W which come equipped with 150mm or 200mm lenses and one cutter. Also on show for the first time was RVE's Hydra 250 channel lighting desk, available in two versions - one for stage and one for moving lights.

The Italians hosted this year's Country of Honour Pavilion highlighting their ancient traditions of theatre and architecture with Comedia del Arte masks and white classical pillars offset against examples of very modern stage lighting and sound equipment.

Whilst the display was certainly elegant and tasteful, it was also rather static. This provided a useful pointer to the Professional Lighting and Sound Association's UK missioners at SIEL as to how they should approach the Country of Honour Pavilion when the UK hosts it next year.

The missioners (pictured) felt that the only really effective way to show the equipment to its best effect and pull in the crowds would be to put it to work in the context of a live show. The UK Pavilion promises to be a true spectacular, and will receive active support from PLASA, the DTI and Reed OIP to ensure its success.

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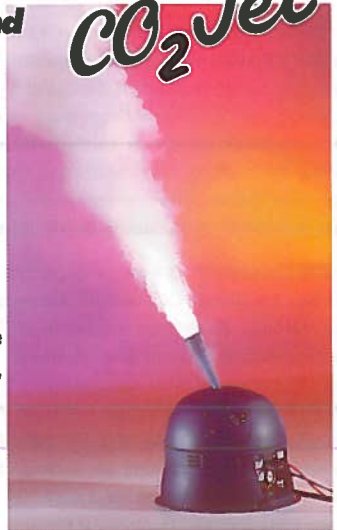
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People News

Sound Dept have appointed **Mike Case** to supervise sales of Crest professional amplification and mixing consoles in the UK. Case has extensive experience of the pro audio industry, having previously been national sales director for German processing company, Behringer, and prior to that sales manager with UK mixer manufacturer, Amek.



Mike Case

Tony Kingsley, formerly of Multiform, has joined Ambient Lighting Ltd in St Neots as managing director. The company is working with interior designers and architects to promote a range of lighting products, majoring on the AVR Colourmaster colour changing system. Ambient is also involved in sound, one of its key products being the Wharfedale Loudpanel.

White Light has appointed **Peter Threadgold** and **Mark Beasley** to its sales team. Threadgold joins after a brief spell with the Gearhouse Group of companies and four years with Cerebrum Lighting. Beasley will be moving to White Light after four years with Rosco. Blitz Vision is expanding its Manchester operation and has appointed **Ian Riley**, who has 15 years' experience in the presentation industry, as operations manager. **Lee Bradshaw**, who has a proven track record in project management in live events throughout Europe, takes on the role of project manager, and **Roger Davies** joins as customer productions manager.

Steve Gunn has joined Metro Audio as UK sales manager. Gunn worked as chief engineer (and later international sales manager) with Trident Audio, followed by a lengthy period as sales manager with Soundcraft. He then spent several years with HHB before joining TL Audio. His immediate priority at Metro will be to consolidate and support the company's UK dealer network, and to launch the new PMZ88 DSP 8x8 programmable matrix mixer/zoner. **David Homewood** ('Woody'), former head of MAC support at Martin Professional UK, has now formed Woody's Lighting Services, providing technical support to the lighting industry.

Vertigo Rigging has added to its management team. **Kevin Lamacq**, a freelance rigger and crew chief for the past three years, has now gone full-time with Vertigo. He is currently engaged in overseeing RUG's Jesus Christ Superstar UK tour. AC Lighting Ltd has appointed **Jason Pope** to the team of technical support staff at their UK headquarters in High Wycombe. Pope, who takes up the position of technical service engineer, comes from the theme park industry having previously worked at Thorpe Park in Surrey and, most recently, at Legoland, in Berkshire. **Gary Smith** has been appointed UK sales manager at Turbosound. Smith brings with him considerable audio sales experience, including several years at the Professional Audio Group. His first project will be to restructure the UK dealership.

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Restoration Theatre

The Theatres Trust has published 'Encore - Strategies for Theatre Renewal' written by Judith Strong, author of 'The Arts Council Guide to Building for the Arts'.

The book details the histories of a number of theatres all built before 1938 which have, at some point, either closed or been threatened with closure. They range from the tiny 200-seat Georgian Theatre in Richmond, North Yorkshire to the 2,300 seat Mayflower Theatre in Southampton and from the Lancaster Footlight Club's Grand Theatre used for amateur productions to the Edinburgh Festival Theatre, refurbished to take international tours. The book also carries a chapter on theatre management and economics written by Paul Iles, former theatre manager at the Blackpool Grand and Edinburgh Festival theatres which gives detailed information on the costs involved in running a theatre.

To order the book, price £12.00, contact the Theatres Trust in London on +44 (171) 836 8591.



Quartzcolor Kicks In

Strand recently launched the new Quartzcolor range. The company have made a multi-million pound investment to research and develop a new family of luminaires. The new and extended Quartzcolor range, aimed at cameramen, directors of photography, gaffers and television studios, has been designed completely from scratch - rather than having evolved from a pre-existing range.

Throughout the entire range, the key design principles are specifically-produced lenses and reflectors, ease of maintenance, commonality of parts and body profile and a durability which will make it reliably roadworthy. The company will produce an entire range of luminaires for every application in the key markets, including Daylights PARs and HMI Fresnels (from 200W to 12kW for large film sets) and tungsten Fresnel luminaires (from 500W to 12kW) for the Studio and Bambino lines. This represents no less than 23 new products. The HMI range begins with the HMI 200W and moves incrementally to the HMI 6kW. For the Daylight PARS, the purpose lens and reflector design in this series - which also uses single-ended lamps - has revolutionised their light output. A new range of Tungsten Bambino and Studio Fresnels is scheduled for release later in 1999.

Strand (UK) +44 181 571 3588

Tyneside Music Centre

The city of Gateshead is finalising its proposal for a £60million riverside Music Centre overlooking the Tyne which is expected to attract up to 500,000 visitors a year. The new Music Centre, which will feature a 1,650-seat concert hall, a 400-seat multi-purpose hall and a music school, is part of a £100 million plus scheme to create an international visual and musical centre of excellence in the North East. If the venue is successful in attracting Arts Council funding, it will become the base for the Northern Sinfonia orchestra and is slated to open in 2002.

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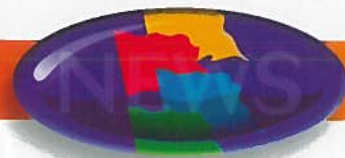
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ESP Celebrates Ten Years

Established in late 1988 by David Stressing and Ann Brodhurst, ESP has since grown to become one of the leading solution providers in the entertainment industry.

Following its merger in late 1998 with CSL Event Management, ESP has now moved to its new 10,000sq.ft manufacturing and production house, with new offices and a stock holding valued at over £1 million. ESP continues as sole UK distributor for MobilTech truss and stand products, RVE dimmers and Diafora colour changers. In addition, it also sells and distributes Martin Professional, Optikinetics and Rosco products, amongst others. More recently it has vastly expanded its stocks of sound equipment and its appointment as distributor of both the Court range of speakers, and MC2 amplifiers, reflect this. This month sees ESP's portable ice floor in use again, this time at Wembley Arena for a two week run of the ice show Holiday on Ice. Other areas of ESP's work include the manufacture of its own range of snow machines, as well as standard dry hire of its vast stock of equipment.

PR man David Neale, a familiar face to many in the industry, is deserting the soft life of South London to ride a bicycle across Borneo. Neale, who can usually be found attending busy client meetings in local hostelrys, has signed up to cycle across Borneo in April for the charity Sense. He told L&S: "The reason I and others are doing this is to raise money for Sense. They work with people who are deaf and blind, which I feel is an appropriate cause to support."

Neale's initial target is £2,000, but he hopes to raise a good deal more. He added: "I have written to several in the industry and their response has been great, but we could still do with more sponsorship."

David Neale (UK) +44 171-801 0223

Technical Department at LTP

Jerry Singleton and Kevin Hill, formerly of The Technical Department Ltd, have now set up shop within the Lighting Technology Group. LT Projects has acquired much of the stock of the old company and invested in new equipment so that as a new division of LTP, the new Technical Department will continue to provide a high quality specialist mains rental service to the exhibition and conference industries across Europe.

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AC Open Day

AC Lighting's Northern office held a two-day mini trade show at the Lawrence Batley Theatre in Huddersfield on the 24th and 25th February. The event, which drew up to 150 people a day from across the Northern UK and Scotland, provided the perfect platform from which to highlight the expansion and relocation of AC's Northern office to Leeds.

The new office, which is run by Jonathan Walters (manager) and Adam Beaumont, will carry a full range of products and consumables, including a large stock of Rosco and Lee gels. It will also have its own showroom where visitors can trial the Jands Echelon, Wholehog II and Chroma-Qs, alongside other products fed from the High Wycombe stock.

Many of the manufacturers whose products are distributed by AC were at the Open Days to lend their support, including Lee Filters, Anytronics, Le Maitre, Lane Lighting, Rosco, Jem, CCT, Zero 88, PCM, James Thomas and DHA. Alongside these was a full range of exclusive AC Lighting products from manufacturers such as Jands, Flying Pig Systems, Cast Lighting and Reel EFX. To widen the appeal of the event, a series of side events also took place including a shoot-out of the new-style 575/600W

Sound Dept Restructure

Sound Dept became an independent operation in late January following a management buy-out from parent company Stage Electrics, who acquired the business in 1993. Managing director Steve Smith, formerly a minority shareholder, is leading the buy-out, which includes three new board members - financial director Peter Nicholls, and executive directors Francis Williams and Sasha Sitkovetsky.

"We are now on our own as independent distributors, and are no longer aligned with a company who may have been perceived as competitors by some of our customers," commented Steve Smith. The break has been entirely amicable and the ongoing goodwill with Stage Electrics is confirmed by a £300,000 investment which they have made in a Crest/EAW rig for their own production work.

Stage Electrics owner David Whitehead added his confirmation stating: "We wish to concentrate on hiring professional audio equipment to the entertainment industry rather than being a distributor for manufacturers. We will continue to invest further in updating our existing sound and pro audio equipment for hire."

Ellipsoidal spotlights and competitions to dismantle and rebuild CM Lodestar motors,

Pictured right, members of the AC Lighting team together with representatives from the large number of manufacturers present in Huddersfield, toasting the new office.



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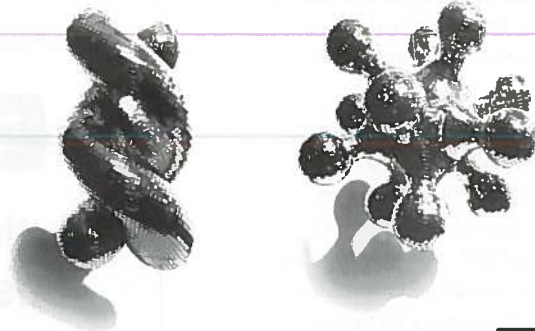
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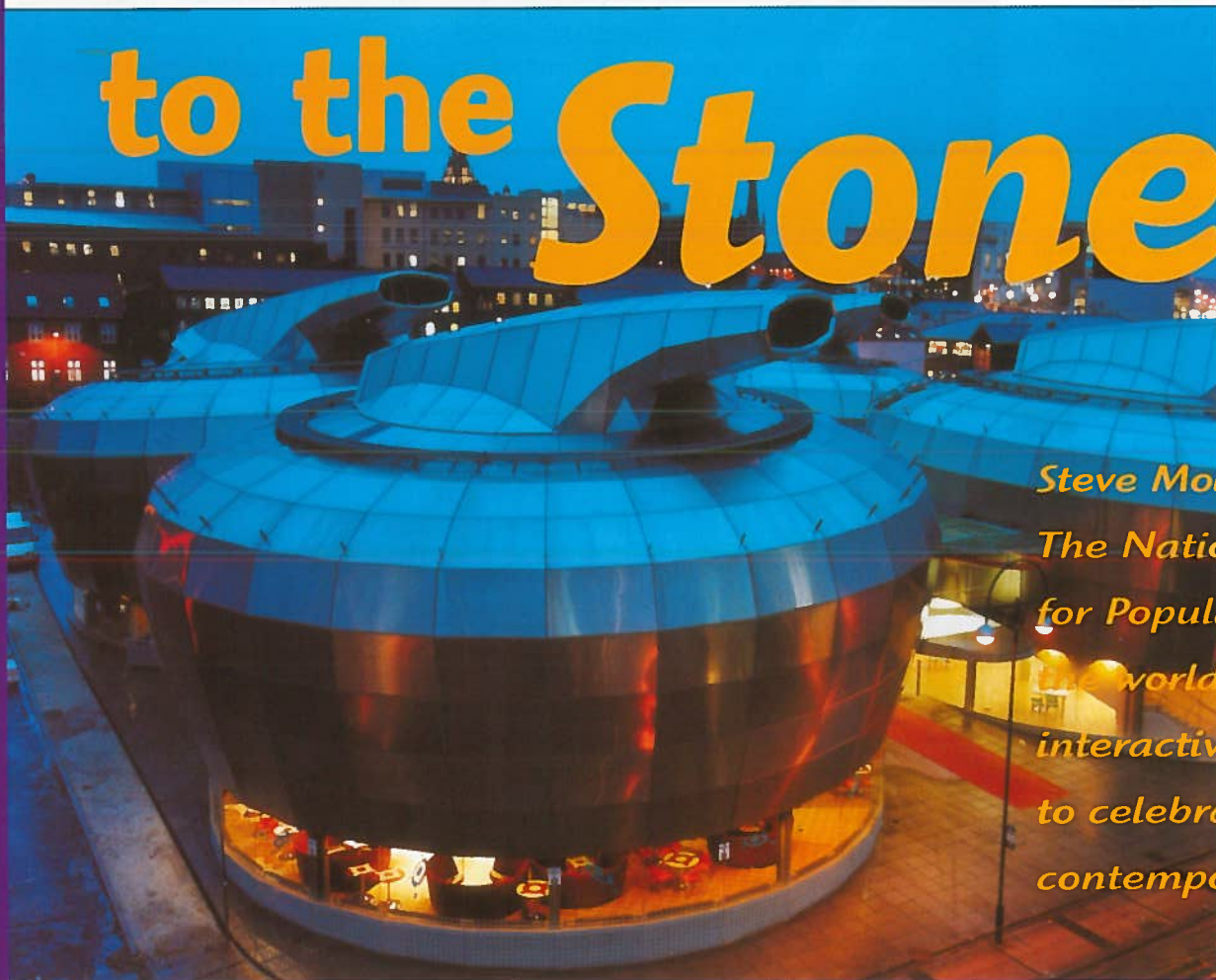
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*Steve Moles visits the
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If you missed the media blitz, then you must have been hiking to Ulan Bator. Readers of L&SI who saw it featured on TV will have had an uncanny sense of déjà vu, and rightly so. The National Centre for Pop Music (NCPM) in Sheffield has, as a structure, graced these pages once before. A silvery inflatable replica was parked like a visiting space craft on Horseguards Parade last Summer for one of those 'Third Way' big ideas. 'Powerhouse::UK' See? I knew you'd remember the building. Powerhouse contents? Well that's another matter.

