

Lighting & Sound INTERNATIONAL

June 1999

The Entertainment Technology Monthly

African Music

- The Three Tenors in Pretoria

Age of Hype?

- Where will the theming end?

Dome Wars

- Lighting shoot-out at Greenwich

Larger than Life

- BFI's new showcase cinema

Seriously Funny

- Profile of Fuzion

Club Classics

- Scala and Destiny

Space-Time Continuum

- British Theatrical Design

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Martin Acquired by Danish firm Schouw & Co

Danish company Schouw & Co, an investment corporation with total equity of some \$90 million and a listing on the Copenhagen Stock Exchange, has acquired a 48.5% share in Martin Professional. In addition, the company has also acquired the rights to a further 4.9% share which will give Schouw & Co a controlling interest.

The shares have been acquired from the three largest shareholders: Peter Johansen Holding A/S, Kommunernes Pensionsforsikring Aktieselskab (a pension insurance firm) and Mercury Asset Management Ltd. Schouw & Co has also acquired the Martin manufacturing facility located in the northern part of the country.

Schouw's purchase of Martin founder Peter Johansen's shares effectively cuts his remaining financial ties with Martin Professional. Industry watchers will be well aware that, following the departure of Johansen last year, the new leadership at Martin has striven to reinvent the company and to get it back on a profitable track. With Schouw & Co as the majority shareholder, apparently in a hands-off role, the company should now be in a position to fully realise its potential.

Although the news broke at the same time as the departure of Ian Kirby from Martin UK was announced (see people news this issue), Martin CEO, Kristian Kolding, has made it clear that the top Martin management, as well

as the company's strategy, will remain unchanged. In connection with the stock purchase, Johansen has signed a five-year binding clause preventing him from carrying out activities which may directly compete with Martin Professional, although they have also entered into a 10 year consultancy agreement with Johansen. Schouw & Co, whose position has always been to invest in companies which have, or are expected to have, a leading market position, is the parent company of a concern that has major business investments.



Martin's headquarters.

Millennium Countdown

Independent television producer Malcolm Gerrie (the man behind The Tube and the recent transformation of The Brits) is behind plans to stage a spectacular musical event at Greenwich on the eve of the new Millennium, virtually on the doorstep of the Millennium Dome. The show, provisionally titled 'As Time Goes By', will tell the musical story of the last Millennium. Gerrie's company Initial will be staging the event, which aims to attract a live audience of up to 20,000 spectators, as well as being broadcast live on BBC1, as the focus switches between the Dome and other events being staged around the world. While Gerrie is still in negotiations with a number of unspecified artists, he has confirmed the signing of the London Symphony Orchestra. However, with top artists being offered up to £10m to appear in the world's top casinos on that night, he may well find them with prior engagements.

Micro-Scope 3 by Artistic Licence

Micro-Scope 3 is the most powerful DMX512 tester available. In addition to the features expected in a product of this calibre, Micro-Scope 3 provides a sophisticated lamp personality library which allows all types of moving lamp to be calibrated, tested, focused and patched. Key features include:

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People News

The phones have been buzzing at L&S this month with news of several high profile industry people on the march, and one or two major surprises.



Left to right, Vanessa Cooper, Justin Frost, Joe Brusi and Jo Boyd

Steve Lakin, chief executive of the Gearhouse Group, has left the company. His departure comes at an interesting juncture for the Group. Since March this year there has been a significant fall in demand in the UK for Gearhouse's products. The reasons appear to be a combination of clients deferring events and a general slowdown in the UK economy affecting the sector as a whole. The Group's operations elsewhere, apart from Australia, are currently profitable. Not surprisingly, the Group's performance will be significantly affected. As a result, the Board has recently commenced a strategic review, and Lakin has left the Group with immediate effect. The search for a replacement chief executive, to be recruited from outside the Group, has already started. In the meantime the Group will be managed by an executive committee chaired by **John Napier**.

Another high profile player in the industry has also upped sticks: **Ian Kirby**, managing director of Martin Professional Plc, stepped down at the end of May in order to pursue other interests. Kirby was instrumental in establishing Martin in entertainment lighting throughout the UK and oversaw the company's growth from a virtual unknown to a key player in the industry. Martin has not yet named his successor.

In what must be viewed as one of the key moves on the hectic audio merry go round, **Justin Frost** has left AKG to join the Audio-Technica sales team. Frost was 12 years with AKG and his appointment as area sales manager for the South of England adds further strength to A-T's sales force. It's also designed to allow **Paul Mason**, Frost's predecessor in the role, to focus on the newly created position of market development manager - UK.

Stagetec (UK) Ltd has recently recruited **Sarah Graham** to their expanding sales team. She has recently completed a BA in Lighting at Rose Bruford College and her appointment coincides with the company's planned expansion into major theatre sound and lighting installations, combined with the growth in Compulite sales in the UK.

Stagestruck has taken on three new members of staff at their head office near Cambridge. **Paul Sadler**, formerly a laser operator and more recently a freelance video technician, has joined the company's team of eight in-house project managers for live events; **Ian Blades** is returning after a three-year sojourn in the South of France taking on a new role as company administrator and **Paul Robinson** joins the company in their new 3D visualisation department.

Loudspeaker manufacturer DAS Audio has appointed **Joe Brusi** as manager of the company's newly created Applications and Systems Group. Brusi is an experienced sound designer and was responsible for the development of the Autopol platform for the acquisition and post-processing of directivity measurements. He returns to Spain after working in the US with JBL Professional.

Vanessa Cooper has joined cable and component specialists, VDC, as a sales executive. She brings with her strong specialist product knowledge, having worked as a sales manager at Key Audio for the past two years.

PR specialists JGP have been joined by **Jo Boyd**, formerly internet manager at PLASA. The appointment coincides with the recent launch of

JGP Online Media in response to the demand from existing PR clients seeking to develop their activities in what is seen as a critical year for internet profiling. The service will also be made available generally to the industry.

David Leigh has joined AudioForum as sales manager for the South West and Universities. Leigh's background is in the leisure industry, which should allow him to assist nightclubs in their development plans.

Lighting Design Partnership Ltd has appointed **Graham Large** to the Board of Directors. Large joined LDP in 1996 and was made an associate in 1997. As a director he will work on the ongoing development of LDP's London office and the business development of the company.

Scotty Ashton has joined PSL Concert Touring department as the US sales manager and will be leaving for LA shortly. He was previously with Britannia Row for 10 years where he undertook a number of roles. Since its move to Milton Keynes, audio company Studiomaster has again been on the recruitment trail. **Leslie-Ann Cross** and **Peter Relf** have both joined the company.

There's also been a lot of movement on the TV and film side of the industry. Optex has seen a number of departures of late, including those of **Lee Rickard**, who has left to set up his own company - LCC Photon Technik - offering studio lighting design and **Mike Perry** who has left to join ARRI. Meanwhile at ARRI, **Nick Shapley** and **Graham Kerr** have both left to pursue other interests, whilst **Richard Maskell** will leave the company shortly. **Chris Pearce** is now the general manager.

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News Round-Up



Are You Contravening Regulations?

As many in the industry will be aware, two new sets of regulations, affecting just about everyone in entertainment technology, are now in force - the Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998 (PUWER 98) and the Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations 1998 (LOLER).

The Regulations, which together implement a revised European directive are each supported by an Approved Code of Practice (ACoP). Both apply to work equipment used in all industry sectors - in our industry, their relevance comes for those who work with lifting equipment, including lighting rigs and stage equipment, stage sets/lifts, computers, plant machinery, accessories and tools.

The new initiatives widen the range of parties with obligations (dutyholders) to reflect the way work equipment is used in industry, where there is not necessarily a direct employment relationship between users and the persons who control its use (e.g. where a sub-contractor carries out work on another person's premises with equipment provided by that person or a third party).

PUWER 98 replaces the existing Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1992 (PUWER 92) and applies to all equipment (including lifting equipment) used at work. PUWER 92's requirements are carried forward in full, but there are important new additions, including a requirement to inspect work equipment where significant risk could result from incorrect installation, relocation or deterioration.

LOLER and its supporting ACoP, deal with the particular risks posed by the provision and use of lifting equipment and the management of lifting operations.

LOLER requires lifting equipment to have adequate strength and stability for its proposed use; requires risks from positioning and installing lifting equipment to be minimised, so far as reasonably practicable, and for equipment to be marked to indicate its safe working load. Dutyholders now have the choice to have their lifting equipment thoroughly examined by a competent person at the intervals set out in the Regulations, or alternatively, an examination scheme can be drawn up and intervals set for thorough examinations based on a risk assessment.

As with all new regulations, where the requirements are new, dutyholders will be given time to assimilate them, but where there are serious risks or what needs to be done is not new, inspectors will be prepared to take firm enforcement action. If you haven't taken action already you need to do so.

For initial information, you can contact the HSE's InfoLine on 0541-545500. Copies of the following publications are also available from HSE Books (Tel: 01787-881165/Fax: 01787-313995) or from booksellers: 'Safe use of work equipment: Approved code of practice and guidance' (HSE Ref. L22), ISBN 0 7176 1626 6, price £8.00. 'Safe use of lifting equipment: Approved code of practice and guidance' (Ref. L113), ISBN 07176 1628 2, price £8.00. You can also get a free helpsheet from Star Hire on +44 1234 772233.

www.open.gov.uk/hse/

In answer to the many enquiries we've received about the web feature which ran in the May issue, the next feature is scheduled for the August issue. Anybody who would like to have their website included should contact Barry Howse or Jane Cockburn on +44 1323 642639

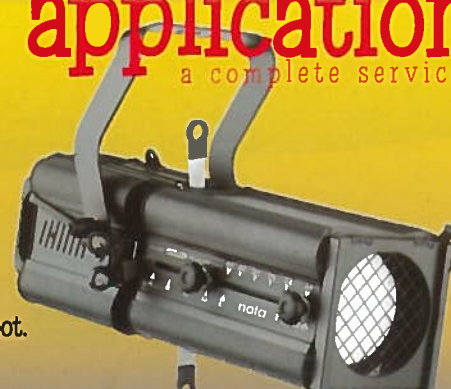
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Strand Launch SL Lanterns

Strand Lighting held their most successful dealer and distributor convention ever, with representatives from over 55 Strand distributors from all over Europe attending a two-day rendezvous in Scotland recently.



Kiener described the event as "the biggest gathering of its kind for Strand," with over 170 delegates attending from all over Europe, coming from as far as South Africa, Iceland and the Middle East. "We

The purpose was to launch Strand's new SL luminaire range, as well as the Quartzcolor range of HMIs, Pars, Studio and Bambino luminaires and 500 Series consoles, including the new 510i show controller and networking capabilities. The main locations were the King's Theatre, Edinburgh and Strand's factory at nearby Kirkcaldy in Fife. Explaining the rationale, Georges Kiener, Strand Lighting's managing director for Europe, Middle East and Africa, told L&S: "With so many new products to launch, it was important to get the same message out to all our European trading partners - gathered in one place at the one time."

wanted to show off our factory, which has been revamped and relaid for increased efficiency and flexibility," explained Kiener. "The new flow line assembly process gives us the ability to produce one new SL every two minutes."

Finally, an extra treat for visitors was the presence of the Strand show truck. Only a few days prior to the convention it was being used for training purposes in Pitlochry and by the following day it was 500 miles away - down on the south coast at Bournemouth - for the Educational Television & Media Association (ETMA) annual conference and awards dinner.

Laser Innovations' New MPU

Laser Innovations has launched what is considered to be the first truly portable and self-sufficient solution for providing outdoor laser presentations.

The Mobile Presentation or MPU will allow the company to provide a flexible facility for laser shows particularly at large-scale events. It has been custom-built according to a specification designed by the company and includes a laser control system including programming suite, a 40W YAG laser, a 10W white light laser, a cooling system, generator, a professional sound system, a hospitality lounge and crew quarters.

Laser Innovation's managing director Dave Hickford has been joined by sales and marketing director, Richard Sekula and a new company Laser Innovations Projects has been set up to manage the MPU which has been available since the beginning of May. The company has already received considerable interest from organisers of several high-profile projects during 1999.



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ShowMagic - total show control

ShowMagic is a new piece of software that enables you to control literally all the technical aspects of any performance or presentation that uses sound, lighting and special effects equipment from a single PC. It uses a 'Virtual Desk' which is the software equivalent to a lighting control desk and sound playback and mixing desk all rolled into one. The virtual desk enables control of up to 512 DMX512 channels and six stereo audio channels. The system is also expandable to 1024, 1536 or 2048 DMX512 channels by using multiple DMX cards to provide multiple DMX 'streams'.



The DMX512 PC card provides 512 channels for connection to DMX512 lighting dimmer packs, intelligent DMX fixtures, numerous other DMX devices such as smoke and haze machines, and also voltage operated devices such as mirror balls and curtain motors by using DMX to voltage converters. ShowMagic takes full advantage of the PC's ability to play MIDI and WAVE files from hard disk and to use CD-ROM drives as audio devices. Add to this the ability to mix these 'PC' audio sources with any external audio devices such as microphones, Mini-Disc players etc, via the line and mic level input connectors on the PC soundcard, and you have a very flexible sound system. Just like a hardware lighting control desk or audio mixing desk, the virtual desk uses faders, buttons and displays. These are operated with the Windows mouse pointer. Clicking on a button is the equivalent to pressing it, and dragging a fader with the mouse pointer is equivalent to sliding a fader up and down with your fingers on a hardware desk. All faders, with the exception of the chase 'speed' fader, display a value range of 0 (Off) to 100% (FL) although the actual output range is 0 to 255 (256 steps) providing the full DMX512 resolution.

ShowMagic is distributed by Dial Sound and Lighting in Bradford, tel +44 1274 651600

Leisuretec Aurora!

Leisuretec Distribution has recently supplied equipment to Cardiff-based Stage Lighting and Stage Sound Services for use at an innovative six-week exhibition at the new Cardiff Centre for Visual Arts.

The equipment comprises four Shure VP64 microphones and a Spirit Folio Notepad mixer controlling (via Sony VCRs) 36 Strand Lighting Coda lanterns and Zero 88 Alphapack dimmers.

Phil Hurley, proprietor of Stage Sound Services explains the project: "Aurora was a six-week work by visual artist Simon Fenoulhet, and was unusual to say the least. Basically, the Shure VP64s were mounted at a height of 10 feet, one on each outside corner of the building, which is undergoing a huge renovation and is due to officially re-open in September. The microphones picked up ambient noise, conversations and the like from passing visitors during the day, and this was recorded onto VHS for six hours daily. In the evenings this would be replayed, triggering different coloured lighting throughout the building."





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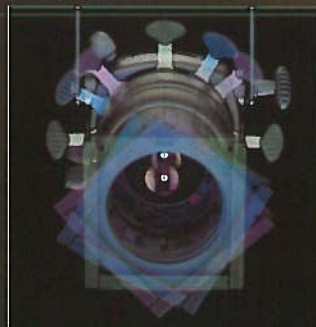
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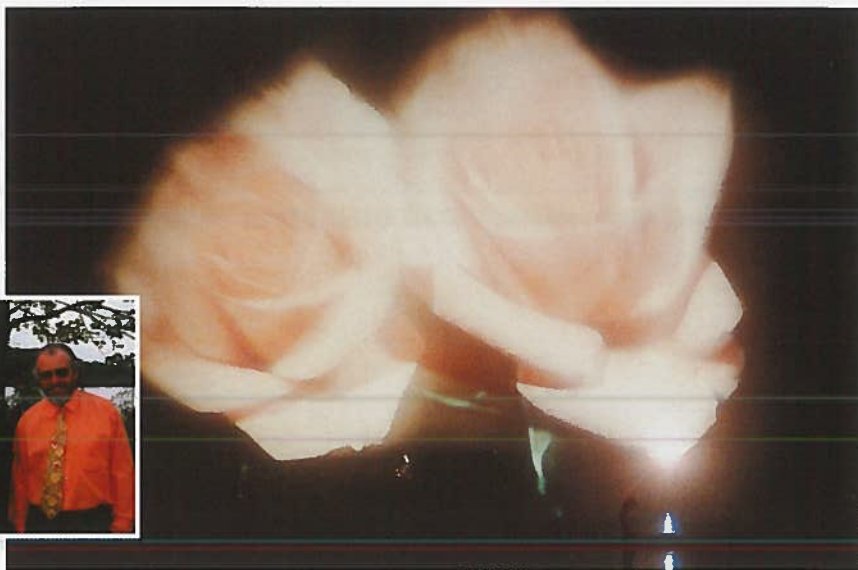
One of the biggest flower festivals in the world - Florelies Internationales in Nantes - was brought to life recently with a stunning son et lumiere across the River Erdre.

The massive 10-day celebration is only held every five years, and the highlight of this year's production was an incredible projection of lifelike images, shimmering against a water screen created by three pumps - each drawing 75k of power and the creation of the company Aquatique Show.

Behind the water-sheet, a floating barge was stuffed with Martin Wavefronts in a W8/W8C/W8S configuration - 28 stacks in all. On a calm night this was quite sufficient to carry the classical, hard-disk generated show evenly across the 85m to the throngs lining the river bank, and occupying the raked seating of the Stade de la Beaujoire.

The Wavefronts were a collective effort, co-ordinated by Martin Audio's French distributor Audia, in the form of their sound department manager Jean-Noel Elouali. While the Florelies' production company, Bruno Alain's Production 44, were the main contractors, their Wavefront stock was insufficient and thus, a second Martin rental company - Bordeaux-based ATC - were invited to supplement the rig. A block of W8 subs in the centre - providing a point source - were stacked eight wide and two high, and were outflanked by W8s, positioned four-wide each side, with W8 Compacts inverted on top, to enhance the vocal performance. This inversion technique worked very well, enabling a transparent and powerful projection through the 17m high water screen and across to the bank. Limiting and crossover functions were set using Martin's dedicated analogue MX5 controller.

The scale of the production had increased since the previous event, and all the contractors - from the mighty pyrotechnics company Lacroix to



Production 44 and the water specialists - were grateful to have had a full year to prepare for this show. In any case, Bruno Alain's company are masters in staging such one-off events - as comfortable dealing with lighting and video, as linking sound to outside broadcast trucks.

When Audia, a division of Gerard Garnier's French giants Camac, first demonstrated the Wavefront 8 to Bruno Alain he fell in love with what he describes as "its polyvalency", and sensing the extra usage he could gain from its added versatility, he set about systematically replacing his old Martin F2 system. Sound engineer, Olivier Joli, was certainly happy enough with the rig, triggering the music from an Akai DR8 hard disk and running the whole show, including the 35mm projection, using various protocols and platforms. The Akai hard disk, fed by the distribution amp, was in turn routed to the Yamaha O2R digital mixer, which controlled the water screen and Aardvark MTC and MPC 2000 MIDI controller. The production team also made use of the Radio DMX Wireless Transceiver from Interactive Technologies - a wireless transmission box spanning a 1km range, which can be amplified to give a signal at up to seven or eight kilometres. The whole show ran just under 32 minutes, with

Above, A floral projection onto the water-screen.

Inset, Jean-Noël Elouali of Audia, Bruno Alain of Production 44 and show designer, Gérard Hieronimus.

images projected from a Cineservices 7k xenon projector. Also used in the production were four 4.2k xenon yokes, with scrollers, and dimmers on the focus, as well as specially-modified 4k Griven HMI Multibeams, two on the bank at the front and two on the boat. The 4.2k xenons were also split to create maximum effect firing across the water.

The show was designed by Gerard Hieronimus, who also scored the continuous music, mixing it down at the local Studio Anamorphose, working in close conjunction with Bruno Alain. With the addition of Space Cannons, there was plenty to punctuate the night sky. A combination of searchlights and scanners was complemented by the pyro, fired by radio remote, and including a selection of multi-coloured gerb effects fired from mortars on the far bank. The 5k and 1k conventional halogen lighting was also used creatively, while the rise time of the sodium arc lamp mimicked the rising of the sun. Très neat. The event was a success for the association Horticole, who promoted the event, and a triumph for Martin Audio, who provided full service support.



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Footage Takes on New Lease of Life

What can you do to a popular student bar that's already trading well, in order to enhance the experience still further?

Allied Domecq are about to find out with the start of the new university term in Manchester, after committing a substantial budget to Marquee Audio to enable them to fit a fully-featured, easy-to-operate sound, light and video package, operating on two floors at the 600-capacity Footage & Firkin. Manager Michael Talbot already admits that the pub is heaving and the clientele is unlikely to change - but they will have their aural senses stimulated by a vastly improved sound system and their visual ones by a Kaleidovision package and an option of programmes, from MTV to Premiership football, running on the two big screens.

The venue, which was opened two years ago, had been earmarked as one of Firkin's live venues - but a spirit of "if it ain't broke, don't fix it" intervened. "Instead we were asked to design a top class package that could be used by non-technical operators, while introducing them to ideas like Kaleidovision to increase the publicity and



promotional aspects of the venue," explained Marquee MD Spencer Brooks.

As the name suggests, the venue was originally an old cinema, and Michael Talbot explains that where the old cinema screen was sited, the venue has two large screens and two projectors - showing everything from the Kaleidovision graphics package to the various satellite channels and a feature movie once a month.

"We have DJs in Wednesday through Saturday and have retained the Pioneer CDJ-500 and DJM-500, but built them into a dedicated DJ booth," explained Talbot. The DJs play club classics, soul and more party-oriented music, working exclusively from CD. For non-manual operation during daytime hours a Pioneer PDM603 six-disc CD player is plugged with source material. All this is now replayed through 11 of Nexo's PS10 two-way passive loudspeakers and four LS500 subs on the ground floor, and six beefy RCF Monitor 8s on the balcony, the sound divided into four sound zones and switched through a pair of Cloud CX242s (offering four music inputs, two mic inputs and two output zones). The system is powered by Yamaha P4500 amplifiers.

"Although we have the option of different sound sources this would be impractical as it's an open-plan layout," adds Talbot.

As for the lighting, Allied Domecq have ordered a Lightprocessor QCommander to run a full artillery, including 10 of the stylish Abstract VR8 scanners, an Optikinetics K1 FX projector and Anytronics Superstar strobes.

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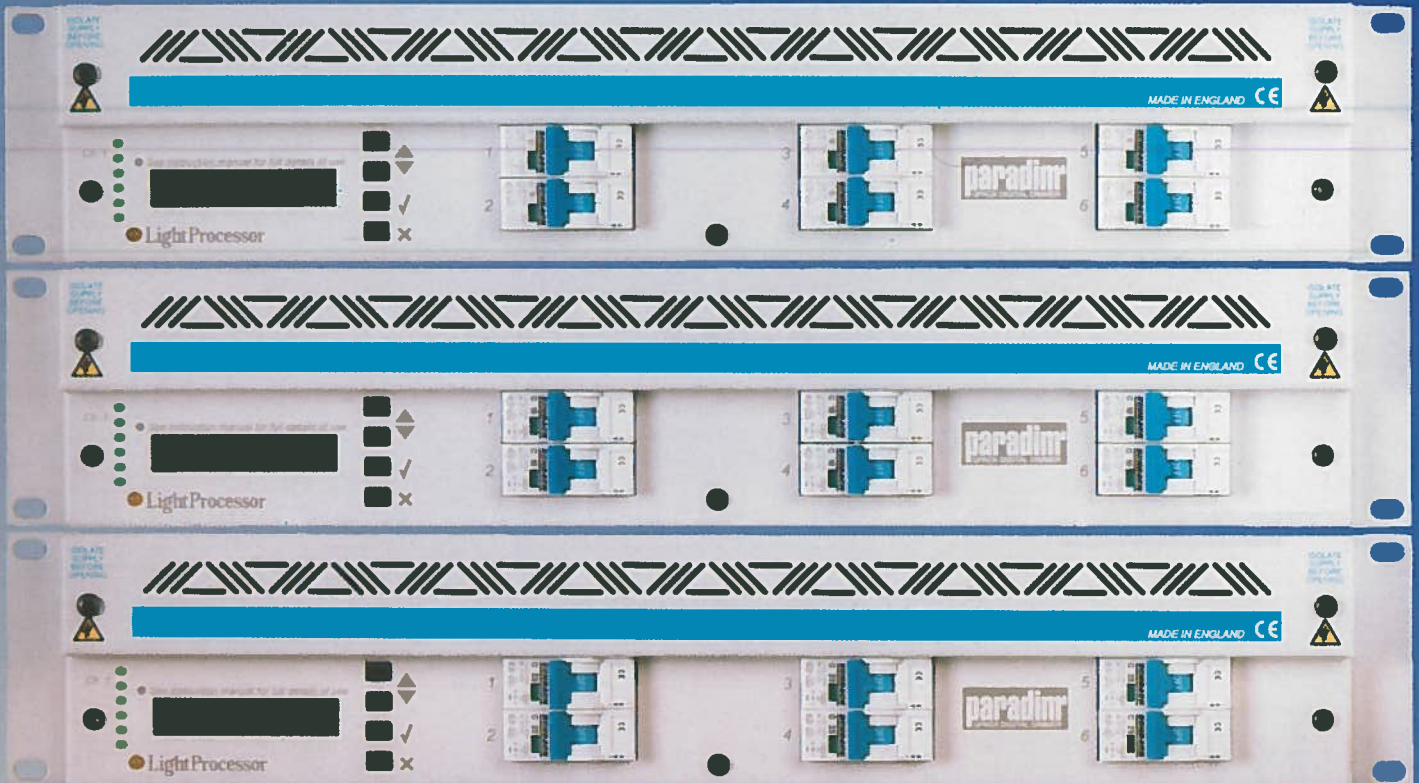
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ExpoLatina Launches in Miami

Starting a new trade show is always a bit of a gamble, especially at a time when other organisers have bowed to pressure from companies suffering exhibition fatigue and shifted their once-annual events to alternate year footings.



