

# Lighting & Sound

INTERNATIONAL

May 1999

The Entertainment Technology Monthly

## Shanghai Opera

- Shanghai's state-of-the-art Grand Theatre

## Ministry of Sound

- Birmingham's new branded bar

## Classic Touches

- Toto and James Last

## Dead Monkey in the Fridge

- Soul at Brixton's Fridge club

## Technical Talk

- Liverpool's Further Education Centre

## Mamma Mia!

- the latest slice of seventies revival

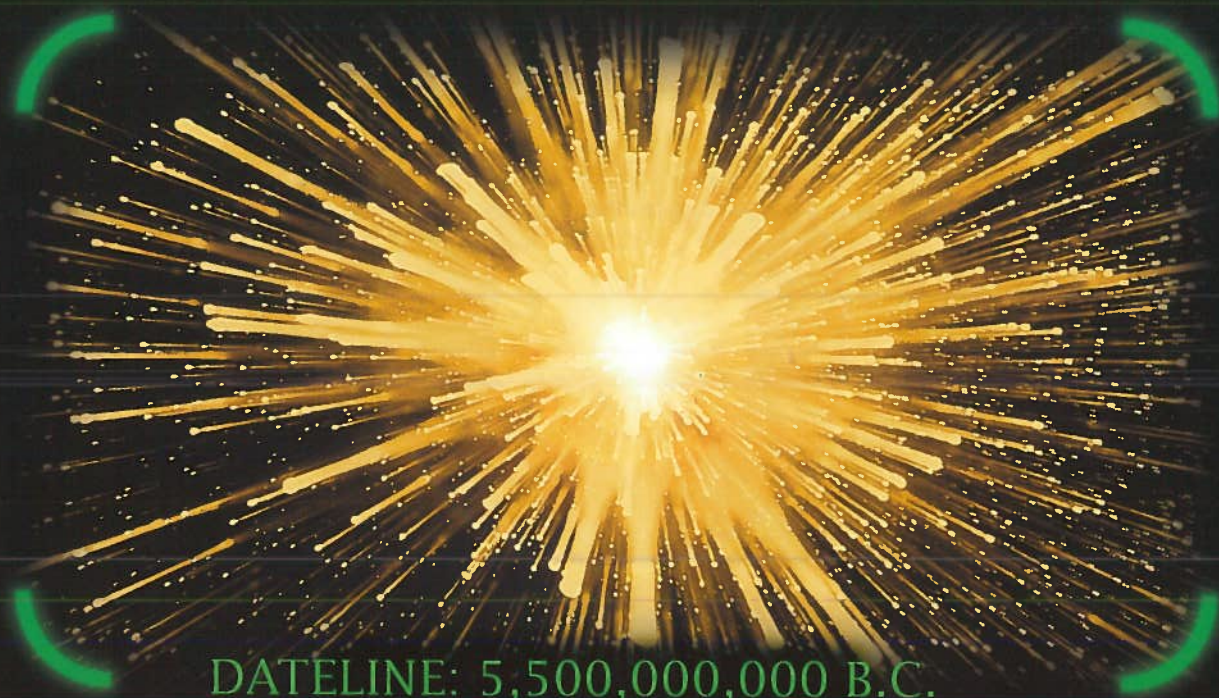
## New High for Shanghai

- PLASA Presents Light & Sound Shanghai

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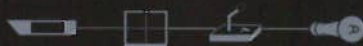
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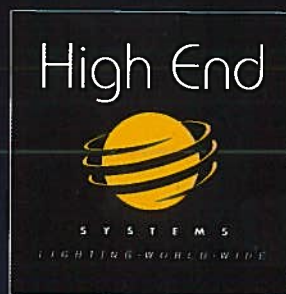
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# Lighting & Sound INTERNATIONAL

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EDITOR Ruth Rossington - [ruth@plasa.org](mailto:ruth@plasa.org)  
DEPUTY EDITOR Lee Baldock - [lee@plasa.org](mailto:lee@plasa.org)  
ASSOCIATE EDITOR Tony Gottelier  
ADVERTISEMENT MANAGER Barry Howse - [barry@plasa.org](mailto:barry@plasa.org)  
PRODUCTION MANAGER Nicola Evenden - [nicola@plasa.org](mailto:nicola@plasa.org)  
INTERNET MANAGER Jo Boyd - [jo@plasa.org](mailto:jo@plasa.org)  
SUBSCRIPTIONS Sheila Bartholomew - [sheila@plasa.org](mailto:sheila@plasa.org)  
ADVERTISING CO-ORDINATOR Jane Cockburn - [jane@plasa.org](mailto:jane@plasa.org)

Regular Contributors:  
Steve Moles, Rob Halliday, Louise Stickland, Ross Brown,  
John Watt, Ian Herbert, Jacqueline Molloy.

Published from the PLASA office: 38 St Leonards Road,  
Eastbourne, East Sussex BN21 3UT England.  
Telephone: +44 (1323) 642639 Fax: +44 (1323) 646905  
Internet: <http://www.plasa.org>

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## High End & Flying Pig Merge

**Automated lighting manufacturer High End Systems Inc has announced the preliminary details of a merger with Flying Pig Systems Ltd. Flying Pig is known throughout the professional lighting industry as the manufacturer of the Wholehog control console series.**

As part of the merger, High End Systems will become the exclusive worldwide distributor of the Wholehog range. Customer service support for Flying Pig products will also be accommodated through HES. According to Flying Pig's Nils Thorjussen: "Everyone at High End and Flying Pig is very excited about this merger and the opportunities it creates. This alliance makes strong strategic sense and will accelerate development of cutting-edge products."

According to Thorjussen, while the merger will have a significant impact on future product development, not much is likely to change for Wholehog II users and customers in the short term. Consoles will still be available from the same dealers whilst technical support functions will be handled directly by FPS.

AC Lighting, the exclusive distributor of Wholehog products prior to the merger, had made no comment on the developments at the time of going to press.



## VLPS London Rationalises

**Further developments have been announced in the ongoing restructuring of Vari-Lite's European VLPS operation.**

Amid the many rumours circulating the industry, L&SI can confirm that Brian Croft, formerly managing director of Vari-Lite Europe has now taken on the role of chairman, and will be working more closely with Rusty Brutsch ; Bert De Haes has now become managing director of the overall European operation; David March is now general manager of VLPS London, reporting directly to Bert De Haes, as does Jan Van Malder in Brussels, Jan Lambrecht in Paris, Adrian Bell in Dubai, and Sonia Sw ard for the

Stockholm and Madrid operations. Industry veteran Guy Forrester has returned to the company and will take on the role of operations manager in the UK.

It is thought that up to a dozen staff have been laid off as part of the process, but no further redundancies are anticipated. Vari-Lite has been quick to reassure that the moves are part of the ongoing merging of the London Vari-Lite operation with that of Theatre Projects/CPL to create VLPS London. London has also traditionally been the administrative centre of Vari-Lite's European operations, and that responsibility has now been shifted to Brussels.

## ESTA and PLASA to Investigate Toxicity of Fogs

**The toxicity of theatrical fogs has long been an issue and rumours continue to circulate about the safety of fogs, with some legal cases presently underway.**

Research carried out by PLASA and ESTA has concluded that the chemicals used in fog machines appear to be non-toxic in their liquid form in the concentrations used. The real issue is what irritant or harmful effect might be attributed to the fogs when the chemicals exist in an aerosol. The ESTA Fog and Smoke Working Group, as part of its Technical Standards Program, has now commissioned an investigation into the safety of fogs in terms of the chemicals involved and the way in which they are used in our industry. This work, as the first part of a larger project aims to investigate whether sufficient data is available to set exposure limits or define levels at which theatrical fogs are safe for performers and technical staff.

Assuming the results of the first investigation are positive, the second would go on to set realistic exposure limits for our industry. Because of the importance of this issue to PLASA's membership, the Association has agreed to provide a significant financial contribution towards the first part of the study.