You might say the same thing about the NCPM. I've walked through it twice now, and on the first occasion I came away thinking, 'what is it I've just seen?' So don't go there expecting to see a lot of 'things', you'll be disappointed. That's not a criticism; the NCPM is a place for ideas – as such what it contains is amorphous, and by the very nature of modern technology, will be changing continuously throughout its existence. That lack of definable content does, in most instances, prove a bonus, as we shall see.

The aim of the NCPM is stated plainly: "To create a unique interactive arts and education centre that celebrates the diversity and influence of popular music." As such you can hear the rattle of funding agencies like Marley's ghost in the sub-text. Most of the funds (£11m) for this £15m capital project came from the Arts Council's National Lottery Fund, with significant contributions from the European Regional Development Fund, English Partnerships, and approximately 7%

coming from a covey of investing sponsors and specific fundraising schemes. Philips Projects, part of the multi-national Philips Electronics Group are the largest commercial sponsors of the project, and as such were the controlling party for installing an estimated £2.5m worth of electronics. Everything from state-of-the-art interactive video, to the more mundane, but no less important, safety and security systems. Philips Projects, under the guidance of company general manager Phill Ford, brought in consultants to specify and install at the sharp end of technology, while keeping a watchful eye on the bigger picture. Thus Sysco, AC Lighting, Paul Gillieron, to name but three, nestle in with the familiar equipment suppliers and manufacturers like Renkus Heinz, ETC, High End, Cloud and ElectroVoice. With the huge diversity of technology employed within the NCPM it would be difficult to list all the suppliers and detail all the gear. It would be like trying to do justice to all the theatres in the West End simultaneously. Suffice to say there's worthy representation by many PLASA members.

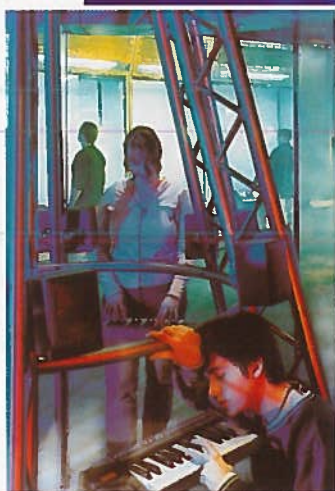
For creative director Tim Strickland, the lack of specificity in the brief must be a hard task master, but he's a man who seems to thrive on it. On the afternoon he very generously gave of his time to show L&SI around, he had already been on Breakfast Telly, would appear on Blue Peter that night, and had a holding pattern of 'the press', worthy of Heathrow, at peak season. It was also the second week of what's been a long fortnight for all concerned at the NCPM, a fortnight of previews prior to the venue's public opening on March 1st. I draw attention to Mr Strickland's enduring patience and tolerance in these trying times, not because I seek to flatter him, but because I suspect many of the manufacturers, technical crews and service



THEMED VENUE

companies, whose names regularly feature in these pages, will have occasion to communicate with him in the future. Why? Because quite frankly, the place is great. A playground, an experimental laboratory and a training ground that must make it unique in the UK. There are enough quirky environments here for pop groups to be queuing up to make videos of themselves. The acoustic properties of at least two of the spaces lend themselves to exploration of an audio kind. What really caught my imagination, however, was the lack of boundaries. I know that's one of those psycho-babble phrases, but in this instance it's accurate. There is no demarcation between video, audio, lighting, musician, designer, song-writer, or any of the other contributing metiers that constitute the 'whole' that is pop. Perhaps we'd better look what's inside before trying to justify that statement.

You'll already be familiar with the four circular structures, all clad in stainless steel (how Sheffield). They are most accurately described as giant Curling stones, and corralled like a four leaf clover, they form the NCPM. It's a two storey structure: ground level gives itself to logistics, one 'stone' is devoted to administration, another to a very modish coffee bar with lots more stainless steel and



"Human interface and durability make uneasy bedfellows - everything appears very low tech', while in the background, the software and hardware is contemporary."

an open aspect to the street. A third is the inescapable NCPM shop, and the fourth, yes you guessed it, a cafe. Upstairs, even before you venture into a 'stone', a subtle assault on your senses is set in motion.

At the top of the stairs is a cruciform of open space that connects the four stones which is clad with glass to the external walls and roof. Apart from a few HMV listening posts, "they are very immediate and familiar," comments Strickland, the space is completely bare. Because the shape is regular, there are no reference points, as in front, back and side. With

the exception of a discreet little name above each of the four 'stone' entrances, you have no real sense of orientation. Strickland's right about the listening posts too. I was mildly disturbed at first, 'what blatant commercialism' I thought pompously, then

consciousness; the clip clop of a horse close by, or a passing helicopter, emanate from concealed speakers. All these sounds are at once familiar, and at the same time out of context. This is fun and it sets the tone for the rest of what you'll encounter.

"We didn't want to be confined by sticking to a conventional museum show," offered Strickland by way of introduction. "We started off with about 20 core ideas." And instantly we are into that difficult area of just what is the NCPM - what is it for and how was its content conceived? "We started off with an ad' in The Guardian," said Strickland. "We were looking for a range of people - lighting designers, theatre crew, set designers, AV technicians, film makers and graphic designers. We wanted to build a creative team." Strickland achieved his goal, creating a pop music think-tank in the process, and with the support of Philips Projects UK, set to work.

The four 'stones' are distinct separate entities, for no better reason than it looked loud and busy we started at 'Perspectives'. You enter Perspectives through a lobby area designated 'Rock or Pop?' decorated by broad black & white wavy lines, the walls punctuated by TV screens buried within. The screens relay 40 years of rock & pop archive footage - a potential copyright nightmare that Strickland reports "never happened - everyone we approached for material was very co-operative." So a pat on the back for the music biz. The TVs are variously clad in Vinyl, studded black leatherette and other familiar fabrics that

realised what a natural object to find. A perfect introduction to the technology we take for granted these days - music machine, headphones: yep, got that. The thing is, as you walk across to try one out, sounds start to permeate your

Above, a still from one of Sean Nugent's animations for the lighting system for Soundscapes; inset, the Making Music 'stone' and right, the Let's Dance club section

have their origins in pop culture. It's a humorous device that is typical of the attention to detail which has been paid throughout the building.

Step through the lobby and you're into 'Dance' - a mini disco area with a 24 screen videowall, enhanced by a mirrored enclosure. Lights, smoke, mirrorball, disco light floor, it's all here, and the music is loud enough to prompt visitors to actually have a bop. It's interesting too, because barely two yards away through an open doorway is one of the quieter parts of Perspectives: 'Love'. Interesting, because, apart from MDF walls, all that prevents the sound from transferring between areas is one of those floppy clear plastic strip doors commonplace on loading docks everywhere. Glad of a breather from 'Dance' we sit down upon the inviting velvet couch in 'Love' and what happens? It whispers sweet nothings to us. Dali would have been proud of such an idea. Screens and old footage feature again in 'Love', playing a host of classic love songs. Unquestionably, the predominant theme in pop music, this was one area where I thought Strickland's team failed to do justice to a big subject, but in fairness, there's so much ground to cover. Having said that 'Love' led onto 'Stardust' and one of the great discoveries of the team.

The floor ceiling and walls of 'Stardust' are dotted by hundreds of twinkling fibre-optic points of light. Otherwise, the room is bare. But it's disquieting. In the background is the most amazing hubbub, and when you speak, it's as if you're in a highly reverberant space. Redolent of the noise you'd expect in a giant public loo full of people, the strange thing is that your own voice remains intelligible, yet subliminally you expect it not to be. It's the same effect you get at one of those 360 degree



cinemas. One sense (your eyes) tells you one thing, while another (your sense of balance) tells you something different, and hence you're either sick or fall over as the roller coaster ride unfolds before your eyes. In 'Stardust', it's the background hubbub that's the disorientating force, and its source is surprising. "Yes it's one of the great accidents of our work," said Strickland: "We didn't predict this at all, but we like it so much we've kept it." The background noise comes from a series of discreet sources mounted into the walls, each playing a recording of influential and innovative vocalists. Look through the peephole above, see their face, then place your ear next to the portal beneath and all is revealed.

What fun to discover Pavarotti rubbing shoulders with Kate Bush and Joni Mitchell, and what a revelation to encounter the effect all their voices has on the ear-brain relationship. Beyond 'Stardust' lays 'Rebel Music' and 'Oh God', but you'll have to go yourself to find out what surprises they hold.

Making Music is the most directly exciting room of all the four 'stones'. It's a completely open space where the novice and expert can stand side by side and . . . well, make music together. The central feature is a dance area of floor pad triggers (developed in-house it should be noted) linked to a specially commissioned 15 minutes of musical sounds put onto hard disk for real time access. The triggers not only create constantly

There are what might be termed more grown up areas, but who wants to be that adult. The Mix station can also be enjoyed at a fun level. Generously supplied with multi-track recordings from Texas, Garbage and local Sheffield band Lazy Dollies, the source material has been mixed down onto eight track systems, the user having access to all eight tracks through a set of industrial strength faders on a front panel. That's perhaps the one weird thing about the whole place - human interface and durability make uneasy bedfellows and thus everything actually appears very low tech', while in the background of course, the software and hardware is all completely contemporary. Oh, by the way, they expect 400,000 visitors per year, hence the robust nature of all public interface points. The only other place you're likely to see such technology accessed by such industrial-looking control knobs, is in the military, and for much the same reason.

There are other stations within 'Making Music' where visitors can design album sleeves, interact with song writers, practise their 'on air' skills by reading an auto-cue live to a mock up of a radio presenter's console with cross fade, jingles (the works, in fact) or even edit a video of Phil Collins live in Paris. I'd warrant this will be the busiest and best liked room of the four, and the noisiest.

As for 'Turning Points' and 'Soundscapes' the other two 'stones', they seem almost bare. While Perspectives and Music are busy and full, these two are open and appear almost empty. Entering



evolving rhythmic sound patterns, but are also linked to a small lighting rig above.

Likewise, there are music stations dotted about like futuristic phone booths without the perspex sides. Each is fitted with drum pads and keyboards, and a third device where interference of an invisible beam, similar to a Feremin, produces weird and wonderful sound effects. All six positions at the station are linked so it takes just seconds for a little ensemble of people to have a music number to take shape.

Similarly, to the side walls sit panels giving the user access to explore how different effects, fuzz, flange, vocoder and echo, affect variously guitars, keys, drums and vocals.

'Turning Points' you are confronted with the World Wall - a rendering of the World map. In steel naturally, it displays 30 cities around the globe. By turning a huge radio-style tuning knob, each city is lit in turn, and each then triggers the playing of pop music typical of that area of the world.

Beyond the wall is a large open space and to the sides are half a dozen information stations all accessed to a database of Guinness Publishing's 'Rockopedia'. High on the opposite wall three large screens run a continuous programme of specially commissioned films. Currently covering just four topics - for example: Trains, Boats and Planes, which explores the relationship between modes of transport and music -

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The World Wall displays 30 cities around the globe. The visitor can select a city and listen to pop music typical of that area.

this appears to be one area where the NCPM almost invites development from outsiders. Readers take note. 'Soundscapes' is probably the most exploratory of the four 'stones' and like 'Turning Points' may be an area of special interest to L&SI readers.

In contrast to the other rooms, it is an auditorium. Set in-the-round, curved seating tribunals (by our friends at Maltbury) define a space that is devoted to the concept of sound manipulation through ambisonics. It also features the most definitive display of modern show lighting designed by Sean Nugent who was able to describe the room most cogently. "Sound-wise," explained Nugent, "they had a clear idea about what they wanted to achieve in here. It's not a live platform, but equally it's not a theme park ride either. What I was briefed to provide was an abstract visual accompaniment to the sound environment. This room has a strong educational focus so as such I had to strive not to distract attention."