Henrik Bertelsen (left) and Pio Nahum (right) of Martin Professional Denmark with Latin American operations manager Buby Sinibaldi



Stephen Smith (left) and Mick Smith (right) of City Theatrical with Joel Nichols of Apollo



Hiram Pérez (left) and Jonathan Resnick (right) of Barbizon flank Marcel Fairbairn of High End Systems



Van Rommel and Mark McKinney of Strand

It was perhaps then a brave move by Intertec, organisers of the annual LDI Show, to launch ExpoLatina - a show for the Latin American market - especially since the region it is targeting has received less than favourable media coverage on its financial stability. The East Asian crisis hurt the region's economic growth through its effect on trade and finance, and the seven largest countries are suffering as a result. Devaluation-hit Brazil's currency troubles have led to a reform of finances, whilst in Argentina, an 8% growth in its economy in 1997, has not protected the country from recession.

These issues aside, Latin America has enormous potential - Brazil, for instance, has seen an explosion in theatre construction in recent years - and whilst we still have a lot to learn, the launch of ExpoLatina is recognition that this is a fast-expanding region with huge potential for export. Everybody, not just the North Americans, has got their eye on Latin America and many are poised to take full advantage.

Indeed some already are, and many of the larger companies exhibiting at ExpoLatina - Martin Professional, High End Systems, EAW, ETC,

Meyer, Crest, Xenotech and Strand - have already demonstrated their commitment to this market.

Certainly, with Intertec in the driving seat, the organisation was faultless and this was almost a mini LDI in look and feel. One of the hallmarks of that show was also very much in evidence - a well conceived programme of seminars and training sessions conducted in both Spanish and Portuguese. The key to Latin America is that it offers companies who've saturated their own markets a chance to expand their business. But they have to

understand the local markets and ExpoLatina goes some way to providing the answers.

There is no doubt that the show will have a future in our industry, Intertec will see to that, but several concerns were raised from the show floor, critically whether the show delivered a new audience to those exhibiting. The feedback was mixed, and whilst the organisers were happy to see over 2,000 visitors in Miami, there were those who felt that the future of the show would be better served as a bolt-on attachment to the existing LDI Show.

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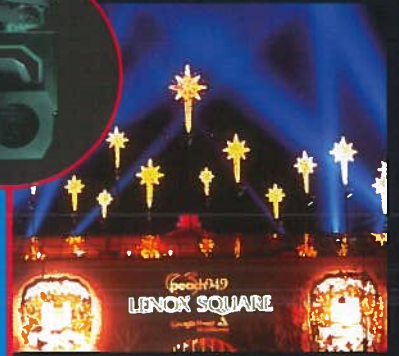
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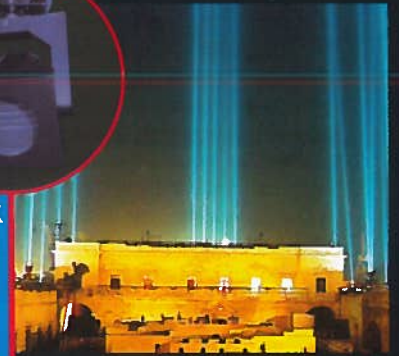
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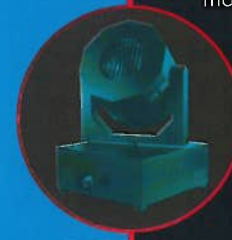
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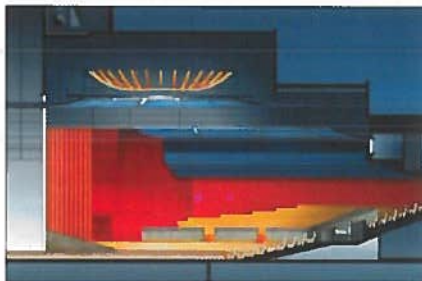
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Cirque's Beau Rivage

After designing the Bellagio and Treasure Island Showrooms in Las Vegas and the theatre at Walt Disney World in Orlando, Quebec-based Scéno Plus has just completed a fourth theatre for Cirque du Soleil.

The latest performance space - the Beau Rivage Showroom - is in Biloxi, Mississippi. The theatre is part of the new Beau Rivage Hotel & Casino Complex and represents a joint project between Scéno Plus, American promoter Steve Wynn of Mirage Resorts and Cirque du Soleil themselves. Working with CDS's set designer Michel Crête, Michel Aubé, principal architect for Scéno Plus, came up with the architectural concept, while president Patrick Bergé and project manager Claude-André Roy headed a talented multi-disciplinary project team that designed and planned the theatre, its infrastructure and the performance equipment. Since the showroom was designed to accommodate CDS's touring shows in two-year time slots, the dimensions of the stage and house are identical to those of the big top used by the company for touring. What makes this project unique, however, is that the



showroom can be transformed into a conventional theatre in short order - just eight weeks. Sections of the orchestra seating can be removed and part of the ceiling dismantled without affecting the integrity of the building's structure.

White Light's Training Initiative

White Light has launched 'The Training Initiative' - a successor to the popular White Light Wednesday workshops.

The Training Initiative will take place at White Light's new premises in Wimbledon, continuing as part of the company's training programme, and will be joined by weekend workshops and individual training schemes.

To support the initiative, White Light will be launching The Resource Pack. Aimed at students, amateurs, teachers or anyone starting out in theatre production, the pack contains stencils, scale rulers, colour swatches, fact sheets and a wealth of useful tools and information.

New Location for Studiomaster USA - Studiomaster Inc, a wholly owned subsidiary of Studiomaster, has relocated to a purpose-built office and distribution centre in a new high-tech business park halfway between Anaheim and Corona in California. With over 50% more warehouse space, the facility will take over all distribution for both North and South America, as well as the Caribbean territories. The new address is 22885-D Savi Ranch Parkway, Yorba Linda, CA 92887, USA. Tel: +1 (714) 998 2102



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Artec Launch ACI Sound Solutions

New York-based Artec Consultants, theatre planning and acoustics consultants, have announced the formation of ACI Sound Solutions, a new sound, video and technical communications division.

The new operation, an outgrowth of the sound and communication systems services provided as part of Artec's consulting practice, will provide design and consulting services for a wide range of venues. The principal design staff are Jens McVoy (left), Thomas Young (centre) and Tom Clark (right).



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Rags and Riches - Away from the glare of publicity surrounding the £214m renovation of the Royal Opera House, another Opera House opened its doors on the opposite side of the tracks, in Tower Hamlets - London's poorest borough.

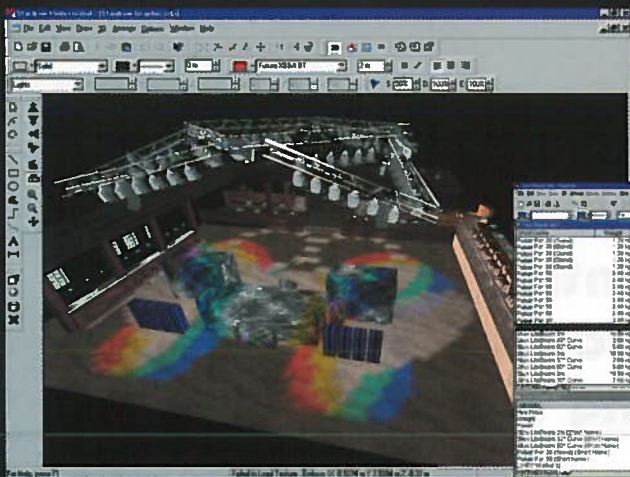
The new venue, the Broomhill Opera, has brought back to life what is probably the oldest surviving music hall in the country after 40 mostly derelict years. Built, ironically, in the same year as the ROH - 1858 - the former Wilton's Music Hall has now been reborn with the sum of £120,000, every penny of which has been supplied by opera enthusiasts. The aim of the group of enthusiasts behind the Broomhill is to bring opera to the people. To this end, seats at premiere shows will be free to those living or working in Tower Hamlets, while a number of seats will be available each night on a 'pay what you can' basis.

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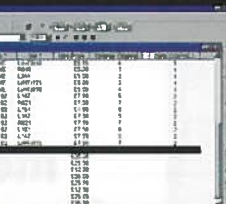
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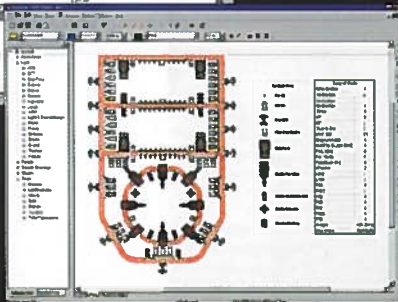
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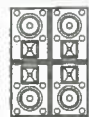
PA 281

PA 261

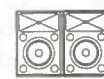
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News Round-Up



NSCA Diversifies

The recent NSCA Show proved a record event for US-based organisers, the National Systems Contractors Association. Over 9,000 visitors (up 7% on last year) from around the globe gathered at the Opryland Hotel and Convention Centre in Nashville in May to see the latest products and services from over 500 exhibitors.

The show is in an enviable position, for the sound installation and contracting market in the US is vast - the NSCA organisation alone represents more than 2,400 companies and its show is probably the key event devoted to this market. While the majority of the exhibitors at NSCA glean the bulk of their livelihoods from commercial sound/video installation and sound reinforcement, they are also increasingly embracing installation technologies from the telecoms, access control and CCTV system fields.

Indicative of a growing trend towards system integration and the show's expansion away from its traditional audio roots, was the introduction of a new facet to the show - the NSCA University: A Virtual Campus. Intended as a snapshot of what will be commonplace in the future, this featured a whole slew of different technologies networked together as they would be on a real campus. It's a feature that the organisers intend to expand still further when the show heads to Vegas in April next year.



NSCA President Mark Dundas of Techworks with colleague Robin Maestas.



Marcel Vantuyn of Stage Accompany with Ben Kok of Siap.



Andy Simmons of XTA with Richard Vivian, latest recruit to the Celestion team.



Scott Casey and Jeffrey Cox of Cox Audio with Michel Brouard of L'Acoustics.

Manufacturers were there in force, and there were literally hundreds of new products launched - one identifiable trend being that of the launch of families of products designed to be integrated for specific end-user applications. The huge range of seminars and technical courses are always a key draw of the show, and this year was no exception. Again, there was evidence of the focus on system integration, and a series of new seminars introduced to address this area.

Certainly the contracting market is growing in the US, and for many international companies at

the show, it represents a significant slice of their export sales. What will come as welcome news are the findings of a recent NSCA survey analysing the commercial and pro audio industry in North America. The results are encouraging: most sectors will experience moderate growth of 10-15% over the next two to four years. What's clear is that the market is very product-driven and because of the number of entrenched competitors in all sectors, product line expansion is going to be a key facet of survival. Which should make for an interesting NSCA 2000.

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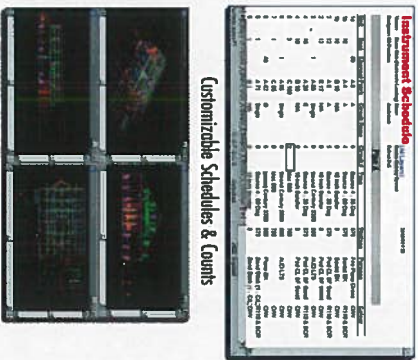


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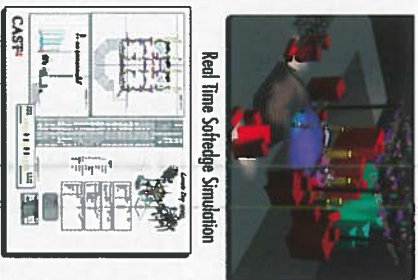
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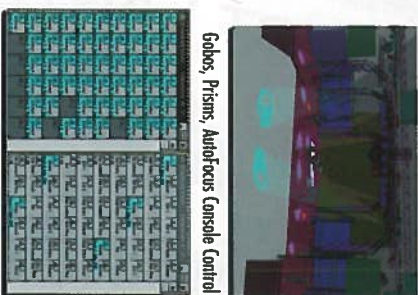
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Recording Technology 99

If you are serious about recording and professionalism in a rapidly evolving recording industry, the place to be on June 25-26 is the Business Design Centre, Islington, London.

A comprehensive display of new technology and some hot topics in discussion, not to mention the assembled throng of industry leading lights (check the bar!), combine to offer one of the best networking, reconnaissance and prospecting opportunities for recording practitioners this summer.

"We have an interactive floorplan, on the website," explains Mark Broad, chief executive of the Professional Recording Association. "For those who have web access this offers a brilliant way to explore in advance, so that time spent at the show can be useful and enjoyable. It shows exhibitor and seminar information, not the individual characters you're likely to greet, which is often one of the best things about a show like this.

"Recording Technology is building up to be the exciting summer event the UK recording industry

truly warrants," adds Broad. "And while technology remains a special focus, as a professional association we are just as concerned with the impact on commercial developments and creative innovation."

Subjects such as On-line Distribution, DVD and the protection of recorded assets will be discussed amongst representatives from all the important industry organisations. "Everyone's on a learning curve," observes Broad "and most of us are happy to admit it! It's quite interesting, that there does seem to be a readiness to lower some of the political defences, in the face of the far reaching and fundamental changes which technology is driving now. Maybe it's all part of the Millennium fever," he adds.

Recording Technology opens from 10am - 6pm Friday and Saturday, 25-26 June at The Business Design Centre, 59 Upper Street, Islington, London (Angel tube station). Admission is free to registered members of the APRS, MPG, AMPS, BACS, BPI, AIM, MPA and exhibitors' guests.

Ticket Hotline (UK): +44 1923 690645

On-line registration: www.aprs.co.uk

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The AVR Colour Master System from Leicester-based Ambient Lighting, aims to provide versatile colour-changing effects for any venue, using small 12volt 50W lamp fittings in either ceiling-mounted or surface-mounting fixtures.

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Adastra Expands

PA manufacturer Adastra Electronics has joined forces with Skytronic UK - a move that will allow the company to embark on an ambitious programme to extend its product range and expand its sales coverage into European markets. Now trading as Adastra Ltd, the company has relocated from its Watford base to new premises in Manchester, and can be contacted at Containerbase, Barton Dock Road, Manchester, M41 7BQ. Tel: +44 161 749 9009.

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News Round-Up



Classic have broadened their range of technical services on offer to event organisers with the introduction of Classic AV as a sister company within the Classic Group.

Classic Expansion



Following a management takeover of Thorn (UK) Hire Services, Fleet-based Classic have established a new division - Classic Audio and Visual Hire Services Ltd. This will take on all existing stock and benefit from the established contracts of Thorn (UK) Hire services.

Paul Gardiner, previously Thorn's commercial and operations manager, will become managing director of the new company. Alan Crowley - previously Thorn's technical manager - will become technical director. Pictured is Paul Gardiner (left) with Tony Timms.

Classic AV (UK) + 0990 133738

Tannoy and Barco form Alliance

Tannoy has announced a joint strategic alliance with Barco Projection Products. The two companies have been working together for some time on the EU-funded electronic cinema (e-cinema) project, and the new alliance is aimed at increasing development on this and other joint projects, as well as the cross-promotion of each company's specialist products to wider markets. The e-cinema project is designed to maximise the latest advances in satellite transmission technology, enabling feature film standard pictures and sound to be transmitted from a central station to venues around the world in digital format.

Rigging School

PCM, UK and European importers and distributors of Columbus McKinnon Lodestar chain motors, in conjunction with Safe Working Ltd, Star Rats and James Thomas Engineering, are presenting a five day level 1 Rigging School in July.

This course is being co-ordinated by PCM, the 1999 Live! Award Winners for Excellence in Training, who are pioneering the concept of offering fully-featured rigging courses on a no-profit basis. All aspects of rigging will be covered as well as hoist maintenance. A full PCM Lodestar Motor School is included as well as SWL's comprehensive rigging course, plus a day dealing with trussing and ground support systems.

The course will be based around the Liverpool area, in central Liverpool venues and at PCM's HQ in Prenton, Wirral. All necessary transport between locations is provided and meals, refreshments and accommodation at a university-type venue is included.

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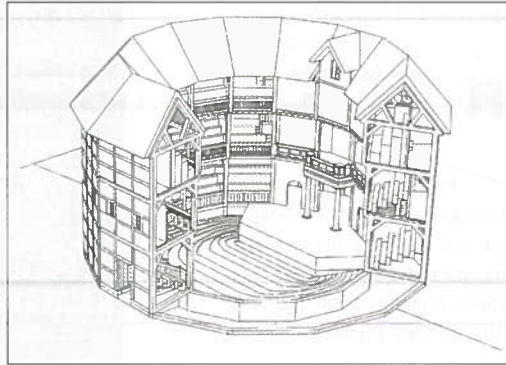
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A Rose by Any Other Name . . .

Some in the industry might recall the opening of the Rose Theatre on London's Bankside in 1587 - it was the National Theatre of its day and its repertory included plays by Kyd, Jonson, Shakespeare and Marlowe. Somewhere along the line, it managed to disappear from the London theatre skyline and wasn't rediscovered until 1989 when its remains were identified and partially excavated, before being covered up again for conservation reasons.



Now, some 10 years later, the theatre site has been reopened to the public, this time as the venue for a new exhibition organised by the Rose Theatre Trust. There is certainly something special about the site; after all, this is a genuine Elizabethan theatre and it was its unique heritage that brought many leading members of the theatrical profession, and thousands of ordinary people, to rally to the site's defence in 1989. It is also what makes the site a complementary, rather than a rival, attraction to its new neighbour, Shakespeare's Globe.

Planning the current display on the Rose site was a challenging brief. This is a temporary exhibition, intended to reawaken public interest in the theatre, and help generate funds for its re-excavation, preservation, and permanent display; the archaeological remains of the Rose itself are therefore not visible to visitors. Rather than opting for a conventional and static exhibition, the Rose Theatre Trust chose to commission a lighting and sound show from award-winning theatre designer Bill Dudley, whose recent projects include *The Forest* (Royal National Theatre) and *Amadeus* (Peter Hall Company). Dudley found himself presented with a large, dimly lit basement space, its walls left unplastered and unpainted and the steelwork which supports the building above clearly visible. In the centre, a pool of water marks the site of the excavated portion of the theatre: above this rise the pipes used for monitoring it.

Visitors enter the site from Park Street; the unexcavated area to the east constitutes a natural viewing gallery, and it is from here, looking out over the pool of water, that visitors view the video presentation which forms the core of the exhibition. This is projected over and apparently through the water covering the site, using glass viewing screens in an illusionistic variation on the 'Pepper's Ghost' technique first developed for Victorian music halls and fairs. Narrated by Sir Ian McKellen, it combines existing stills and footage with new computer-generated images and, in an unprecedented and indeed revolutionary development, electroluminescents. Floating just beneath the surface of the water covering the site, these plastic panels show exactly where the theatre's remains are hidden below. They can even be selectively illuminated to show, say, how the original theatre's walls and stage were pushed back in 1592.

Lighting designer Dorian Kelly of Colchester-based Illuminati, known for his innovative work in stage and architectural lighting, sound, video and special effects, was the man tasked with the job of producing the underwater lighting effects to recreate the hidden remains. Bill Dudley wanted to use an electroluminescent material he had previously seen in Vienna, but this product proved unsuitable for use underwater and, in any case, was not available in large enough sections. Kelly spent four months researching plastics technology and different kinds of waterproofing systems eventually redesigning the product with the aid of British and American specialists in phosphors, plastics and electronics. The resulting blocks of light were produced by 'electroluminescent' excitation - a process whereby phosphor material is vacuum deposited onto a substrate and then encapsulated in an electronically conducting film. Illuminati specified and commissioned US-based E-Lite Technologies to produce the 80sq.m of the

The working masses.

Since the introduction of sound reinforcement a largely unsuccessful battle waged against the powers of acoustics by arbitrarily cooperating individual components. Only the intellectual revolution of d&b led resolute, self-contained systems onto the battlefield of sound reinforcement, making it possible to achieve democracy for the listening masses, even under hostile acoustic conditions. This would have been impossible without the support of the Heroes of Toil: loudspeaker diaphragms and voice coils, resistors and capacitors, transformers and transistors - all trustworthy, solid components of a robust product realisation, simple in its complexity. The functionality of these working masses, acting in solidarity under intense pressure, forms the basis of the dogma: Mechanical and acoustic compatibility for all d&b systems! Carefully tuned interaction of loudspeakers and electronics! Linear frequency response! Well-defined, controlled directivity over frequency! Serious efficiency in small dimensions! Neutral sound! Hark the signals of the working masses.

News Round-Up



material which, when subjected to a high frequency current, glows brightly. Around 200m of polyester film was then handpainted with the exact representation of the remains below. Complex layers of encapsulation produce the required waterproofing properties and the panels are designed to be dimmable.

"There are 108 different-sized pieces of E-L material fed from 72 purpose-designed dimmable inverters in a substantial enclosure by Seton Engineering," explained Kelly. "The individual features of the remains, chalk blocks and timber pieces, were individually mapped and drawn in AutoCAD by Bill Dudley and project surveyor Marek Ziebart. Each piece of E-L material was then placed with millimetre accuracy on the site in an exact alignment with the original, with the aid of a Datalogger and a computerised surveyors tool - Total Station. Several kilometres of underwater cable and special waterproof connectors were then used to connect the system."



The effects are controlled by an Expression LPC (Lighting Playback Controller) donated to the Rose project by ETC (Europe) Ltd. The DMX output from this is fed via a Pulsar Universal Interface to the analogue inputs of the individual inverters, whilst the house and working lights are controlled by an Anytronic DMX 410 pack, together with Illuminati logic boxes. All the effects are programmed as separate cues onto the LPC, complete with fade and link information, and accessed via the macro inputs on the rear. This is accomplished via simple switch closure signals emanating from the Avenger Conductor Show Control system supplied and installed by Cornwall-based David King Technologies. This system was specified to be capable of

providing five different video data streams, as well as surround-sound audio using source oriented reinforcement (SOR) techniques to provide the required directional effects, while retaining the close intimate sound required.

Dave King had previously demo'd a wide range of video projectors for the project, eventually settling on a pair JVC-S10 projectors. To achieve the required throw, 1:1 lenses were chosen, which had to be specially imported from Japan.

Terry Murphy Scenery manufactured all the required metalwork, diverter mirrors and screens for the elaborate Pepper's Ghost system, weighing some two tons; Vertigo Rigging were then called in to suspend these. TMS also made all the required staircases, platforms and shopfittings, as well as painting the artwork for the E-L materials.

The graphic material was designed and produced on DVD by Bill Dudley and Jon Greenfield of Parameta Architects (who became project architect for Shakespeare's Globe after the death of Theo Crosby), using a range of 2D, 3D and VR image manipulation tools on Macintosh G3 computers. The finished imagestream is replayed on two Pioneer V700 serial DVD players, the sound processed with TEAC Dolby Pro-Logic decoders, with custom operator diagnostics panel, power supplies, racking and interface assemblies for the Avenger Conductor Universal Controller designed and supplied by Dave King of DKT.

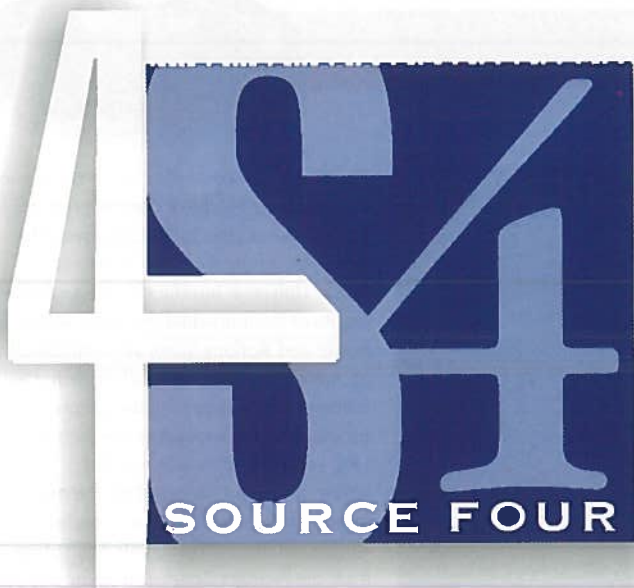
The Rose Theatre Trust has plans to enlarge this exhibition by adding further walkways at the same level, to the south and west of the site, and further viewing screens in these areas. Dudley also has plans to enhance the video presentation by including specially-filmed extracts from some of the famous plays in the Rose repertory. These would be filmed on a 'bluescreen' set with fixed cameras, set up to recreate the original layout between the stage and the various areas of the auditorium represented by the positions of the glass viewing screens. Digital technology will then make it possible to create a 'virtual sandwich', so that the performance seems to take place within a reconstructed version of the original theatre. Complicated though this sounds, it would actually be relatively easy and inexpensive to achieve.

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Classic Meat loaf

When Meat loaf had to postpone a number of dates on his European tour because of a throat infection, there was some doubt as to whether he would complete his run of performances in the UK. But in the best tradition of showbiz, the great man recovered his voice, gigs were rescheduled and Meat loaf, together with band The Neverland Express and the wonderful Patti Russo took to the stage at Wembley Arena in mid May.