**Cue-Patch provides soft-patch, backup and show controller in one box**

When the curtain goes up, Cue-Patch is the control room product upon which you can rely. Cue-Patch supports two DMX512 universes providing 1024 channel input and output. Key operating modes are:

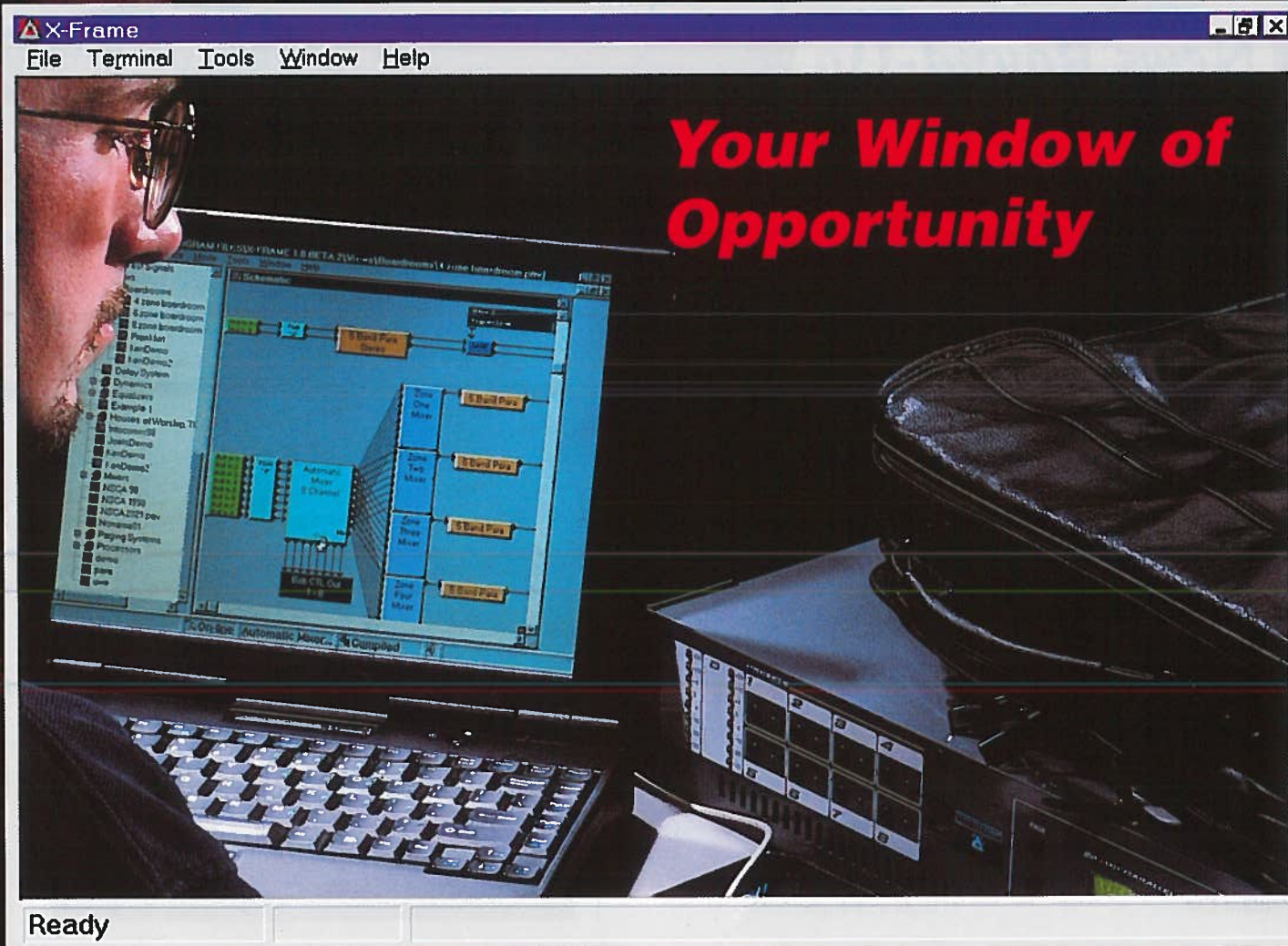
**Soft-Patch:** Use either the front panel keypad and lcd or the off-line PC editor to enter the patch information. Patch any number of output channels to the lighting console or merge two consoles together.

**Show Controller:** Cue-Patch can record 400 level cues and 5000 timed playback steps. Programming is performed either by numeric entry (1 thru 50 @ 75%), snapshot of received data or by spreadsheet using a PC. Playback may be triggered by front panel macro keys or by remote contact closures. Cue-Patch can also fade to and from the DMX512 input allowing integration with any existing lighting control system.

**Show Backup:** Cue-Patch can detect failure of received DMX512 and automatically fade to a user programmed cue or sequence.

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As part of the transaction, Wembley Stadium Ltd will be renamed Wembley (London) Ltd.

Wembley Arena and Wembley Conference and Exhibition Centre will continue to operate as a Division of Wembley (London) Ltd. Wembley (London) Ltd will work closely with its sister company Wembley

## Wembley Stadium Sold

**Ownership of Wembley Stadium has been officially transferred to the English National Stadium Development Company (ENSDC). The sale was announced following the shareholders' meeting with the final agreement of the contract between ENSDC and Wembley Stadium Ltd.**

International Ltd, which provides state-of-the-art box office services and ticketing systems.

The stadium will continue to operate and host events throughout the whole of 1999 and into the year 2000, until planning approval has been obtained. Work on the Stadium is not expected to begin until August 2000.

## Obie Co and Westsun Merge

**California-based production lighting suppliers The Obie Company and Winnipeg-based technical support company Westsun International have merged.**

The new operation will be based in Winnipeg, but The Obie Company will continue to do business under its own name. Dave Oberman will continue as president and CEO whilst Westsun president and COO Phil Bernard will oversee the merger.

## AES' Next Century

**The Audio Engineering Society is holding a two-day conference 'Audio - the Second Century' on Monday 7th and Tuesday 8th June at Church House in Westminster, London.**

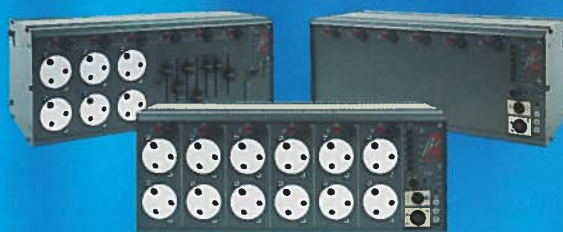
The conference will provide a guide to the effective handling of multi-channel and low bit-rate audio combined with coverage of the latest DSP and computer technology and standards. For a full programme, telephone +44 1628 663725 or e-mail [uk@aes.org](mailto:uk@aes.org).

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## Obsessive Behaviour

**Club Obsession is the latest addition to Durban's burgeoning nightlife.**

In terms of size, the club is no baby, accommodating up to 3,000 people, who can flit between the three fully equipped bars and main dance floor. When hunger sets in they can head for either the restaurant or a take-away and before too long a sports bar will also form part of the complex. In what must be a first for any club in Kwa-Zulu Natal, the dance floor features a glass walkway which created some interesting possibilities in terms of lighting and there are also a series of 3D artistic designs on the walls which are painted with ultra-violet reflective paint. Large areas of the walls are covered with mirrors, which have the Obsession logo sand-blasted onto them. The technical brief was understandably for a lighting and sound rig of international standard. The lighting element fell to the Electrosonic Kwa-Zulu Natal team and Club Obsession represents the first major nightclub installation to be carried out by them.



They were given the go-ahead in early December last year, with the venue marked for opening on the 18th of December 1998. "With the club still under renovation, we had to fit ourselves into their schedule to install the lighting rigs, run cables, and programme the lights," explained Electrosonic's Gerrie Coetzee.

The lighting rig features Martin Pro 400 colour changers, Pro 518 RoboScans, a single Martin Centrepiece, a pair of Magic Moons and Punishers, four Starflash Twin Cones and Tri-cones, all managed by a 3032 Controller. Atmosphere comes courtesy of a pair of Martin Pro 2000 smoke machines. A pair of Martin Pro 400 colour changers have been installed beneath

the glass floor, which shine up through the floor, effectively creating the illusion of the glass changing colour.

According to Vallen Rungasamy of Electrosonic KZN: "The installation of a lighting rig using intelligent lighting fixtures was not straightforward. The decor inside the club is rather extravagant, and we had to co-ordinate our work with that of the other contractors on site. This meant that we could not install any of our lights which were going underneath the glass walkway until the walkway was installed and safety tested."

The sound installation was handled by Rene Pennington of the Audio Distribution Company in Durban. A combination of Nexo PS15P and LS 1200 sub bass loudspeakers and Cerwin Vega V15B loudspeakers form the mainstay of the system. Amplification is provided by Crown MA 3600, MR 2400 and CE 1000 amplifiers, running in tandem with a Sabine ADF4000 DSP workstation. A Numark DJ mixer and CD player, Technics turntables and Shure mics complete the line-up.