Fortunately, the narrative information that accompanies the musical exposition is pretty clear in its intention. It only remains for the lighting programmer to constantly transpose themselves to the position of a punter in the audience to recognise the inherent lighting demand. Nonetheless, there's some fun stuff in there and Nugent must have been tempted on occasion. "My job is to assist the psychology of the acoustics," said Nugent, by way of explanation. A rather grand assertion, but one which he then supported with a highly illustrative analogy. "Part of the sound material was recorded at York University. A lot of it is done in a natural environment - York Railway station, for example. Some sounds, when heard out of context - that is without their usual visual accompaniment - aren't necessarily easily recognised. A recording of a downpour of rain for example, can easily be mistaken for someone crumpling a crisp packet when heard in isolation. What I have to do is insert a lighting effect that's redolent of water, or watery looking, that gives some visual reference point to confirm the sound to the listener."

really put in set, nothing too specific anyway. The room's too small and you wouldn't be able to get away from it. You do need to be able to change the look." But he did need an object that gave some definition to the theatre's centre. What he's had made is rather clever. At first sight it's a simple 3D polygon made from perforated white metal with three main facets in the vertical, low, middle and top. But in the horizontal, it's a pentagon. As such, when viewed from a seated position, it always appears as an irregular shape, lacking symmetry. That's an illusion of course, but it's significant in that with everything else in the room fixed as circular, this breaks the symmetry and means Nugent's more easily able to significantly change a look with just a few lamps down onto his polygon

The open nature of the 'Soundscapes' room is not just for these set pieces, it will also host small corporate presentations, and we can hazard, will also be a useful facility for acoustical demonstrations. As for the manipulation of sound and space through use of delay and speaker position, rather nebulous to describe, rather effective to experience. Perhaps the best that can be said is the audio information is so acute and well defined that I observed listeners becoming convinced that it was loud and leaving the room. Whereas, in fact, levels are quite moderate as they quickly discovered.

The day I visited a 'sensory chair', developed by Hallam University, was being tested in 'Soundscapes'. Something like a drummer's thumper seat only more so, it is intended for the sensory impaired, to find another way for them to experience and enjoy music. That's possibly typical of what's going to happen here, as Strickland himself said: "In terms of content, we can't get it wrong really. No one has done this before." And by implication there's no limit to what can be tried.

So what's it about? Hopefully it's about to make you go to Sheffield and try it out.

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Lord of the Rings

L&SI Special Report on a unique staging of Tolkien's epic fantasy adventure in Berlin



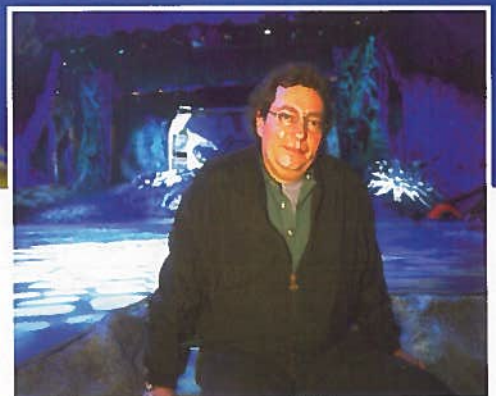
THEATRE

Staging J.R.R. Tolkien's epic fantasy adventure *Lord of the Rings* is an ambitious project at the best of times. To do it in a tent in Berlin, in mid-Winter, is quite frankly, a chilling prospect.

With the permission of the Tolkien estate, the classic tale of Middle Earth has been set to music by Bernd Stromberger, a renowned Viennese composer and conductor, and staged in a \$40m production by Fantasy Musical Production Company.

The production, which was two years in development, takes place under the canopy of a circus-style tent in central Berlin, and boasts scenery and costumes befitting the imagination of Tolkien himself. The tent's whole interior has been transformed into a fantasy scene with volcanoes, waterslides and other props, and is peopled with acrobats and dancers who perform wonderfully-choreographed battles. Even the orchestra members are dressed as Tolkien characters.

The lighting for this unusual project was designed by Chris Laska, and programmed by Nick Moran. Laska, who's been designing for 27 years, jumped at the opportunity to light this production of a story which he personally adores and has read no less than seven times! And, as Laska reveals, he is also quite at home working in a tent: "My first job was in a tent, not as a lighting director, but in sound. This is where I got interested in designing lighting



*Above, the stunning production of *Lord of the Rings*, and inset, lighting designer Chris Laska*

and I've done it ever since. I have used moving lights since 1984, with the early Vari-Lite models, and on this production we have 12 tons of truss and lighting," he says. "The idea for the lighting design was to try to design a scheme with very little conventional lighting - just moving lights - MACs and PALS," he explains. "The difficulty I had imposed by the tent and on top of that it being in-the-round, is that it eliminates the possibility of using any front light, otherwise you get light on the audience. So I had to design the lighting using mostly top light and that is hard because of the shadows you get, especially on the faces."

"With a production such as *Lord of the Rings* though, it was possible to incorporate a lot of colour, so that's what I've done. In order to reduce the impact of shadow, I use lots of colour from above. I realised that in order to do this I would have to use dichroic colours with a very strong lamp, therefore I knew I had to work



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with moving lights. For me, the most important elements for the lighting equipment were dichroic colours - with a moving head, gobos, CMY colour-mixing and a good dimmer - but I knew that dichroic colours were going to be key."

Originally, the set was to have featured a series of bridges which would have allowed Laska to use various lighting angles and have greater freedom with regards to light intensity. But, as is so often the case, that particular idea was discarded along the way. Laska continues: "The way it is now, without the bridges, we have to use a lot of light which makes the entire tent very bright at times. Once the bridges got scrapped, I knew I'd have to have a powerful light, but we can still create mood and atmosphere through the use of gobos and make-up."

Some 320 special litho gobos were created for *The Lord of the Rings* to create the moods. The original idea was to use projectors, but when they too were cut from the budget, it was decided to use Martin PALs with customised gobos to create the patterns and images needed. Fourteen PALs are built into the stage for projection onto the tent walls surrounding the stage.

"Gobo projection is such an integral part of the lighting that a special gobo wheel was made for the MAC 500. "I use the MAC 500 for break-ups on the stage floor. It took me a while to get into the MAC 500 because I like colour mixing," he states, "but it has worked out well. The gobo wheel really works perfect for this production.

"I believe you have to pick a product and grow up with it. That's really the only way to learn the ins and outs of a product. On this production, for example, we use the followspot system, the MLD (Martin Lighting Director). We have four trackers controlling 16 PALs. It's been a bit of a chore at times to teach the actors not to hit each other on the tracker microphone in the fight scenes, otherwise the signal gets disrupted. I like the new technology though. It

is really good for me that there is someone on the continent that is taking care of these things, producing cutting-edge products."

The tent is also illuminated with 14 Martin Exterior 600s. "We chose Martin because they are European-based and have a lot of experience with moving lights. I had the opportunity to use the MAC 600 and liked the colour-mixing very much, so I decided to see what they could do. Then I used the PAL with the framing device - I use it as some of the only front light to frame scenery, etc. I can cut the shape with no backlight so it works perfectly for me."

Procon were the lighting supplier of choice, and were also tasked with coming up with the grid from which to hang this substantial overhead rig. "Fortunately, we had already done something similarly ambitious with the Buddy Holly musical in Hamburg," explains Procon's Thomas Kaczmarek, who co-ordinated the project along with Arthur Frantz. "We knew just what sort of grid was required and we knew just who we wanted to make it for us."

What Procon needed was not quite as fantastical as the story, but stretched credulity nonetheless. "Chris Laska's lighting system," continued Kaczmarek, "was pretty huge. The grid had to hang from a central point in the middle of the tent, had to cover lengthy spans, and contain four circular elements within an octagonal grid."

Total Fabrications Ltd (TFL) have a long association with Procon, and were suitably nonplussed by their unusual request. "We always enjoy a call from Procon," said TFL's Karen Cronin. "They take a lot of our standard trussing for their TV work, but they frequently come up with challenging ideas for us." The grid Procon requested is 36m (110ft) in diameter, comprises two concentric octagonal rings, the outer in integers of five metres, and stands on just four towers. "Building the continuous five metre spans of Medium Duty truss was easy enough," said Cronin, "even if shipping them demanded an empty trailer to start

"What Procon needed was not quite as fantastical as the story, but stretched credulity nonetheless . . . The grid needed to be ground-support, had to cover lengthy spans, and contain four circular elements within an octagonal grid."

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with. Integrating the circular elements into the system was a bit more problematic."

The circles are each hung from two points off straight trusses, rigged like spokes between the inner and outer ring of the main octagonal grid. "With circular trusses it's not good enough just to make them the right size. With these kind of loads and two point supports, the circle's load strength must be carefully calculated - not so straightforward in circular construction."

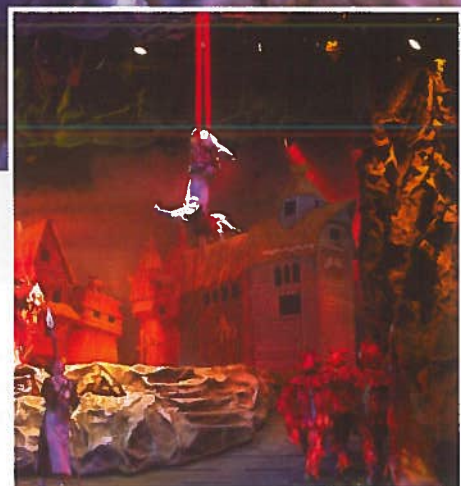
The show opened to promising reviews in December, and is currently scheduled to play in Berlin through 1999 and then travel to other major European cities, beginning in 2000. But the reviews have, in fact, been so promising that Procon are predicting Lord of the Rings could run for anything up to five years. "Not all in Berlin, you understand," said Kaczmarek, "but with a tour around Germany already

in the planning stages, five years is a quite reasonable estimate."

In which case, look out for Lord of the Rings in a city near you, some time in the next five years. You might even have time to read the book, for the first, second or seventh time . . .

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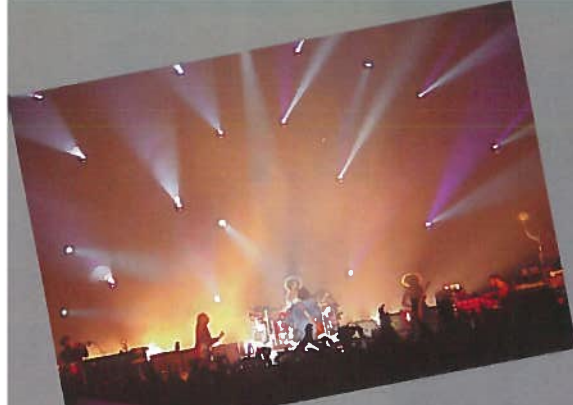


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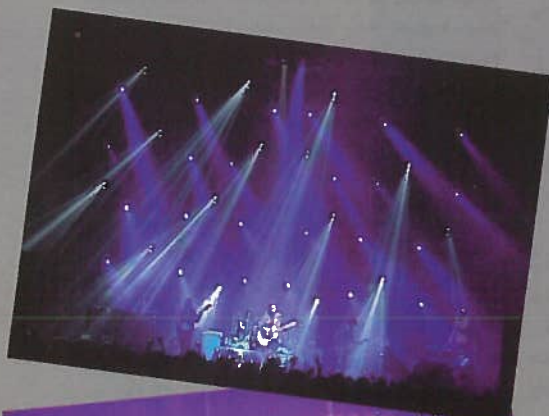


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In the event that at press time there have apparently been no consequences from all the rumoured mergers, amalgamations, break-ups, break-ins, MBOS, MBIS, NIMBYS, TESSAS, PEPS etc, etc, of our publicly quoted leisure companies, as mentioned in my last column, most of this month's stuff has been plucked from the national press. We probably ought to change the title temporarily to What the Papers Say!

IT IS SOMETIMES FASCINATING to look in that particular mirror (not the Daily one) which is a kind of giant reflector of how others perceive our industry. So I have picked up on one or two pieces which I offer for your delectation. First though, the big story, of course, was the Stephen Lawrence enquiry and the sudden confrontation with the proposal that we, and more particularly the police, are all a load of racists.

AS ONE who remembers nightclubs with little sliding hatches through which the doorman would glare at prospective punters, much like a warder checks on prisoners in jail, ostensibly to restrict entry to 'members', but in fact to keep out 'undesirables', into which category virtually anyone black, or of Middle Eastern origin inevitably fell, we are certainly not blameless. While this practice is now contrary to the

Race Relations Act, or at least that particular application of it is, I bet it is still being abused to this day. We should not be proud of that.

A different type of door policy was operated at Studio 54 where the greeter (that's a misnomer if ever there was one), alternately Steve Rubell or Mark Heggarty, stood on a fire hydrant behind the legendary red rope barrier and

imperiously selected the privileged few. I mention this only as a convenient link to the next piece, but in passing would mention that this method, surprisingly, never led to any violence that I am aware of. In Manhattan, at the time, it would have come as no surprise if some spurned wannabe-inside had pulled a gun and blown the notoriously arrogant pair away.

AND IT CAME TO PASS that in the year of Our Lord, nineteen hundred and ninety nine, the heirs and successors of Studio 54, a decadent den of debauchery of biblical proportions, came to London, which is in England, to build a hostel which shall have many rooms and shall thus be called a hotel. Desirous of casting off the mantle of their past, they appealed to Caesar Augustus for permission to open a place of dancing and imbibing below said hotel saying: "We have done penance for our past sins, and built a chain of wondrously successful hostleries with exotic names like, Paramount, Royalton and Delano, and for which we have received much praise." But their pleadings fell on deaf ears, and being unable to shake off the consequences of their previously sinful existence, consent was refused and the imperial thumb was pointed firmly towards the ground.

THE POINT about the above bit of nonsense is that, however hard you try, however lauded your designer (in this case Phillipe Starke), however innocent your proposal, and this one was certainly not going to be controversial in the operating sense, in England, the killjoys will always find you out and beat you with your past. Shame, but we can at least look forward to Ian Schrager's first hotel outside the USA, and that will be something to wax prolific about, I have no doubt.

ONE WEEK LATER, Richard Branson's Virgin Clubs were refused permission to convert part of the Regent Palace Hotel into a giant dance and entertainment emporium, which is also a blow to the capital as the hub of Europe's entertainment experience. The Regent Palace, of course, was the site of a thousand té dansants during WWII. As was the subject of the next item.