For a man with such a large personality, this was a relatively understated affair, but then with a voice like his who needs the trappings. The stage set was simple - there were no videoscreens, no

dramatic set details and just a straightforward cyc at the rear. However, there were a couple of nice touches played by lighting designer Bill Sheldon - notably the free-standing truss towers at the rear of the stage uplit by colour-changing Parcans with Starlite Mk5s perched on top. The overhead rig, principally a front and rear main truss with four arms fanning out from the rear truss, featured the usual battalion of Pars (most gelled) and further Starlite Mk5s (in fact there were 50 in total across the various elements of the rig), complemented by tour staples such as Thomas 4-cell groundrows, 8-Lites and out in the depths of the Arena, Gladiator followspots. The tour must also have been one of the first outings for Wybron's new CXI Color Fusion colour changers and the company behind all the lighting kit - Neg Earth Lighting - reckon they are one of the few to hold this product in stock. At the helm of all this technology was a pair of Avolites Diamond II desks, one for the moving lights, the other for generics, with three 72-way Avo dimmer racks also in the spec.

The audio fell to Scorpio Sound in the US who have serviced the Meat loaf tour from day one, the main PA being an EAW 850 system

supplemented by 853 long throw boxes and SB1000 subs, all powered by Crest amplification. George Wehrin, the front of house engineer, worked principally on a Midas XL4 with an XL200 also in tow to carry the spillover of 72 inputs from the stage. Monitor engineer Kevin Pruce fronted a pair of Midas XL250s and the entire band were on in-ear monitors.

Of course the fans got what they came for and despite the fact that the rescheduling meant that this was relatively 'last minute' with next to no publicity, Wembley Arena was packed. His US fans will no doubt give him an equally rapturous reception when his US tour kicks off in mid-October.

Stagetec Open Days

Stagetec are hosting Open Days at their Slough HQ. These will run on Friday 2 July and Monday 5 July, and will offer visitors hands-on access to the Compulite and Selecon ranges.

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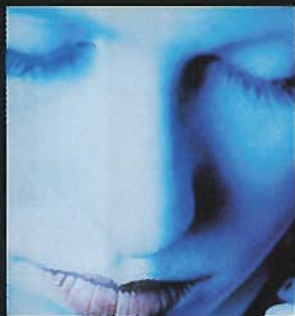
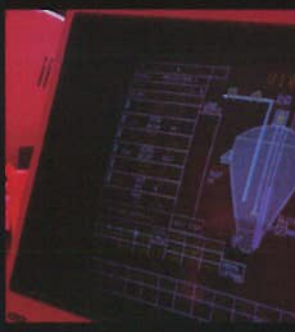
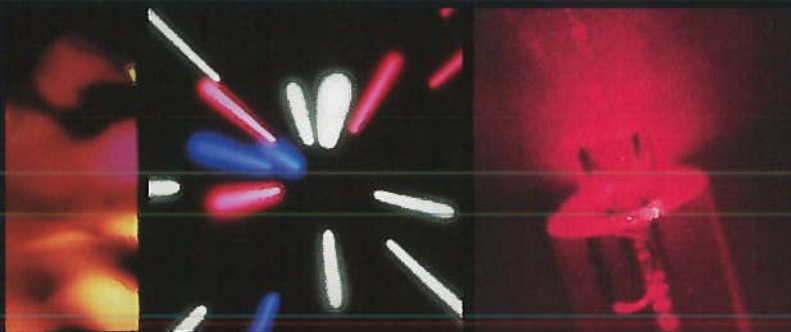
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DeSisti Lighting spa and DeSisti Lighting UK Ltd recently held a three-day convention at Three Mills Studio Complex to endorse the appointment of their new distributor - Source 21.



Being based at Three Mills, Source 21, under the guidance of Terry Walters, are in a strong position to meet the demand for lighting, grip and textile products. They will handle DeSisti's revised range of location lighting, along with the new 10/12kW and 20/24kW QH spotlights, the 400W and

6/12kW single-ended discharge broad/shadow lights, the 400W, 575W and 6/12kW single-ended discharge Pars and DeSisti's range of dual-ballasts.

Source 21 are also distributors of the full Cosmolight range, along with the Kobold Licht range which includes the new 12V Mini Cine Magic and Delux Variable Iris Cine Magic mains sources. In addition, the company also deals with Cine Meccanica's Super Dario and the new Little Caesar dollies. Source 21 can also supply popular ranges of professional grip equipment, in addition to their own range of portable location lights, frames, textiles, consumables and distribution equipment.

Pictured left to right are Walter di Masi (DeSisti), Terry Walters (Source 21), Amando Grottesi (Cine Meccanica Italiana), Massimo Cecchini (DeSisti), Ion Reay-Young (DeSisti), Mario DeSisti (DeSisti), Bill Smillie (DeSisti) with Fabio DeSisti (DeSisti) and Gavin Walters (Procrew) kneeling. Also in attendance, but not pictured were Alexandra Fromel of Kobold Licht and Kevan Wilson of Cotech Sensatising.

New Addition to Fuzion Portfolio

Fuzion has taken on UK distribution of the Innova Son range of digital products with immediate effect including the acclaimed Muxipaire multicore system and a range of mixing consoles. The first Muxipaire digital multicore system was sold in 1994 and the development of the Sensory and, more recently, the Sentury digital mixing consoles quickly followed.

New from Alistage

Staging specialist Alistage has recently launched a number of new products - all compatible with standard decks. The Alistage Grid Deck, fitted with punched and pierced steel planks, provides a slip resistant surface and has been designed to allow the projection of both lights and smoke through the stage. The New Light Deck incorporates a standard Alistage deck, fitted with an opaque heavy duty perspex top in place of the normal plywood decking.

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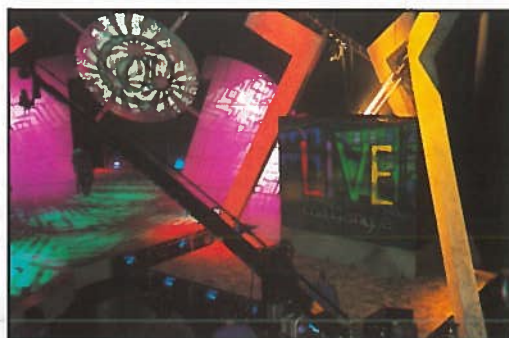


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John Watt

Second Take...

John Watt's view from beside the camera

Is it just me who watches the BAFTA awards with a sense of growing irritation? Is it the sight of self-satisfied executives and producers sitting at £150-a-seat tables that upsets me or is it the fact that the Academy has not instigated a special award for the producer who has shot the cheapest programme of the year? (The rules could specify that no lights are to be used and the only kit allowable is a mic' mounted on a

camera - a Dixons receipt for the camera must be provided to enter). Or is it that they still insist on lumping 'Best Photography & Lighting' into a single category. This more or less automatically steers the award towards work shot by a DOP and therefore usually drama. Will the work of that army who turn out quality lighting on Game Shows, Light Entertainment, OBs, Sport, Chat Shows, Cookery and all those lifestyle programmes, ever be recognised?

see with your eye is what you get on the screen. This will either be the familiar dirty range of white through messy pinks, or all those rich shades of brown. Why then fiddle with this most basic of elements on the screen? But fiddle they do, ranging from 152 in all the keys (more than one career has been built on this 'style') to the lunatic fringe as evidenced at GMTV who seem to have been completely swamped in Heinz tomato soup. I guess they should get an award for extending the Watt colour correction range, which in the tungsten-to-anybody's-guess section, now runs; orange, very orange, Monkhouse, O Connor, GM and acute embarrassment.

FAITHFUL READERS of this column may have got the impression that I'm not the greatest ambassador for fluorescent lights. The words 'humble' and 'pie' started to loom when my gaffer at Wimbledon (yes, we are there again - unfairly seeded as before against that wiley Daylight) suggested I use a fluorescent or two in a particularly tight commentary box situation. I had recently come across a light called, I believe, a Slaphead 80 and it seemed a good idea even if I did have my doubts about levels, until I saw the price. I was quoted around £10 a tube per day, plus even more for alternative colour temperature tubes. So the job can't afford the money and I can't afford the ignominy so it's back to the old faithful 575s and a lot of spun.

DHA RECENTLY SENT me a flyer showing their new gobo wheels - a clever idea, though I wouldn't want to be the one choosing which selection to put in each wheel. I thought they had blown it when I couldn't find 'radial lines' which I can't live without (the other things I can't live without are salted peanuts and WD40 which DHA don't do either) but it is there in wheel 7 'abstract'. It's often difficult to focus on the one you want - I spent ages the other day looking for what I've always called 'Seagulls' now known as 'Zeds a Leaping' - I should have

known. It's been a lifetime ambition of mine to get a gobo credited to me in the catalogue - but someone already did New York Fire Escapes, which will take some topping. I think it will just have to be simply the word 'Something' so that next time a director says 'stick something on the cyc' Watty . . .

I RECENTLY CAME across an American idea which, with a bit of tweaking, might catch on elsewhere. In the US there is a radio station which offers listeners the chance to be 'a roadie for a day'. So how about TV lighting director for a day? You are given an indecipherable map photocopied from the A to Z and told to turn up at six in the morning (street parking outside the secondary modern where the third form have the hub cap concession). You are greeted by a belligerent set of sparks who are on annualised hours and then by the unit manager, who is also late, having not been able to read the map. You rig 50 lamps in various states of disrepair (on hire from Arthur Daley Lighting) and just finish gaffer-taping the earth leakage trips in, when breakfast arrives - six poly' cups of something brown and six hot dogs from the greasy spoon down the road.

THERE'S NOT MUCH CHANCE of any change from the tenner you gave the gaffer to produce this feast and, in passing, you wonder how he knew where to go. Gaffers make the average carrier pigeon look like an agoraphobic recluse when it comes to homing in on food and drink. At 10am the director and cameraman turn up and change everything. The cameraman, who feels he is fully qualified to light the job himself having spent the better part of last week out with half a kit of Redheads suggests the whole set up is turned through 90 degrees, completely screwing up your rig.

WHILST THE DIRECTOR and cameraman lunch at Le Bonne Gourmet, you take the crew to the Barrel & Clamp (no change from £20 this time) after which you re-rig seven tons of gear. Having started with the chromakey set up, the presenter then turns up in a blue shirt. The 20-year-old wardrobe lady, labelled associate producer on the script, must have been missing on the day they covered chroma-key at the Scunthorpe school of broadcasting. So you use the green screen instead (paint purchased from council chap outside doing the lampposts). As guest LD, you are asked to make the wispy hair key nicely - you try - and so it goes on. Anyway, you've all been there and can fill in the rest till the final wrap when you return to the car only to find it blocked up on 246s with the wheels missing. Second prize, two days as an LD.

"Will the work of that army who turn out quality lighting on Game Shows, Light Entertainment, OBs, Sport, Chat Shows and all those lifestyle programmes, ever be recognised?"

ON ONE GAME SHOW I'm associated with, the brief from the producer was significant. I had gone over the top and put some diagonal slashes down a wall with half a dozen ZKs. "What are those for?" he enquired. "Oh, just to cheer up that plain wall and give it a bit of interest and colour." "Now see here," he said, "we don't want any of your arty farty lighting here." So that's how I got the job - I'm now on the sixth series and no smell of a BAFTA yet.

TO CONTINUE last month's 'masterclass' I would point you towards the subject of flesh tones. We need a shade card really, but that won't stop me. My philosophy is that what you

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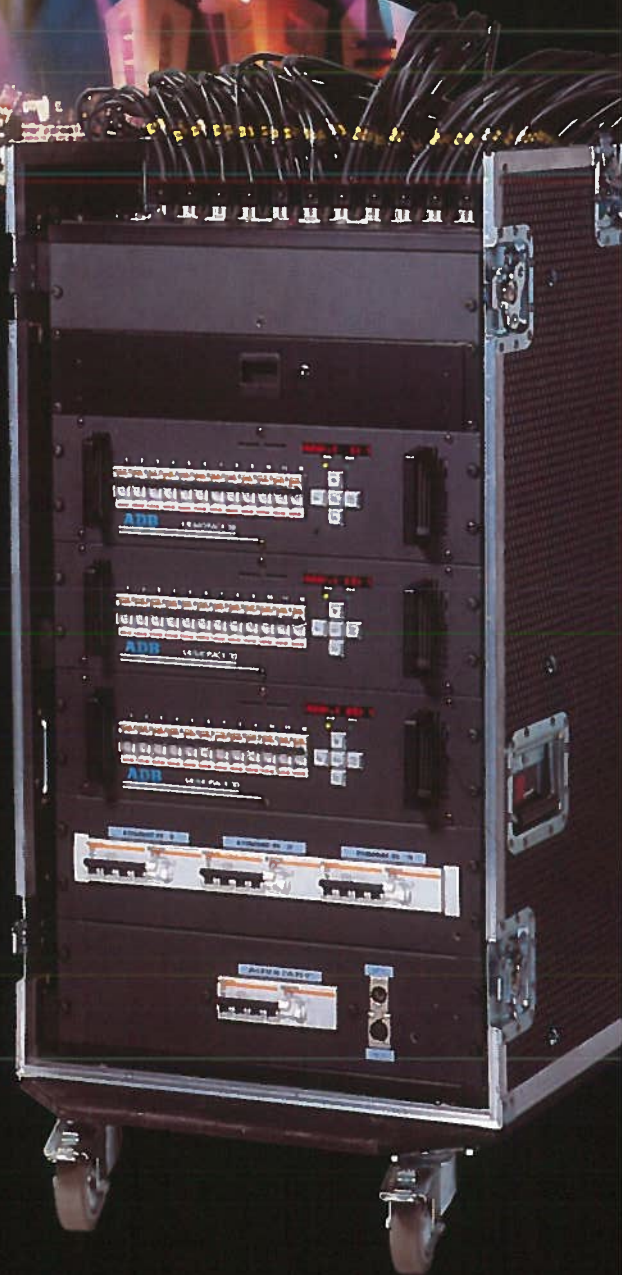
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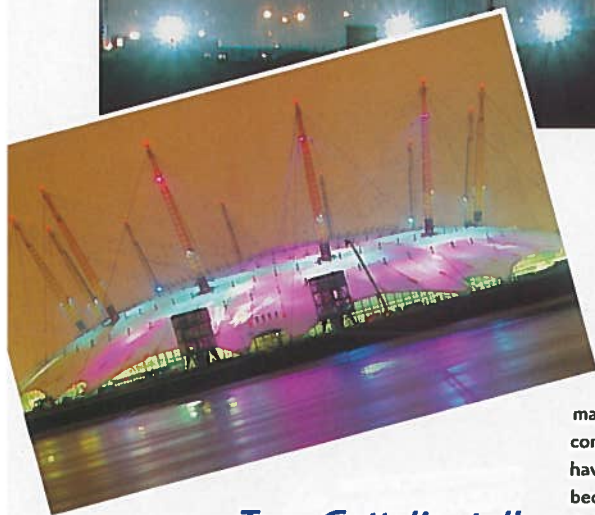
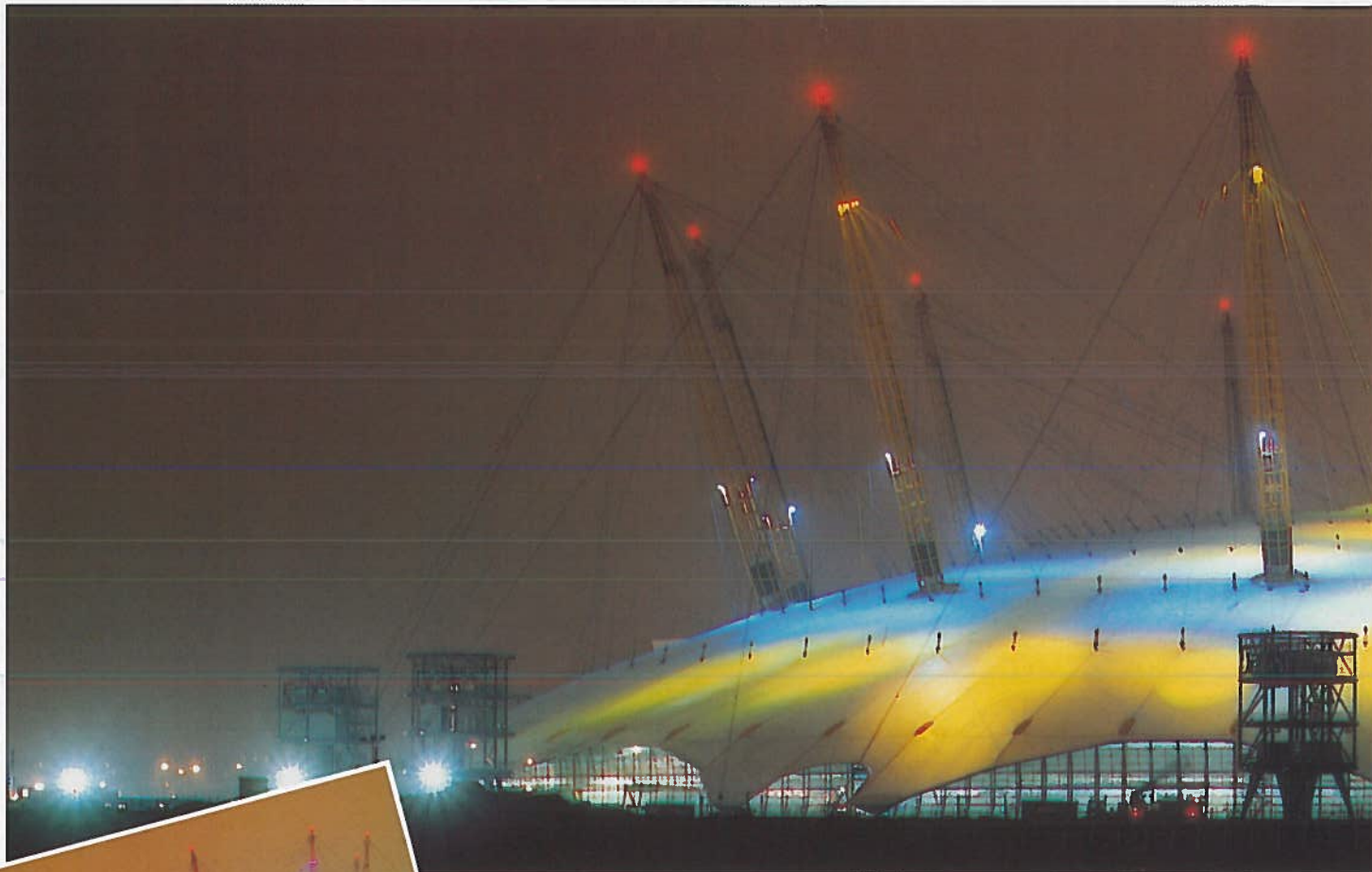
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***Tony Gottelier talks
to Patrick Woodroffe
about his role at the
Millennium Dome
and a duel of washlights***

Since Patrick Woodroffe was appointed lighting director of the Millennium Dome there has been considerable speculation about what he would actually do to realise such a gargantuan task. Although, I remember Mark Fisher saying that Woodroffe had a design even before he was offered the job, and despite a very public bid process, the whole package has been kept more, or less, under wraps.

Now, some of the facts are starting to emerge from the mists of the Greenwich peninsula, about what Woodroffe, his sidekick Dave Hill and Simon Brophy, head of lighting at the NMEC, have been up to these past months. Residents of Greenwich and Docklands on t'other side of the Thames, who

may have been tracking progress of the construction of the vast bowed roof expanse, will have got quite a surprise when looking out of their bedroom windows one murky day in February. For this was the day of the great colour trial, when Woodroffe decided to roof-test three different marques of washlights, to determine which to use ultimately to colour the outside of the edifice. The white surface of the giant canopy, the scale of which would have made Kubla Khan's architect's eyes water, presents itself as a one million square feet projection screen and would be irresistible to any lighting designer.

Woodroffe is no exception: "I was ambivalent about the Dome, but once I became involved, I realised that the extraordinary shape of the roof presented a blank canvas that had huge potential." His plan is to light the roof from the 12 iconic masts, using a total of 144 washlights. But to be certain this would work it was necessary to carry out a test. So, three manufacturers were asked to provide eight fittings each and these were temporarily rigged to three of the masts to enable the lights to be directed to any section of the surface. "Actually, the rigging was also a bit of a pantomime," says Woodroffe, "because we couldn't use any lighting crew or electricians - everything had to be done by the site riggers. At that stage, the most important thing was that the equipment was not seen to destroy the clean look of the masts, which are the enduring

Colouring

image of the building. However, in the scale of these 100 metre high masts the kit just evaporated and Mike Davies, the architect, agreed they would be no problem." However, there remained, and still remains, a question as to the load these masts can take, and it may be that only nine, or less fittings, can be used from this vantage in the final analysis. In that event, the M&E 'cylinders', coincident with the foot of each mast, will be used to house the rest.

Then there was the issue of programming: in order to see what was going on, Dave Hill had to be launched in a cherry-picker, trusty Wholehog on lap, high over the structure, communicating with Woodroffe via mobile telephone. "Calling cues while Dave was swaying about in his crow's nest high overhead was rather a laugh," Patrick recalls. Maybe for him, but hardly for Dave Hill, some might think.

Eventually came the moment of truth, when Woodroffe, the aforementioned architect, Clare Sampson, production director (NMEC), and Simon Brophy jumped in a car and toured various distant vantage points to check out the overall effect and to check the individual performance of the different luminaires. Eventually, and inevitably, they ended up in Canary Wharf, the tallest building in the City. Here they stumbled into a party being given on the top floor by a firm of architects. "It was useful to get the views of others and to find out



the Dome

how it had impacted on them," Woodroffe observes. "A straw poll was hugely supportive and, I have to say, that the vista of the colours on that giant screen was just spectacular from up there!"

Apparently, the overall impression was much helped by some fixed, dark blue, discharge floods which Brophy had installed for other reasons near the bottom of the masts. This helped to make the whole thing look seamless according to Woodroffe and it seems that these may be retained along with the red beacons at the very top of the crown.

So what was the fixture decision at the end of the day? The answer is, that the Coemar CF 1200, the carbon fibre moving head with the Formula One pedigree, outpaced the rest. But then, in the interest of fairness, it was the only one with a 1.2kW, race-tuned, light engine used in the trial. Nevertheless, this is a considerable coup for Bruno Dedoro and Coemar and for Graham Barron's Lumenation, who have won the bid for the supply of the 144 fittings. However, before that actually happens, somebody has to come up with a system to waterproof these beauties, and that may prove quite a challenge. Typically, Woodroffe makes light of the issue (excuse the unintended pun).

One last aspect of interest; as the lighting director of the Dome, all the lighting is co-ordinated through Woodroffe since, of course, one thing may have an impact on another. To overcome any

potential conflict, all such lighting systems, including those designed by Spiers and Major, will be linked at the control end to ensure full co-ordination. The final word goes to the man in the trademark, pink oxford shirt, Patrick Woodroffe: "Most of the time the Dome will be a simple, glowing, elegant statement in light and colour. But with the Coemar CFs we will also now have the facility to go crazy every now and then." From the man who has lit the Stones so spectacularly for many years, this may be an understatement.



To hear more of the secrets of the lighting of the Dome, and in particular Patrick Woodroffe's ideas for Mark Fisher's central, circus-based spectacular, look out for the programme of events and seminars to be held at PLASA '99, in future issues of L&SI.

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Steve Moles was in Pretoria to witness The Three Tenors perform in the largest and most ambitious production ever undertaken in South Africa



CONCERT

In terms of significant events, the Three Tenors performing in South Africa might not, on first examination, appear that important. However, they are unquestionably three of the best known faces (and voices) in the world.

Their recent performance in Pretoria was significant for a number of reasons, not least because it was staged at the foot of a sweeping semi-formal garden in front of the Pretoria Union Building (seat of the Government Executive) where Nelson Mandela and his successor Thabo Mbeki, sat proudly side by side, front row centre.

It was the executive producer of Framework Television, Persis Tozer who gave an insight as to why South Africa has reason to be proud. Tozer specialises in major events around the world:

"We've done the Three Tenors in the past - most recently in Japan. Normally everything is sourced from overseas. This year we've used local suppliers and for the first time an entirely local orchestra and choir." So it is that, with the exception of 12 cabinets of Meyer MSL10s and most of the FOH audio control, every other

element in this production was from domestic service companies. What's more, Gearhouse South Africa provided almost the entire infrastructure for this production from roof, stage, lighting and video, to all the power (including 7km of festoon lighting), leaving only the stage set and seating to outside contractors.

The stage was 25 metres across, the roof trimmed at 15m, with two pairs of Doric columns, copies of the Government building at the top of the hill, flanking the stage proper. The 18 metre deep stage had an additional 10 metre extension at the rear. Separate PA bays to each side hosted two cantilevered clusters just over a metre downstage of the roof edge. The stage wings created a total width of 110 metres, most of which were scenic flats and painted scrim, with just a sprinkling of speakers hidden behind the decorative cloths. At each side, approximately eight metres from the ground, a pair of rear projection screens were neatly integrated into the wing facade. Vaulting high above the roof top were a pair of towers, again dressed as copies of those that crown the Union Building, which created a total scaffolded out height of 28 metres. The PA, though just six

Meyer MSL10s and three Turbosound Flashlights per side, still weighed in at three tons.