Club Obsession must now rank as Durban's premier club, and without doubt one of the best in the whole of Kwa-Zulu Natal.

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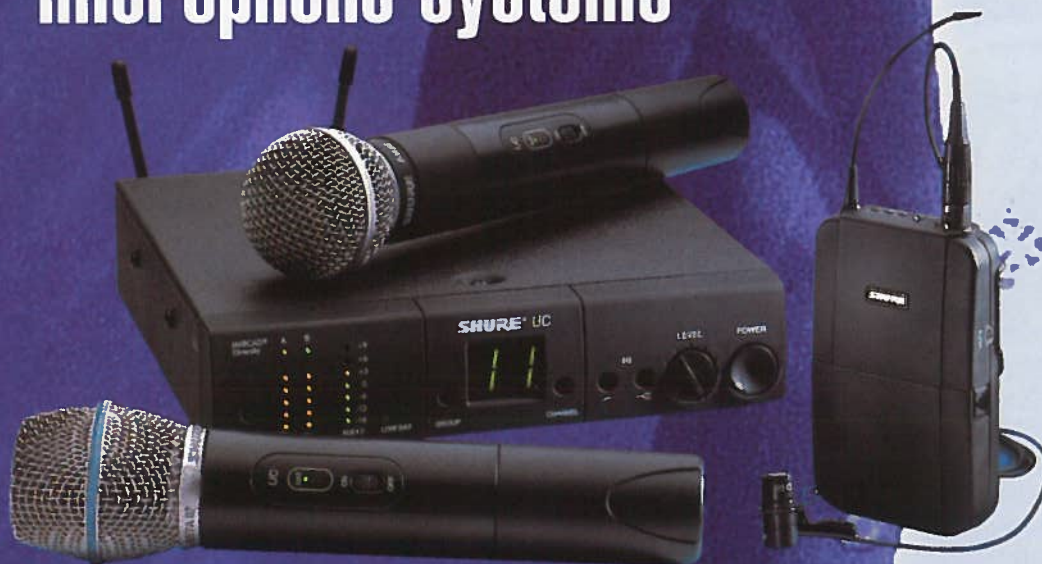


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## Designers on Colour




 Totalisant 60 années de métier à eux deux, Christian Brean et Jacques Rouveyrollis, ces deux grands complices, ont boursingué a 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 Vania Vanni, assumendone il ruolo nel 1991.

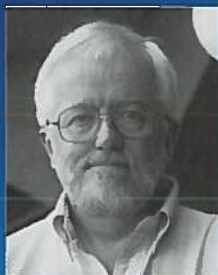


 Max Keller hat sich in Deutschland stark für den Beruf des Lichtgestalters eingesetzt. Mit seiner Bildersprache, die sich vor allem in einer Kombination

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.



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."



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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## Theatrical London sets the Scene

Have you ever explored the Victorian stage machinery at the historic Drury Lane Theatre, or seen the innovative drum-revolve at the National? Have you seen the exciting new Millennium Dome? Do this and more with



**Theatrical London: Setting the Scene, an insider's view of entertainment venues in London.**

Scheduled for September 8th - 10th 1999, immediately following the 1999 PLASA Show, Theatrical London: Setting The Scene offers participants the chance to get backstage and see the technology at work, as well as meet the designers and technical teams that make it all possible. Conversations are currently underway with various venues to ensure that the event will be as exciting and informative as possible. The following is a proposed schedule of events:

**Wednesday September 8 (evening):** dinner followed by a West End play or musical and a backstage tour of the theatre, plus the opportunity to meet members of the production's technical team.

**Thursday September 9:** meet for breakfast and a tour of the 19th century Drury Lane Theatre followed by a tour of the newly-renovated Covent Garden Opera House, just months before its official re-opening;

lunch will be aboard a boat on the River Thames en route to Greenwich for a visit to the Millennium Dome; the boat will return to the Festival Pier on the South Bank by the National Theatre for dinner, a performance and backstage tour.

**Friday September 10:** farewell breakfast, complete with a map of additional venues of interest, and a list of local entertainment design and technology companies that will welcome visitors throughout the day.

The fee for Theatrical London: Setting The Scene is £295 for the full package, including the performance of a West End musical and backstage tour on Wednesday evening, or, for those who may still be busy at the show on Wednesday evening, just £225 for all day Thursday and Friday breakfast.

Sponsored by PLASA, ESTA and the World-ETF, the deadline for registration is July 15th 1999. For additional information call PLASA in the UK on +44 1323 410335, or ESTA in the US on +1 212 244 1505. Alternatively, details can be found on the web at [www.plasa.org](http://www.plasa.org).

## Temporary Structure Safety

The Institution of Structural Engineers has published the second edition of its guidance document *Temporary demountable structures: Guidance on procurement, design and use*. The Guide has been prepared by an expert group chaired by Dr Sam Thorburn OBE (past-president of the Institution) with representatives of government, industry, and the Institutions of Structural and of Civil Engineers.

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## People News

Further to the purchase of Irideon by ETC late last year, the company has appointed **Stephen Phillips** as European architectural marketing manager. Previously international marketing manager with Irideon Inc, as part of Vari-Lite International, Phillips has an extensive knowledge of the European architectural lighting market.



Stephen Phillips

Another ETC Europe appointment is that of **Tim Stokholm** as sales and marketing director. Stokholm, who will be based at the company's London office, joined ETC in 1997 from Copenhagen-based Bico Professional, ETC's Danish distributor. He takes on responsibility for marketing and sales in Europe, Africa and the Middle East.



Tim Stokholm

Having previously worked for Pulsar, **Sabrina Marengi** has been welcomed back as assistant marketing manager.

**Peter Eardley**, a member of Neutrik (UK) Ltd's board since 1995, is to step down at the end of June. Eardley Electronics Ltd was appointed as a

Neutrik agent for the UK in 1976, which eventually led to the formation of a joint venture company, Neutrik Marketing Ltd.

Following two years of growth Total Fabrications Ltd has welcomed **Gary White** into the fold as the company's new head of sales. White comes from a background in performance and engineering-related fields, most recently working for Unusual Rigging.

Arbiter has appointed **Santi Arribas** in the role of JBL Professional Technical Support. Arribas studied at the School of Audio Engineering and worked as a studio and live engineer with artists such as Jamiroquai, Pete Tong and Boy George. His previous three years were spent as sound engineer/technical manager for the Ministry of Sound.

Elstree-based Illumination have appointed **Jaime Fletcher** as lighting designer, to work mainly in the corporate event market. Fletcher has been involved with lighting since 1989 when he started work at The Fringe nightclub in Brixton. He has extensive experience in both film/TV and touring lighting, and has worked with Spot Co for the past six years.

## Five to Try

If you're surfing the net you may like to check out the following web sites

5

1. If you want to find a restaurant, bar, nightclub or cyber cafe anywhere in the world, use Blanch  
[www.heyblanch.com](http://www.heyblanch.com)
  2. You can now configure and order a computer, choosing from hundreds of options  
[www.gw2k.co.uk](http://www.gw2k.co.uk)
  3. Absolute Vodka is a site dedicated to the history of DJs, technology and dance music  
[www.absolutvodka.com/](http://www.absolutvodka.com/)
  4. Ever lost for words when faced with annoying people - try the random insult generator  
[www.xe.com/htbln/nph-abuse](http://www.xe.com/htbln/nph-abuse)
  5. Flight information, seat availability etc  
[www.flightbookers.co.uk](http://www.flightbookers.co.uk)
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## New Products from



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### Par 56 Outdoor lantern

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### New:-

### 52cm Folding Supertruss

The Supertruss range has been extended. This new truss supersedes the old GP Folding truss. This truss combines the most compact dimensions for storage with a typical loading capacity of 2000 kg's uniformly distributed on a 12 metre span.