ACROSS THE OTHER SIDE of town, the Hammersmith Palais, the infamous Hammy Pally - subsequently reborn during the rule of Tony Marshall with the grandiose but totally undeserved sobriquet, Le Palais, franglais spin at its most puke provoking - has finally succumbed. According to the business press, Rank has sold it 'for a song', to the tune of £5m, for

redevelopment as an office block. Well now, that's entertainment!

When I read in the London Evening Standard that Leeds has become the Barcelona of the North (whatever that means), I thought to myself, ah ha First Leisure's PR machine has been hard at it promoting its mega club, eponymously named after the capital of the Costa Loda, and a mere courtesy bus-ride from the WEst Yorkshire city's centre (See L+SI March 1998). I couldn't have been more wrong!

NOT ONLY DID their reporter, Zoe Williams, thumb her nose at the free ride, assuming she even knew about it, but she also shunned Rank Leisure's famous Majestyk, preferring to grace the portals of less salubrious establishments. So what were the aforementioned spinners of the two majors doing, allowing that to happen? Maybe it's a symptom of the malaise that has put both Groups in the frame as take-over targets. There is a consortium after Rank apparently, and a brewer sizing up First, with Luminar Leisure, a City favourite, an outsider for that plum. I have to say, if Luminar were to win the day, it would almost certainly be a case of 'the Gods punishing Steve Thomas, by giving him the things he thinks he really wants'.

MS WILLIAMS confined her comments to a one-nighter at The Warehouse, so 'established' even I spent time there some 20 odd years ago, NATO and The Cockpit which, despite the unpleasant implications of its name, is apparently THE place to experience Northern Soul, or at least part of it is. I wonder.

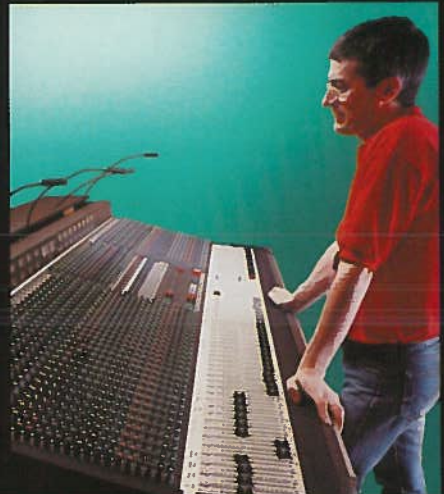
So on the same disco special note, I send with a few snippets. According to the press, Browns was the place to be after the Brit Awards at the London Arena. Actually, Browns has been the place to be in London for the past 13 years. Quite an achievement for owner Jake Panayiotou, but then Tramp and Annabels are also still going strong and they've both been around for even longer than that.

MEANWHILE, Piers Adam managed to contrive a spat at the first birthday party of his highly successful K Bar in Soho, which attracted the attention of the gossip writers, and Bass's All Bar One achieved Best Concept in the Retailers of the Year Awards.



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Surgical Cuts

The public demand for television hospital dramas continues unfettered. Hot on the heels of *Casualty* is *Holby City*, based at the same hospital (in the surgical ward upstairs) as its hugely successful, often controversial sister-series. The initial nine-part *Holby City* series kicked off in January this year with similar popularity ratings to those enjoyed by *Casualty*.

Holby City is set in Darwin Ward, based around the closely-knit team who work in the operating theatres performing life-saving operations, providing long-term care for coma patients, intensive care facilities and wrestling with the politics and conundrums of an under-resourced NHS system.

The cast includes the incisive consultant surgeon Anton Meyer (George Irving), his opposite number, vying with him for beds on the ward for her medical patents, consultant Muriel Kendrick (Phyllis Logan), the ambitious senior house officer Dr Kirstie Collins (Dawn McDaniel) and naturally, a lead male role fitting the 'skilful, handsome, reassuring, authoritative' figure. In this case it's registrar Nick Jordan played by Michael French.

Whether French will come to rival the obsessional fan base of George Clooney remains to be seen. Clooney became one of the US's highest paid and best-known TV actors by playing heartthrob paediatrician Dr Doug Ross in *ER*. Ross was the surgical soap character to die for - an archetypal brilliant and committed doctor co-existing in a Jekyll & Hyde personality as a drunken womaniser who could do nothing right in his personal life... the kind of guy every woman should hate, but can't help but love him! Clooney's announcement last year that his *ER* time was up created nationwide hysteria

Holby City production is based at the BBC Centre at Elstree, not in any of the studios, but on the sixth floor of an office block within the complex. Ninety per cent of the footage is shot here, which is essentially 'on location' - even though it houses the permanent set. When set building commenced, the sixth floor still contained fully operational offices, including those of *Top of the Pops* (also based at Elstree). Unsurprisingly, TOTP were reluctant to decamp until suitable alternative premises were found. Because build time was



so tight, TOTP admin had to co-exist for a while amidst the chaos and confusion of building contractors at work, while the sixth floor was gutted and the set for *Holby City* got underway. They were eventually resettled, vacating the whole floor to be transposed into *Holby City* Hospital.

Production designer Steve Sharratt explained that normal timescales for constructing a permanent set at a location such as this would be six months. The production team had just two-and-a-half at their disposal! Fortunately, they found a firm of contractors (who normally outfit offices as opposed to sets for the BBC) who reckoned they could complete on time - and they did. Just.

The building is a 150ft long rectangular sixties-style office block with windows running around the entire circumference. Inside it looks exactly like a hospital - albeit newer, brighter, crisper and populated with individuals who



look a good deal less stressed-out and wan than anything you're likely to encounter in the real NHS world.

The set dispenses with conventional scenery. This is for real, utilising proper partitioning systems, walls, doors, sockets that yield electricity, etc. An overhead lighting rig running throughout the entire set (floor) was built into recessed modular fittings in the ceiling. The set consists of various wards, a full-scale operating theatre, nurses' station, visitors rooms, consulting areas, a six-bed intensive care unit, corridors and other normal hospital facilities. *Holby City* is Sharratt's first named medical drama, although he has previously recreated smaller-scale hospital wards. The design and logistical challenge demanded by *Holby City* is immense in terms of sourcing the

had the freedom and consistency they needed to shoot everywhere within a large set that was almost totally glazed. These are hardly the easiest climatic conditions for working within natural and creating artificial daylight. They might be shooting a scene that has to be cut together over two days - one day it might be brilliant sunshine and the next it might be rainy and overcast.

Thornton took a doctrinaire approach to lighting *Holby City*. Having first pioneered the use of fluorescent lamps whilst working on *Brookside*, he then took the resultant successful methodology via *The Bill* to *Casualty*. *Holby City* has seen him go all the way. There are virtually no conventional tungsten or HMI light sources at all on set. Head of Series Mal Young has



authentic specialist equipment found in wards of this nature. The intention is always to make the set as realistic as possible so it's

not a question of recreation . . . in addition to the vast amount of gear they were able to buy, they also have to borrow complex equipment from numerous hospitals according to when it is available.

Machines may be free for variable periods of time - two days, 10 days, whatever - before they have to be returned, so the script and shoot schedules are in a continual state of flux to account for this parameter. Apart from the medical experts who consult for the series, Sharratt has built up a network of contacts who are theatre nurses, theatre managers and operational department assistants (ODAs), all of whom know where and when to obtain various machines, what kind of accessories are required to accompany them (e.g. needles, tubes, etc), and most importantly, how to use them. Many of the more specialist pieces of equipment need their own operators. Sharratt's massive learning curve and rising to the gauntlet of *Holby City* has been a stimulating and rewarding experience.

Lighting director and director of photography is Darrell Thornton. Lighting was always an integral part of the set design. As with all location-based series, there are the usual extra-curricular idiosyncrasies with which to tussle, in addition to the fractious meteorological karma of January and February in England.

Thornton had the provocative task of ensuring that the directors (of which there were four spanning the first series)

been very supportive of Thornton's effective and radical fluorescent theories for the lighting of video drama.

Thornton's enthusiasm, energy and dedication to both fluorescent lighting philosophies and *Holby City* is impressive. His research and experimentation now having proved he's on to a winning axiom. He needed to source a fluorescent with a very high colour rendering index (95 out of 100) for lighting skin tones. He eventually discovered an off-the-shelf krypton-filled Osram Lumilux Delux tube that was suitably close to daylight at 5400°K. These were supplied to BBC Property Services in an off-the-shelf Thorn fitting. They are powered by PCA Excel Tridonic digital dimming ballasts (recommended by control manufacturers Luxmate). These are easy on the tube and enable complex controllability from the Luxmate remote controllers, as another requirement was that the lamps be dimmable.

The demanding nuances of lighting control were solved by Luxmate and their LM-EG controllers, each of which is capable of individually dimming any and every single lamp in the set. The LM-EG is a commercially available controller, but usually only found in high tech office/architectural environments, lecture theatres et al.

The set contains over 500 ceiling-mounted lamps (concealed behind louvres) of various lengths, split into 25 zones or specific areas of set, e.g. a ward, corridor, nurses station, etc. These are then subdivided into groups within the set and each lamp can be addressed as required. The LM-EG controller in each zone is an inoffensive, flat wall-mounting touch-panel switch which blends perfectly with its surroundings. All the

lamps are addressed via a bus network, and pre-programmed scene files enable them to go from night to day settings at the push of a button, just as a conventional TV studio would do when using the usual light-sources . . . but with fluorescents.

In addition to the recessed fittings throughout the wards, ceiling-mounted suspended fluorescents are used for the corridors and linking walkways - also all individually controllable. These utilise the same Category 2 louvres that proved successful when Thornton lit Casualty, producing an even spread beneath the lamp whilst also shading the walls either side. A lamp suspended at eight feet high produces a 'shade down' of around four feet on the corridor walls, allowing the central performance area to be lit while the corridors remain shaded. This prevents the problem of close-ups shot against the corridor walls suffering from the walls being more brightly lit than the actor in the centre.

For production lighting within the set, Thornton continued his commitment to the fluorescent path. Conventional hard-edged HMI or tungsten fresnel lamps were out of the question, being no match for the overriding fluorescent softness of the set ambience. He went extensively with the lightweight, low-heat Kino Flo range from America, which are available in modules of 1, 2, 4 or 10 tubes. These also have a colour rendering index of 95 and so fuse seamlessly with the overheads. They have the additional advantage of being highly manoeuvrable and can be tucked neatly into the oddest of places - pillars, frames, counters, doorways - around the set.

Once the colour-rendering/daylight problems had been solved, the next galvanising task for the lighting department was how to deal with the windows. Additional environmental factors - such as one side of the building overlooking a peak-white painted tower block which bounced in additional light on the bright days - weren't helpful

With no part of the set isolated from layers of window (both the exterior glazing and the interior levels of glazing through glass doors and windows within the set), ND'ing became a gargantuan task. ND'ing a particular area might require over 100ft of glass to be dealt with - time consuming to say the least.

Thornton and gaffer Robin Jenkins came up with the production- and time-efficient solution of sourcing 36 huge sheets of ND acrylic, each measuring 2 x 3 metres. The supply of this was handled by Bill Summers from the main lighting contractors Playlight, and had to be imported from the US, as Rosco UK were unable to supply anything sufficiently large. The acrylics proved highly successful, enabling the team to ND 150ft of window to .6 in less than 15 minutes. The most difficult days are those when it's windy, with skies shifting rapidly from sun to cloud . . . and the ND sheets are constantly in and out. Jenkins explains the pivotal role played by the HOC lookout during these times - the Head of Clouds. The designated individual provides a running commentary of estimated times between each cloudy/sunny patch.

In front of the acrylics are blackout blinds designed into every window of the set by Thornton and Sharratt. These make the set a light-tight environment for shooting night scenes in the daylight. Each window was then further fitted with a Venetian blind in front of the blackouts. Thornton had discovered the virtues of using Venetian blinds as variable ND while working on The Bill. By having the louvres horizontal they are virtually transparent, and turning them to 45 degrees effectively gives .3 of a stop down.

The heat efficiency of both the Osram fluorescents and the Kino Flos was a vital consideration in their specification, as the

heating on the sixth floor had to be full on with the rest of the building's winter settings. With the acrylics in, it was effectively triple-glazed, at times fricasseeing Holby City and its occupants!

There are a few concessions to conventional lighting on the set, one of the more interesting being the large new Atticus MSR 'Top Hat' lamp above the operating table in the main theatre. This was chosen to mimic the real, cool blue, petal-style surgical lamps, and to give the organs and blood a glistening authenticity. The directors specifically wanted a 'celestial', life-giving feel to the operating theatre.

The night time exterior shots, both on and off the BBC complex, have naturally featured the usual HMI and tungsten fixtures. Playlight frequently provide a second crew, plus the requisite generators to cater for these which take place at assorted regional hospitals including Hatfield, Welwyn Garden City and Northwick Park in Harrow. (Playlight are no strangers to the world of television and film lighting. In addition to working on high-tech shows like Holby City, they've also completed such epic productions as Our Mutual Friend, Great Expectations and Hornblower.)

The production schedule has been gruelling for the first series, with many concentrated days of long hours of filming. "We are constantly up against time with this series," Thornton expands. "I have to think on my feet most of the time - if I get 10 minutes to light a scene I'm lucky - but I still have to give it a texture and a look, and I find this an exciting challenge using mostly fluorescents." The different tonalities are subtle most of the time, e.g. lighting in areas like the operating theatre being warmer than the more functional coolness of the corridors and wards.

Sound recordist Ken Campbell is a veteran of film and drama, but Holby City is his first foray into the realms of surgical medicine. He has also stuck his neck out and taken an alternative approach with the use of radio mics on set. The large area lent itself to lots of movement by actors, cameras and dollys, so sound had to be as flexible as possible in terms of the overall objective of getting the microphone where it was wanted. With many moves being fast and long, Campbell didn't want to be hampered by a cable, and so pledged himself to the wireless route.