Countering this, approximately 14 tons of lighting is hung from beneath the roof: "I've got over 60 sections of truss up there," reported head rigger Pieter Joubert, "a mix of LSD pre-rig and Total Fab's medium duty General Purpose." Gearhouse now has a dedicated rigging department, run by Joubert, that stocks both CM Lodestars and Verlindes. "South Africa is no different from Europe these days," said Joubert. "In terms of safety, we've drawn on recommendations from the PSA and the Pop Code."

The main structure is a Stageco roof (which Gearhouse purchased as a 20m x 20m some years ago). "I had it increased to 25m in width when I joined the company three years ago," said Chris Loeijs, who heads the stage department. Loeijs is a Belgian - he's also an ex-Stageco employee, as was his assistant on this job, Erik Muhn.

Both men had first experienced working in South Africa on international tours passing through: "When I first came it was hell," said Muhn, a fluent English





“Without question, audio is the most vital element of the show, and the one area where the Rudas organisation seems to have nailed down an effective MO.”

speaker with a penchant for ageing Jaguars. “We pretty much had to do everything ourselves. Now we have created a highly-trained professional team. Chris or myself can base out a stage and pretty much leave the guys to it, just like Europe.” No mean achievement in three years, especially as the SA Government has just implemented an Affirmative Action policy to force employers to bring more blacks into management and positions of responsibility. This has necessarily meant that a number of less experienced people have been included in the equation. Fortunately, Ofer Lapid, the charismatic MD of Gearhouse South Africa is a keen exponent of encouraging all employees, be they black, white or coloured. As such, the company is well positioned to be a positive influence in this time of change.

Two hundred tons of steel, mostly Lehrer scaffolding, hold the whole stage area together, though Loeijs drew my attention to some newer, shinier kit. “This is from Ascco. Basically identical, it’s from a group of guys who used to work for Lehrer. The design patent on the Lehrer system ran out and these guys went out and built their own system. It’s fully integratable with the whole system, and it’s cheaper. To make it easy to identify from the original, they’ve slightly redesigned the connecting rose on the uprights and in so doing, they’ve actually managed to make the join structurally much stronger.” The scaffolding supports mainly scenic dressing, much of it timber-framed, and some vast painted cloths.

The set designer for the Three Tenors was Sarah Roberts, a renowned SA theatre designer, who

drew on the Italianate features of the Union Building above her main motif, backing her selected architectural features with abstract silhouettes of South African flora. The set was built and supplied by Just Sets, Johannesburg’s leading theatre set builders, with Kay Page providing the artwork. “I worked with Just Sets for about three months before we started bringing steel on site,” explained Muhn. “Samples were built and models made so we could experiment with ideas. When it came to the build, everything went straight up and fitted together perfectly first time. Painless.” Which is a great tribute to planning, although one slight fly in the ointment emerged when the crew were rigging the two main column sections that flanked the stage. “These were the only two major pieces of the set that were flown. Unfortunately, they were just too tall. Although I was able to pull them up on CMs without damaging them, one of them got damaged in the wind a couple of nights before the show.” It’s probably a good juncture at which to note that historically, this was the largest and most ambitious production ever undertaken in South Africa, possibly the entire African continent. The fact that the whole presentation was perfectly realised on the night says much for everybody’s professionalism and ability to learn and improvise.

The stage site, at the foot of a gently sloping formal garden, was ideal – all 38,000 punters having a clear view of stage. Save, that is, for one problem – a giant statue of a horse, which stands centre stage with its backside facing the audience. Unfortunately, it posed problems in other ways as well, for it meant that Gearhouse couldn’t build the complete roof structure in the normal way because it would effectively go around the statue.

Unfazed by this complication, Muhn is one of those curious breed of roofers who delight in these things. “At first there was a plan to deck up the whole stage to above the level of the horse, build the roof upon it, lift it and then dismantle the stage back down to the proper level. But I’m lazy, so we built three quarters of the roof on the proper stage, lifted it above the horse, and then added the back section

using a mobile crane.” Muhn had reason to be confident in such a technique; some months earlier Gearhouse had built the same stage for a Janet Jackson concert in a Capetown Stadium that did not have access for a mobile crane at all. “Jah, we used a helicopter instead.” The fun these roofing boys have! The statue plinth was more or less concealed by the choir stalls, some three metres above the main stage level, the horse itself hidden behind a trio of columns centre stage.

The choir stalls also had another concealment role to play – masking the huge, onstage dressing room area (the 10 metre backstage extension mentioned earlier). “The most important thing are the dressing rooms,” chuckled Muhn. “In Modena it took us three days to build the stage and roof, then another four days to get the dressing rooms done as they

wanted.” The rooms for the South African performance were, in fact, beneath part of another roof system, a smaller-scale tower roof designed by Stageco, though built under contract in the UK by Total Fabrications. Alain Counson is Gearhouse’s structural engineer. It was he, Muhn was quick to point out, who took all his (Muhn’s) and Loeijs’ ideas and crunched the numbers to make sure they worked, most critically in the dressing room area where the TFL/Stageco roof had to support the choir stalls above.

Loeijs and Muhn had further sections of scaffolding around the site. These included first-line delay towers which were tall enough to get the followspots over the truss, second line delays which hosted a pair of rear projection screens, and a pair of small towers with tiny centre fill delays at the very back. For the front-of-house mix position there was no scaffolding at all with every piece of control gear at ground level.

Persis Tozer and Framework TV proved more than capable of supplying the television facilities for this major international event as Tozer explained. “My director Ray Wilson and I worked together on the Commonwealth Games.” Tozer had also covered the Pavarotti concert at Stellenbosch down on the Cape three years earlier so she had enough experience to be confident in her decision to go with an entirely domestic team. The broadcaster, naturally, is South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC), and thus Tozer called in their OB department, Airtime. “They have well facilitated digital trucks but even so pictures are the real issue. This is not a rock concert; lighting levels on each of the Tenors is different, and the main cameras were to be some 80 feet away, so we insisted on LDK93s to give us that extra F stop. The Tenors become uncomfortable under very bright light, so you have to make some allowance for this.”

For TV audio, 96 direct feeds are split straight from stage to a multi-track in the audio van. “It’s then mixed down in the Radio van by Mark Williams from the African Broadcast Network,” said Tozer. “Rudas will later determine which parts of the performance are good enough for broadcast.” John Pellowe,

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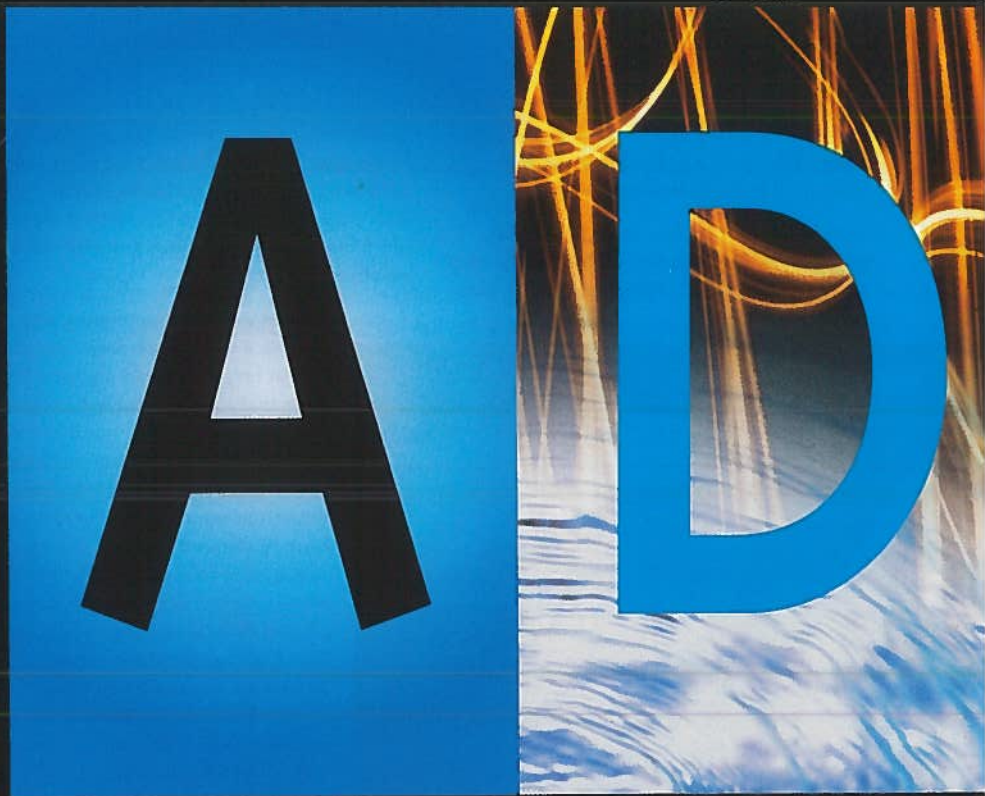
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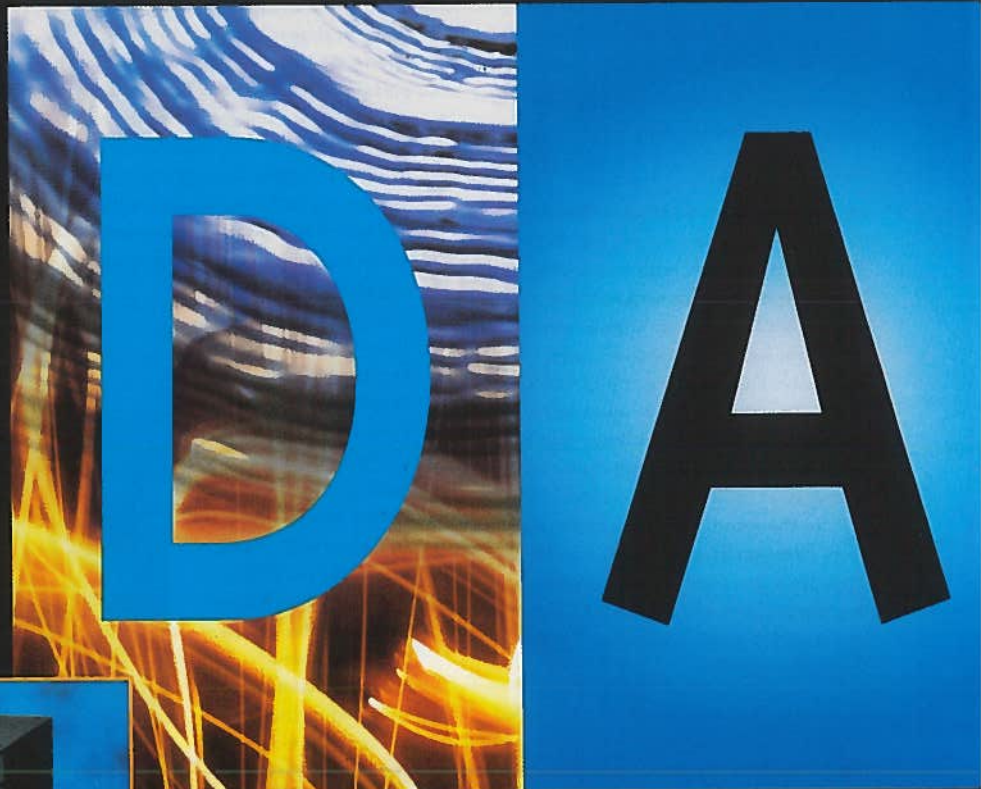
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front-of-house engineer for the Tenors, is also responsible for all aspects of the live show audio, and thus the broadcast recording.

Tozer went on to explain the attention to detail and scale of production that's demanded for this presentation. "The video was just too

slightly awkward one: normally the Three Tenors have a regular designer, but for reasons unknown (perhaps the 'all South African ethic') they decided to go for a local designer, which didn't initially go down well with some members of the crew.

There were also other reasons why this was a tricky number for Turner: "It was only four weeks ahead of the show that I was approached to do this. Andre and I knew straightaway that we could not allow the lighting system to infringe on the set. That meant the nearest lights would be at least 12 metres overhead, with no side lighting to speak of. That made it all very toppy." So it was that Turner elected to do what most people do for a big stage show with a large orchestra - he went for six straight trusses across the top and slightly cranked at the ends - just a gesture to a little key from the sides. All fully loaded with Pars he had 500 lamps overhead all bulbed with #2s to compensate for the long range, plus a further 60 fresnels - 2 and 5kWs.

"Having looked at the design for previous shows, I decided to try a slightly different approach and opted to give the performance an African flavour, determining to put the show through four main phases. They liked the idea initially, but then they shifted back to an insistence on just one look." Perhaps colourful washes across the strings were too radical for this most conservative of organisations can do, Three Tenors manager Tibor Rudas quickly brought over the Three Tenor's regular designer Denis Ruege from the US for reassurance, if nothing else. "He looked at what I was doing and said, 'Yeah, we can do something with this,'" said Turner. In essence this saw all the major colour themes remaining in the brief, but restricted to the set only, leaving the orchestra bathed mainly in open white, with six colour washes: two tones of blue, two of lavender, and two in amber/red to subtly change the mood on stage to suit the character of the songs. "For the cameras to cope we had to put a lot of white light on the orchestra, whilst for the Three Tenors themselves I had six Gladiators in the house, so in truth what you saw on stage was as close to a TV show as possible."

How Turner's set lighting looked on camera remains to be seen. In the flesh it was bold without being garish. What was interesting was how he handled it across huge painted scrim and towering columns. "The main part of the

rig was a host of High End Studio Colors, and about 50 Pars with Chroma Q colour changers. The Studio Colors worked especially well on the columns, giving uniform coloration over a vertical throw of almost 15 metres, and from close range as well."

With TV in attendance, and the ever image-hungry eye of the camera to deal with, Turner also had to provide extensive audience lighting. The set wings were high enough that he could put four Maxi Brutes atop each and not blind the top dollar punters in the first 100 rows, but these could only ever be used for those brief interludes between songs. For the main part, he had to light the audience from behind and to the side. Another 500+ Pars saw the total lighting power draw peak at 2400 amps per phase at 220/380v. Turner operated from a Wholehog II, assisted by Alistair Richards on a Fader Wing which ran the audience lighting. Fortunately for him, this is his preferred desk, as the changes brought about by Denis Ruege's arrival, although essentially small, required a major all night re-programming session.

In the end all worked well, when Ruege went backstage after the show he quickly returned to tell Turner: "We got an 'A' from Rudas." Maybe Turner has started something here.

Without question, audio is the most vital element of the show, and the one area where the Rudas organisation seems to have nailed down an effective MO. Alexander Yuill Thornton II (Thorny) was the sound designer for the show, with John Pellowe the live engineer. Both men have worked together on these concerts for many years, coming to them through a working relationship with Pavarotti, who began the move to more public arena-scale presentations back in the early eighties. Although sound design as a separate metier is commonplace in the West End, and rare for live concert environs, it's true to say that in the theatre world, it is the sound designer who will also determine how the live mix will be achieved - the console operator being more a competent pair of hands at the desk. There's nothing wrong with that: economics dictate the good sense of

it, especially when a show is successful and runs for months if not years, but it is rare to find both disciplines allowed equal rein in any circumstances, as they were with this show.

The Three Tenors, as a spectacle, generate enough cash flow to warrant the extra spend and, more importantly, the division of labour pays enormous benefits for what is almost always a one-off occasion. John Shaughnessy at Gearhouse Audio finds the arrangement a delight. "I'd worked on a couple of projects with Thorny before - Pavarotti at Ellis Park and



Above, Anthony Sacktein with the power generators for the show. Below, a view of the stage from in front of the Union Building. Far page, lighting designer High Turner

big for one OB truck, so we linked two together. The master output had 24 live cameras to the desk, with four roving, plus eight documentary cameras out and about. Then there's six little iso-cams in amongst the orchestra: we also brought in images via microwave links from the top of the Sheraton across the road, and there was another camera on top of the Post Office Tower two kilometres away for the wide shot. Two cherry pickers and a jib gave us back shots across the audience." Just for the record, as well as recording the show (the broadcast to South African viewers took place two weeks after the concert) the Framework team put together 52 documentary pieces and showed 26 previews describing how it all came together.

As already described above, the live video comprised four rear projection screens (24ft x 18ft), two flanking the stage with another pair two thirds of the way down the audience, each with two Barco 9200s piggy-backed behind them. Feed came direct from Airtime, the SABC OB unit; the screen and projectors, plus a Barco MX50 vision mixer were supplied from another member of the Gearhouse Group - PSL South Africa - who run a comprehensive AV service out of Midrand halfway between Johannesburg and Pretoria.

Lighting, for both TV and the live show, fell to Hugh Turner with consultation by Andre Rossouw of Airtime. Turner is an independent designer whose credits include co-design with Tim Dunn on the most recent Miss World show. His experience in TV and live concerts is extensive. Turner's situation for this show was a



Stellenbosch - but this was different. At those two, Thorny had seen the venues, this time all he'd seen were plans and no preliminary visits were allowed for. We sent him photos and videos and he wrote back with several concerns, not least the many trees." His concern was the distance needed between the delay towers. "He wanted them as close in as possible to prevent the image being pulled to the left or right. However, because of the trees and the seating plan, there was no alternative." But - and here's why Shaughnessy, and for that matter all the members of the audio sound department, found Thornton's input so amenable - his instructions and definitions as to what he wanted were so precise as to leave no room for doubt. I saw the document; extensive and exhaustive, Thornton leaves no stone unturned. Mess this up and you deserve to fail.

Shaughnessy makes light of his input to the delay system: "Thorny determined level and delivery, so for us it was just a simple box equation." That's rather understating the case and Thornton, when I spoke to him, was extremely flattering about what had been achieved prior to his arrival on site. "I'd tried the Turbosound system three or four years earlier and was impressed by what I was able to do with it. When I mix systems like this (a main stage PA of Meyer MSL10s was brought over from Sound Hire in the UK) I see one of my main jobs as getting all those involved talking to each other. That's why I document things so thoroughly - it helps everybody."

In essence, the PA system was three-tier: the primary system was the Meyers mentioned earlier, which have an extended throw and despite their being just six per side, the first 90m of audience was easily covered. The second tier was the first pair of delay towers which each had eight high and four low-end Flashlight cabinets. Because of the wide placement of the stacks and the consequent long-throw across the audience, Shaughnessy had a dozen highs flown in the towers originally, but eight subsequently proved enough. The second delay at 160m had fewer heads to cover and sported just a four and two, high and low combination. This second delay position was aided by a solitary tree that sits plumb centre of the field which allowed two small towers to be erected in its shadow, each with a pair of near downfills turned side on. So it was, that the poorest seats visually received a better placed sound image than those half way up the hill.

With punters in the front rows paying up to 1,750 Rand (£440) for their seats, much attention was given to the fill speakers around the open maw of the stage. The main Meyer rig had three Floodlights hung beneath each side, a necessary addition with the PA trimmed at some 20 metres above ground. The very front of stage was covered by three pairs of TCS 612s (individually delayed centre, mid and outer), with a solitary Floodlight at the centre of the downstage lighting truss, all of them critical to keeping the image



down and central at seating level. "It's my aim," said Thornton, "to offend people as little as possible. If that sounds a little negative, what I mean is that I let them get past the fact it's electronic, by not offending them. The intention is to bring them the orchestra and performers as accurately as possible."

Thornton measures and sets the main delays using the Smaart system, a system he apparently contributed to in the development stages. The TCS 612s across the front are set from a KT DN716 and there is a limited amount of low-end produced by the system - the only subs in the whole set-up are eight boxes of the Flashlight TFS 780Ls stacked behind the wings. Peter Day, Gearhouse's sound crew boss for the show, gave an insight into this lack of low emphasis: "Pellowe feels that the important entry level is around 110Hz, so the lows are just there to bring out the occasional bit of bass instrument. I've hardly heard him use them," added Day - surely a contributing factor to the overall clarity of presentation.

Pellowe is a quite unique sound engineer. His credentials as live engineer for the Tenors place him in high esteem, his background as a recognised classical music studio engineer for Decca (a role he still indulges even now as a freelance), makes him one of a rare breed. Able to fulfil both live and studio demands, he is a competent jockey both on the flat and over the hurdles as it were.

Pellowe started his career at Decca in 1974: "I trained as a recording engineer and got on well with Decca's chief engineers Kenneth Wilkinson and Jimmy Lock. After five years I was high flying in terms of classical recording, especially opera. I did my first live show with Pavarotti in '84. By his own admission these early concerts weren't easy, either for himself or Lock, but secure in the knowledge of how it was supposed to sound, they persevered. "After a short time we got quite good at it," he said almost ruefully. "Now I do more of this (live mixing) than studio work and I miss recording dreadfully." Pellowe is kept busy - not only does he handle the live mixes for the Three Tenors, but he also does all of Pavarotti's shows as well.

His role as mixer is three-fold; FOH, foldback and the live recording, which, in this instance, he was happy to delegate. The other two are crucial, particularly in an open environment, where both have to compensate for lack of natural acoustic to their respective listeners. It's a tough challenge - not only is the audience arguably the most critical you're ever likely to present an amplified concert to, but surely the sensibilities of the three principal performers must be acute. "In the open air, it's almost anechoic. For the performers there's no immediate acoustic," he said quickly coming to the heart of the matter. "If I didn't give them something, they would try to over project." For monitors, each performer had a pair of UM1s

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(supplied like the main PA, by Sound Hire), which Pellowe fed direct from his main console - a Yamaha PM4000, mixing a bit of dry with a touch of reverb. "I used a Lexicon 480 split front-of-house and stage. For the main mix I added different reverb for different sections of the orchestra, depending on what each was doing. My general rule is to add to the higher frequency instruments and I try to keep the bottom end as tight as possible." That's not to say low end is absent, he's just selective.

"As for the monitors, well it's been a long learning curve to find a sound they like and can use to improve their performance. Even then it's a bit subjective. They will ask: 'Can we have it like it was at the last show?' and, of

course, there are things I repeat every time, but that doesn't mean it's always going to sound the same to them." A refrain that will be all too familiar to monitor men everywhere.

Aside from that touch of reverb to give a feel of concert hall liveliness, Pellowe's mix is quite natural. The balance was not weighted in favour of the vocals - the audience might lynch him if it was - instead the rise and fall of each piece being left to the composition. As such, concentration on music capture is crucial, yet for Pellowe essentially simple. "I use just two microphones, both Schoeps, the Mk 3 cardioid for vocals and almost all instruments in the orchestra, and the Mk 21, a sub-cardioid, for the strings. I use it on the strings because it has

a broader pattern and makes the string sound richer. If you use a cardioid microphone, it almost sounds as if the back is off an instrument like the violin." Naturally he's unable to use a completely open mic because of feedback problems. The PA is right on the front stage line for obvious reasons and even with the extensive wooden wings (like lighting barndoors) added to the Meyer system, which casts an acoustic shadow across the mic line, he'd still have problems. "These are a great microphone" he continued, "not that there aren't plenty of other excellent mics around, but these are good everywhere. No problem in hot and humid conditions, and the wind protection is very, very good. It was originally developed for us and now everyone uses it."

Having only recently begun to appreciate the passion opera evokes in true advocates of the form, I couldn't possibly comment on the rendering of the performance. As a mere troglodyte grounded in the baser instincts of rock and roll, I can only say that I found the experience enchanting.

In terms of ambition you have to note that Hazel Feldman of Showtime and Mark Ransom, her production manager, were fearless. This was no small undertaking in anyone's book. Familiar teams like Robbie Williams, Mark Fisher and Harvey Goldsmith, might pull off shows of this scale in the UK every summer, but for South Africa this was a first.