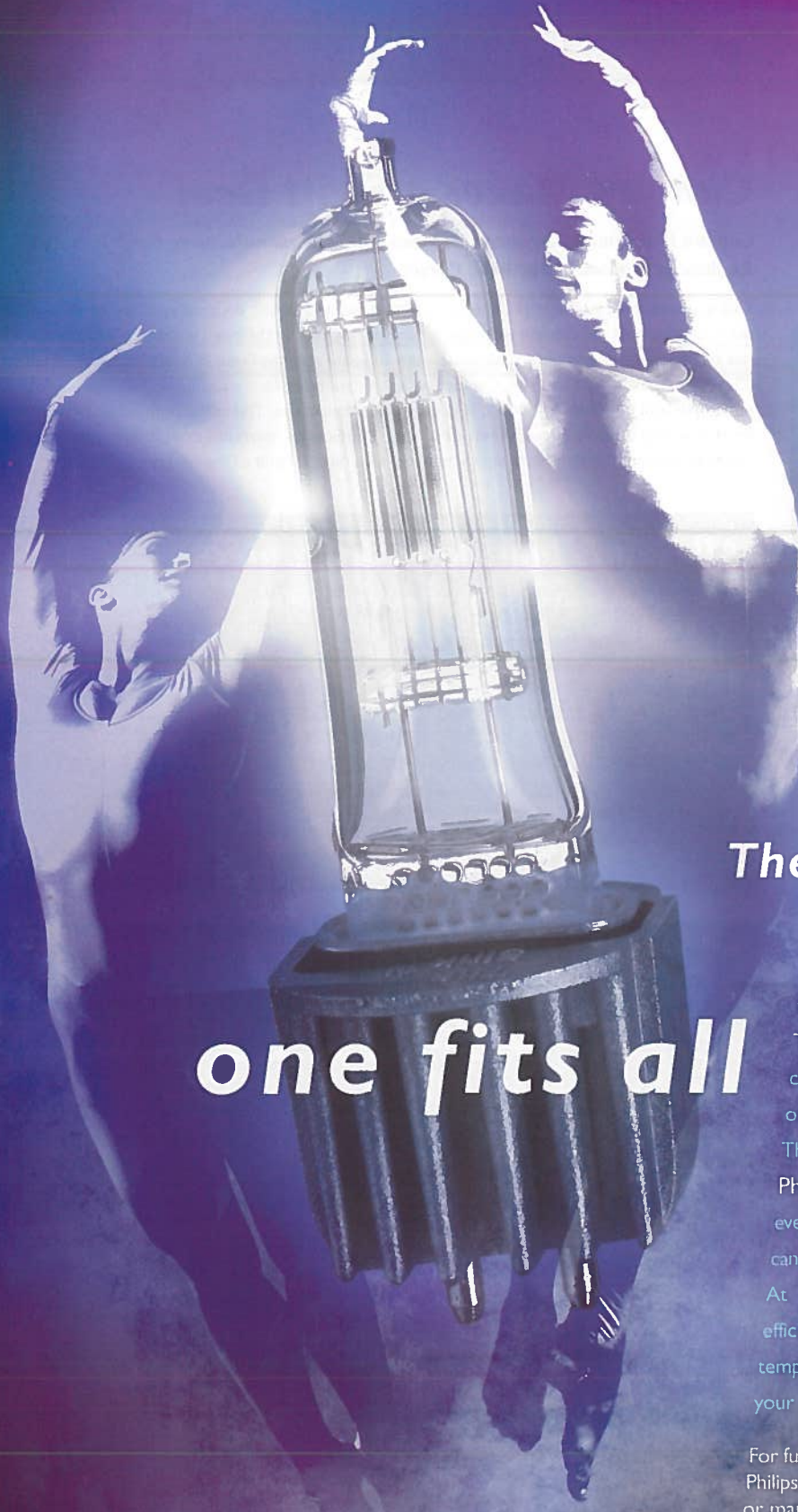
### New extended range:-

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or [martin.christidis@cro.lighting.philips.com](mailto:martin.christidis@cro.lighting.philips.com)



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## Metro on the Move



Expansion has forced Metro Audio, manufacturers of stage management and DSP networking devices, to relocate from their Guildford premises to a new industrial unit in Goldalming, Surrey.

The company can now be contacted at Unit 23, Woodside Park, Catteshall Lane, Goldalming, Surrey, GU7 1LG. Tel: +44 1483 419681

Pictured above are Metro Audio's Steve Gunn (left) and Nigel Cunningham at the new premises.

## Canford Makes a Swift Deal

Canford have bought the specialist video connector manufacturer, Swift Precision Engineering, based in Portland, Dorset.

This acquisition complements Canford's existing manufacturing division and further emphasises their commitment to both the video sector and to increasing their self-manufactured product. Swift has been a supplier to Canford for more than 10 years and has been in business for 13, employing 25 people at their Portland site. Canford recently expanded their existing manufacturing to encompass an additional 12,000sq.ft at their Washington site. The company's range of over 14,000 products, sold directly through their catalogue 'The Source', currently contains approaching 1,500 self-manufactured lines. This is set to increase as a direct result of the purchase of Swift.

## All Saints touring with Trantecs

After auditioning many leading radio systems in his quest to get the best vocal sound for All Saints' first headlining tour, the band's production manager, Steve Levitt, has alighted on the award-winning Trantec S5000 UHF synthesised system.

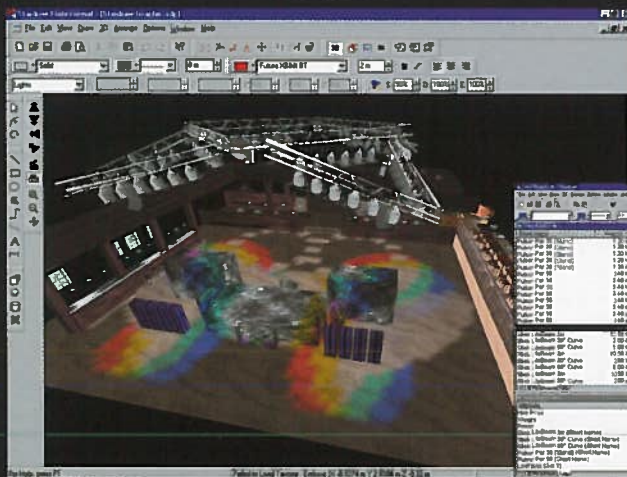
At Levitt's request, Trantec were happy to modify the systems, which were supplied with the antennae distribution system and rack-mount kit, and which will run on Channel 69. They have bypassed the on-off switch to obviate the potential problem of straying fingers accidentally turning off the mics. Levitt's decision was fomented after taking an S5000 out on field trials during the current tour by Steps, who are also using Trantec's SIEM 5000 in-ears. All Saints' UK tour of UK and Ireland kicked off in Rhyl on April 11, and will move from theatre to arena-sized venues before finishing later this month.

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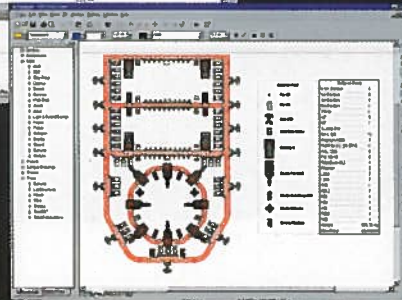
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10000005	10000005	5	200.00	1000.00
10000006	10000006	6	166.67	1000.00
10000007	10000007	7	142.86	1000.00
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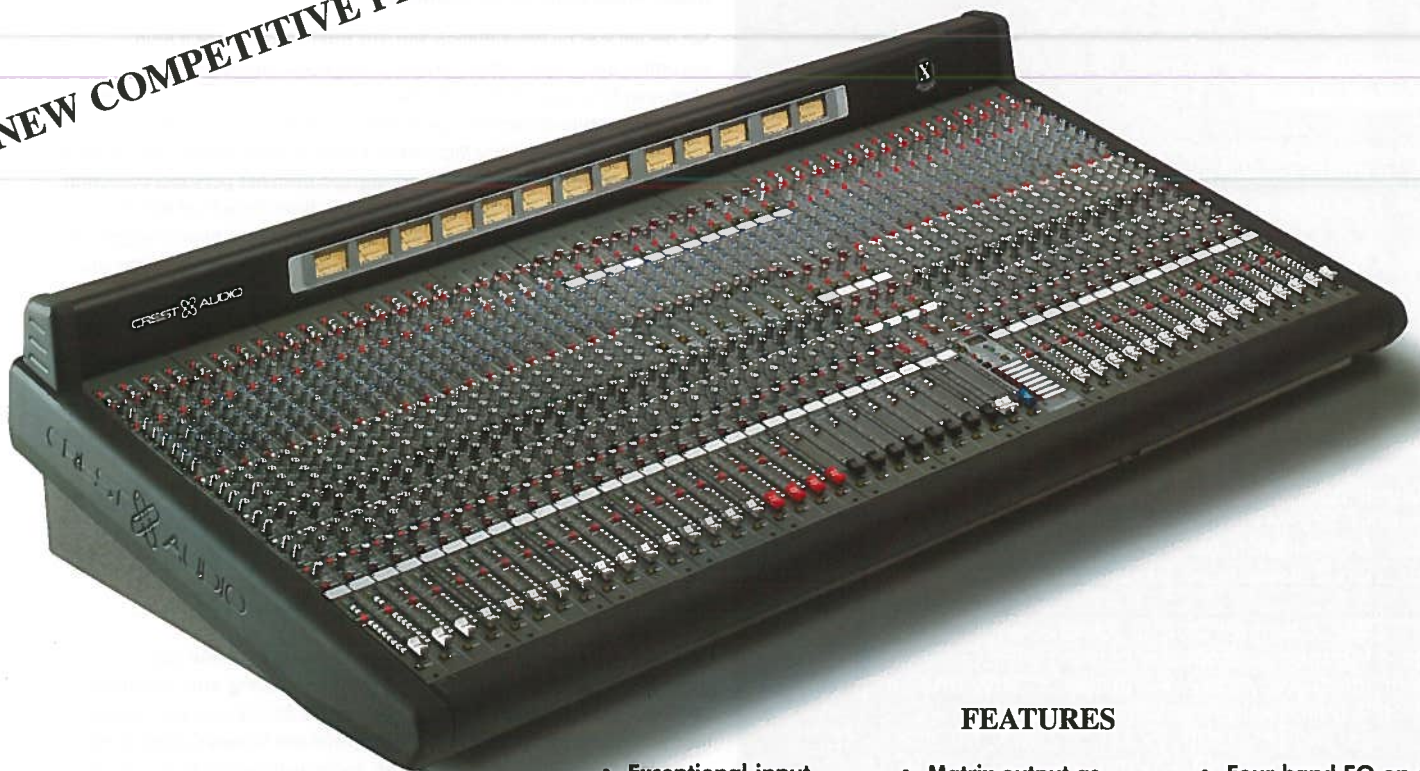
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(\*) SMPTE Synchronisation requires add-on DMX Input/SMPTE ISA card