He chose Audio Diversity 2020 radio mics, which he feels have the richness of cable mics without the constrictions. His strategy has certainly paid off in terms of self-sufficiency for himself and his boom op who aren't tied to any cables,



"Thornton took a doctrinaire approach to lighting Holby City. Having first pioneered the use of fluorescent lamps on Brookside, he then took the resultant successful methodology via The Bill to Casualty. Holby City has seen him go all the way."





previously edited material has had to be dropped in, and new dialogue recorded and matched with that which was perhaps produced three or four weeks previously. "There are sometimes a few rough bits," he says chuckling. "But I like that. It gives it a rawness and stops it sounding too smooth or over-produced." Which, at the end of the day, would fight against the spontaneous feel of Holby City.

cameras, potential trip-overs, places where the dolly won't track or tight 180° turns prone to getting disappearing cable in shot. Sound is recorded onto a Digi Beta tape machine on which Campbell drew the short straw, having it located on his audio trolley. He says he treats it like a large DAT machine with pictures. The day's rushes then go to the edit suite. He says the biggest challenge of Holby City for him has been the time and financial restraints.

The fact that there are virtually no post-dubbing facilities means that the sound quality needs only a minimal degree of tampering and tweaking. The continual re-scripting has also dictated that

to rival the commercial success of Casualty, judging by the ratings from the first series. The fluorescent philosophy has also proved its worth, and Thornton is now employing it on the new series of Casualty. Steve Sharratt comments proudly that a number of consultants and medical experts involved in the series have implied that if they were sterilised and had the right drugs, they could have open heart surgery performed right there on the set . . . which given the chronic shortage of NHS beds, is an interesting postulation!

Footnote: The show has been recommissioned and will run right through to February 2000.

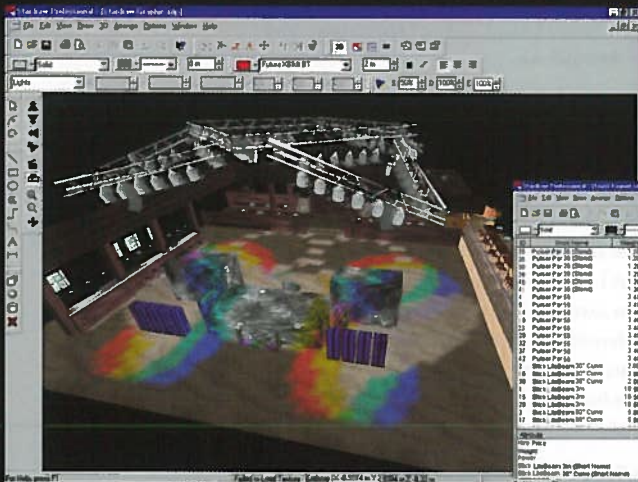


Certainly Holby City looks set

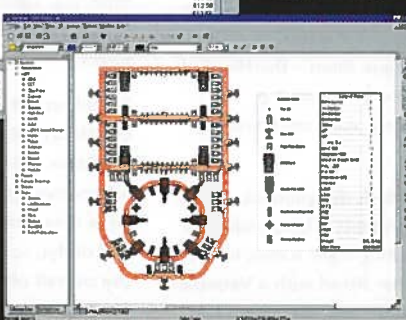
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Second Take...

John Watt's view from beside the camera

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output of our great television service than you are. Generally it's agreed that it's a close-run thing, although, if one of the jobs is for Channel Four they do seem to start with a bit of a handicap. Direct comparisons can be made between normal and wide screen formats and the pros and cons of the two.

AS MY PROFESSIONAL readers will know, wide screen has been developed for three reasons. The first is for the universally boring sports programmes, which seem to adopt a natural linear format, as they

consist largely of groups of individuals (or animals) running about after balls (or one another). These activities are traditionally conducted on long strips of ground, thus making it useful to have a wide screen, although, since this is all paid for by the broadcasters you'd think that they would have enough clout to insist on these games being played on, say, square pitches. This would enable us to stick to a three-by-four format which is much better for mid shots and close ups, of which 95% of television pictures consist.

PERSONALLY, I would suggest round pitches, as the corners of rectangular ones are notoriously difficult to light. A curved touchline would cut down on the rows over where the advertising is placed and would also avoid the cameramen having to pull focus so often. Corner kicks could be scrapped - no one in their right mind would attempt to score end-on to a goal anyway. Secondly, the introduction of wide screen provides something different for Comet to put on their shelves and charge a premium for. Thirdly, it enables production companies to

employ spotty youths straight out of school to operate cameras as the traditional skills of framing, positioning and focus are no longer relevant as no one knows where to frame and focus anyway. Like tights, one size must fit all, and male readers will know how well they work.

THOUGHT: why not fit barn doors to TV sets? Then with a much-practised clout or two with your tweaking stick you could have the picture shape you like. A jealously guarded technique is to put the loose barn door on top (there's always a loose barn door - I think they're manufactured that way) and rest it on the side ones. Not many people know this. Interestingly, this would limit picture width to about nine-by-sixteen, after which the door would fall across the top half of the screen so that you could only see the bottom half which is usually occupied by a crawling message saying phone calls will cost no more than £2.50 a minute so call now before Cheap & Miserable TV have to spend any advertising revenue on programmes.

THE SAGA BETWEEN ETC and myself is over, as I now know everything about their products and remain an enthusiast. This was thanks to Fred, their MD (Mr Foster to you); strange name for an American, you expect Hank or Tex somehow. He braved the rigours of the M1 in winter to show me the new variable beam 'Par', which isn't really a Par at all, but thinks it is. No more need to fiddle about changing bulbs to get the beam angle you want, just turn the dial - clever huh? Keith Reed, the LD who can give any fully-fledged DOP a run for his money, came along to see fair play and then spoilt a perfectly good lunch by going on about fluorescent lights. My Mum has one in her kitchen, where it seems to act as a reasonable fly-catcher, so I expect the high frequency ones do better... maybe that's the attraction.

I'M CURRENTLY on a gig at Ulster TV so early morning flights to Belfast are the order of the day. I'm not really a morning person, and British Airways' idea of breakfast doesn't help. I try not to come to any conclusions about the plot until I peak at about 12pm; then the red pen and stencil are a blur until lunch, after which I go rapidly downhill again. Bill Klages please note - I've not succumbed to the wonders of CAD in spite of your entreaties. I'm sure you are right and I should become computerised but as Mr Micawber might have said, "Income for job - one thousand pounds, expenses (on pen) 64p, result happiness. Income for job one thousand pounds, expenses on CAD system and giant printer seven thousand pounds, result misery!"

DURING MY VISITS to Ireland, I've met lots of nice people who I reckon will keep me out of trouble, though I do have one nagging worry. After going for months without problems, this very week I've had two lamps explode on me with a good old-fashioned bang. What happens if this happens in Belfast? Hit the floor as usual, I suppose?

ONE WAY I've avoided the early morning bit this week is by not going to bed. This resulted from accepting jobs on consecutive days without checking where they were; you always know when you are pushing your luck when you have to fill up the car's petrol tank more than once in 24 hours. The good news is that the traffic does quieten down a little between two and four in the morning, and not having shaved since heaven-knows-when means you can get a sensible-sized mug of tea in the truckers bit without any sidelong glances, though I recommend removing the pan glass from round your neck before entering.

BACK ON THE ROAD, refreshed, I have evolved a technique for getting past the gritters without having your paintwork sandblasted down to the undercoat. As you know, these machines behave like most softlights, throwing grit in all directions in a totally uncontrolled way. The trick is to use a truck to act as a cutter or flag, just make sure you only overtake in lane three when there's a truck in lane two between you and the gritter - it works. Of course, having arrived at job number two you should try not to drop off in front of the production manager and at all costs avoid going to a meeting for next week's show - you are bound to lose the battle with drooping eyelids and will then wake up with a start and say something silly like 'Can we rehearse before recording?' or 'Can I park in the company car park next week?'

DOWN AT TEDDINGTON, which has to have the most stress-relieving environment of the lot, with the Thames bordering the car park, they have a new (to me) safety rule. If you ask for a 'wrap', i.e. a filter clipped to the doors, they will wire all the 'croc' clips together, just in case one falls off. I guess they have a point, but console op Dave Midgely emerged briefly from a cloud of tobacco smoke (use Dave and you can save on the oil cracker) to question why they don't use clothes pegs as they do in Nottingham? I think he's right, though he does have an ulterior motive as he takes in washing on days off. I'm rapidly approaching the point where I'll do the same.

"Production companies can employ spotty youths straight out of school to operate cameras as the traditional skills of framing, positioning and focus are no longer relevant. Like tights, one size must fit all, and male readers will know how well they work."

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 Gianni Mantovanini nato a Milano, dal 1963 al "Teatro alla Scala". Nel 1975 firmo per la prima volta le luci di uno spettacolo messo in scena nella allora "Piccola Scala", dove dal '75 all'80 ho svolto il ruolo di Lighting Designer. Nel 1981 passo a collaborare alle produzioni del "Teatro alla Scala", affiancando il lighting designer e mio maestro Vanio Vanni, assumendone il ruolo nel 1991.



 Max Keller hat sich in Deutschland stark für den Beruf des Lichtgestalters eingesetzt. Mit seiner Bildersprache, die sich vor allem in einer Kombination

von Lichtquellen mit unterschiedlichen Farbtemperaturen vermittelt, prägt er die Aussagekraft des dramaturgischen Lichts. Er entwickelte seine Lichtgestaltungen für das Schauspiel an den Münchner Kammerspielen, aber auch für Opern an anderen Bühnen, vor allem in Europa. Als Autor des einzigen deutschsprachigen Fachbuches über Lichtgestaltung im Theater trug er viel dafür bei, dass die Arbeit mit Licht stärker als künstlerisches Gestaltungsmittel akzeptiert wurde.

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Hans-Åke Sjöquist has worked as a lighting designer in his native Sweden for almost 30 years. From 1978-79 he studied in the USA at the Yale University School of Drama. He worked at the Royal Opera House in



Stockholm for six years as Resident Lighting Designer from 1980 to 1986, lighting over 20 major productions during this period. For the past 13 years he has run his own lighting consultant company, Candela Design Limited, designing numerous drama, musical and opera productions in Scandinavia and throughout Europe. Mr Sjöquist also designs architectural lighting for indoor and outdoor environments and has just lit two major permanent exhibitions at "The Museum of Natural History" in Stockholm, introducing the largest fibre optics installations ever made in Scandinavia.



Widely regarded as the dean of lighting designers for both the West End and Broadway, Richard Pilbrow also heads Theatre Projects Consultants. His second book "Stage Lighting Design - The Art, The Craft, The Life" was named LDI Product of the Year. "When I began lighting only about fifty shades of Cinemoid were available. I often used them two and three to a frame seeking new possibilities. Then I discovered Rosco and first brought this wonderful range to Britain. Now the possibilities are almost limitless. Colour brings life, texture and vibrancy to the stage. I love it."



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Entertain Me



Robbie Williams has done things people said he couldn't do. I was greeted by this maxim no-less than three successive times upon entering the back stage area at Sheffield Arena to see Robbie Williams perform. First by Jason Truman, Vari-Lite technician: "You've got to see it," then Mark England, lighting crew chief: "It's amazing," and Laurence Titton, animator. (Animator?) What are they all talking about?

This is show nine of Mr Entertainer's first arena tour as a solo artist; most of these crew members have been with him since Angel broke back in autumn '97; and so most have seen him rise through club, to town hall, to this. Surely there's little left to be amazed by, other than the confirmation that he is a star. I can give no greater measure of just how big a star, than the fact that as I sat watching the show, along came Simon Harraghy, Icon tech' to the Rolling Stones. "What are you doing here?" I asked. "I just wanted to see him." Now, if you've got three days off in Bremen, then you may well go along to the Stade Halle and see any tour that's passing through, but when you're at home on a break in the schedule, the last thing you want is to lig at the big rock gig.

Having sat through 1 hour 45 minutes, it's easy to see the attraction: this man is vaudevillian in his humour and rapport, potent and powerful as a singer, writes good songs with his MD Guy Chambers, and patently works his butt off. If I can still raise a pen in 2015, I fully expect this man to be treading the boards.

Apart from a brief sojourn to service Depeche Mode, Dave Bracey has mixed for Williams since the beginning; likewise, Alan Bradshaw on monitors. It's nice to see that most of the originals are there, including all the service companies. Companies who went that extra mile with price and gear when Williams was still climbing out of his stupor back onto stage. So often a meteoric rise from club to arena signals massive change, as witnessed in the Mansun camp, where the whole crew has apparently been Hoovered up over the past eight months. But I digress.

This is not Bracey's first time in arenas, nor RW for that matter, but for the band it's a new experience and the venue size holds some interesting consequences. "This is the first time I've ever had to ask a guitarist to turn up his stage gear," said Bracey. "Both of them, in fact." That's both of them, two keyboard players, drums and bass. It's a big-ish band, and despite inhabiting the pop genre, the stage approach is pointedly rock and roll - no

Steve Moles has a night with the enfant terrible of British pop - Robbie Williams, and the thrill of his life with Garbage

in-ears. Even so, stage sound is relatively muted: "Apart from Robbie that is," said Bracey, "who's too loud for everyone. But at least Alan [Bradshaw] keeps it isolated to whatever part of stage he happens to be on."

So, a big band, traditional monitoring, and everyone sings - open mics everywhere: a sound man's nightmare. Dave? "Well I've been lucky. While I was away on Depeche they all went to a vocal coach for six months. Now they can all project, so mic gain is not an issue. The biggest challenge I have is the fact that Robbie's music is full-on and very layered. There's not a bit of space." Just what you want in a nice big reverberant arena? "If something in a particular song proves a real problem I can talk to Guy [Chambers] about changing the arrangement. Even so, he used a lot of different instruments on the album and that's what the people expect to hear."