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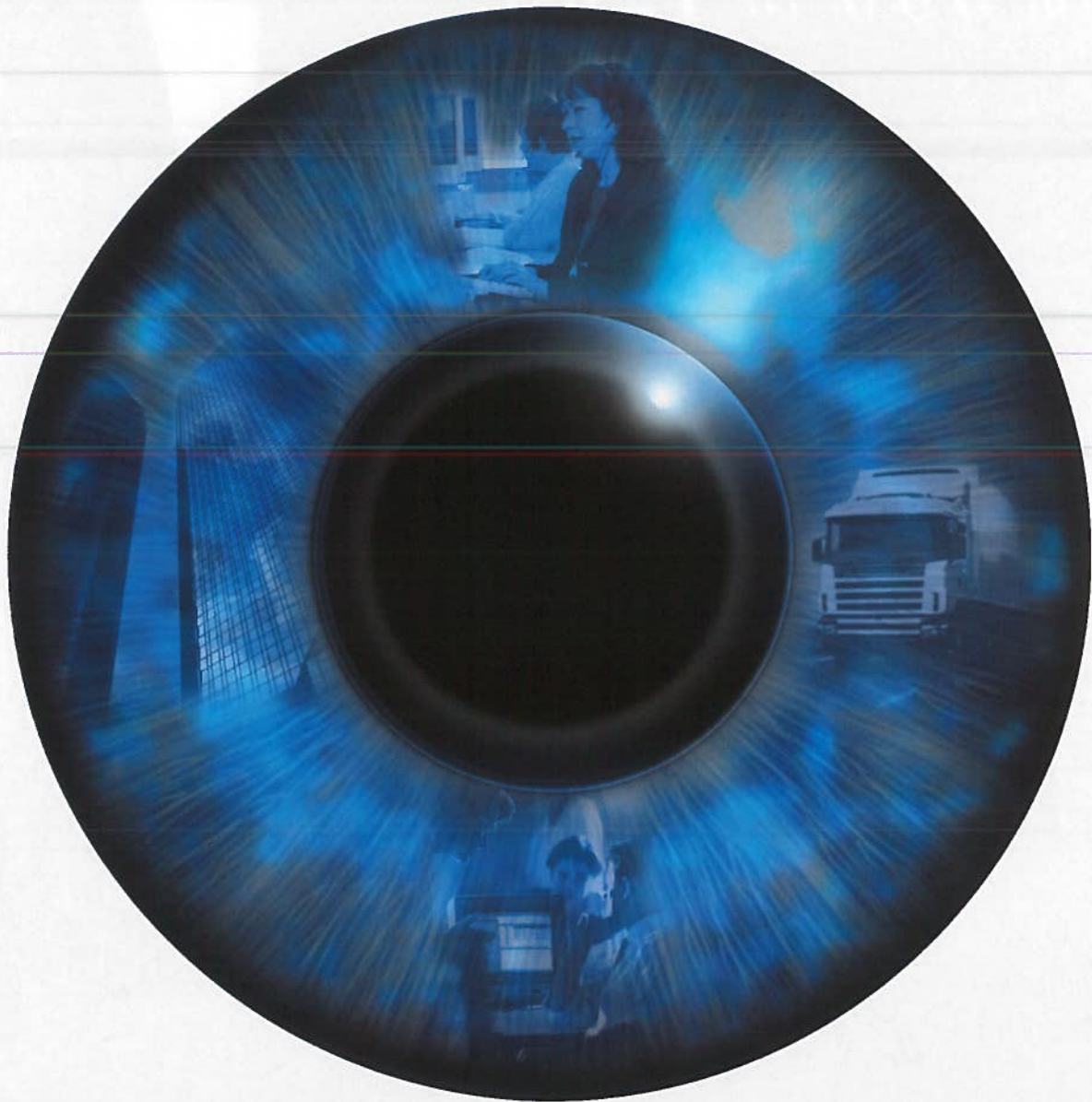
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This is no faceless corporate boxshifter, but feels more like a club, where your attitude is as important as your bank balance. Which is not to say that making money and being professional are alien concepts to directors Tony Oates, Paul Ward and Gary Ashton - the company has enjoyed steady growth since its formation in 1994 and has just been awarded ISO9002 certification.



Fuzion MD Tony Oates is flanked by Paul Ward (left) and Gary Ashton

Fuzion is all about partnerships - whether they be personal, corporate or technical. The triumvirate of directors may share the same philosophy, but their skills and experience are very different.

THE CHIEFS

MD Tony Oates is perhaps best known for starting up Shuttlesound in the early eighties. His interest in forming Fuzion was fuelled by a frustration at the lack of in-depth expertise in the PA market: "I was absolutely convinced that there was a need for niche experience in the sound reinforcement business. In the last few years, equipment rental companies have really started to become service companies. They are now selling a service to a market that really needs it and can build the market up again. The brand of kit being used has very little to do with the service company's ability to sell themselves to their clients - it's what lies behind the gear that matters. I wanted to develop a situation where we could have a frank and open relationship with customers and manufacturers - where we would have a truly useful role to play."

Directing the sales and marketing arm of the business is Paul Ward, who previously handled French speaker manufacturer Nexo, at Network. Though, like any salesman, Ward professes love and admiration for all his customers, he does admit that "the best relationships we have are those where the communication is really good." This is perhaps really an admission that only a limited number of people understand his jokes.

Technical director Gary Ashton (known to Fuzion staff and customers as 'the Prof' and described by Ward as 'possibly the cleverest guy on the planet') has overall responsibility for pre and after-sales service - in fact, no new products or manufacturers are taken on by the company until they have passed his gruelling regime of tests.

I visited Fuzion's new 1,500sq.m premises in Surrey shortly after the company completed its move (from just around the corner). The atmosphere inside the unprepossessing building reflects the company's style - relaxed, informal, but clearly well-organised and efficient. A total of 13 people are based at the company headquarters, with a remote regional sales manager based 'somewhere Up North'.

The choice of personnel is clearly vital to the success of any small organisation, especially one that has a very open structure. The Fuzion team includes five in sales and marketing (including new recruit Martin Sweeting, who is handling the northern customer base), two in service, two in accounts and three to handle logistics. Another of the abundant company mottos is 'The Assets Go Home At Night' - which I assume means that the employees are highly valued, and not that Paul, Tony and Gary leave the building each evening weighed down with the day's takings! Certainly internal communications are informal, with ESP and hand signals being the favoured media.

In the past five years, Fuzion's turnover has grown to an impressive £3 million, which owes as much to the individual brands' increased market share as it does to the widening product portfolio. With Crown and Nexo as the mainstays of the business (in fact, the building is shared with Nexo's sales operation), Fuzion now distributes wireless systems (dB Technologies) consoles (Innovason) outboard equipment (Sabine, Symetrix), speakers (Galaxy and Technomad) and helpful 'system products' from RDL and Littlite.

Fun is a serious business at Fuzion. As Mike Mann found, the highly personal, laid-back image of the company is carefully tuned to the quirky needs of the professional audio market.



COMPANY
PROFILE



All three directors agree that Fuzion's newest brand, Innovason from Brittany in Northwest France, has the most interesting range of products to emerge from the digital race. Already adopted by BBC Television as a digital stagebox-cum-matrix system, Innovason's range has recently expanded to include an integrated production system that has applications in live sound as well as broadcast. Oates is excited by the stronger stance now being taken by independent digital equipment manufacturers: "Despite the extreme conservatism of our industry, it's becoming impossible to deny that this is the path that audio systems will be taking. I'm not convinced that digital development is always driven by a broad user base, though - much of it has come from broadcast and is being slowly adopted by a few live users."

When asked to give me the company's mission statement, Tony Oates simply scowled. "We are not great fans of mission statements. I prefer the pragmatic, no-nonsense approach. If I had to sum up where we are coming from, it would be something like 'Make Money, Have Fun'."



Above, Fuzion's new light and airy sales office. Inset, the sales team of Steven O'Neill, Paul Ward, Dean Davoile and Kiera Leeming.



BEFORE AND AFTER

Offering in-depth pre- and post-sales service for Fuzion's disparate product lines is a major task, but one clearly relished by Gary Ashton and engineer Nigel Waterfall. Though there are only two people in the technical department, Fuzion runs the biggest Crown service centre in Europe; in fact, its throughput of repair work is second only to the Crown factory.

I asked Gary Ashton about the level of quality control applied to Fuzion's distributed products. "Since we vet all new products thoroughly before they are released to the market, we don't generally need to tweak individual units. Occasionally, we will perform modifications - changing voltage taps, for example. When customers' equipment comes in for repair, we check it against the manufacturer's original specification - and if it's possible we'll tweak it to improve on the original figures!"

I wondered if, since this effectively bypasses the

role of the dealer in after-sales support, this level of involvement presented a problem to Fuzion? "No - we actually encourage people to send units to us rather than fixing it themselves. Without either the right documentation or the correct components, the result of a home-made repair is often more expensive to put right." In addition to fault-fixing, Ashton operates a system of preventative maintenance - cleaning, tightening, and re-calibration of customers' equipment. He recommends that amplifiers are serviced every couple of years: "Because of their high power and heat output, amplifiers are inherently more prone to failure than low-current equipment - even so, we only get about a 0.01% failure rate, and still see DC300s made in 1967 in active service. Within reason, we can still get parts from Crown for these products."

DUBIOUS HERITAGE

One perennial problem for service departments is 'inherited product' - sales made by previous distributors. Ashton is philosophical: "A lot of the units we see in here for repair were sold by someone else. But at least this way we can see the whole picture - if we spot trends within

certain products we can feed that information back to the manufacturers, and keep hassling them until it's sorted out."

Warranty is a thorny issue for many customers - Fuzion's warranty policy is typically straightforward: "We have a clear agreement with all the manufacturers we represent. If we see a product fail and decide to uphold the warranty for the customer's benefit, we don't expect to have that decision challenged. It's so short-sighted to quibble over a few quid." While Nigel Waterfall concentrates on service, Gary Ashton's role is becoming increasingly pre-sales orientated. "We act as a huge technical resource for our customers - helping to specify systems, giving application advice over the phone - we never tell customers to go away. This industry is full of bullshit and we're trying to help get rid of it. We take a problem-solving approach to every project - even if that means sometimes having to direct a customer to a product we don't sell."

GETTING IT RIGHT

Gary also handles internal and external IT for the company, and maintains the Fuzion website (www.fuzion.co.uk) with marketing manager Kiera Leeming. While the Internet is an ideal medium for distributing sales information, it is also a growing part of the pre and post-sales service armoury. "We are trying to encourage more people to visit the website, and we are now posting datasheets, full manuals, FAQs and other technical data, like our own simplified set-up guides for the more complicated products." At present, the level of use of the website resource is limited by an important aspect of Fuzion's relationship with their customers - the personal touch. Ashton, though, is happy that one-to-one contact is still a major part of his job: "We have a limited number of customers, and we know them all personally. I really believe that this gives us an edge over bigger companies. We don't have a problem dealing with end users, either - even though we're not a dealer."

I asked if, as a technical person in a systems environment, Ashton was not tempted to expand into manufacturing products to fill the

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gaps in Fuzion's portfolio. "No - manufacturing opens up a whole different set of problems, especially now that we have EMC regulations to think about. In any case, we have very close relationships with all our suppliers, and if we come up with a marketable idea they'll probably end up designing it anyway." I suggested that the limited range of products handled by Fuzion might restrict the company's ability to help installation customers. Ashton disagrees: "In fact, dealing with a small number of companies means we have incredibly in-depth knowledge about their products. This is one of our key strengths."

TIMES THEY ARE A-CHANGING

The traditional image of the service department, reeking of hot solder and isopropanol, is changing, and Fuzion's 'Medicine Men' are adapting their methods to suit more advanced technology: "Digits are changing a lot of things - for example, at the moment we do component level repairs on pretty well every piece of equipment we sell. As a rule we have avoided the 'board-swap' philosophy until now, mainly because built-up PCBs are very costly to stock. Digital equipment, though, requires specialist tooling. We do have surface-mount repair equipment, but some of the digital surface mount circuitry is so small that we can't realistically do component replacements."

Though component-level repairs necessitate stocking a bewildering variety of active, passive and mechanical parts, Fuzion is not in the business of selling spares. "We never sell spare parts at retail prices and we don't penalise the end user by loading the price of the components we use to repair equipment." Explains Ashton: "I can't stand it when I hear about manufacturers making enormous mark-ups on spares. The only thing that this achieves is boded repairs as people can't afford the right components."

As a time-served audio specialist, Ashton has seen digital equipment becoming increasingly popular, but is sceptical about manufacturers' motivation. "A lot of the problems we have seen with digits have been exacerbated by cheaply-made rubbish. As with analogue, the people who do it right charge heavily for it. Equipment buyers and manufacturers have the same concern, which is that since digital technology is moving so fast, a product is obsolescent almost as soon as it is released. Analogue equipment has a much longer lifespan, just because the speed of progress is so much slower."

THE BUSINESS OF SELLING

Along with Tony Oates and Gary Ashton, sales director Paul Ward has been with the company since its inception. They clearly shared the same philosophy - and according to Ward, continue to do so. "We looked around and saw a lot of boxshifters - especially in the form of distribution which had been set up by multinational manufacturers. As an independent, we knew we had to offer something different - some added value."

The three directors decided at the outset to keep the company small. Paul Ward explains: "We have never been into wholesale distribution. We were determined to avoid the problems of size that we had seen and experienced with other companies." Emphasis was placed on infrastructure and support - the systems in place at Fuzion could handle a workforce much larger than the 14 people currently employed.

Ward is critical of the market for not making the most of its opportunities: "We have always borrowed business techniques from other markets - and when you see how other industries do business, you realise how immature the audio market is. We try to make sure that everything we do is strategically driven - if you do that, it's easier to have fun on a day-to-day basis. Unlike some companies, this is not a hobby gone out of control" However, he is keen to show a healthy respect for his competitors: "These days, there are several good people out there. Graham Paddon, for example, at Autograph Sales, is one of the nicest guys in the industry. Though our product lines overlap, there is still room for co-operation



Above, the new Innovason Century console, pictured at SSE's facilities and inset, engineer Nigel Waterfall.



between professionals." Tony Oates echoes the competitive message: "Positive competition is great - but the pointless competition that we sometimes see is hugely destructive - it diverts resources away from R&D and customer support."

Fuzion's loyal customer base seem to enjoy a special relationship with their supplier; Chris Beale, managing director of Midlands-based SSE

Hire, says that service providers will often take on products because of the support they receive from distributors: "I would say that we have a model supplier/rental company relationship. There's never any concept of a 'sell', but there's also no lack of attention - even when we're not buying anything!" Beale adds that the relationship is "both professional and pastoral - they are people with whom we enjoy associating."

Unconventional perks are offered to dealers, including annual overseas trips. Last year's South African safari, which included camping under the stars while keeping watch for marauding lions, was more than just a thank you to the company's dealers, it was a chance for all involved to forge stronger relationships away from the usual business environment, thereby increasing the network within the customer base.

RABBITING ON

Paul Ward believes that the key to Fuzion's success is the support-led attitude towards the company's customers and suppliers. He points out that distribution is a highly cash-intensive business, and that limiting the company's horizons but earning customer loyalty has paid dividends. Clearly, though, Fuzion is expanding its horizons from its original sound reinforcement niche. The introduction of Symmetrix and most recently Innovason to the catalogue is an indication that the term 'pro audio supplier' is becoming more appropriate.

However, like his co-directors, Paul Ward is clear about Fuzion's place in the market: "We're not a hire company, we're not resellers and we are not installers. It's our job to support those companies who already perform those tasks. "From a sales point of view, we don't

believe that it is helpful to get involved further along the chain. What we do is really quite simple, but we try to do it to the very best of our ability. If we can have some fun and make money doing something we enjoy, we're all happy bunnies."



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Ian Herbert, Asleep in the Stalls...

The weekend of the Premio Europa in Taormina is established as a big moment in the International Theatre calendar. The generosity of the European Community in offering prizes worth 80,000 Euros, and the extraordinary hospitality of the town itself, have ensured it a large and by now familiar turn-out.

I IMAGINE it's a little like that meeting in America where world leaders throw off their clothes and go rampaging in the woods. There's no nudity in Taormina of course, at least among the delegates, but there is a strong sense of the great and the good of European theatre on holiday. Some of those present are not completely at leisure: the Union of European Theatres uses it to hold a business meeting, as does my organisation (not very great, but occasionally good), the International Association of Theatre Critics. And for everyone there is the chance to find out, formally and informally, what's up in a theatre world beyond their own.

"I imagine it's a little like that meeting in America where world leaders throw off their clothes and go rampaging in the woods. There's no nudity in Taormina of course, at least among the delegates, but there is a strong sense of the great and the good of European theatre on holiday."

THIS YEAR the E60,000 main prize went to Pina Bausch, who followed the

tradition of Taormina by offering a performance by her Tanztheater Wuppertal company. Its title, *Small Collection*, is self-explanatory: it was really no more than a half-hour set of party pieces by a dozen Bauschists. All the same, in that modest assemblage could be seen most of the hallmarks which have put the name of Pina Bausch on the

lips of many well beyond her world of dance - playfulness and wit coupled with sensuality and languor, moments of serene formality contrasting with others of fierce energy.

THE INTEREST of the larger than usual group of visiting British critics was more focused on the winners of the junior prize, the 20,000 Euros given for New Theatrical Realities, since it went to the Royal Court. The Court responded by sending a big delegation of its own, including its directors Ian Rickson and Stephen Daldry and associate director Max Stafford-Clark. The whole team appeared on the platform for one of the weekend's more successful panel discussions, moderated with genial firmness by the unflappable Michael Billington, the UK representative on the prize jury. After this, there were workshops in which Messrs Rickson and Stafford-Clark demonstrated (or simulated, as Ian Rickson put it), their working methods, as did the Italian director Barbara Nativi with a couple of Martin Crimp's *Attempts on Her Life*.

THE EVENING SAW a production, or perhaps a simulation, of Conor McPherson's *The Weir* by the Court's touring company, led by Tom Hickey. Simulation, because the intimacy of McPherson's Irish bar was difficult to recreate fully in the 1,000-seater congress hall in which they had to perform. There was some raising of European eyebrows at the fact that the prize for new theatrical realities was going to a company presenting such a slice of old theatrical reality. Those who attended the earlier session, however, knew well the full scope of the Court's activities - a theatre with funding for 10 productions a year that insists on doing 20, and a theatre which in recent years has vastly strengthened its links with Europe, to the great gain of both parties.

THE MOST AMBITIOUS piece of staging in the whole event was in the Vittorio Emanuele Theatre down the road in Messina, where the Swiss director Christoph Marthaler, who won the new realities prize last year, returned to present his latest work, *Die Spezialisten*, subtitled *A Thé-*

Dansant for Survival. Almost as self-explanatory as the Bausch piece, but four times as long, 'The Specialists' owes a lot to Pina Bausch's work. Those who have seen Marthaler's *Stunde Null* will recognise some of his own trademarks: once again an elderly female minder oversees a besuited group of grotesques, this time both male and female, who dance the tango, declaim passages of important-sounding nonsense and throw themselves and one another about the stage with a precision that one hesitates to call military, since this is the company of the Deutsches Schauspielhaus Hamburg.

THEIR PLAYING space is the full stage of a big theatre, a clinically white area that is part commuter train, part 747, part departure lounge, with a full complement of fold-down seats, overhead compartments, Underground straps to hang from, and even a pair of aircraft seats (undoubtedly Business Class) that track up and down the centre of the stage as required. The dreaded Airport Art seems at last to have arrived. Fortunately, Marthaler is satirising it, not creating it. His specialists know everything and have learned nothing, whizzing from place to place as they do, accompanied by the latest electronic gadget.

MARTHALER has an important and chilling point to make, and he does it with all his inventive skill. But it is only one point, and it is well made within the first 30 minutes of this Teutonically over-extended single joke. 'Why do we have to talk about a play you haven't yet seen?', asked the director at the pre-show press conference. Was this modesty, or just exasperation at an audience who obviously hadn't found the five pages of explanatory notes in four languages in the Taormina programme?

IT'S A HUGE privilege, and for the technical staff in Taormina an administrative nightmare, to see three major European companies in action within three days. The price that must be paid is attendance at the award sessions and saccharin speeches of tribute in praise of the big winner. The only real question was whether Pina Bausch was sitting on the right or the left hand side of the Almighty. Max Stafford-Clark, talking about rehearsals for *Shopping and Fucking*, recalled the day when a straight actor had to tackle the play's gay rimming scene for the first time. 'Afterwards, he went to the window, took a deep breath, and said "Well, that's the first time I've ever licked a bottom."' In Taormina, the practice seems to have been raised to the level of high art.

PS: I write all this at great personal risk. It seems to me that every time I say something even the slightest bit uncomplimentary in print about Taormina and the Premio Europa, my hotel gets downgraded the next year. I wonder what the Catania Airport Youth Hostel is like?

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NIGHTCLUB



Scala and Destiny

At the beginning of April, two new clubs opened their doors within a week of each other. Scala, a converted cinema in central London, has been set up by promoter Sean McClusky to be an arts-based bolt-hole for the discerning Londoner. First Leisure's Destiny, on the other hand, is situated 50 kilometres to the north, in Watford - an area better known as a suburban dormitory than as a haven for clubbers.

A GLITTERING PAST

Prior to my visit to Kings Cross in April, I had not set foot inside Scala since 1986 - when it was still operating as a cinema club running bizarre all-night film compilations for a semi-comatose audience. Prior to this it had enjoyed a period in the seventies as a live venue, where the likes of Iggy Pop and Hawkwind could be seen. The club's present clientele will probably be unimpressed to discover that Gary Glitter played his first London show at Scala.

The cinema closed at the start of the 1990s and lay dormant until 1995, when Sean McClusky suggested to the leaseholders that the venue could be split to provide a full-scale multi-purpose venue above a ground-level snooker club. McClusky brought in spatial designers FAT and gave them a brief to create several isolated areas that could be genuinely multi-

functional. Their description of the result is pretty close to the mark: "Scala looks and works like no other venue in London - it reinvents the idea of the kind of place you want to spend an evening in, and the things you might want to do while you're there."

Scala already had a name as a centre for underground arts in London (which was appropriate, since London Transport own the freehold and the club sits directly over four subterranean railway lines), and the proposal was not only to capitalise on this, but also to add a commercial element to ensure the club's viability. McClusky's target has already been reached; as well as hosting popular art cinema evenings, appearances by DJ acts such as the Chemical Brothers, art exhibitions and various live bands, Scala has already received sponsorship from Gordon's Gin and is taking corporate bookings from record companies and other London businesses. The club's varied programme is designed to attract a multiplicity of age groups, and daytime opening of the foyer bar (complete with Internet facilities) will increase the club's f&b turnover without significantly increasing their costs.

NO SAUSAGES

McClusky is clear about where the London club scene is going: "Too many clubs are

*Mike Mann
takes a look
at two very
different
new UK
venues and
compares
the
requirements
of city and
suburban
club-goers*





Cover page and above, Sean McClusky's Scala nightclub. Turbosound speakers have been employed in a simple left-right design either side of stage.

Right, the Avolites Azure 2000 console - an indication that installers Art of Darkness have allowed for expansion.

finished within a couple of years," he says. "We have been very careful not to hitch ourselves to one theme - we don't want to be a sausage factory." Décor is, therefore, muted - but gives the club a very clean look, especially in the VIP bar, which has a simple black-and-white motif, with a wide glass frontage overlooking the main dance floor. With a capacity of 200 and a licence to 2.00am, this is intended to provide a smart, relaxed atmosphere for after-show hospitality. The main room itself was constructed by extending the original cinema balcony floor as far as the back wall, giving a good-sized dance area and raised bench seating at the rear. At the uppermost level, the balcony has been expanded to become a 'crow's nest' bar and restaurant. This is open to the main room, but features a set of 30dB acoustic curtains to limit spill from the Turbosound PA to the bar. This, claims McClusky, enables the room to be used for private functions without closing the club itself: "We have a separate sound system up here, with film screening facilities and separate access from the main foyer. It's great for smaller-scale presentations and corporate evenings." Quite how realistic it is to present an entirely separate event upstairs while the main dance floor is heaving remains to be seen. A further members' bar is planned which will require the conversion of the old projection room.

"With a capacity of 200 and a licence to 2.00am, this is intended to provide a smart, relaxed atmosphere for after-show hospitality."

FLOODLIT DANCEFLOOR

Though sound installers Tarsin are strongly associated with Acoustic Sound System loudspeakers, Turbosound was chosen because of its more international appeal. The apparently conflicting requirements of a central dance floor and conventional stage are met with ease by this simple left-right design - though the original plan to fly the main clusters would have improved the coverage of the system and sightlines on stage. The main system comprises four Turbo TFL-760

trapezoidal Floodlight cabinets per side, with one TSW-124 and four TSW-718 subs. All speakers are powered by EV amps and controlled by a brace of XTA DP226 processors. The stage monitor system uses six TFM 300 wedges and a pair of THL-2s as sidefills, again powered by EV units. A 32-channel DDA CS8 dominates the caged DJ booth, but is only used for live bands - a Rane Mojo MM8X mixer, Technics SPL1210 decks and Pioneer CD players serve the guest DJs.

The three bar areas are fitted with a variety of ASS systems; each can be used with a portable DJ console. These are turntable-based (SL1210s again) and incorporate Rane mixers, BSS crossovers and EV amplification. The isolated VIP bar can be fed from with main control room - with a suitable delay.

A DARK ART

In contrast to the comprehensive sound systems, lighting at Scala is remarkably sparse - though the inclusion of an Avolites Azure 2000 console is an indication that installers Art of Darkness have allowed for expansion. A simple box truss over the centre of the floor carries four High End Systems Technobeams, four Datamoons, four Dataflash strobes, two 4-cell Moles and 20 Par cans. To the left and right of the stage are six-lamp Thomas bars in classic rock and roll style, and the system is completed by a couple of Technobeams at the back of the room.



Brian Leitch designed the installation with the club's multi-purpose role in mind, though, as Sean McClusky points out, the creative flair of lighting operators needs careful management in this difficult environment: "They are under strict instructions not to overdo the gobos - especially when we're using

projected graphics." These are provided and projected by Eyecon onto one of three screens in the main room, either from 16mm film loop or slides, and form a major part of the club's feel.

As a promoter, McClusky points out that he is not averse to the use of technology to expand his market: "We are already producing regular live web-casts in association with Interface Radio, using ISDN technology." This, in addition to live transmissions from the club by BBC Radio 1, should ensure a wide potential audience for Scala's unique mix of art, film and music. The idea of providing a sophisticated, relaxed atmosphere in a part of London that has traditionally been beset by inner-city problems of drugs and prostitution is a great one. If the non-stop telephone enquiries at the Scala office are an indication of the popularity of the concept, this may spell the start of a regeneration of the London underground scene.