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## News Round-Up



## Linda McCartney Tribute

London's Royal Albert Hall was the venue for the recent tribute to the life and work of Linda McCartney on the first anniversary of her death. The event was hosted by comedian Eddie Izzard and yielded an impressive array of artists including George Michael, Heather Small, Paul McCartney, Elvis Costello, Tom Jones, Neil Finn and Chrissie Hynde whose band, The Pretenders, were the house musicians for the evening.

Set design was by Peter Bingemann. His brief was to make it bold, uncomplicated, highly effective and to use Linda McCartney's photographic images to form the basis of the show's visuality. The set consisted simply of five front projection screens of varying sizes. Approximately 80 of Linda McCartney's photographs appeared on screen, covering diverse subject matter and sourced from her personal collection. Production Arts Europe provided projection from three Pani BP2.5 Compact and two Pani BP4 Compacts, all with AMD-32 Slidechangers. All five were rigged from a front truss trimmed extremely high for sight line purposes. This necessitated the projectors having to hit the screens at a challengingly steep 45° angle, with all artwork keystone corrected accordingly to deal with this.

Light & Sound Design provided the lighting with lighting director Eugene O'Connor making good use of the existing RAH trusses, adding a 20ft extension each end of those furthest upstage to mask the Hall's organ. In front of these sat the five projection screens. The main lighting rig comprised 34 LSD Icons and 37 High End Studio Colors, together with a handful of ETC Source Fours and Pars, plus 10 sets of ACLs. LSD contrived a DMX link to the RAH house system to access uplighters on the cupola pillars to handle the decorative work on the roof. All the lighting equipment was run from an Icon board.

Audio was supplied by Concert Sound, who fielded an EAW system consisting of KF850s, 853s, and 855 underhangs, along with SB850 and SB1000 subs. Two Midas XL4s took care of the 80-channel mix front-of-house, with engineers Paul 'Pablo' Boothroyd and Robert Collins at the controls. Monitoring, overseen by John Roden with two XL3s, was from Concert Sound's own cabinets, while Shure sponsored the event with the provision of UHF radio mics and a number of in-ear systems.

## H<sub>2</sub>O Is In

CITC have launched The Haze Max hazer offering a new way of creating a long-lasting, even, dry haze from a water-based fluid without using any glycols. The Haze Max will fill a 500 seat auditorium in 15 minutes and comes with a 25ft remote control and is DMX-controllable.

CITC (US): +1 425 776 4950

## Triple E Appoint Stockists

For the first time in its 14-year history, track and automation specialist Triple E has appointed a UK network of stockists, including AJS, Blacklight, FHS, Lancelyn Theatre Supplies and Stage Electrics.

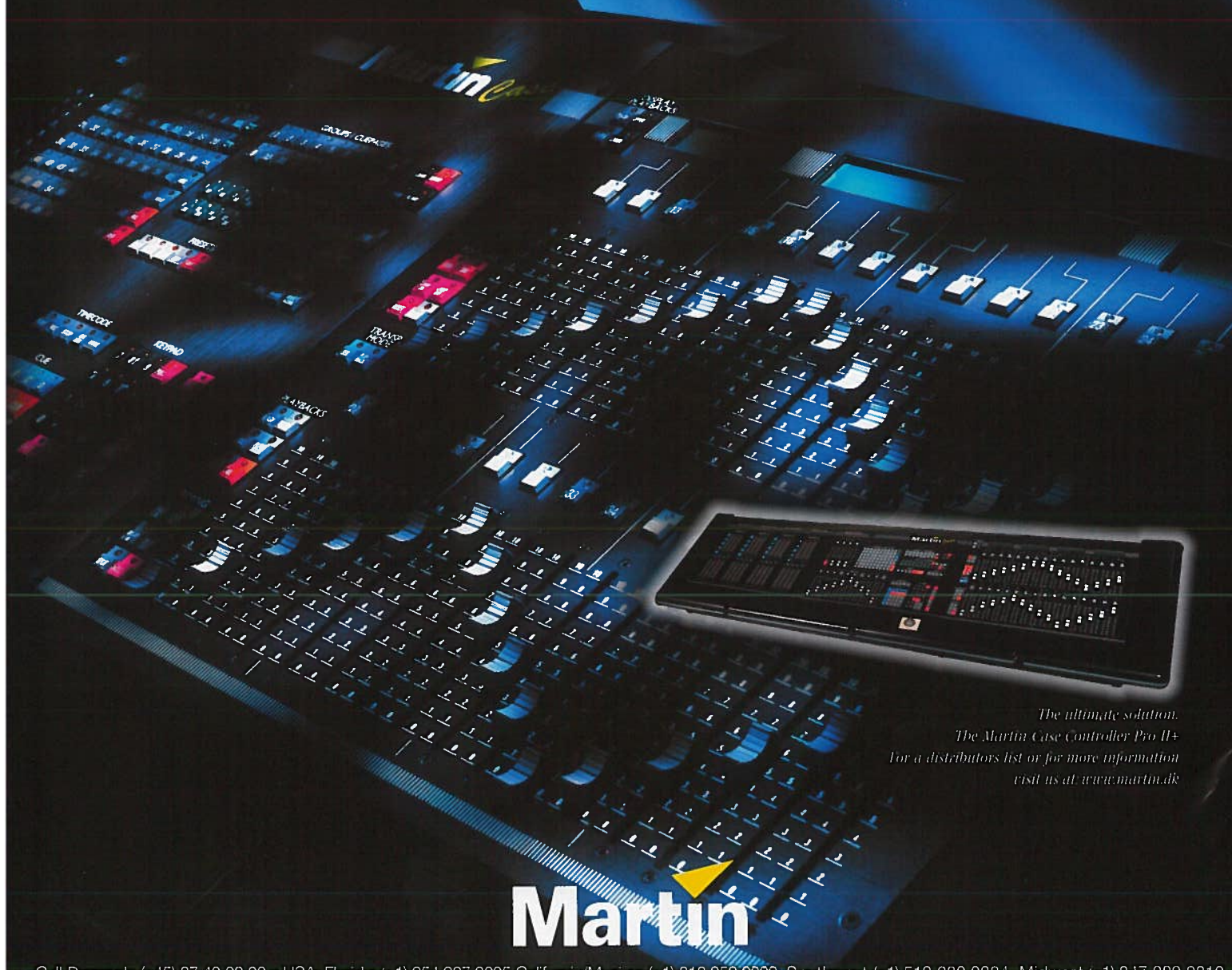
Managing director David Edelstein commented: "We recognise the growing importance of the sales and rental market for our standard products, and this move enables us to proactively promote the UniTrack, UniRail, UniTruss and powered hoist systems."