Thus, it's a busy evening for Bracey at his Midas XL4 - all the musicians appear to be playing on every song. The sound down on the floor at the desk position is intense to say the least. This is a surprise: the PA - a Turbosound system from Britannia Row - is not huge, there are just 21 boxes of Flashlight hung per side - seven wide - and four cabinets out at mid-hall delay position. But that blasting mid-high energy is confined to the front 50%. Up on the seated areas, and even to the back of the arena, the sound is more suited to the ears of an old fart like me. Bracey uses a Yamaha 03D for control of a bunch of samples. All are natural and with switching between instruments as acoustically diverse as harps to fuzz guitar, he has to do a fair bit of EQ'ing and compression, something he subordinates to the Yamaha automation. Aside from the usual suspects, Bracey has one of the big blue mono compressors from Tube Tech lurking in his rack, which he uses for Williams' vocals.

Well, this is what all those crew people were exclaiming about at the beginning. The 'can't be done' factor comes from the way Richard Turner has deployed his video gear and the surfaces onto which he

projects. It is immediately familiar to anyone who's ever watched the opening credits of a Bugs Bunny cartoon, but not in this context. The backdrop to the stage is a set of flat concentric rings, slightly staggered to telescope depth into an otherwise regular 50 by 24 feet stage. It has been done before - Warner Brothers (the record label) used this familiar image for a touring package of US acts back around the mid-seventies, but the technology to pull it off as a working trompe l'oeil never existed back then.

This is a collaborative effort as all involved are at pains to point out. Hattie Spice designed the set (built by Brilliant Stages), Justine Catterall produced the video footage and edited existing material, Laurence Titton took care of animation, and Turner made it all work and stamped his mark on it with an experimental projection technique. But it was lighting designer Liz Berry who started the whole thing off, and who had enough of the artist's ear, and his confidence, to take a pot in the dark. (Not bad going for an LD designing her first ever arena show). Turner had worked with Catterall on commercial presentation work, Berry knew Titton from his days as an IT specialist, and everyone seemed to know Hattie.



The result is a compendium of parts: Turner has taken a system of four Barco 9200s from PSL, placed two centre-stage, paired, with the other two halfway to either side. "The advantage is that instead of trying to cover a huge 50ft wide surface from a single point with resultant loss of resolution and brightness, I'm dividing up the surface, projecting from several points."

By softening the image at the overlap point, the joins are invisible to all but the most critical eye and the shorter throw leads to a consistent bright clear image across the full width. Berry, using a VLPS system of VL2Cs, VL5s and the new VL7s, had her work cut out balancing the lighting to the projected video, but anticipated this, and indeed, with great foresight, has built a presentation of marked originality. "The whole thing is structured," she said. "It's all projected light. That's why we didn't want an LED or CRT screen. There is the danger that such a powerful image would overwhelm the stage." Apart from archive footage of Williams from singles videos, this is not a show where 20ft high images of the artist occupy the eye. In fact, there is only the briefest of moments when a live camera is used for a gag, otherwise this is all recorded material.

Berry has discovered a technique that helps blur the lines between video and lighting, and in so doing produces a fused display. "It's about contrast and complementary lighting," she notes. Without giving away too much, the premise is that the eye will compensate for a lack of visual information, filling in gaps that the brain subliminally recognises as missing or patchy. Contrasting against the dominant projected colour, or complementing it, the video is either subsumed into the lightshow, or jumps out from a painted stage.

One example of this comes during 'Lazy Days', where what appear to be images of skeletal bones rain down from above, which at first had me believing that the VL7 gobo optics really are fantastic, before I realised it was video from the Barcos. Truth is, there isn't room here to do justice to what Turner and Berry are playing with, but the clues are all there. By her own admission, "We've only just begun to scratch the surface with this."

Two final points. Both production manager 'Wob' Roberts, and long-time Brit Row sound tech' Gerry Fradley, each said it was a shame that now the band were in arenas "they feel obliged to jump around all over the stage". I can only say this: they did jump around, but nobody was watching them. Apart from the Bugs Bunny screen, the stage was almost bare - minimal risers, no real set to speak of. Robbie Williams is the focus of attention. Quite simply, he's bigger than a 50ft-wide stage.

Back around 1982, while touring with Madness, I vapourised a pair of Nike training shoes with the aid of a theatrical maroon, two tins of flash powder, a tin of concussion powder, and a couple of detonators. The ensuing blast was so powerful it shook 30 years of dust out of the roof of the Foire International in Lille. And it hurled shattered fragments of flash powder tin so forcibly that one of them penetrated the lid of a CP flightcase about three feet to the right of me. Last night's Garbage concert at Doncaster Dome is the most exciting thing that's happened to me since.

I don't want to categorise the band and their music - well-textured grunge I've seen it described as - just be assured; they're loud, high energy, raucous to the extreme, and blisteringly entertaining. It's a joy to see a band who quite obviously are having a thunderously good time

from the moment they hit the stage. Shirley Manson is animated, compelling and charismatic. Duke Erikson throbs malevolently. With a name like Butch Vig, it's no surprise he can project character beyond his drum kit, flailing as he does like some demented Muppet. Steve Marker, meanwhile, is more Butch than Vig, a frenzied steroid mastiff, he's heavy, bald and muscular, yet can flit from explosive guitar playing to delicate flourishes at the keyboards.

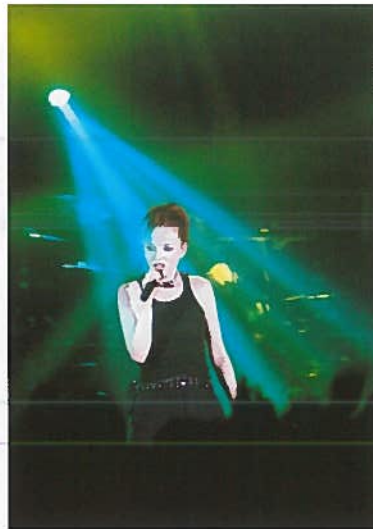
No wonder Vig's such a sought-after producer. How he can maintain the presence of mind to steer the ship of Garbage amidst such a cataclysmic cyclone of energy is a mystery.

That a band like Garbage are able to produce fantastic music out of such frenzied, violently energetic activity is surely the key to their attraction. By the time you read this, the tour will be over and you'll have missed them. Don't do it again.

The system for this tour (and their shows in the US) is from SSE, a Nexo Alpha, with Tom Abraham at the controls. Abraham, readers may recall, is the outspoken engineer featured in the latest ads for the Soundcraft Series Five console, so no prizes for guessing what's parked out front at Doncaster Dome. So how is it now he's had it out for a while? "Well, the truth is, I chose the console because I was bored with the regular desks. I'm not that picky really." Although he did confirm that its size-to-input and VCA ratio gives it an advantage on tours with wildly varying venue sizes - a worthy factor that he's exploited, as confirmed by the neat little voltage-switching system SSE had built for the tour, tolerant of 100v-250v variance and 50/60 cycle changes. "It's a new desk, and I haven't needed to crack open the manual. It's the quietest desk I've ever used. If I have one tiny complaint, it's that the EQ is too soft," but then, for a more subtle band, that's probably an advantage.

The Series Five also has a solo button on all the VCAs: "There's a lot of processing work on her voice, so soloing at this stage is ideal." In the racks, Abraham has the new TC Gold Channel, a combination Compressor, De-esser and EQ mic' pre-amp, which SSE purchased specifically for the tour, it being assigned to Shirley's vocal channel. There's a Manley compressor across left and right: "This is a very sub-bass heavy show; this helps to tighten up the low end, especially in the bigger rooms." Not an issue in Doncaster, but hearing the show it's easy to understand how it could be. Effects include an H3000, SDE3000 and the Behringer Virtualiser.

Steve Dando of SSE sets the system for Abraham, flying nine boxes a side (despite a relatively low



ceiling): "At 56kgs per box, I find I can fly just about anywhere. Here, with a flat floor, it's useful to get a fair part of the system up there." With four lows a side flown and six on the floor it's apparent where the power of the low end comes from, and considering the final result, well worth the extra hassle of hanging.

Stage sound is paradoxically quiet: not only do all the band use the Shure in-ear system, but even the kit is muted: "We filled all the drums with Styrofoam packing peanuts," according to Brian Keeffe on monitors. "The benefit of having everything [mics] open on stage, even the drums are mainly triggers, means that the sound breathes more." Keeffe uses the ever-popular XL3: "I especially like the pre-amp in the board," has stereo compressors and EQ on each in-ear system and for Shirley has an H3000 and Behringer Virtualiser, so she's not working dry. "I use a lot of straight compression on the instruments. When you've got about 30-40dB of dynamic range on an instrument, and maybe just 8-10dB of usable dynamic on vocals, then I find you've got to compress the instruments on the input side to get everything down to the same level."

Between the two men, the resultant sound in the room is taut - both acoustically and musically. Without their efforts, this band would be just another loud thrash band, and I warrant better heard on CD. Instead, it's tight from top to bottom, and even the little sound effects that Marker likes to noodle in between songs, contribute to the whole. If this is Garbage, take me to the dumpster.

LD Carl Burnett has chosen an asymmetric approach for this band, trusses not only tossed across the stage, but also hung at funny angles. He's taken a mixed bag of bits from LSD's cupboard: "I've got long-nose Par 36s, all bulbed 28V and individually dimmed, MiniMoles with scrollers, eight pairs of Death

Stars also with scrollers, likewise 14 5kW fresnels, and an Icon system for my moving light and all control."

For an LD who's been around a fair while now, this is his first experience with LSD, something that's evidenced by the fact that Death Stars are not their standard inventory high output strobe, and all the colour scrollers are Wybron Colorams. "Since they picked up the tour in the US last April, I have to say they've been pretty amazing. The important thing with this band is crew. The band are really friendly," something I can vouch for having shared the dinner table with Shirley Manson.

Burnett's pièce de résistance is his backdrop. Known affectionately as 'bubble-wrap', this translucent orange plastic device seeks to mimic the latest album cover. "It's actually a close-up of a tacky orange quilt jacket Shirley has," informed Burnett. "Inflated, the bubbles are about three feet thick and three feet across. I originally wanted to light it from behind, but it took too many lights - 24 four-cell MiniMoles on the front, with the deep pillowing of the surface, makes for some nice shadows. The nice thing is it all looks a bit weird." Which fabricator Dave Perry may be pleased to hear. Burnett builds each song from dark and moody, often a single colour beam pattern from the Icons against minimal open white sources, quickly moving to a selection of more intense colours. He seems to have a particular affection for rich golden ambers, mauve and cool green combos, and deep primary reds. A theme he persists with

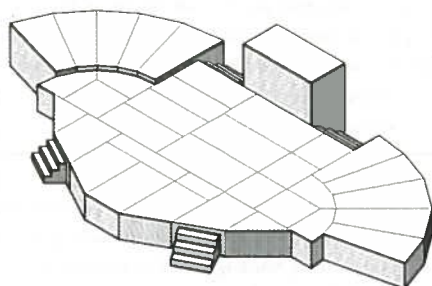
throughout the show, managing to keep his revisited colours looking fresh and different by source variation. It's not until you see someone work colours around a system like this that you begin to appreciate just how different wash lamps like four-cell Moles and 5kW fresnels are, especially at close range.



What's perhaps most distinctive about Burnett's show is the preponderance on large-ish, wide-angle wash lamps on what is generally a medium size stage. The tour has visited arena stages, but reportedly the atmosphere has been better at the smaller gigs, where those great dollops of light blend with very narrow beams from the Par 36s and Icons to greatest effect.

The lighting mix reflects the sound: great belting waves of powerful low end, with lancing slices of guitar and vocals cutting through. That's a very blunt metaphor, but this is not a show for discretion. If it wasn't for the money, this band would be well advised to stay at sub 3,000-seater level - like lions on the Serengeti, it's their natural home, and one where they can be king.

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Ian Herbert, Asleep in the Stalls...

There's a bit of a spat going on at the moment over the state of theatre funding. Peter Hall says there isn't enough of it, Melvyn Bragg says there is. The Arts Council, who ought to know, also say there is. Peter Hewitt, their chief executive, wrote a reply in *The Independent* to Sir Peter's outburst, and Lord B had a go in *The Guardian*. When so much effort is being expended to tell us that all is for the best, you start to wonder.

THE INFORMATION

I'm getting suggests that Peter Hall's the one who is right. Malicious tongues say he's only moaning because the Council won't give him half a million to start his own company. Not so - he's also been talking to the Independent Theatre Council, who look after the small-scale and touring companies, and they haven't noticed any wheelbarrows full of loot trundling their way, either.

MR HEWITT refutes Sir Peter firmly, but not at all convincingly, because he doesn't always grasp Sir Peter's point. He's proud of the big increase that the National has received, for instance, and gives it as an example of the Council supporting 'frontline arts activity'.

avoiding mention of the huge amount given to Covent Garden for making a total pigs' ear of their planning, Hewitt denies that the Arts Council is elitist: "The Arts Council's support to regional arts boards will double to £122 million in 3 years." Cobblers - that money is simply being shifted from the central Arts Council pocket to the regions to pay for exactly the same activity, and it hasn't been significantly increased.

HE DENIES, too, that arts cash is being 'sidelined increasingly to bureaucracy', pointing out that the Council is, at present, cutting its staff by half. Let's not argue (for the moment) about whether the right half of the Great Peter Street Army is being cut, or whether the sudden departure of half of their new senior appointees is a good sign of the impact of Mr Hewitt and Gerry 'Granada' Robinson. Let's suggest that Mr Hewitt may once again be failing to grasp the point. There is more money in the Arts Council's budget for the coming year, praise be, but there's not much more in the two years to follow. And a serious question is how much Council control there will be over the artist-administrator balance in the companies that do get any increased funding. I bet the bureaucrats will be at the head of the queue.