DESTINY - FILLING THE (WATFORD) GAP

By contrast, Watford's population is not well served by local clubs - perhaps due to the town's proximity to London (half an hour centre-to-centre by train). However, one venue which has ruled the roost here despite several name-changes over the years, re-opened this spring as Destiny. Owned by First Leisure, Destiny has a capacity of 1,980



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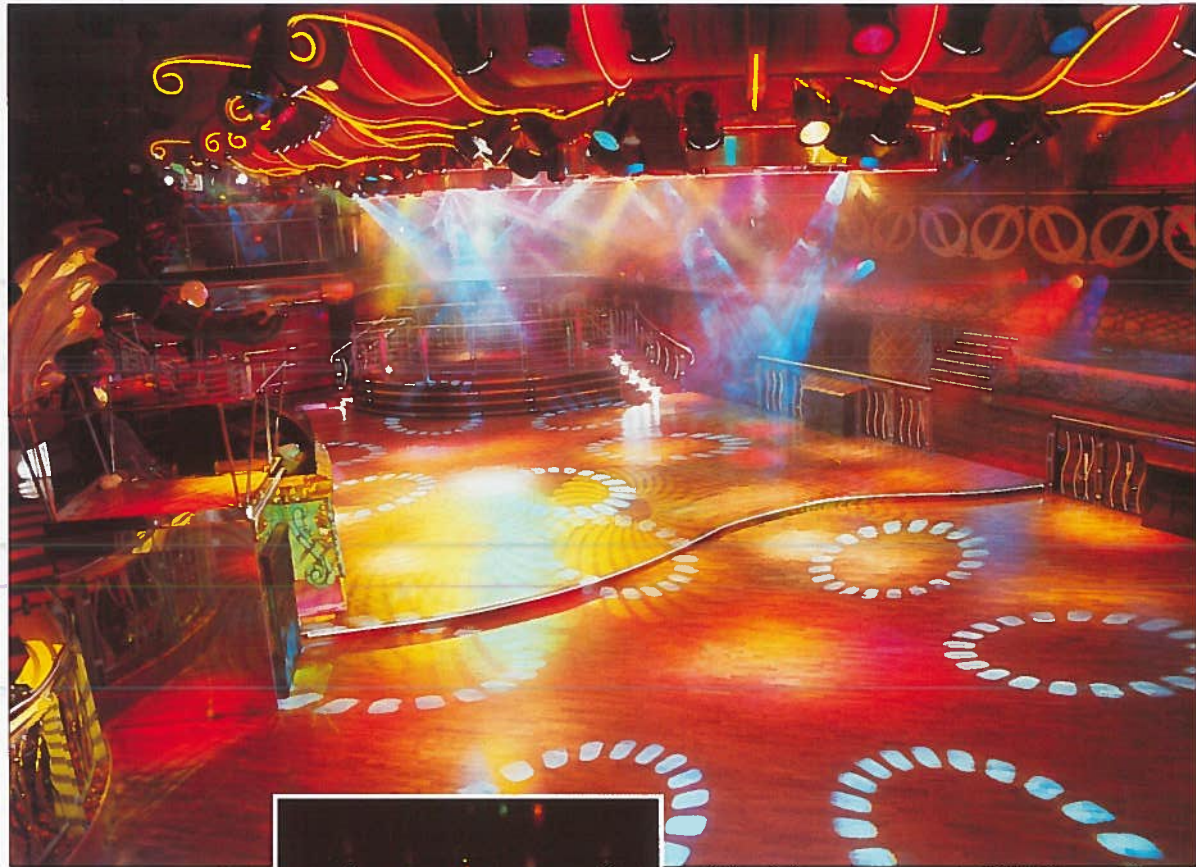
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KNOW HOW

"I can't remember the last time we used anything on vinyl here. We have to have a turntable just in case, but realistically everything our DJs play has already found its way onto CD or MiniDisc."



Above, Destiny's split-level dance floor; inset, Mark Gallen - the man responsible for the club's technical services



(increased by nearly 200 since its last refit due to improved access and escape routes) and boasts six bars, each with a fantasy theme. The club's oval main room has a balcony which encircles the dance floor, and this upper level plays host to the Diva cocktail bar, a safari-themed dining area and the Elite lounge. This members-only VIP sanctuary is isolated from the main room by a full-height glass wall and contains a 60-cover restaurant. Downstairs, as well as the three peripheral bar areas, Destiny provides a smaller room for the segment of its clientele who are into older music styles - Aphrodisia plays seventies and eighties music in a less frenetic atmosphere.

The original balcony - which in the club's previous incarnations had always created a 'them and us' divide, has been remodelled - and indeed contractors Phoenix had to chop out over eight tonnes of reinforced concrete to form a bridge which gives the Organica bar some badly-needed height. This has also allowed the installation of a 4.5m high mirror behind the bar, which strengthens the visual link between the upper and lower levels.

The award for sexiest bar at Destiny goes to Diva - a sumptuous deep scarlet-draped area which is sufficiently distant from the main lighting to take on a feel of its own. While the leather-clad bondage mistress who graces the

bar is only a picture, the high-backed studded chairs and cross-laced wall coverings are very suggestive. Lighting is used to good effect downstairs in the Prism bar, with a colour wall lit by 23 AVR colour changers - though these seem to suffer from synchronisation difficulties over prolonged periods.

The spacious DJ booth is overshadowed by a huge statue of Neptune (though I am reliably informed that the Greeks called him Poseidon), holding a pair of pearls which he has apparently plucked from oyster shells to his left and right. These shells form the backdrop for the club's resident dancers. Almost opposite this, the venues (plain) stage provides a rise of about 1.7 metres for rap acts, DJs, or guest MCs.

BORN-AGAIN SOUND

Much of the sound system is a re-working of the club's existing Turbosound installation - with 16 TSE111 mid/high cabinets flown above the lighting rig and seven dual-18" TSE 218 subs distributed around the dance floor. Bose Panarays have been used in peripheral locations, and in the Aphrodisia room, The Music

Company (supplier of the original system) has provided a pair of its own TMC 215 subs to go with the d&b high/mid cabinets.

The main sound control in the DJ booth is via a Cloud CXM mixer, with a Yamaha MX12/4 used as a live console for feeds from the diminutive stage. A Cloud zone mixer distributes the mixed output around the venue. Denon is the preferred source machine supplier, with CD and MD players for both rooms. Mark Gallen, responsible for the club's technical services, pointed out the lone Technics SL-1210 deck; "I can't remember the last time we used anything on vinyl here," he commented, "We have to have a turntable just in case, but realistically everything our DJs play has already found its way onto CD or MiniDisc." This is in sharp contrast to the installation at Scala, where four decks are the standard configuration for guest DJs. Radio mics are by Sennheiser with DJ monitors from Martin Audio. Amplification for the main rig is provided by Crest 6001s, and Gallen explained that the only work required on the old Turbosound system was some selective driver replacements.

MARTIN FLAIR

The lighting system, on the other hand, has been completely reinvented for Destiny. Design Intervention were appointed as installers and wanted to integrate the lighting look with the fantasy concepts of Harrison Design, who was responsible for the club's overall scheme. A largely Martin-based system was specified, comprising three MAC 600s, a dozen MAC 250s, four Pro 1200RGs, four





Destiny's VIP lounge and restaurant - a sanctuary partitioned off from the main dancefloor

Centrepieces and 12 Destroyers. Other fixtures include 148 Par cans, 16 Robocolor 2s and a single Pro 400. Though the neon 'ribs' which join the two halves of the split-level dance floor are quite dominant and a little garish, the addition of two identical circular features, each loaded with the smaller MACs and a JEM Clubsmoke 2, makes a big difference to the ceiling-mounted rig - especially when these two rings are flown in to a height of 2.7m metres above the floor. This is a very handy way of getting some vertical interest in the main room, without totally blocking the view for the champagne-swilling VIPs.

Lighting control is from an ACS Enigma, with a Masterpiece Replay and Martin 2504. Mark Gallen was understandably keen to reassure me that the diminutive lighting system in the Aphrodisia room was due to be supplemented in the near future with what he describes as a 'retro' rig - at present, only a clutch of 812s and Par 56s adorn the (low) ceiling. However, since the room is intended for the 25+ age group, it may be that we oldies don't need too many bright lights. A few chasing Pars and a mirror ball should suffice.

FORWARD THINKING

Like Scala, Destiny is looking ahead to the future in terms of technology. Plans are afoot to add a plasma screen-based video system. The entire building has been cabled to allow for this, but the refurbishment budget would not stretch to the equipment itself.

Considering that this club was refitted in the space of just 11 weeks, the quality of finish is superb - and I was given the guided tour while the venue was empty and quiet, so my perception was not muddled by either atmosphere or alcohol. Even the toilets, a traditional low point in most provincial clubs, have been well thought out (though it is only a matter of time before someone mistakes the huge circular communal washbasin in the gents for a urinal).

DIVIDING THE MARKET

First Leisure are clearly taking a practical view on the idea of theme clubs: keeping the concepts fairly abstract will doubtless prolong the life expectancy of this refit. This 'safe' attitude may be commercially right for this affluent suburban location, however, it would seem that this approach simply separates the social clubber from his or her more 'serious' contemporaries. Those who are happy with a comparatively conservative mix of music can take the short stroll from one of Watford's many pubs to its only major nightclub, whereas the night-owl in search of something a little more 'arty' must venture further afield. With Kings Cross only 30 minutes away by train, it remains to be seen if the independently-run Scala will exert a strong enough pull to lure clubbers into the city centre from the commuter belt.

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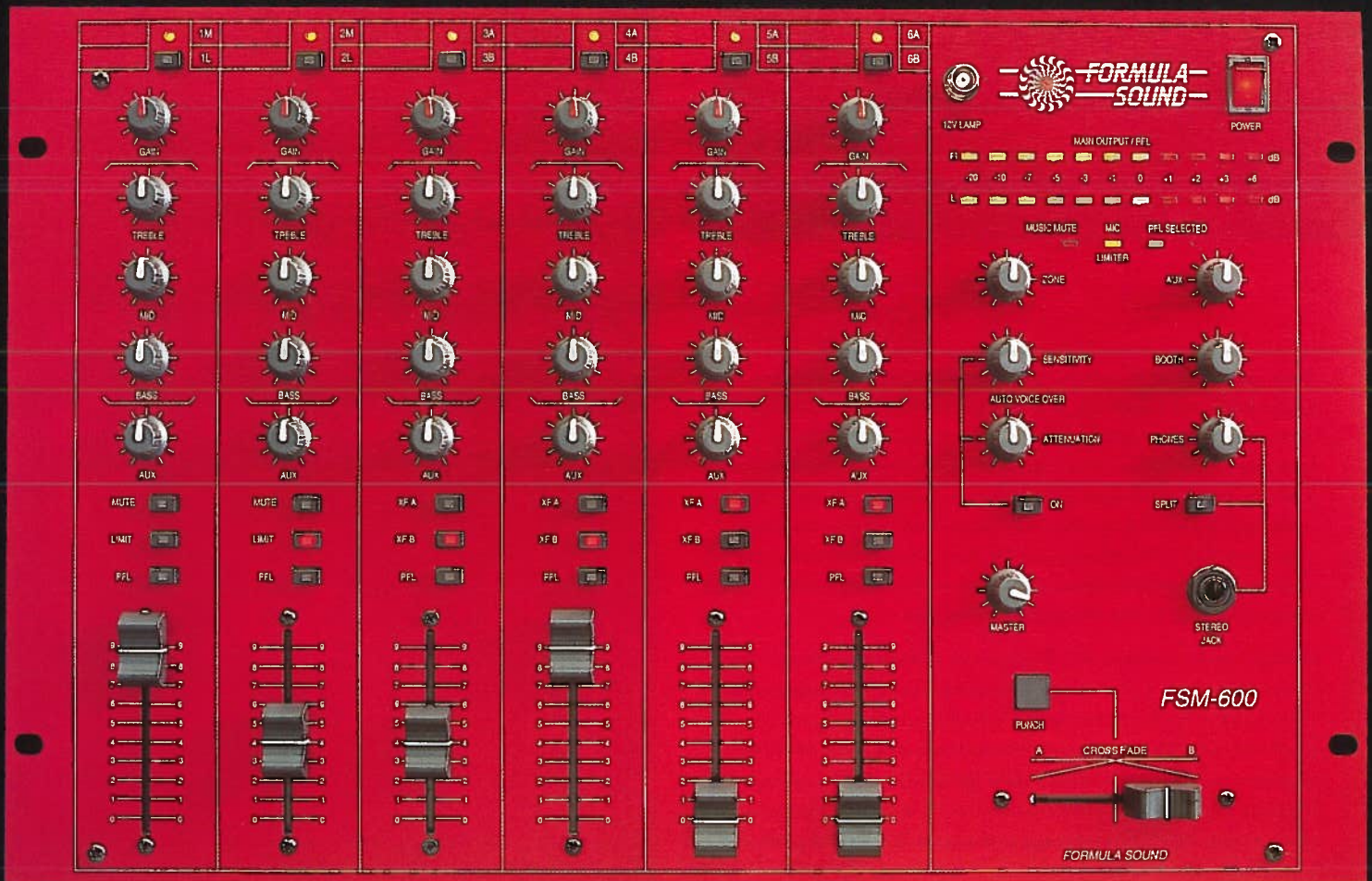
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Site for Sore Eyes

Whoever at the BFI had the original idea to site the London IMAX Cinema in the middle of a busy roundabout must have been something of a masochist - not only did this reduce the access for construction traffic, but the central London location is directly above several busy underground railway lines. However, the visual impact is quite remarkable. The glass-enclosed cylinder was designed by Brian Avery and is ideally suited to the unusual shape of an IMAX theatre. To adhere to the IMAX Corporation's strict specifications for auditorium noise levels, the building is supported on 30m deep sinks and a two metre thick slab. A total of 90 columns, each topped with oil-damped bearings, supports an upper slab which is the base for the whole of the building above the first floor. An isolation gap of 12mm can be seen dissecting stairs and lift shafts - in fact, there is no lateral restraint on the building. As the sprung bearings were released just prior to the building's opening night, staff members were heard voicing concerns about high winds!

Environmental Improvement

The original roundabout site, which is dissected by subterranean walkways, had been a trouble-spot for many years - though used as a convenient short-cut from Waterloo bridge to one of London's largest railway stations,



FILM

the area was unsafe at night and detracted from the South Bank's artsy image. The new building retains the original access routes but provides a very attractive centrepiece - a fact that is not lost on the BFI. The glass outer shell of the building provides useful protection for a large-scale artwork by Howard Hodgkin, depicting the effect of the IMAX format on the audience.

David Hersey Associates were commissioned to design the exterior lighting, but as Peter Fordham (lighting designer for the IMAX Cinema) pointed out, this was only the beginning: "DHA Design Services was asked less than a year ago to design an exterior scheme, but during the development of the building we were asked to come up with some feature lighting for the auditorium. For the drum wall, we have used Selux linear dimmable fluoros and metal halide spots - all on separate circuits, which enables us to introduce modulation via a set of dimmers. Apart from varying the mood of the exterior throughout the evening, this will allow the BFI to run events such as a New Year's Eve countdown using the 40 illuminated columns."

The Inside Story

Internally, the auditorium required a degree of intelligent lighting to complement the pre-show announcements (provided by a live





'host') and the hilarious five-minute signature film which was written and directed by Terry Jones and stars John Cleese.

Eight MAC500s are used to light the host, projection room and screen during the pre-show warm-up. Control is from an Electrosonic Lightcue, which was programmed via a Celco Navigator. For the

opening of the cinema, three static states were

programmed, plus a timecode-driven dynamic sequence.

Simple push-buttons are used adjacent to the enormous IMAX projector to change states.

The 20m x 26m IMAX screen is perforated, allowing Fordham to illuminate the elements of the surround sound system for the audience. ETC Source 4s and Dataflash strobes are used to highlight each loudspeaker in turn as the introductory 'tour' takes place. A HELL Starfield is used at the rear of the auditorium, driven by five MR16 light drivers. Conventional lighting comprises (amongst others), 21 1k Codas in addition to the architectural lighting.

Big Is Beautiful

For those who (like me) are new to IMAX, it is worth a few moments to investigate this unusual film format.

The IMAX concept was first seen in 1970, and is the largest commercial film format - there are now some 180 cinemas in 25 countries around the world. Originally conceived as a 2D format, the IMAX system (with its higher picture stability and improved resolution) provided an obvious medium for 3D films - the London IMAX Cinema is one of 50 worldwide which are 3D-equipped.

IMAX uses specially-developed Kodak 70mm film, which is run horizontally through the projector gate. This means that each frame is 15 perforations wide, giving an image that is ten times the area of a normal 35mm window.

The projector itself uses a 'rolling loop' system which uses compressed air and a vacuum move the film through the gate at 24 feet per second - advancing the film at 1.7 metres per second using mechanical methods would place an impossible load on the stock. The rolling loop method also allows a shutter ratio of 68%, giving a third more light output than normal 50% shutters. A 15kW Xenon short-arc lamp provides the light source itself. The multi-element lenses are 60mm (61° x 45°) at f2.4; for 3D films, the two lenses are polarised at 90° to each other. Right-angle polarisation gives a far superior result to the traditional 45° system, and the glasses supplied to patrons of the London IMAX cinema are made to a higher specification than 3D film-goers might expect.

The London IMAX cinema is also equipped with a pair of Century 35/70mm projectors for conventional film screenings; these are fitted with a variety of audio heads to enable them

to run almost every sound format. Though their conventional lenses prevent the projectors from using the whole of the IMAX screen, the BFI is keen to promote the showing of 70mm films.

Separate Sound

IMAX is a complete package - their subsidiary company Sonics Associates (based in Birmingham, Alabama) provides and installs the audio system required by the IMAX format. Audio is stored separately from the film itself, as there is no room on the 70mm stock for the six tracks used by the system.

The audio format itself is remarkably simple - six full-range tracks, with a mixed feed of all six being sent to subwoofers behind the screen.

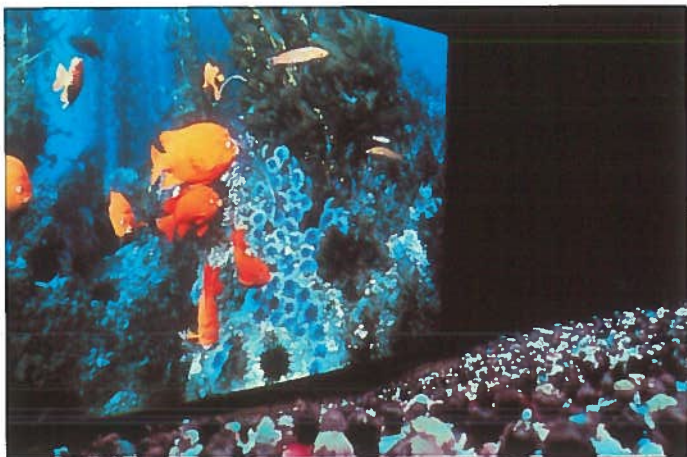
Sonics have used their three-way 'Proportional Point Source' cabinets for the full-range channels and a cluster of 18" loaded subs. The four front channels are left-centre-right and upper centre. This last channel is required partly for vertical imaging, but also due to the steep rake (25°) of the auditorium. It also means that energy is much more evenly spread, compensating for losses towards the rear of the seating. A pair of cabinets is located rear-left and rear-right for the surround effects. The PPS system uses concentrically-nested high and mid horns, with four 12" LF drivers around the periphery - an arrangement which is necessary to avoid timing problems between the high and mid sections, bearing in mind the "short, wide and tall" layout of the 482 seats in the London IMAX Cinema.

In Control

To minimise downtime while the potentially complex sequence of trailers, pre-show announcements, advertisements and main feature is set up, Sonics has supplied a DTACS show control system which links the IMAX projector with the Lightcue controller and also provides hard-disk storage for some of the audio elements of each presentation.

Each IMAX film is distributed with a DVD containing not just the soundtrack itself, but also registration information which is used by DTACS to 'drag and drop' the film and audio into a sequence. This may include repeated announcements, looped music, or even elements from the 35/70 projectors - not all material shown is available in IMAX format. To avoid unauthorised bootlegging, the soundtrack itself remains on the disc - only the






The 3D Deep-sea story 'Into the Deep'

registration information is downloaded. Emergency announcements (such as evacuation instructions or film-break apologies) can be fired manually, and the projectionist even has the facility to skip through the sequence checking audio level and making adjustments, which are then applied to the entire element of the programme. Levels may be adjusted 'on the fly', but the intention is that each presentation requires only a button-push to run the sequence of events. The biggest limitation is the sheer size of the film stock; a 60-minute reel (the absolute maximum possible) weighs 100kgs and is 1.5m in diameter!

Audio for non-IMAX presentations is run through an entirely separate system, supplied and installed by UK-based Omnix Pro-Film Ltd. JBL 4675 cabinets are used for the five front channels, with 16 8330s handling the four surround channels. Sub-bass is provided by four 4645B subs, with a mixture of QSC USA900 and USA1310 amplifiers powering the whole system. Steve Grant, chief engineer at Omnix, points out that an increasing number of independent houses are now equipping for all formats; SDDS, Dolby Digital, DTS and analogue soundtracks. In fact, although the BFI chose not to have the new cinema THX approved, the audio installation was completed to THX standards.

To mark the opening of its new showcase cinema, the BFI commissioned a 'signature film' from members of the original Monty Python team. This five-minute epic serves as a perfect introduction to the IMAX format, with John Cleese attempting to give the audience an idea of just how big an IMAX image is. Followed by the 3D deep-sea story 'Into the Deep' and a 2D adventure entitled 'Destiny in Space', the signature film is the first of two IMAX films to be commissioned by the BFI. However, given that an IMAX camera can only hold just under three minutes of film (that's 1,000 feet!), we will have to wait until next year to see the follow-up! 

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No Comment...

The mid life crisis that our industry is going through in spades this year, continues apace, the body parts are being re-assembled and made-over with the rapaciousness of routine cosmetic surgery on an ageing Hollywood bimbo. While my worries remain as to whether the hormones are draining away at a similar rate, I guess that we have to be adult enough to accept that our industry is serious business these days and serious business means serious financial muscle.

"It would be a foolish man who predicted that it was the end of the line. There may be a brief intermission while the business reinvents itself, but the next train will be along shortly and they'll all jump aboard."

The first signs that individuals, the hormones of my opening paragraph, are going to suffer as the result of these changes came with the news that up to a dozen jobs have been shed at Vari-Lite's

Greenford offices, as the administrative epicentre of VLPS European operation moves to Brussels. There is also an, as yet unsubstantiated rumour, that amongst these is at least one, very well-known and respected industry name.

Meanwhile, it is stated from Denmark that Ian Kirby, managing director of Martin Professional UK, a protégé and stalwart of the Peter Johansen regime, is leaving by mutual consent to pursue other interests. Whether this indicates that Martin Group CEO, Kristian Kolding, with a background as a company doctor when previously working for venture capitalists, is severing links with the past to present a new, more structured approach to the market, remains to be seen. While seeking a replacement for Kirby, I understand that Pio Nahum will be spending some time in the UK each month to keep on top of things.

The other sector where turmoil rules OK, is the clubs market where all the major estates seem to be up for grabs. First Leisure have made it known that they are keen to sell, Rank have been off-loading for a while and the new boss, Mike Smith, seems likely to speed up that process as his focus will doubtless be in a different direction. Even Allied, whose bid for European seems to be going through, are apparently threatening to sell the resulting combined club estate, which may raise questions about the rationale of the offer in the first place. So, there are plenty of opportunities for those who still have faith and I can think of a few that would be tempted to take the plunge.

However, there remains the question as to why all these majors are in such a hurry to divest themselves of their pedigree herds of cash-cows? It can't surely be just on the basis of one poor year, unless they perceive that last year's results

were more endemic than they led us to believe. So what do they know that the rest of us don't? I suspect the answer lies in something touched on in an earlier column, which is that they realise that the changing licensing law is driving a change in the fashion for late night entertainment; as heavyweights, they can never be light enough on their feet to respond to such an upheaval. Isn't that always the way in the market and what, in fact, enables the little fish to bite the tails of the whoppers? Furthermore, the City is in no mood to allow these groups the leeway to invest the kind of capital needed to gain from the changing conditions.

So, while it's a case of 'all change, all change... and mind the gap', it would be a foolish man who predicted that it was the end of the line. There may be a brief intermission while the booze and boogie business reinvents itself, but the next train will be along shortly and they'll all jump aboard.

Are we being snowed? was the first and most obvious question to ask when I read the national press coverage about a Mr David Crownshaw whose Gloucestershire company is apparently making several different fortunes out of 140 different types of artificial snow. I've never heard of Mr. Crownshaw, and my prior knowledge of the subject only stretches to being a member of the panel which gave an award for non-sticky stage snow at LDI'96.

Actually, I am not the least interested in Mr. C's snow. No, what I want to know is the name of the PR person who created the blizzard that blanketed the national press in many deep and crisp and even column inches about this previous unknown and his faux frozen eau? This coverage even included 135 column centimetres in The Times alone, replete with this delicious quote from our Mr. Frosty: "It just snowballed from there (i.e. pulling out the stuffing from Jiffy bags and dyeing it). I soon realised this was a full-time job and there was huge potential. I decided to jump in with both feet and make every kind of snow there is."

This is the kind of publicity most companies in this industry would die for, indeed the industry itself would die for such publicity. This spinner's ultimate achievement was also to get the company name mentioned. Which is, wait for it... Snow Business, of course. Come out, come out wherever you are, the PR person behind this coup de glace, this industry needs you!

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Hyperreality Or Hyperbole?



Main picture, the massive new Bluewater complex in Kent. Inset, Chorion plc's branded venue, Tiger, Tiger - an eclectic collection of spaces within one building to sate the most schizophrenic of mood changes.