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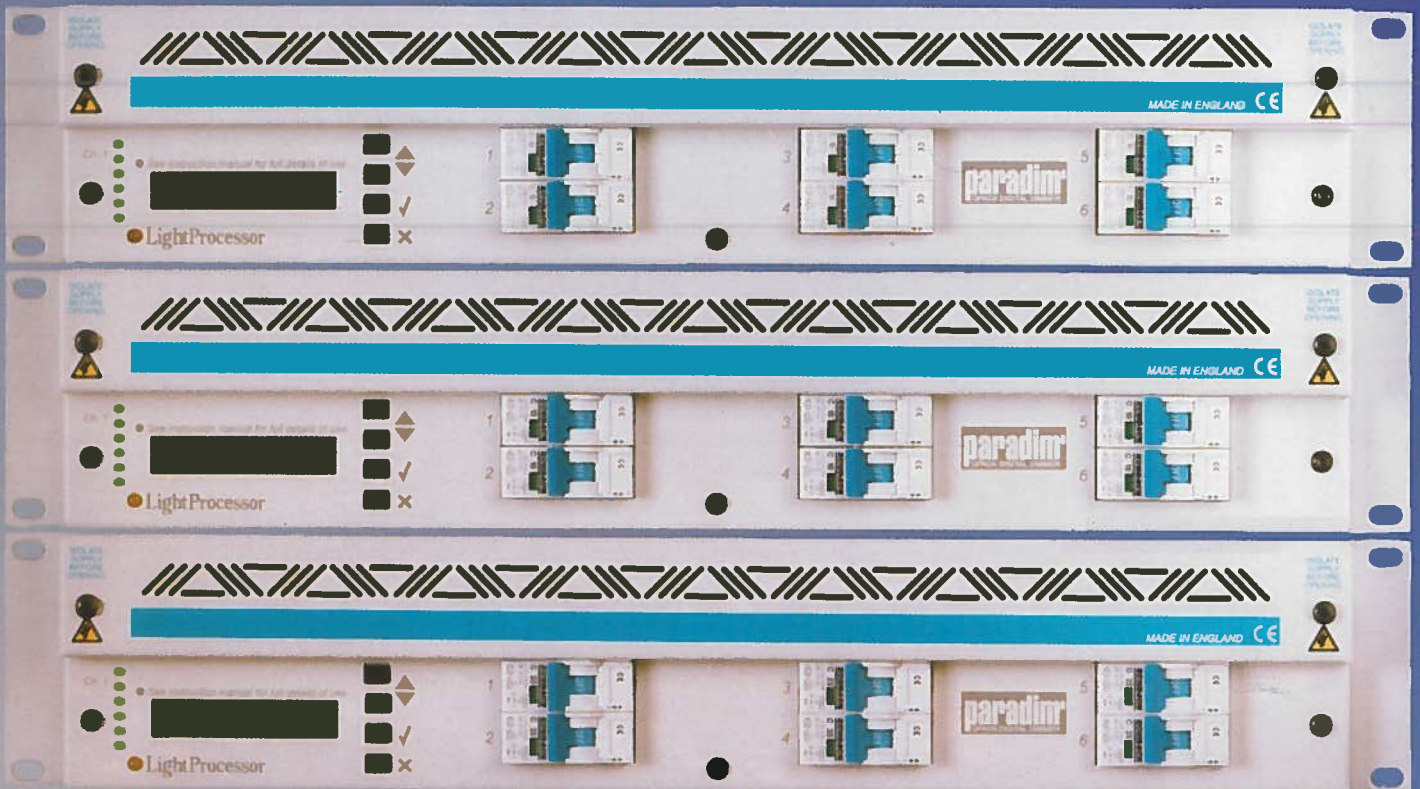
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paradigm (pàr'e-dim') noun - An example that serves as the pattern or model for the rest.

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# LIPA Lighting Project



*The Liverpool Institute of Performing Arts (LIPA) building in Mount Street, Liverpool, was transformed from three basic, prosaic, flat-fronted beige façades into a colourful spectacle in early April by Paul Nulty and Nick Handford, two final year students at the Institute.*

The event took place nightly for a week, during which time the exterior was illuminated in spectacular style with High End Systems architectural luminaires. The project was designed by Nulty, a final year BA Performance

Design student with a penchant for more unusual and off-beat situations in which to stage his ideas. The 'LIPA Lighting Project' as it became known was initially spawned by Nulty at the end of his second year. He then approached Nick Handford, a final year Enterprise Management student, to collaborate with him and to deal with the challenging management infrastructure required. The two have been exhaustively engaged in the project for the last eight months as part of their final year project.

Faced with an initial budget of just £200, Nulty and Handford set to work to raise the extra cash required to facilitate the project. One of the first companies they approached was High End Systems, who have supported LIPA from the outset with the donation of intelligent lighting fixtures, continued technical support and training dating back to the opening in 1996. Once again, High End supplied additional fixtures for the event. Nulty and Handford produced a further £4,000 in sponsorship and donations from various sources including The Moat House Hotel, Bass Breweries and The River of Light. The Project utilised assorted High End Systems fixtures which were supplied by High End Systems and their UK distributor, Lightfactor Sales. Six EC1 weatherised architectural wash fixtures and four Studio Colors skimmed the outer walls of LIPA, texturing the building, creating shadows in the cornices and producing strong contrasts between shadowy and lit areas. The EC1s were placed in two clusters adjacent, below the outer walls of the building. They produced a fanned shape which pulled viewer's eyes towards the main block of the building.

The main section of the building was lit at the top and bottom of the wall by 10 EC1 wash luminaires. Four Cyberlight hard-edged moving mirror units and four hard-edged Studio Spot automated luminaires were also utilised. A further two Cyberlights were situated on the roof, illuminating the small bell tower, enabling it to be seen from across the city. Two additional Studio Spots skimmed the outer edges of the main block, framing it and establishing its face as distinct from the others. High End Systems also produced high-resolution customised LithoPatterns featuring logos of LIPA and other benefactors, all of which were projected through its fixtures onto the building.

The fixtures were controlled via LIPA's own Status Cue desk. Programming took place during the week preceding the show itself and the get in took place over the previous weekend. Programming proved a challenging task as several cues ran simultaneously and the scheme also ran automatically without a 'live' console operator. This was done in several overnight sessions during the previous week by a collection of LIPA students. The crew of eight worked round the clock to prepare the show in time for kick off on the Monday night. Naturally, the changeable English weather threw its own spanner in the works! With every imaginable meteorological occurrence making an appearance during the week, it put Nulty and Handford's improvisational skills to the test. This resulted in the 'LIPADomes' - a variation on the Ecodome - to protect the fixtures from the elements.

## AC Lighting Establish New Division

*Established entertainment lighting supplier, AC Lighting Ltd, has set up a dedicated projects division to take care of the growing amount of installation work that the company is now doing.*

Initial jobs have included the installation of a television grid system at the Royal Navy's recording facilities in Portsmouth, a new control and dimming system to the National Film and Television School, and the installation of the lighting system at the new Ministry of Sound themed bar in Birmingham (see feature this issue). With a 27-year history, AC Lighting is able to use its extensive product range to offer customers the best choice of lighting equipment for any application.

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## Something to Shout About at Greenwich

**In an exciting development at the Dome site in Greenwich, a brand new entertainment centre has been launched.**

Nestling between Lord Rogers' famous Dome and Sir Norman Foster's striking Tube Station - Skyscape is a dual-purpose

entertainment centre, comprising two 2,500-seater cinemas - one of which can be rapidly converted into a 3,300 capacity concert hall - with a dramatic central atrium. Edwin Shirley Staging are the primary contractors for all aspects of design and build including the provision of seating, air-conditioning, power and sound-proofing.

The New Millennium Experience Company only issued the design brief in May 98 and ESS applied their specialist knowledge to produce a workable solution to their requirements. "There's no doubt there is a market for a venue in East London," said Sensible's Andy Zweck. "In terms of capacity, Skyscape falls nicely between the Shepherds Bush Empire (2,000) and Brixton Academy (4,000)."