HE DOESN'T ACCEPT that a significant percentage of theatres will close in the next year. I hope he's right, but this week I've heard of the loss of a London grant to the Kings Head (which puts it in jeopardy), the failure of Croydon Warehouse's lottery bid (which will force it to close), and a funding shortage at Bolton Octagon (which will mean it goes dark for the summer, if not longer). If Melvyn Bragg wants to go to the theatre in Surrey, I hope he won't turn up at Farnham or Leatherhead, which Mr Hewitt's delegated executives on the local Arts Board have already closed. Westcliff? Bognor? Lancaster? Don't look now . . .

THAT THE MAN who's supposed to be in charge of arts funding should be so blissfully upbeat is terrific, except that he doesn't appear

to have much grasp of what's actually going on. I have the teeniest morsel of sympathy for Mr Hewitt in this, because it's very difficult to find out what is going on, with funding so disastrously fragmented. A London theatre gets news of an increased Arts Council grant one day, then learns it's lost its local authority support the next. A sponsor agrees to put up matching funds for a theatre's lottery project, then the project fails - having no doubt kept a lot of consultants (not bureaucrats, Mr Hewitt, but not actors or technical people either) profitably busy for a long time.

BUT THEN AGAIN, if the head of the Arts Council doesn't know what the national funding situation is, who the dickens will? If he doesn't know because he's delegated his authority downwards, shouldn't the delegates be telling him what they're doing? If he doesn't know because he's decimated his library and information service, whose fault is that?

WHAT WE seem to need, and desperately, is a body that can assemble the information that exists about all the present sources of funding and show conclusively whether it's increasing or decreasing (and PS, if it is decreasing, make a heck of a fuss about it). I would have thought that the Arts Council should be that body, particularly now that it is sloughing off so much of its responsibility for small, day-to-day decisions, which indeed could, and should, be made at a local level. We still need to know and compare nationally what's happening locally, and the Council should be able to tell us.

MEANWHILE, I can only go on what I see and hear. See, in the programme for West Yorks, who are following up their much-praised McKellen repertory season with another less trumpeted repertory season in which the Courtyard will be filled for ten weeks by two actors doing three Ayckbourns on one set. Hear, people like the director who tells me he's off North to direct a large-cast premiere - large, with six actors? - in a theatre which will be half closed off by the set because they don't expect to get a big enough audience.

NOW ALL YOU TECHNICAL FOLK

could stand aloof from all this, especially the equipment people who are still picking up juicy lottery funding. But I'm sure you're much cleverer than that. Suppliers will have registered that the amount of new lottery money allocated to theatre in the last twelve months has almost dried up, and stage technical staff know very well what happens to them when a house goes dark. We're all in this together - you need theatres to work in and I need them to sleep in. Shout, scream, stamp your tiny feet to keep theatres alive - best of all, find a funding person to chivvy.

"We're all in this together - you need theatres to work in and I need them to sleep in. Shout, scream, stamp your tiny feet to keep theatres alive - best of all, find a funding person to chivvy."

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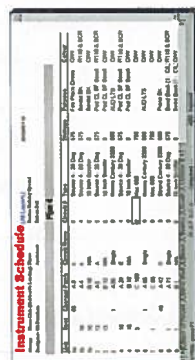
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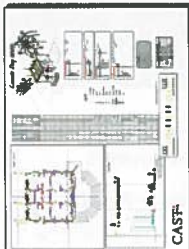
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Best of British



TELEVISION

An estimated total TV audience of 500 million people worldwide sat down to watch The Brits. What they saw this year was a show of a quite different complexion

He did not abseil onto stage, was not 'legless', and, more's the pity, he's not in panto with Celine Dion (what a marvellous image that thought conjures). He was, however, the star of the show, winner of three awards and is a bit of a chap. As such Robbie Williams is worth a few bob, and sad to lament gone are the days when you could casually get a pop star to drop onto stage using a figure-of-eight after half a dozen lessons with the tour rigger. (See El Tommo, Madness circa 1980, and one of rigging's great characters, Irish John).

Williams' descent was just the start of a Brits show of a quite different complexion. Subtle, but altered nonetheless. Did you notice it? "What they were aiming for this year was a bit more of a light entertainment show," said Ronan Willson of Elstree Light & Power (ELP) who provided the entire lighting system.

And here's the most significant change: not only was the lighting contractor new, there was, in fact, not a Vari*Lite to be seen in the house. "Mark Kenyon was the LD," continued Willson. "He's an experienced TV designer and readers will recognise his name from programmes such as the Lottery Show and Noel's House Party." What Kenyon brought to the show, apart from his trusty team of three operators, was a rig filled with High End and

Martin automation. There were about 450 heads in all - Studio Colors and Spots, Cybers and MAC 500s and 600s. Operating all of the effects lighting for Kenyon was Nigel Catmur who ran 131 Martin MAC 500 fixtures from his own personal Wholehog II. More and more these days it is becoming popular for top lighting programmers and operators to purchase their own lighting consoles and Catmur is one of many who have invested in a Wholehog II.

The awards also featured two Compulite systems, a Sabre from Richard Martin Lighting operated by Roger Williams for the moving lights and a Micron 4D owned and operated by Will Charles for the conventionals. Kenyon specifies three operators because each works to a main camera position. Which makes handling what is still a live show rather tricky, but is great for those close-up hungry cameras.

It did involve ELP running 13 separate DMX lines to each desk, but considering this was the biggest ever non-VL system, it looked pretty good. There was sometimes rather a lot of lighting activity when actually nothing was happening on stage, but hey, that's Light Entertainment. It felt like the cosy familiarity of an old cardigan.

Live sound stayed in the safe hands of Derrick Zieba and Britannia Row. For such a show, it's a tricky compromise between the needs of a live audience and the desires of getting good signal to the OB truck. There are considerations that make that interface between TV and live an uneasy one. "Getting the vocals across in a room filled with 9,000 noisy diners is tricky," said Brit Row's Bryan Grant. Hence, in broadcast terms, it was quite noticeable how Johnny Vaughan's lectern mics were lifting off in the early part of the show as they struggled to find a level that didn't include the baying hoards. Perhaps greater credence will be given to Derek Zieba's accomplishment the previous year when he got Ben Elton on a hand held.

The other area that forced a compromise was the stage set; the huge padded doors especially eating up



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Jasper Dade leading the team and John 'Mad Max' Maxwell taking care of Mr Williams' preparation. As the set included the previously noted six giant scenic doors fabricated by Blackfriars, each weighing 600kgs, and travelling on tracking built by Triple E, in addition to the lighting, sound and screen technology, this

valuable rigging capacity that prevented Brit Row from flying any low end cabinets at all. "Call me old fashioned," said Grant, "but couldn't they have done something similar with some lightweight flats and painted scrim?"

The screens, two high definition JTS17s from Screenco, were brought in by Chris Saunders of Black Pig, who, in turn, was contracted by show producer Mick Kluczinski of MJK. One of the screens proved a bit of a wow. Positioned each side of stage, the one very much in the broadcaster's eye behind the presenter's lectern had a nifty little doorway for the prize givers to emerge from. Blackfriars Scenery built the screen truck and Screenco's Stuart Young informed that the door-fit tolerance was "... just 1mm each side. But we did have that section of stage beefed up with three 'I' beams beneath it to take out any flexing." When you see a trick like that pulled off so slickly, and, let's face it, you couldn't see the join when it was shut, it's then you begin to realise that we're not so far away from having screens as de rigueur scenic elements.

Blackout were the main rigging contractors,

involved rigging over 180 points and required 100-man days of labour for the Blackout crew. The company believe this to be the heaviest indoor show ever staged in the UK.

As for the implications of Mr Williams' spectacular descent. It's all down to insurance you see. Luckily, there is a device purpose-built for such an occasion - a personal controlled descending machine is an everyday piece of kit in the off-shore oil industry and LGH Rigging Services just happen to stock such items. "We did, of course, check with our lawyers," said a justifiably cautious Andy Tinneveld.

"These things are designed to let rig workers move safely out of danger in a hurry. A controlled 1.2m per second descent with built-in arrestor that acts if you move too fast or if you get snagged up and the load comes off. They're built to operate 20 times a day, 365 days of the year - in fact, made for the job." Just the kind of reassuring information insurers like to hear.

"Am I going to die?" joked Williams before the big moment. Not on a light entertainment show you're not.

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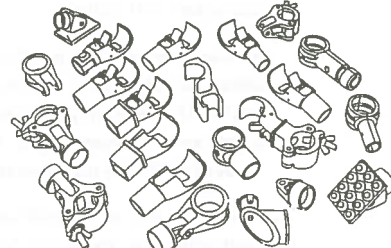
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Passion & Betrayal



The current production of Tosca at the Royal Albert Hall has set tongues wagging. Opera purists are up in arms, not because Raymond Gubbay's production is not faithful to the spirit of Puccini, but because the staging flaunts its use of modern production techniques

Imagine this. Act two, Scarpia (the villain of the piece) is with Tosca. He has arrested her lover Cavaradossi, tortured and just about killed him, and now, as a portent to his ultimate attempt at rape, he says to her: "Come sit with me. Let's talk it over." Well, it's so blatant I almost hooted with laughter - you get more realistic dialogue in *Casualty*. But there's the assumption that points to Puccini's greater success. Like a classic film script, the libretto for *Tosca* is a skeleton, virtually devoid of directive instruction. It's just a simple collection of lines linked by evocative songs and music. It leaves the tableau bare for the Director to impose his/her imprimatur.



OPERA

Essentially, *Tosca* is a tale of deceit, jealousy, betrayal and passion, set against the larger backdrop of the second Napoleonic wars. Melodramatic by late twentieth century standards, it nevertheless deals with issues as pertinent today as ever they were. Most notably, the corruption of power in war, as wielded by Scarpia. It's a power that leads him to the inevitable conclusion that he can do, and get away with, anything he wants. Are the leaders of the Serbian State any less deluded? And in a more commonplace context, can any man seriously believe he'll win a woman's ardour by threatening her? No. But the nutters still try.

Director David Freeman brings a certain contemporary gritty reality to his interpretation; the fact that he gets his





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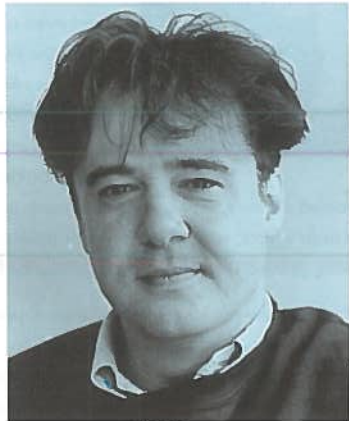
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singers to act with such credibility is laudable and the rape scene is particularly uncomfortable. With the latitude the text gives him, there are two ways to realise the tale - place it conventionally on a proscenium stage rich in scenic and proprietary elements, or cast it into the open, where it can breathe. He's been offered the latter 'Opera in Arena' format - the form that has attracted so much Press attention.

The Times, in particular, has devoted many column inches to discussion of this setting's validity over the years, and in this instance for once, found a common theme to justify it: Audio. Even Michael White in *The Independent*, who grudgingly found room for three column inches in his review, used most of them to pontificate on amps, mics and speakers.

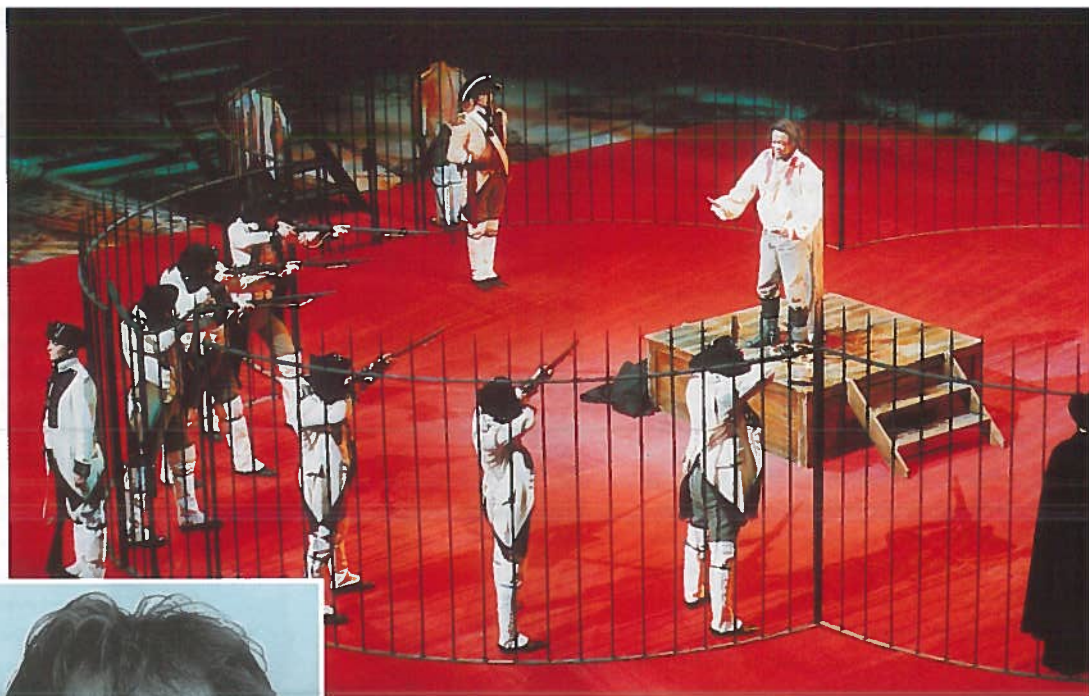


It's no surprise that Autograph Sound are to be found at the helm of this audio spectacle, their long association with promoter Raymond Gubbay and particularly their exhaustive efforts to find the amplified route to 'Opera in Arena' perfection, more than justifies their presence. Bobby Aitken is sound designer, and here follows a formula he's developed over time, with one new ingredient added. But more of that later. Having experienced *Madam Butterfly* last year at the Sheffield Arena, I have to make this observation in support of the Royal Albert Hall.