What is 'Theming'? Louise Stickland sets out in search of the answer . . .

Everywhere we go, not just in large parks or 'attractions', theming pervades just about every aspect of our daily lives. Together with signage, it panders to some basic need within us to identify and to group things together by some means, be it socio-economic category, musical style, clothing, cuisine, leisure pursuit, lifestyle or aspiration.

The result is that theming presents a hyperreal simulated environment for the indulgence of safe, uncontroversial fantasies. And it certainly works, for it's commanding an escalating proportion of the leisure pound/dollar. Theming now seems irreversibly entwined with mass culture, appealing directly to those with a disposable income who have a willingness to identify with a given milieu, cutting across traditional class, racial, ethnic and cultural barriers.

But the real question is whether theming offers opportunity for fun, frivolity and fulfilment of desires or whether it is just a glib veneer shrouding a more sinister controlling process? Does it turn individuals into docile clones, content to exist in an insipid, unspontaneous CCTV patrolled environment or is it a revitalising creative force?

We are now officially in an 'Experience Economy', so should all businesses, not just the entertainment industry, aim to produce some form of memorable 'experience' as a unique selling point (USP) to distinguish themselves

from the competition and to create a desire for the customer to return? Welcome to the 'guest' experience.

Why do 'sports people' buy their trainers from Niketown and not K Mart - at half the price? Simple really - choices rest on the lifestyle associations connected to the themed experience with psychology and social politics assuming a seminal role. The 'guest experience' contains an element of sensation, often a physically stimulating one. In this day and age, with so much more now possible, old style museums and educative experiences are dull to a generation of teenagers and young people raised on 'interactive', screen-based, three-minute-soundbite culture. In response, there's been a rapid rise in 'edutainment' centres and 'experiences' serving up local history in a themed environment. Some are extremely well done with meticulous attention paid to detail, like Leeds Armouries, for example, while others are one-dimensional, mis-informative and lacking in substance.

Two elements underscore the essence of theming - fantasy and consumer culture - but taste, styling and perceived quality come into it too, explaining why certain themes can succeed or fail amongst different regions and target groups. Theming has cultivated its own internal dynamics from massive cross-cultural diversification - while socially excluding those without purchasing power.

To understand hyperreality it helps to look at 'reality'. Reality and 'the news' is increasingly served up by a global media, controlled by a few powerful individuals with enormous economic (and consequently political) influence. It reaches



THEMED VENUES

us, the public, in digestible bite-sized chunks, a dumbed-down format - 'Slobba' for Sun readers who aren't trusted to get their tongues or heads around the pronunciation of 'Slobodan Milosevic' being a current case in point.

Reality is presented as iconised matter requiring little questioning. The language is increasingly sensationalised, exaggerated and served up with pain-free arcade-style gore - like a new pornography. A smug, self-censored global media fears the slightest threat of a ratings drop posed by the unpalatable reality of life, so 'unfashionable' suffering like Third World issues are sidelined - as are pertinent social issues on our own doorsteps!

By comparison, hyperreality in simulated, controlled environments, with the supposed human detritus of the world surgically removed, seems plausibly attractive! Witness the new family-friendly Las Vegas with shows featuring GM (genetically modified) Loaf and his ilk. The hookers, sleaze, sex, junkies and neon glitz of Sin City have been swept off The Strip into the hinterland, together with the smoke and sweat of the best card games. Guests can now enjoy European art, monolithic themed hotels, rides and experiences, up-market restaurants, slot-machine gambling - 'family' entertainments. ('Hook 'em young' has never been a moral dilemma for consumer culture).

Hyperreality enables us to visit an Indian Temple in Walt Disney World's Animal Kingdom without the unpleasant backdrop of poverty. We can do Europe (selected countries only) at EPCOT, Walt Disney's Environmental Prototype Community of Tomorrow: "A technocratic version of urban bliss

smack in the middle of Florida swamp and pasture." Alternatively, there's living in exotically-named themed apartment blocks or taking holidays at Centre Parks' sanitised version of the countryside - come rain or shine.

'Guests' can bask in the intensified 'Italian' visual opulence of the Bellagio Hotel in Las Vegas or eat worldwide in predictable environments like McDonalds or The Hard Rock Café where everything tastes, sounds and looks the same . . . or visit the local high street All Bar One on a Saturday night, reassured that the door stewards will exclude riff raff and preserve a safe, standardised environment.

"Is this the Golden Age of theming? Why has it endured and where is it heading? Are we in danger of the whole world turning into a massive theme park and how do the protagonists justify their cod culture?"

The desire to escape reality and embrace simulated surroundings has never been greater. Global override, usually at the expense of local culture, is just one of the more unpalatable side-effects of mass consumption themed culture. New Internationalist magazine devoted their entire December 1998 issue to revealing and questioning some of the more dubious and less-publicised aspects of the Wonderful World and the Magic Kingdom. They examined the 'disneyfication' of the world in depth - a phenomenon by no means restricted to the namesake corporation!

Is this the Golden Age of theming? Why has it endured and where is it heading? Are we in danger of the whole world turning into a massive theme park and how do the protagonists view and justify their cod culture?

"Familiar toilets, cuisine, language, currency and affordability," makes EPCOT attractive to those

panacea by failing businesses attempting to stave off their demise. He adds that Wall Street, in its enthusiastic endorsement of safe, efficient money-making, formulaic operations, has not helped the cause of good theming. "The best themes are those derived from local culture and folklore," he insists. BRC Imagination Arts design, build and devise the contents of themed situations and Rogers emphasises their exhaustive research of local elements for each undertaking. "We work worldwide and certainly don't consider ourselves culturally superior. Context makes all the difference to us."

Peter Chernak's company Metavision, 'specialists in the unknown', are also based in Burbank, California, producing unusual high-tech media and 'specialists in the unknown'. They have been involved in the creation of fantastic drama and hyperreality in numerous award-winning themed projects during their 22-year history, including some of the most extravagant like the SpaceQuest Casino at The Las Vegas Hilton - a completely immersive gaming environment which places the guest in a space station 350 years into the future, 1,500 miles above the earth!

Chernak has an insouciant enthusiasm for the themed industry and has derived enormous fun and satisfaction working with a host of interesting, talented and creative people throughout his career. He acknowledges the important role played by technology and visual media in theming, but emphasises that this alone won't guarantee effective theming. There has to be "substance behind the illusion" to make it successful and to hook people into coming back for more - the ultimate goal.

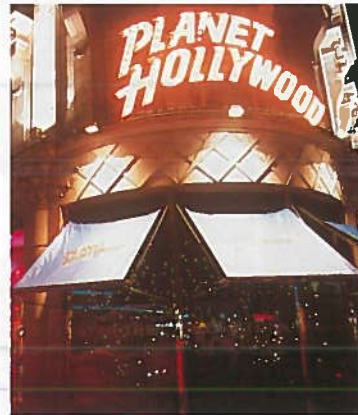
He feels themed entertainment has a healthy future in the giant Urban Entertainment Centres (UECs) - retail environments that also offer entertainment (i.e. movies) and eating. Chernak feels UECs are driven by customer expectations which are significantly higher than in typical 'goods and services' industries, and that themed entertainment is the means of delivering these experiences. He adds that to exploit the shift to an Experience Economy, the most effective entertainment venue designs "will cross the threshold of experience normally reserved for theme park attractions."

The latest of these retail leisure complexes to open in the UK is the highly-designed Bluewater in Kent, described as a 'linear city of the future' by American architect Eric Kuhne. It is a surreal glass-covered environment, complete with Australasian forest, surrounded by seven lakes, 13,000 car parking spaces and 350 stores! John Hannigan digs below the foundations and feelgood factors of these 'fantasy entertainment zones' to argue that they are based on the same mass surveillance psychology as theme parks.

Nick Farmer from Farmer Studios in Leicester, an independently-owned design and production company established in 1976, agrees that theming has been around for some time! One could argue that signage and symbolism in architecture and design dates back to ancient

civilisations, most of which constructed their settlements around a central symbol, usually religious, also commonly found in theming.

Farmer Studios' work in the UK and Europe. Recent projects include the theming of the new Spinning Rapids ride at Parc Astérix in Paris and the themed queue line for Drayton Manor Park's



new water ride Storm Force 10.

Farmer emphasises the importance of quality design in the creation of a pleasant environment. This can be applied equally to theme parks as to retail outlets to entice those with the targeted tastes to eat, shop, dance or experience fun within the identified arena. "I find going into Marks and Spencers an archaic and desolate experience," he recalls. "But going into a well-designed shop like Jigsaw in Knightsbridge or Dolcis Shoes in Leicester can be a delight to the eye." For him, a successfully themed environment has a streamlined design and not naff pastiche.

Farmer and Chernack are both adamant that the bottom line of the thematic experience is to have 'fun'. "Themed attractions can be vibrant, humorous, innocent, uplifting and light-hearted, but sometimes critics can read too much into 'the experience'," states Nick Farmer. And lets face it, thousands flock into themed experiences, feel very good, and part with their hard-earned cash!

The Themed Entertainment Association (TEA), started eight years ago in Burbank with 25 members. It now represents over 700 companies involved in the themed entertainment business and its European arm is currently headed by Peter Ed, business development manager of Electronic Theatre Control, Europe. Ed feels the theming business is still a thriving market with plenty of potential, and that the US is approximately five years ahead of Europe in the way they utilise specialist consultants and designers in their project development processes. (He adds that Europe is catching up rapidly).

This adeptness at using specialists, he feels, maximises the quality and integrity injected at the outset of a project and ensures that it trickles down through every aspect. To him, the application of this expertise can make or break a themed concept. The Disney Corporation, he feels, is a case in point. Disney is renowned for paying meticulous attention to detail, investing massive resources into production values and making incredible theatre.



Above, Farmer Studios circus train - complete with singing animatronic animals - for an entertainment centre in Hong Kong.

Right, Hard Rock cafe - probably one of the best known themed venues

wanting to short-circuit Europe without leaving America, according to Bob Rogers, president of Burbank-based BRC Imagination Arts. He also feels that theming, successful as it has been in some areas, has generally been hijacked as a catch-all

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Disney was instrumental in founding the themed industry, particularly once Walt Disney World opened in Orlando in 1971. However, the forerunners of the great American themed attractions were certainly the World Fairs and expositions that took off in the mid-nineteenth century as the industrial revolution gathered pace.

Disney hasn't always got it right. When Disneyland Paris (originally Euro Disney) opened on the outskirts of Paris in 1992, the high price of the experience, its peripheries - food and accommodation - and consequent lack of interest forced the company to the brink of collapse. Disneyland Paris was turned around by a major refurbishment, the building of the Space Mountain rollercoaster,



competitive pricing and Americanisation. Simultaneously, elements of French culture, such as allowing wine to be sold, were also incorporated. (Alcohol is not available in the parks of Disneyland or Walt Disney World).

The Disney Corporation also initially employed and trained thousands of designers and imagineers who then went on to form their own creative companies, taking with them the inscrutable standards demanded by Disney that are now characteristic of the American theming industry.

Ed highlights the increase in affordable air travel which now makes the US and the rest of the world more accessible and homogenised to themed guests. How many now fly to experience hyperreality as opposed to reality? Now that would be interesting! In 'theming' he also includes corporate visitor centres and 'brandlands' such as those operated by VW in Germany, where the VW buyer can get the full immersive VW experience including seeing their vehicle through the final stages of its production. "Theming is the whole area of adding an extra layer of satisfaction, entertainment and imagination," (to consumption).

For Disney enthusiast and consumer Lindsay Cave of Orchard Studios, the telling of the story is what can make a themed attraction succeed or fail. He first became fascinated

with controlled environments while studying for his BA thesis on Theories of Hyperreality and Simulcrum. He visited Mark Twain's 'home' town of Hannibal, Missouri, only to find the town had become so themed by the Tom Sawyer story that its original identity was non-existent.

Cave was disappointed by Hannibal's flawed attempt at storytelling by their pre-painted white picket fence - the painting of which takes place in Twain's Tom Sawyer. Yet when he visited Tom Sawyer's Island at The Magic Kingdom he found the hyperreality experts had paid sharp enough attention to detail to ensure the picket fence was half painted, complete with paint pot and brush lying beside it, ready to finish the story . . . the experience could take place at Walt Disney World - a hypothetical situation could become a potential reality!

Cave also points out that some of Disney's attractions are celebrating their 25 and 30 year anniversaries - testament he feels to quality 'experience' and remarkable endurance in still appealing to a



generation more likely to be reared on the adrenalsed, highly aggressive, stylised, fantasies engendered by mass-consumed computer games depicting the likes of Lara Croft and her drones.

Pub, club and restaurant theming applies the genre's central concepts in modified contexts. The rules and regulations of signage, association, replication and repetition are similar. One big difference is that the guest experience in any of these environments is likely to be considerably shorter (hours rather than days - potential minutes in a fast food joint!) than in a theme park.

Peter Salussolia is MD of Glendola Leisure, responsible for contemporary themed environments, including the Rainforest Café, Bar M, Waxy O'Connors and Bootsy Brogan's Irish pub/bars. The company's involvement in theming dates back 25 years, when they launched Flannigans, a series of Edwardian-themed fish and chip restaurants, before moving in to the lucrative area of disco pubs during the sixties and seventies.

Salussolia thinks the key to a successful theming operation is to contain it (their production of a given themed venue at one or two a year is comparatively slow), maintaining high quality and ensuring there's substance behind the theming, like supporting it with a good (as opposed to an average) food operation. "People are looking for something different - for an atmosphere, for something of a reasonable standard and as authentic as possible," he comments.

Glendola staff their 'Irish' venues with Irish personnel to create a "warm and friendly" vibe and to make the (simulated) 'experience' seem more real. He feels that the large PLCs rolling out themed venues by the hundred are the ones who are producing the formulaic, sterile environments and causing commentators to speculate that theme is on the rocks. He believes that humans will always seek good atmosphere when they go out to socialise, and therefore "Theming offers a great future to me" he concludes.

Designer Rob Matthews of Paragon (one of their clients is Bass Breweries' Vintage Inn themed pubs) feels the way forward for theming lies in the subtlety and enduring qualities of 'smart' theming with a broad, contemporary, modern base and room for progression. This is seen in its most hyperreal forms in restaurants like Yo Sushi (high tech, automated, noisy environment, fun presentation of minimalist food) or The Pharmacy (medical, fashionable, cool-place-to-be) and the stylishly-designed environments of Conran restaurants.

One person who firmly believes that the "steam has gone out of theme" is Tony Gottelier of the WWG partnership. Never mind All Bar One - bar humbug is where Gottelier thinks it's at! (And yes, he has been to Bar Humbug in Brixton, renowned for its excellent vegetarian and fish gastronomy). To him the Planet Hollywoods, TGI Fridays and Fashion Cafés lost the plot when they went global. He believes The Fashion Café failed because it was vacuous! "The novelty and the entertainment value goes out of it and it becomes banal," he declares. Even though Disney and Warners were among the first to open high street stores to extend their retail operations into more mainstream themed environments, he feels the numerous ersatz imitations as others attempt to grab a piece of the action results in a base level of poor quality for the consumer.

On a personal level, Gottelier can think of nothing more unappealing than going into a club in Airdrie that looks, feels and effectively is the same as one in Brighton, or eating a McDonalds in Beijing, Bangkok or Brussels - and buying the T-Shirt, rucksack, personal organiser, etc!

Paul Fowler is editor of the UK magazine D1. He reckons that older, community-based bars are still thriving, whilst the antiseptic high street pubs - of Rat and Trousers Leg, Slug and

Lettuce ilk - have themed themselves almost into oblivion. "Some large breweries have themed in such volume that their concepts have aged before they've finished opening all venues in the chain!" He observes a shift by the corporate club operators over the last 18 months toward producing less highly-stylised venues. These are intended to have greater longevity and avoid jumping to the obligatory three-year refurbishment cycle as the next interior design trend comes into vogue.

Fowler believes that more subtle pub and club theming reflects a greater sophistication in the tastes of nineties target audiences, one that still plays on providing them with what they can't get at home - the 'shared experience' part of the equation. Higher-tech audio and visual apparatus for home entertainment and more exotic food to cook or microwave is available, but we can't get the atmosphere, ambience and energy of being sardined into a buzzy, energised nightclub, bar or restaurant with the luxury of food, drink and dancing on tap - or even lap for that matter. This raises the interesting theory of whether table/lap dancing constitutes a themed and safe pseudo-sexual experience for the punter?

Theming doesn't necessarily have to mean that everything is the same. Designer Steve Howie originally started his career designing movies. Since his move into interiors, he has extreme themed club venues such as Venom in Reading (snakes, reptilia, vampire women) and Turnmills (retro, time warp fantasy, Jules Verne during the industrial revolution, elephant's bottoms) in London. He enjoys the imaginative freedom offered by cutting-edge design, but is very forthright about the desired end-result: "I design highly-themed interiors to make the client money," he states. He predicts that 'theming' in the UK is "headed down the toilet" and that an enormous recession is looming in which the first thing to be disposed of will be venue theming. Under these economic conditions, he believes theming will be regarded as superfluity and designs will then revert to a minimalist epoch.

The fact that no-one can agree on a universal prediction for the future of theming is no great surprise considering the diversity and application of the subject! Ironically, the same is true of 'postmodernism' - no-one is really quite sure what it is despite its prevalence as a late twentieth century buzz word. Established elements of postmodern culture are directly interchangeable with theming, including a nostalgia for the past (hugely popular in theming); fragmented society in search of social cohesion; mass production of fake art (frequently found in themed spaces); machine aesthetic optimism - the belief in a



Facing page, the \$1.4 billion Bellagio - the most recent addition to the Las Vegas strip. Inset, Yo Sushi in London - the world's largest conveyer-belt sushi bar. Above, The Rolling Stones Voodoo Lounge in London and inset, the recently opened F1 bar in Kent.

universal 'modern' style that is reproducible anywhere, transcending all cultures - axiomatic!

Postmodernism's greatest contemporary apologist is French philosopher and sociologist Jean Baudrillard. His incisive and original theories have produced a social, aesthetic and a conceptual framework within which theming can be understood, one where the borders between art and reality have collapsed to produce simulation and hyperreality - as brilliantly detailed in his work *The Perfect Crime (The death of reality)*, 1995.

One element that will perhaps ensure theming can retain a vitality is the fact that everyone will potentially encounter a unique 'experience' - within the same environment. This is similar to the psychological parameters of 'set' and 'setting', where individual personality attributes define why those taking the same dose of the same drug will encounter totally different experiences. Taking theming as a concept for the creation of dynamic hyperreal situations - good, bad or indifferent though these might be - the more society becomes fragmented and brutalised by its external or 'real' environment, the greater the demand will be for escapism and hyperreality.

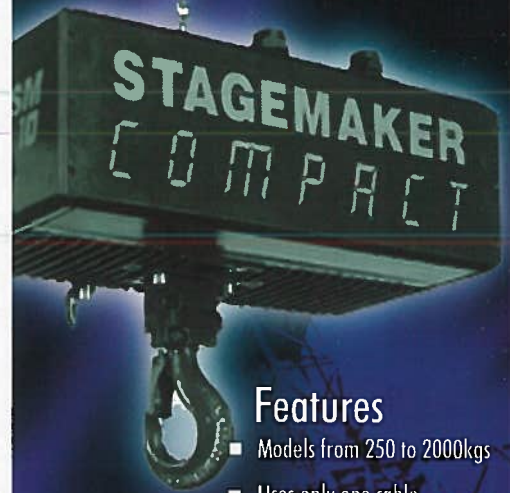
Religion has been replaced by hyperreality as an easily accessible, safe, clean, escape mechanism. Theming is part of that religious-style experience. It can gloss over the inherent 'sins' of humanity, make us smile and feel good - it's more fun than going on Prozac and an easier, more socially acceptable high than using illegal drugs! This will surely seal its future in some shape or form for a few years hence.

Jean Baudrillard writes: "The only response to the phantasmagoria of the worlds-beyond, the latest and most subtle of which is the artificial synthesis of this world, is the higher illusion of our world . . . What within truth is merely truth falls foul of illusion. What within truth exceeds truth is of the order of a higher illusion. Only what exceeds reality can go beyond the illusion of reality".

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Last year was not a good year for UB40 - their annus horribilis remarkable for a cancelled tour of the States, breaks with management and a recognition that things weren't working out. However, it seems like they've been that way before. Their first album, and the single that launched them came out in 1979/80. Since then, their career has had its fair share of peaks and troughs, but they're a resilient bunch and always seem to manage to pull the proverbial rabbit out of the hat. Since last autumn, they have returned to the play-lists - in the UK at least - and once again they've produced a couple of successful songs.

They occupy a unique position and although tinged with a heavy Dub label, they are, in fact, a very upbeat pop group who happen to use Reggae as their idiom. That's a special feature, it makes their music timeless, and 'Tyler' sounds as good today as when it was first released. I asked two 12-year old boys who'd been dragged along to Sheffield City Hall by their parents what they thought about it: "If it were released as a single now I'd buy it," volunteered one.

Unfortunately, there were also other occasions when they sat stupefied, their eyes rolled up into the back of their heads, and they looked bored to death. But there you go, out of 110 minutes of show time, only 100 minutes were classic pop hits from the UB40 canon. Junior attention span nil - unless that is, the product is top notch. Which, going off the subject completely for a moment, is why this review is a little shorter than normal. Never go to talk with a road crew when there's a football International on the telly, their attention is focused elsewhere.

When I met with Tony 'Beamer' Austin last year, he told me then that he'd worked up some great ideas on using lighting and video together for the next tour. Well, his opportunity didn't come around quite as quickly as he'd wanted, but he's there now. The trouble is, as the band rebuild their career, he won't have quite the full exposure for his ideas. "This tour moves around a fair bit in terms of venues," explained production manager Jerry Raymond Barker. "We've gone from sell-out shows at the Ahoy to tiny sub-thousand seaters in Munich." It's a similar story in the UK; two nights respectively at Wembley and the NEC, then Stoke Trentham Gardens and Sheffield City Hall.

Forewarned, Austin has conceived an A/B rig to accommodate the vast changes in stage size, and used the classic formula of single trusses to allow maximum flexibility with minimal disturbance to lamp positions. Austin's basic rig is three finger trusses, a mid and back cross-stage truss and plenty of lamps on the floor. For the big arenas, he has a projector truss with Barco 9200s from PSL projecting onto three screens. "Very effective," said Vari*Lite operator Andy Gibb. "All the images and footage he's put together are stored on a huge rack of hard drives (also from PSL), just so they can all be accessed in real-time." Although some of Austin's graphical images are presented here, it was not their full glory with just a pair of projectors for the 'B' rig, and intensity and definition was much reduced by being front-projected onto a simple back scrim.

Austin controls his rig of Pars, VL6s and Studio Colors from a Diamond III and keeps his looks simple and strong - a fair reflection of the melodic style. The opening song 'One in Ten' was typical - a two colour wash, white and pale amber, blacked out on the chorus breaks to be replaced by a chase



CONCERT/
TOURING



from the VL7s (operated by Gibb from a Mini Artisan) and heavy backlight strobing. 'Come back Darlin' employed a similar formula - deep sea greens and blues, using the VL7s at the same time, then switching to magenta for the breaks - it's one of the reasons why the projection helps him lift things. Abstracts on the scrim allow him another, more eye-catching form of animation on the back cloth, relieving him of the need to put too much activity into the rig.

Gerry Parchment looks after front-of-house. He's also the band's studio engineer, but is not intimidated by the transition from nailed down environment to live. "No, actually I like the ups and downs of a live show," he said. "It's not all performed in perfect sequence." The band have used SSE as their preferred PA supplier for years now, but this tour is the first time Parchment has used their Nexo Alpha system. "I do prefer it to the old EV MT

system and I find this system a bit truer. I like the speaker size for one thing - small and easy. I can EQ the system pretty flat and between the instruments and the system, I hear everything I want." Parchment is assisted by Charlie Bradley out front, the two men sharing duties across the XL4 and stretch.

Despite the Dub/reggae origins of the band, the mix is restrained; yes there are passages where effects predominate, but it's not a deluge and much of the time Ali Campbell's vocal is allowed to shine. There are constants - the two H3000s providing harmonising and chorus, with an SDX for a slight stereo delay to widen the vocals. What's fun to see and hear are the classic old studio tools. For

instance, the Bel delay, which Bradley can be seen dialling up and down throughout the evening (one of the few items in the rack that can't be MIDI'd up) and there's also a Dimension D for some dated harmonising on the brass section.

Some might see this as an indulgence, but it's part of their sound. For new punters and aficionados alike, that's something that should be nurtured and it's what defines UB40. That's not to say that the latest tools don't feature - a TC Gold Channel is inserted on Campbell's channel for some quick touches, 'vintage compressor' for one, though Bradley reported that it need watching, "there's a slight problem with headroom, you can hear it limit." Both men are sharp at their jobs, as Campbell playfully headed for the



side-fill, monitor man Gonzo was caught unawares, a loud squeal emanating from the stage, but from the PA all was muted. Despite the bottom-heavy emphasis, we were never submerged into a trough and asked to wallow in it. Parchment keeps his levels light, and doesn't lean on the master during the show. Altogether a pop band at their reggae best.

Come early summer, the band are off to Puerto Rico, the start of a brief tour of South America, followed by the US. However, expect to see them back in Europe at the occasional festival, they are after all the Beach Boys of reggae, the perfect band to sway around to after a long hot day in the sun.