Based upon ESS's modular Tower system, Skyscape is both longer and wider than the Midland '97 building provided by the company at Battersea little more than a year ago. The length of the contract period means that the building has to comply with all the

requirements of permanent building codes and, in addition, it is fitted with an acoustic lining to reduce sound leakage both into and out of the building. The increased loading and the additional width mean that ESS has had to develop a new tower and truss system. The building has a clear span of 54m and over its entire area the allowable imposed loading from snow and the acoustic lining is in excess of 500 tons.

Skyscape retains all the speed and ease of construction that made Midland such a successful venue. Currently in shell form, the structure will be utilised by the NMEC as a warehouse until October when the internal fittings and equipment will be attended to.

## Entech 2000: At the Olympics!

*Entech returns in March 2000 (March 5th-7th) to a brand new venue at Homebush, Sydney, the home of the 2000 Olympics.*

Entech is Australia's Entertainment and Presentation Technology trade show, with the 2000 edition set to showcase the new Olympics venues. Previous Entech events have introduced major new technologies to the industry in Australia, but the 2000 event promises to be the most important yet, with a number of major manufacturers already planning key product launches at the show.

The show will be held at the Dome, a new exhibition space located opposite Stadium Australia - the 110,000 seat Olympic Stadium which opened at the beginning of March.

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BRYAN LEITCH, LD for the Manic Street Preachers, made much use of facilities, such as the Shape Merge - which allows two separate shapes to be morphed together. He also extensively relied on the fast and straight forward application of times onto parameters. A whole page of memories with time can be edited in a couple of minutes.

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## Sherman Theatre's Rolling Stock

*An unusual stipulation from the National Lottery Board when handing out funds for the refurbishment of Cardiff's Sherman Theatre, was that in the event of the theatre's summary closure all the kit should be easily transported to another location.*

Hence Tim McCall of Marquee Audio, who won the tender to supply and fit to a specification devised mainly by the theatre's chief LX Andy Pike, had to resort to touring-spec connectors and many more kilometres of cable and multicore than normal for a fixed situation. In locomotive parlance it would be known as 'rolling stock'.

The building had originally tendered a £7 million National Lottery application three years ago for a complete refurbishment, including extension over the car park, but in view of the high number of applications from South Wales theatres at the time, it was not only deemed impractical, but also that there would also be an over-provision of theatre seats. The theatre eventually ended up with a capped figure of £500,000, but a clerical error was to deprive them of a further £120,000 at the eleventh hour, forcing a late downsizing of the audio budget. It was for their performance-to-budget ratio that Martin Audio components entered the re-specification inventory at this point.

The spend on audio was £105,000, on lighting and electrics £75,000, with show relay, stage management, paging, intercom and house lighting to form the final phase of a project which is expected to be completed by the end of July. The main theatre was last fitted out four years ago and the theatre retained as much of the functional kit as possible; so for example, while the ADB dimmer racks remain the same, all the lanterns are brand new. The theatre has also gradually turned its attentions to digital, and several Yamaha O2R mixers were in evidence.



*Above, the exterior of The Sherman Theatre and left, Martin Audio's Simon Bull (left) and Marquee Audio's Andy Pike (centre) and Tim McCall look up at the rig.*

Here Marquee have put together a cost-effective and future-proof set-up. In addition to the O2R they have specified a Soundscape digital recorder and 360 Systems instant replay hard disk storage facility. In the rack are a pair each of BSS's DPR-504 quad gates and DPR-404 compressor/de-essers as well as Tascam MD801 minidisc players (MD501s are in rolling racks elsewhere in the facility). Also present is an Allen & Heath 14/4/2 MixWizard, which will also be used in other areas of the theatre as a sub mixer, and a Rode NT2 condenser mic which is used for voice-overs. Another important feature is the large patchbay, which interlinks with the video and CD appliances.

The new Wavefront system passed a baptism of fire, debuting on a production of *Everything Must Go*, by Patrick Jones, brother of Manic Street Preachers' Nicky Wire. Written around the Manics' music, it was delivered as a full-on rock and roll show. Tim McCall explained that when they set the system up, using a BSS Soundweb, they filtered out some of the 2K on the W3s. "We simply removed some of the attack from the vocal range and rolled off the bottom end a bit. Fortunately, it was quite a neutral room. W3 and WS2 stacks form

a traditional pros' arch system, with a further pair of W2s and six EM 26s sited at short delay points with a final pair of EM26s providing the rear effects.

Andy Pike managed to reclaim six auditorium seat spaces, into which he has crammed the Yamaha O2R, which will be used for recorded playback, alongside the existing Soundcraft Venue and a new drive rack. A Varicurve Remote was specified simply for its recognition factor by visiting productions.

As in the main auditorium, the studio system is driven by Crown K Series amplifiers. A central ceiling cluster of Martin Wavefront W3s overhang the flexible space, while a pair of (unrelated) Martin Pro MAC 300 moving yoke systems were rushed to the site the day before the production went into rehearsal. LX design was by Chris Davies, another department member.

All the lighting equipment was supplied through LSI and comprises largely ADB luminaires - matching the ADB dimmers installed four years ago. The cocktail of 1k, 2k PCs, 1k floods, 500W fresnels and PCs, four-way groundrows and cyc floods is complemented by 40 ETC Source 4 Zooms and 20 Source 4 Pars - with a pair of Robert Juliat Ivanhoe followspots completing the array. All lanterns were spec'd to BBC specification safety bonds from Rope Assemblies, and were supplied with ADB's own hook clamps.

Wiring has been a major part of the project: Between six and eight man-weeks have been dedicated to the cabling alone to obtain the interchangeability between desks. Speaker cables are VDC Blue and Black multicore and Marquee have also used their mic cable - as well as some from Canford Audio. As for the peripherals, EMO Systems' Racklights and power distro have been fed in to make it all neat and easy.

Marquee are far from finished at the Sherman however, as they are now planning on-site training which will enable the technical team to maximise the use of the Varicurve, Soundweb and Soundscape.

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LSI





## Oh What a Night

*The opening of Mamma Mia in London has sealed our fate. The UK will see out the century on a wave of seventies nostalgia.*

It started a decade ago; nightclubs desperate to counter the rave phenomenon staged 'Disco revivals' to get the non-E generation back on the dancefloor. Kim Gavin, he of 911 and Take That fame, saw the potential three summers ago when he staged 'Oh What a Night' at the Blackpool Winter Gardens. A touch too early then, he seems to have his timing just right now, as the show opens for a three-month run at the Manchester Opera. Like Bjorn Ulveas's show, this is a shameless plundering of seventies music, but with a contemporary presentation. (And I'll wager, a more plausible plot).

Sound is provided by Alpha, whilst the lighting is designed by Simon Tutchener and supplied by LSD.

Reconciling seventies style with nineties presentation has worked. Audio-wise there's really no argument - the medium is invisible and it would simply be a mistake to recreate the gappy and



harsh audio of the era. But for lighting, how do you excuse the fact that there are 30 Mac 500s up there? "Oh I don't," said Tutchener with touching candour. "Kim and I discussed it and decided on the need for a really punchy show." Tutchener has made changes since the Blackpool run; this is not a concert light show by any stretch and he's unafraid to set the scene and let the action do the work - a blessed relief with all those songs in there.

Although Tutchener uses the full concert armoury of Pars, Chroma Qs, 8 Lites etc from LSD, he's also integrated with the house system using their 1kW sils. As such he's brought in Richard Bleasdale's Mac-based software to simplify control of an Avo Diamond III and a Light Palette.

That mix between theatre and concert is emblematic of what director Kim Gavin has done. His slick transformation of five disco punters into the Village People, done in the twinkling of an eye, is both great drama and an absolute hoot, raising one of the biggest cheers of the night. 'Oh What a Night' is just about right.

Steve Moles

## Optikinetics Opt for [OPTI]

*Optikinetics has shortened its company trading name to [OPTI].*

The new look reflects the changing image of the company and also formally recognises the name given to it by suppliers and customers for many years. The company has also recently launched a new range of projection systems - the [OPTI] GoBoShow - which, along with its accompanying lighting effects, has been specifically designed to meet the needs of the display and leisure industries.