Whatever the headaches this venue presents to any audio practitioner, they are more than compensated for by the contact it gives the audience. By his own admission, Aitken devotes most attention to presenting a natural sound, one where by crafted use of time-delay and speaker position, he is able to shift the audio image around the stage to coincide with the actual vocalist's position. With *Butterfly* in Sheffield you were conscious of the effect, but the distance between performer and audience (exacerbated by the now infamous water-filled lagoon) precludes the development of any real vocal intimacy.

What's instantly apparent at the RAH is contact with the performer - most seats are within 20 feet of the singers and as such, when they turn to face you, their natural voice projection weaves into the amplified sound giving a feeling of real space and natural dynamic. At least that's what I perceived, and perception is everything. I'd hazard that's what Michael White and Rodney Milnes (at *The Times*) also thought, but the truth is it's more likely to have been the now enhanced use of delay positioning in the PA system.

In simple terms, the PA breaks into three sections, a heavyweight ring of 18 single hung MSL4s way up high that project out covering the main upper balconies. Hung directly below each MSL4 in the identical vertical alignment, is a pair of UM1s that point down to the lower balconies and stalls (five degrees the top box, 30 degrees the lower). So far all in the air, but as was seen at *Butterfly*, low level speakers are required to pull the image down



to a point where we might imagine it is actually emanating at head height. A false floor fills the RAH arena, its surface broken regularly by the familiar black metal Expomet grille faces of speaker cabinets. But these are just false grilles; were they actual speakers they'd just project vertically into the cupola. Instead, what lurks beneath is a set of d&B E3s each in its own little enclosure aimed obliquely through the grille to the stalls. That they perform admirably in their principal role to pull the image earthwards is

evidenced by the praise of Rodney Milnes at *The Times*. "It is much more directional," he writes. "Whatever is done to them, the voices still seem to emerge from the singers, not from some disembodied sound-heaven."

So much is established science, the theory is easily understood, the main hurdle is getting enough level and quality information from low down to effect the process. So how does Aitken construct his image; how does he move it around; what are his principal tools and what is it that's been added for *Tosca* that Autograph have not tried before? TiMax is the answer - Outboard Electronic's sophisticated multiple source and multiple delay control device.

"We agreed to try it for *Tosca*," said Aitken, "once we had secured Robin's presence for the rehearsals." That's Robin Whittaker, the main force behind the development of TiMax. "In rehearsals we started by defining the image to the stage map. We also entered cues off line as the rehearsals developed. Then you have to do the maths." Although TiMax can do this for you, Aitken preferred to take his own counsel on such matters. "You go to your definitions, your stage points and then set all your delay points. There are 33 of them for *Tosca*. There are algorithms that will calculate what the delay will be, but we did most of the calculations manually."

Each performer has his/her own input to TiMax, each wearing two transmitters, one to the Cadac, one dedicated to TiMax but remote switchable as a back-up in the event of catastrophe. With 16 TiMax inputs, 32 out and separate EQ on all 18 hangs of PA (each a discrete output) as well, this was in Aitken's words: "EQ 'tastic. It did push the EQ budget up a bit. But I have to say the TiMax worked very well for us. Every time we go into the RAH we learn something new. This time TiMax enabled us to tighten down the delay times. We learned a lot about just how accurate they need to be." The audio system also contained an added element that points to Gubbay's financial commitment to his popular presentations. A small PA stack on Promenade level stage-left provided the distant concussions of the Napoleonic battle that ebbs and flows with the main theme. An indulgence, but one well

Above, Cavaradossi's execution scene. Inset, sound designer Bobby Aitken

"Even Michael White in *The Independent*, who grudgingly found room for three column inches in his review, used most of them to pontificate on amps, mics and speakers."



made. So too the second orchestra that inhabits the promenade level, providing the mock concert for the Palace atmosphere in Act 2. There's also a bell up there for the mournful toll that greets the dawn of Cavaradossi's execution.

Like the sound, so too David Roger's set design and Andy Bridge's lighting pulls our attention to all corners of the RAH. Roger uses simple devices to take us from Church, to Palace, to Cathedral, most effectively the painted Italianate cupola ceiling rendered on the arena floor. The repeated use of curved iron railings in a variety of assemblages easily transforms one scene to another. The Act 3 monumental stairway and imposing Archangel from where Tosca commits suicide make for a powerful finale, fully exploiting the height the RAH affords. And praise should be given again here to Gubbay; like the lagoon for Butterfly this is a grand theatrical gesture, cannot have been cheap and typifies Gubbay's understanding of the need for great spectacle when taking such a presentation into the larger arena.

Bridge is presented with the same problem Aitken encountered, consideration of sightlines takes the lighting grid almost 60 feet above the arena floor. But there are other physical restraints as well. "Going in overnight, and the limited flat floor space, means you can't put in an enormous grid." What he has, appropriately enough, is a crucifix of truss (90' x 60') as his main structural element, a centre cluster above, with lamps also hung variously on the RAH balcony rail and the latest Robert Juliat 2.5kW HMI profiles up on the Promenade level. The system comes from VLP5 - a mix of conventionals,



Tosca prepares to leap to her death in the dramatic finale

Vari*Lite and the aforementioned Juliats. The lamps are deliberately clustered: "I do a three point focus so you get an interesting colour mix, and you always get shape." The strong directional sense this conveys contributing heavily to our perception of the arena floor as defined rooms, rather than open space, as do the Juliats, which in Bridge's own words, "give me bigger, bolder strokes".

The moving lights are a mix of VL5bs, VL2Cqs ('q' for quiet. Didn't know such a thing existed) and even four of the new VL7. Having missed both the PLASA and LDI trade shows, Bridge was, "... keen to try the VL7. The zoom and indexing together are fantastic. Cross fade colour is much better. The only thing I found disappointing was that compared to the 2C they

seemed dimmer, especially if you zoom it." However, where he did use them to most effect, such as the cone of isolation projected down onto the torture room, proved them a worthy addition to the rig.

Whatever the purists might feel about moving lights, and shifting sound images, this current short run of Tosca has established one thing. Modern presentation techniques are now a valid tool - The Times says so. If you want further proof of a growing acceptance listen out for a special on audio and opera coming soon on BBC's Radio 4. photos: Phil Dent



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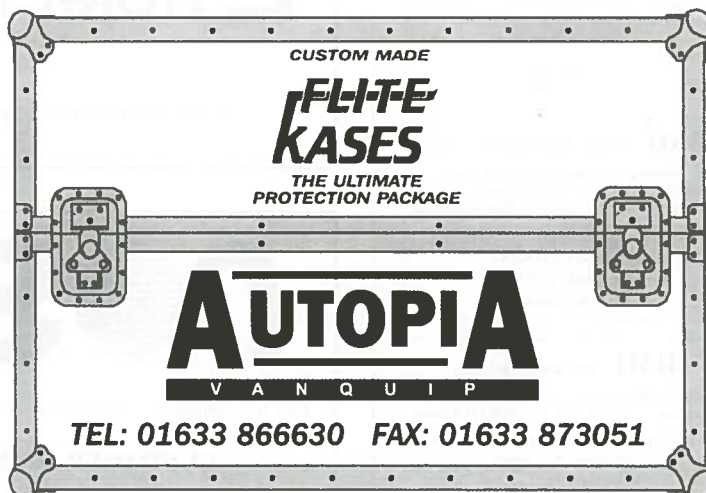
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In Profile...

L&SI Talks to the Industry Trend-setters

"The truth is, I don't know the meaning of the word 'No'." Just one of the reasons Blue Leach, a man who has no formal qualifications whatsoever for the work he does, is recognised as one of the leading exponents of video direction in the field of live music. Of course, the forename helps - it's eye-catching, like much of his work, and yes it was given him by his parents, not by some passing twonk in a school playground - but that's another story.

Blue started life the middle of three brothers: "Jonathan, my older brother, has followed my father into the motor trade, Thomas is more like me in that he's driven by a more artistic need. He works as a painter and sculptor." Driven is an equally applicable adjective for Blue, and is perhaps the watchword of the family Leach. His father started life as a milkman: "But he's a bit of an entrepreneur. By the time I was born in '67 he'd built up a chain of car dealerships right across Surrey and Sussex." Blue also admits to a fierce competitive streak, something else he

believes he owes to his father. "My brothers and I were plonked on little motor-cross bikes almost as soon as we could walk, and we learnt to compete from day one. It was very exciting and motor-cross is still something I'm very

much into today. Similarly, I find directing very exciting, live vision directing on a good night is easily as exciting as motor-cross." His third stimulus is more common-place; like most of his contemporaries the young Blue found TV, and particularly music TV, compelling. "It started when I was only six or seven - those Saturday morning kids shows are what did it. What fascinated me was the fact that if music was on TV, then it had to have some form of visual representation."

By the time he left college at 18, Leach's passion and drive towards video had diminished not one

jot. Following a brief interlude in France - "I was fascinated by languages, and determined to learn one language really well, so I went and spent a year in France," - he dove in head-first, his deliberate incomprehension of the word No proving a worthy calling card. "I got a job with Magic Eye in Wandsworth. I just kept banging on their door until they gave me some work as a runner. I'd been there eight months, making tea and doing stuff, when I ran into a company making pop promo' videos - Aubrey Powell

Productions - they'd hired the Magic Eye studio for a couple of days. Quite frankly I went weak at the knees, 'they have to employ me' I thought." Not one to miss an opportunity, Leach phoned in sick to Magic for a few days while he went and banged on Aubrey Powell's door.

"They gave me a couple of days work on a Who video, as a runner, and that was it, I felt I was another rung up the ladder." It was to be some time before Leach gained employment doing anything more worthy, but he kept his eyes open and began to recognise where his drive was taking him. "After a time Po (Powell) promoted me to production assistant. The company had begun to concentrate on live music videos and that's when I first isolated what it was I wanted to do. Live music is what excites me - the nature of performance is truly beautiful. Despite the fact I'm in concert halls all the time now for a living, I still go and see other live acts when I have the chance."

In 1989, Powell's company were invited to provide video for the McCartney 'Flowers in the Dirt' tour, and Powell needed a show guide to work from. "He gave me a VHS tape of the whole show and sent me away to sit down, watch it, and write him a script." The two men were now developing a rapport which saw Leach work with Powell first on the McCartney tour, then the



Cure's 'Wish' tour, and then back to McCartney for 'New World' which proved to be Leach's seminal moment. "Po really gave me a boost upstairs on that second McCartney tour, making me assistant director. When the tour moved into markets like Mexico, South America and Japan, I would be directing the live show, recording it and sending it to Aubrey who was set up in

a studio in LA. He would edit it down, and the Live in Mexico tape would be available almost before we'd moved onto the next country."

Having peaked, Leach knew it was time to move on: "Being assistant director on the McCartney tour gives you about as much confidence as you're ever likely to need. There was no time like the present, it was shit or bust. I left Po in March of '94 (they remain firm friends) and started hunting for camera and directing work. My contacts with Nocturne, who'd equipped the McCartney tour, put me in touch with companies like SPS, PSL and Creative Technology. Now I have established relations with men like Chris Mounsor at PSL, and lighting designers like Woodroffe and Barnes. Those relationships, and the ones you develop with artists and production managers, these are what bring in the work." But there's no doubting the passion behind Leach's work is key to his continued employment.

For anyone with similar drive and ambition he has this advice. "Having been a punter for many years I never forget that they have to be able to get into it. Whatever you do up there, it must never be a private joke. They have to get it too." ■

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Alistage	63	Hand Held	63	Neg Earth Lighting	49	Slick	31
Aliscaff	68	Harkness	17	Northern Light	28	Soundcraft	51
Altman	IFC	High End	3/10/23	Outboard Electronics	72	Sound Partner	37
Arbiter	11/22	HW International	7	PALA	66	Starlite	56
Artistic Licence	6	Jands	52	Par Opti	21	Tomcat	41
Avolites	31	LA Audio	9	PCM	33	Total Fabrication	17/29/35
Bandit Lites	59	Lee Filters	4	Philips Lighting	15	Trantec	44
beyerdynamic	16	LGH Rigging	38	Philips CSS	43	Triflite	28
CCT Lighting	24	Light Engineering	38	Procon	OBC	VDC	69
Chainmaster	46	LightProcessor	36	RB Lighting	28	Vari-Lite	5/25
CITC	13	Link	21	Recruitment	80/81	Wilkes	64
City Theatrical	74	LMC	48	RNID	14	WYSIWYG	65
Clay Paky	26/27	MA Lighting	34	Robert Juliat	12	Zero 88	8
CTS	68	Maris	68	Rosco	60		

Steve Moles talks to Blue Leach, live video director

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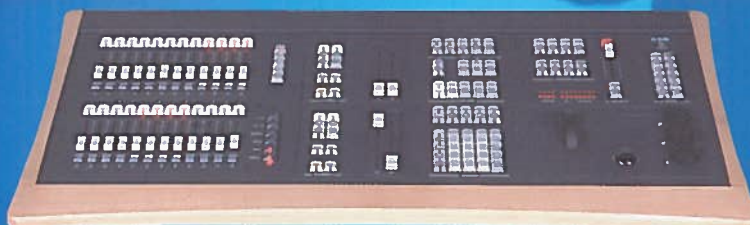


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