The Best Disco in Town, or 'Slave Labour' as it's affectionately known by the unfortunate individuals on the tour, is a seventies disco-dance revival. Lasting only five days - all arenas, all back to backs - I have never before encountered a crew so road weary: 'only two more shows to go' was the refrain, and here we were on just the third show.

They sounded like they'd all been out with Motorhead on the 'No sleep till Hammersmith' tour. The only thing that seemed to keep them going were the performers and a grudging respect for a bunch of old has-beens who, despite passing years, can still turn it on: "They are all very good, real professionals," said Pete Russell at the front-of-house console. Why was this tour so onerous? Seven bands a night (Odyssey, The Real Thing, The Three Degrees, Rose Royce, Tavares, Sister Sledge, and KC & the Sunshine Band), that's why - a mini-festival on tour.

Promoter Tony Denton's premise is essentially sound. As a presentation this is great value, the punters love it, and economically it probably makes good sense. But it needs some help. You can't do back to backs with a show of this nature without proper production rehearsals. Without them, you get

what happened here which is show three and all the different acts still using sound checks to run through their paces. The sound crew are working from the moment the trucks tip until doors. They can then snatch a quick meal before the show starts half an hour later. "All this for no extra money," might be a familiar

refrain from Pete Russell, but in this instance, he has every right to want it. So too does Kevin Moran on monitors - show three and he was already in that care-free, demented state, where a pop star's fundament beckoned an SM58 insertion. Lighting was not without its problems either: LD Mikey Howard was presented with a job of work and made designs to cover all the artists with an even share of light. Then KC & The Sunshine Band intervened, their LD was given 'top billing' authority and redesigned the rig to suit his charges. Nothing wrong there - under normal circumstances this would be a routine decision, but this was not normal. So it was that Howard was obliged to light the first six acts with a less than suitable rig. One whole truss blocked off upstage behind a drape is fair enough, but when 48 of the 60 lamps on the front truss are focused so far upstage as to be useless for the opening acts, then you're in the twilight zone. As you'll see from the photos accompanying this article, six perfectly reasonable acts were not given a fair crack of the whip. Did Mr Denton watch the first show and see what was wrong? It's his name on the ticket.

As a nostalgia trip, Best Disco was not without some redeeming features. The quality of artists was excellent and whatever the intervening years may have done to their waistlines, it has diminished their voices not one jot. For Russell and Moran, the intensity of changeovers - 20 minutes per act, 30 seconds per change - is eased by two factors. The professionalism of the performers themselves: "They're old stagers," said Russell, with touching affection (he's big man, easily mistaken for an off-duty Hell's Angel, not prone to expressions of sensitivity). Secondly, they all sang in front of a house band assembled from a bunch of stalwart session men. "Generally, they're all dot readers," confirmed Russell, "but each act has their own MD, so we get some changes each time, a bass player here, a keyboardist there, even a drummer for one act." One keyboard player I noticed in particular seemed to think that this was his chance to be Keith Emerson, no doubt he'll get over it.

"I can offer no higher praise than to say Howard struggled manfully with a bastard rig for two hours. Like a blind man searching for a black cat in a darkened room, there was nothing any of us could do to help."

The core band does keep things relatively settled: "There are no major EQ changes between acts," said Russell, "but it's hard for Kevin (Moran) because all the different vocalists want different mixes." One imagines that by the time each of the acts is into its final number, Moran is probably just getting the mix to where they'd like it to be and the automation of an XL4 instead of the XL3 spec'd might just have helped a little. Would a Recall be the thing?

According to Russell, one of the more interesting comments from the performers has been a wry observation about not being able to hear what's in the room. A sure clue to the reason why they are all in such good vocal shape - simply because they all still work the lounge circuit. This is very much a straight performance with Russell adding just a touch of reverb and harmoniser to thicken: "It's just a blend, not an action sort of mix." The Nexo Alpha system receives light attention on the low end: "If you think about it seventies disco wasn't low, low end," said Russell. "Not like the severe 40Hz stuff you get from modern dance music."

By his own admission, what you hear instead, is the attack of kick drum, rather than its deeper resonance. The other pay-off from the lack of low-end emphasis was improved vocal clarity. Russell also enjoyed being able to hear the instruments "without having to do lots of EQ work to get the separation," this, in turn, giving the instruments a truer personality. He also pronounced the actual mixing job "really very pleasant, a lot different from what I usually do". It's not possible to print here what Moran had to say, but he did reinforce Russell's observations on the imbalance of the workload, and with some vigour.

Three straight trusses, a bunch of Studio Colors and Cyberlights "and more Pars than I've used in years," said Howard, a slight grin on his lips. The gear is LSDs and the Pars are Chrome. No surprises there then. A nice touch is a pair of Cybers still in their cases, lids off, propped at an angle each side of stage, like coffins with mutant inhabitants. Howard runs everything through an Avo Diamond III, though all the conventional lights' control lines are split so KC's LD can run their show from a Sapphire Rolacue. "He gave me a free hand to do what I liked with the moving lights for KC," said Howard. Put 'em back in



the truck springs to mind or am I being uncharitable? (The lighting crew, incidentally, refer to Howard as 'The Icing', as in 'the icing on the cake'. No prizes for guessing the cake).

Luckily, Howard has a few tools to work with, notably a Gold Lame back drape "flown in specially from the US," said crew chief Scotty Duig. (Strange, I could have sworn I saw something just like it out on M People a few months ago.)

Although Howard can only put the moving fixtures onto the drape with any control (the front truss Pars just look crazy) the gain he gets in backlight is worth it on the occasions he does so. Howard, unlike his compatriots in PA world, did get a chance to prepare using the Visualiser software down at Avolites,

"but I did find myself programming stuff at the first gig, right up to the break before KC came on."

Other interesting conundrums presented by the re-design included moving the mirrorball, "from the mid truss where I put it, to an out rig bar off the front truss," said Howard. Curiously, none of the lights on the rig could hit it in its new position, so a pair of ETC Source 4 profiles now also hang out-rigged from the front cord.

I can offer no higher praise than to say Howard struggled manfully with a bastard rig for two hours. Like a blind man searching for a black cat in a darkened room, there was nothing any of us could do to help.

So a tough time all round, and to cap it all, the bus squeaked. And Boris Yeltsin thinks he's got problems?

photos: Steve Moles

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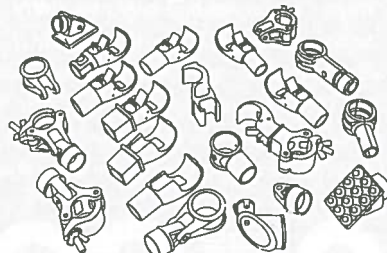


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Designers on Colour




 Totalisant 60 années de métier à eux deux, Christian Brean et Jacques Rouveyrollis, ces deux grands complices, ont brouillé à travers le monde pour apporter leur touché de la lumière à la Française. Ils ont ainsi éclairé des Opéras, des Ballets, des scènes de Music-Hall, des Evènements, du Sport-Spectacle, des pièces de Théâtre. Le monde de la Télévision comme celui de la Vidéo ne leur sont pas étrangers non plus. Au-delà des grandes productions pour lesquelles ils sont si souvent appelés, ils aiment apporter leur expérience à des spectacles peut être moins prestigieux mais tout aussi intéressants.



 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.



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.

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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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Journey Into Space-Time



*Ian Herbert enters
Time + Space, an
exhibition of design
for performance*

*covering
the last
four years*



Five years ago it was *Make Space!*, a brilliantly planned and executed show of four years' British stage design which successfully toured half a dozen UK venues and, in contracted form, went on to triumph at the 1995 Prague Quadriennale, the designers' Grand Prix. Now the SBTd, in conjunction with ABTT, ALD and even Equity, have come together to produce *Time + Space*.



THEATRE

The show comes in two formats, a 136-page full-colour book and an exhibition which was launched at the RCA's gallery next to the Albert Hall and ran in late March/early April. The two are related, but you gain a very different impression from the book, where in general contributions are limited to a single illustration and commentary, to that given by the show itself, where exhibitors have three dimensions to work in and a far greater possibility of display. Further, some designers made it for the show's deadline and not the book's, and possibly vice-versa: one of the show's most impressive displays is Gregory Smith's floats for the Barcelona Epiphany street parade, on which he was probably far too busy working to get them into the book.

It's risky to label the show in either form 'the best of British design'. Any collection which does not have entries from the likes of Maria Bjornson, Bob Crowley, Bill Dudley, John Gunter, John Napier, Mark Thompson, Joe Vanek and Anthony Ward has to seek a different description. There is no heavy theming by school, either, in the way of the celebrated Balls Pond Road exhibit which

carried off Prague's supreme award, the Golden Triga, in 1991. According to its organisers, the indefatigable Kate Burnett and Peter Ruthven Hall, *Time + Space* 'has taken some of the questions that designers ask themselves and their collaborators as "coat hangers" for a more conversational stroll through the exhibition.' These questions relate to the elements of time and space, but it would be unrealistic to take their exposition as more than this series of pegs. The eight sections into which it is divided can look pretty arbitrary on the floor, and the prefatory notes to each section in the book are its least satisfactory element, apart from the excuse they give for some fine full-page images.

If many of the big names are absent, there are still plenty represented, but the real virtue of *Time + Space* is the idea it gives of the strength in depth of British theatre design. The last four years have seen a reduction in the number of blockbuster musicals and even National Theatre biggies on which expensive talents can be displayed, but opera commissions continue, and the

*Main picture - Martyn Bainbridge's stylised setting for A Little Night Music
Inset, Juliet Shillingford's metallic Richard III*

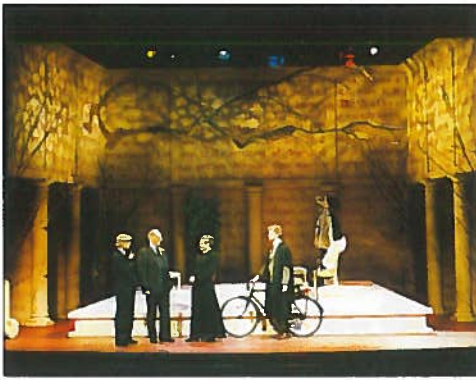
beleaguered regional theatre still has to put on shows, even if reduced to small casts on single sets. Turning the book's pages, or roaming the warren of the exhibit, is a constant reminder of both the very different kinds of work our designers at all levels are called upon to supply, and the very individual ways in which they seek to present and deliver it. Two quotes at random from the designers' own accounts of their work will help to point this up:

"The set design's aesthetic echoed the spirit of Russian Constructivism." (this of a Tartuffe!)

"The ultimate criteria were flexibility, accessibility, fun and the fact that it all had to fit inside a Luton van."

As I have already implied, your reactions to the book may be very different from your reactions to the exhibit. For a start, you're more inclined to read the commentary on the page; in the exhibition, you can miss some very helpful captioning simply because there's such a wealth of more direct visual stimulus to claim your attention. Then there's the impact of the actual production on stage, if you were lucky enough to see it.





Robin Don in the book shows a photo of his model for *The Storm* and a production shot from *The Winter Guest*. In the exhibit, he has the two models, neither of which is anywhere near as impressive as the finished products in the Almeida, flanked by two big production shots to prove it. On the other hand, Tom Piper's 'balsa wood' set for the RSC *Measure*



for *Measure* looks rather better in both photo and model, than the very schematic, rather dull reality I saw at the Barbican, and the same goes for his admittedly much more colourful *Bartholomew Fair*.

The full glory of Tim Hatley's total makeover of the Cottesloe into the artist's studio for *Stanley* is apparent when you peer into the peephole (if you notice it) in his mock-Spencer painting in the show; in the book there



is a charming, but modest, preliminary sketch.

And here's one big problem in the assessment of an event like *Time + Space*: your reaction to what you see may not be a fair one in relation to the final product. This is most acute in the case of the lighting designers, a few of whom have individual exhibits, while others are there by association with particular designs. Rare birds like Ian Sommerville, who design

lighting as well as sets, can make sure that the lighting element of their work gets its proper due - the stunning ramp for his *Andrea Chénier* isn't bad as set design, either. Others may find themselves literally overshadowed.

The ALD bravely tackled this question by organising a slide show, a quiet corner where a continuously revolving carousel projected the work of 20 of their members. Unfortunately, on the two occasions when I saw it in action the focus left much to be desired - unless it was a very sophisticated attempt to give an impression of lighting

states rather than tie them too closely to productions that the viewer probably hadn't seen. Of those who also exhibited individually, Simon Corder contented himself with some straightforward photographs of a couple of outdoor lighting commissions. Rick Fisher's own display of excellent production photographs gave the bonus of a chance for visitors to see some of Lez Brotherston's outstanding designs for the *Adventures in Motion Pictures Swan Lake* as lit. He also came very well out of Es Devlin's exhibit, where his treatment of her Rachel Whiteread-like translucent walls for the *Bush Love and Understanding* returned the compliment. Only Mark Jonathan produced an exhibit to compete in ambition with the set designers: he showed video clips, complete with soundtrack, alongside stills of an opera double bill for Ghent (where Lez Brotherston crops up again, as costume designer); Mark's other very finely displayed contribution, to Ruari Murchison designs for Birmingham Royal Ballet's *The Protecting Veil*, had the lanterns themselves acting as a significant part of the design. Full marks, too, to Fringe man Guy Hoare, for having the initiative to present his lighting for one of the many shows he has lit in Oxford.

The items that really stand out in *Time + Space* are those which demonstrate specific skills: costume drawing (Paul Brown, David Collis, Ann Curtis, Tim Goodchild, Robin Linklater, Nancy Surman), model making (Georgina Shorter and a score of others), scrapbooks (Christine Marfleet), storyboards (Jamie Vartan), superbly detailed working drawings (Peter Ruthven Hall) even decent production photography, which in my day-to-day search for visual records of theatre can sometimes seem a lost art.

One or two designers produced especially coherent exhibits, chief of them Liz Ascroft, whose promenade *Alice* is represented in the book by one sparky line drawing, but solidly occupies its own corner of the exhibit, where you can sit on the Caterpillar's stool and thumb through her book of costume designs while you listen to a sound commentary on the work. Emma Donovan, too, gives a site-specific feel to her presentation for a *Twelfth Night* in Exeter's Rougemont Gardens. Nettie Scriven pays serious attention to the show's theme in showing the method behind her delightful work for a couple of small-scale tours. Atlanta Duffy's striking presentation of a show for the Fringe Southwark Playhouse probably cost more to put together than the actual show budget. Sophie Jump manages both a video and an indication of costume for the site-specific *Trainstations*.

Louise Ann Wilson's wall for the installation *House* was another exhibit which took you thoroughly through the design process, even if it finally lacked a centre. Likewise, Paul Farnsworth's account of the London premiere of Sondheim's *Passion* gave a strong sense of the designer at work.

Connected series like Peter McKintosh's four models for *Method + Madness*, Martin Johns' three for the Keswick season (a real treat), or Jonathan Fensom's re-usable sets for Soho Theatre's *Five Plays, Four Weeks*, all of them reflecting the huge invention that can still be achieved on tiny budgets, made a big impression, as did the Northern Stage alcove which showcased several of their designers: Neil Murray's work for Alan Lyddiard's *Version of Twelfth Night*, in particular, made you wish you'd seen the show.

Then there were the minimalist exhibits, where one or two large

Top to bottom - Elroy Ashmore's representation of Oxford academia for *Shadowlands*

The brutal landscape of *The Winter Guest* designed by Sharman MacDonald

Neil Murray's industrial backdrop for *A Version of Twelfth Night*

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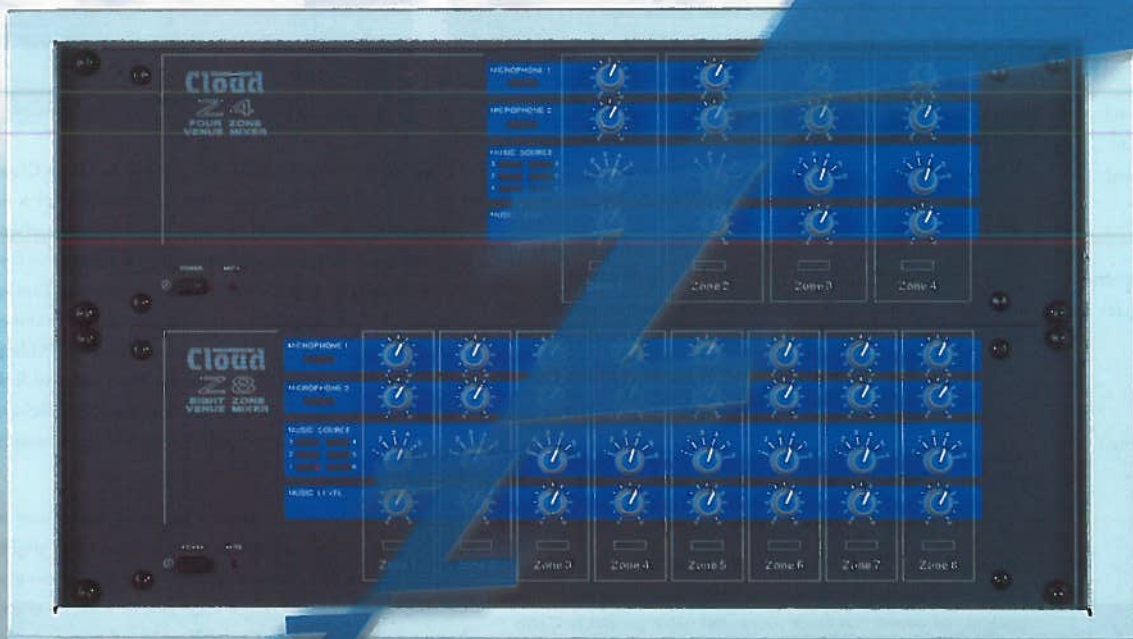
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Main picture - Mark Jonathan and Ruari Murchison's spiritual approach to *The Protecting Veil*

Top right - the French-influenced setting for *Andrea Cheniér* designed by Ian Sommerville

Right - Sophie Jump's platform piece for *Trainstations*



features were allowed to tell all the story: Gabriella Ingram staked everything on one striking costume for *Il Mondo della Luna*. Sue Ayers showed three jolly life-sized cardboard cut-outs for a *Threepenny Opera*.

All in all, our regional designers, such as Elroy Ashmore, Martin Bainbridge and Ken Harrison, some of whom would be proud to call themselves journeymen, come very well out of this show. There's a very impressive showing from the North, and Midlands designers like Patrick Connellan (with a fine classical *Julius Caesar* for Birmingham), Charles Cusick Smith (a metallic Leicester *Edward II*, beautifully lit by Jenny Cane) and Juliet Shillingford (at Leicester, too, with a modernistic *Richard III*) also stood out.

As evidence of the source of many designers' bread and butter there was a generous showing of pantomime designs, of which the most successful were probably Celia Perkins' costume sketches for an *Aladdin* that could have come straight out of the pages of the Beano, the most unlikely Ian Westbrook's borrowing of Norwich Cathedral as a setting for his finale. Alan Schofield, true journeyman, showed a panto, a generic touring set for *Me and My Girl*, and a Medieval Banquet full of bewildered Japanese tourists - all of them fitting their purpose admirably.

At the other extreme were the big guns: Alison Chitty gets four pages of the catalogue, deservedly, for a superb account of her *Turandot* at the Opera Bastille, while in the exhibit you can stay gobsmacked for hours in front of Stefanos Lazarides and Marie-Jean Lecca's big display. An *Ernani* from Richard Hudson, who also shows some of his *Lion King* set designs, also stands out, as does Hildegard Bechtler's ENO *Boris Godunov*. Ian MacNeil and Robert Innes Hopkins both show opera designs, while Robert Jones has the stunning golden *Henry VIII* he created for the RSC.

But the list of names is getting too long, and there are nearly 200 of them altogether. If you have the slightest chance to see this show as it tours over the coming year or two, do seize it. If not, I urge you at least to enjoy the book. 'Theatre design is a continuing education,' says its preface. 'It is also essentially practical and pragmatic: each physical aspect of a design is measurable and capable of being assessed.' You will enjoy making your own assessments.

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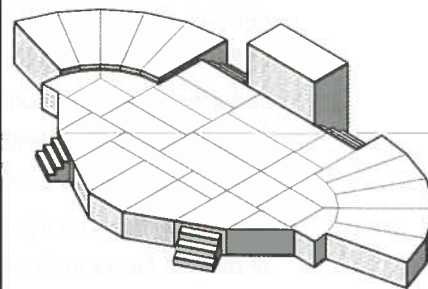
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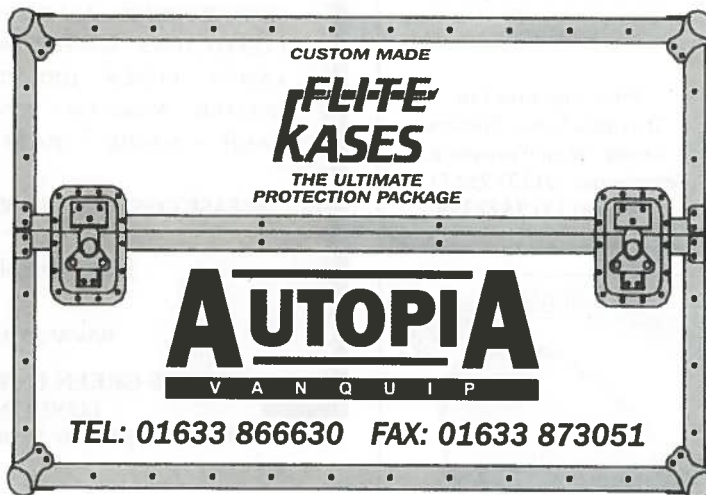
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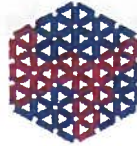
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In Profile...

L&SI Talks to the Industry Trend-setters

As MD of Gerriets Great Britain Limited, Stewart Crosbie sits at the helm of a company dedicated to the production and installation of drapes, star cloths, background fabrics and floor coverings for the theatrical and corporate markets.



His love of the theatre, and all things associated with it, began when he was 16 years of age: he was lucky enough to catch a performance of Rigoletto and found that his interest in the music led him to look more closely at the staging and setting elements of the production. Whilst training to be a technical teacher, he sought diversion in set design and construction and put his emerging talents to use for a local amateur operatic group.

achieving this was for Crosbie to stand centre-stage (not a good idea in itself anyway, but complicated by the fact that he would have to share his marker with the lead female singer.) A brave soul suggested that he hide up her skirts, so that's where

he ended up. During one particular performance, when the lead female was belting out the aria 'Where could he be' - referring to the hanged man, of course, - a deep booming Liverpudlian voice from the wings shouted "Up yer skirt missus!"

In the gaps between his theatre commitments, Crosbie was also working part-time for Brian Downie at Gerriets, as indeed was Ges Ashby, whom Crosbie first met when Ashby was stage manager at Dundee (Ashby later joined Crosbie at Gerriets as workshop manager).

Finding the 14 hour days, seven days a week rigours of theatre life too demanding, not least because Crosbie by now had a young family, he quit the theatre to work full time at Gerriets. His brief was to establish the company's new manufacturing division and such was his success that when Downie left in 1991, it seemed natural that Crosbie should take the chair as MD. He was soon to discover that running a business wasn't a holiday by comparison - "Of course, I'm back to the 14 hour days now," he quips.

As is often the case, he couldn't quite bring himself to make a clean break with the theatre and was constantly being approached to work on various productions. In 1990, he came 'out of hiding' and worked as technical consultant on *The Ship*, a production about the decline of the ship building industry. The performance took place in a large industrial warehouse in Glasgow -

large enough to accommodate the huge set. Using workers from the local labour exchange, the technical team set about building the skeleton of a 28 tonne ship with the engine room acting as the stage. At the end of the play the ship moved 200ft down a ramp disappearing into the far end of the shed leaving the stage area empty with only one actor remaining. Crosbie so enjoyed the technical challenge presented by the complex staging of *The Ship* that he vowed to work on one production a year - by 1998 he was working on four!

Far from distracting him from his main task at Gerriets, his continuing involvement with the theatre allowed him to positively influence the direction in which the company developed. Prior to his arrival, the emphasis had been very much on distribution and installation, but Crosbie was keen to develop the manufacturing side of the company. In so doing he has built a profitable business and the Gerriets name is known all over the world; the company has a strong presence in the Far East, particularly Japan, where the company has established a good rapport with its Japanese agent, Suzuzen Co.

When Disney brought its production of *Beauty and the Beast* to the Dominion Theatre in London's West End, Crosbie was one of two production managers working on the show. Eighteen months on, most of the original team are still working on the production which says something about Crosbie's ability to bring a team together.

His plans for the future of Gerriets include moving to larger premises to give the team the space to develop its work on specialist painted drapes, and, for himself, he would like to continue working in the theatre business in the faint hope that one day he and the critics will agree on the merits of one show! ■

L&SI talks to Stewart Crosbie, managing director of Gerriets Great Britain Ltd

remained for three years.

These were just some of the high profile stops along the way, but he served his apprenticeship in many places. In one of those glorious anecdotes that can only come from the theatre, Crosbie recounts the time he spent as ASM at The Alborough Theatre where a production of *The Weir of Hermiston* featured a scene where an actor hangs himself. The theatre didn't have a grid, so Crosbie had to hold the nylon rope used to suspend the actor. The only workable way of

Lighting & Sound NEWS

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