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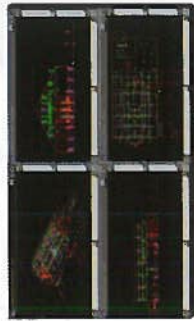
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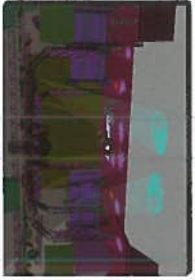
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# Millennium Showcase Hits the Corporate Road



*Hire and rental specialist HSL of Blackburn has teamed up with Promo Concepts (UK) Ltd to create a new entertainment concept for the North West business community.*

The Millennium Showcase is a major new initiative, designed to provide a comprehensive project management and technical services package for the corporate hospitality

marketplace. At the centre of the Millennium Showcase is The Millennium Dome Structure, a purpose-built, self-contained structure. The launch event for the Dome featured a cabaret floorshow which included lasers, lighting and special effects. HSL and Promo Concepts spec'd a Martin Pro lightshow, which created the centre-piece of the entire showcase. 16 MAC 500 and 12 MAC 600s formed the basis of the lightshow, with 42 RoboColor Pro 400s, eight Pro 400 Fibre Optic units and four PAL 1200s all running through an Avolites Diamond 3. Generating the atmospheric effects are a range of Jem Smoke systems: a Jem 428 unit using four smoke heads and four steam effect heads, worked in conjunction with two Hydrosonic HOT 2000 hazers and a single Heavy Fog HF 6500.

## Who's on your 'Shopping List?'

*Where can you go to get the low down on companies within the lighting business that might make good acquisitions? Plimsoll Publishing has just produced a 'Special Acquisition Pack' on the lighting business highlighting 51 companies that would make intriguing acquisitions, based on Plimsoll's analysis.*

Plimsoll analysed the entire lighting industry to find companies that were under performing yet were fundamentally very profitable. The companies chosen achieved a better than average gross profit margin, yet produced very low pre-tax profits and even losses! Interestingly, Plimsoll found that the earning potential on these companies was higher than many companies in the industry who were much more profitable. On average the companies with good potential were earning almost 45% in gross profit margins compared to the industry average of 33%. Yet, these companies were making a pre-tax loss of 0.3% compared to the industry average profit margin of 3.4%.

In analysing the lighting industry, Plimsoll identified 97 companies that were achieving 10% or greater return on assets which seemingly proves that it is possible in the lighting industry to make good profits. Choosing the magic 10% is therefore a credible benchmark for companies in the industry. An interesting finding to come out of the analysis, was that most of these potential acquisitions were paying higher than average wage bills and interest payments which was losing them the advantage they had at the gross margin level. For instance, on average, those companies with good potential were paying 28% of their sales on wages, whereas, the companies with an above average return on assets were only paying 23% of their sales on wages.

Within this 'Special Acquisition Pack' is a bound book in which each of the 51 companies are individually analysed using the company's last four years' audited accounts. Added to each analysis is a 'what if' fifth year. This computer-generated future year demonstrates the worth of future earning potential of each company. Because searching for acquisitions is private and individual, the pack contains a separate book containing 124 individual company analyses of the major UK players from the lighting industry. This pack also comes with a disk containing all the information for enhanced analysis.

To order a copy of the Special Acquisition Pack and qualify for a 10% discount on the full price of £450.00 call Plimsoll Publishing on +44 1642 257800 and mention that you read about the pack in this magazine.

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## Climbing the Clocktower

*The Broli Cymraeg Trust has project-managed the acquisition, renovation and re-equipping of The Clocktower in Mostyn, Flintshire, North Wales as an active arts venue.*



The Clocktower is a Grade II listed building built in 1928 by a local shipping magnate as a village hall and featuring early art deco architecture. It now has a 200-seater auditorium and in its new guise, it will not only be used for educational purposes, but will be available for all types of live shows, conferences, product launches and other functions.

The main technical contractor on the project was AS Green and one of the interesting elements of the rig is a fairly specialist application of trussing and motors - which includes swinging and static trapeze, cloud swing and corde lisse - which was handled by aerial artist and designer Becky Truman from Skinning The Cat, together with Mike Patterson from Emergency Exit Arts. The technical

specification and installation for the double truss

arrangement features two rectangular trusses, one inside the other. The external truss is for rigging lights while the internal one has the aerial equipment attached. The two can be brought in and out independently of one another. The Mec Quadralite trussing came from Portman Systems, designed specially for Broli, the Lodestars came directly from PCM and the sound system was supplied by locally-based Apple Sound from

Mold. Working in partnership with local colleges and training providers, the Trust also plans to offer full and part-time courses leading to NVO and GNVQ levels in Performing Arts and Entertainment Industries.

The building project total reached £1.3million including full restoration of a 25 room house on site to accommodate staff and students, a fully functional internet café, kitchens, an outdoor performance space for street and open-air entertainment and all the necessary technical infrastructure including power, lighting, audio, rigging, props and ancillary equipment.

## TOA Streamlines

*Toa Corporation has appointed a new managing director and has also made a move across the Home Counties to Morden in Surrey.*

Mitsuo Itani, a senior member of the TOA Corporation in Japan, has taken up the position at the helm of both TOA UK and also Rotor Ltd, their loudspeaker manufacturing subsidiary. He had already been appointed chairman of BBM Electronics (Tranted) - to whose premises TOA UK will relocate - following the acquisition of the radio mic specialist by TOA Japan in April last year.

Itani has held considerable influence with TOA Japan for nearly two decades. He joined as a sales executive and has risen rapidly through the management planning division, developing his skills and expertise in sophisticated management techniques and principles.

The company can now be contacted at Kestrel House, Garth Road, Morden, Surrey SM4 4LP. Tel: +44 181 337 2573 Fax: +44 181 337 2632.

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## News Round-Up



# ABTT Success . . .

This year's ABTT exhibition in London was the 21st event, and the visitor count certainly lived up to the occasion: at around 2,000, numbers were roughly one third up on last year. The buzz in the halls from the outset hinted that this would be the case.

A number of first-time exhibitors were present, among them **HTS Lighting**, the UK agent for Smoke Factory fog generators, who also had the Tiny-Fogger from Look Solutions on stand. **Orbital**, a supplier of sound systems to the theatre, conference and exhibition markets, debuted at the show to reflect their increased presence in theatre sound hire. Orbital projects to look out for include the hotly-tipped 'Boyband' and the forthcoming 'Happy Days'. **Total Audio Solutions** were another first, displaying Sony's comprehensive range of sound reinforcement equipment, including high-end RF systems, processing and source equipment. Paris-based **AMG Culture Communications**, a specialist in the equipping of theatres, opera houses and many other types of venue, was also new to the show.

**Stagetec** attracted much interest in the latest 4D software release and the new CompuCAD-console link. Products on show included the Micron 4D and Spark 4D consoles, both featuring new effects generator software, look ahead and black tracking functions for moving lights and scrollers as well as Palettes which include the more common gel definitions for the popular wash luminaires. The latest CompuCAD release, with Ethernet communication, was also on show. Also on stand was the budget Yoke E, compact Yoke MY500 and the high accuracy, 50kg load capacity Yoke MY410, all designed to fit a wide range of luminaires.

**Strand** became the first virtual reality exhibitor ABTT has ever seen. The plan to park their fully-networked mobile showroom outside the venue went when it was found that the thing was just too big to be accommodated. However, their new range of SL luminaires was to be seen on the stands of **White Light** and **Northern Light** to name but two. The SL Series includes six fixed-



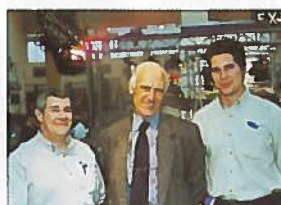
Ken Christie (left) and Jonathan Allen (centre) of Northern Light with Keith McClaren of Carr and Angier



Mike Goldberg who has recently joined Triple E (Right) with Maurice Marshall of Northcott Theatre



Iain Price-Smith of Multiform (left) with business partner Dick Tapper



A Lighting Technology trio of Graham Thomas, David Morgan and James Jose



The Orbital line-up of Chris Headlam, Thomas Byrne and Tim Sherratt

angle fixtures as well as two zooms. An architectural, long-life metal halide version is also planned for release within the next few months. The intention has been to replace all Strand's current medium-size profile luminaires with a single range of high performance dichroic reflector luminaires. **Cerebrum** also had Strand fixtures on show, along with Rainbow colour scrollers, MA Lighting control systems and the DMXtra system from Maris.

**Lightfactor Sales** launched two new LDR profile spots - The Nota 8/22 and the Nota 18/36. These lanterns are both powerful and precise 1000/1200W tungsten halogen profile spots, featuring double condenser optics. The largely aluminium construction provides for a lightweight yet robust product.

Staging specialist **Maltbury** launched Ambideck, a platform system developed in response to requests for customised units which could be fork-lifted and already spec'd by the Royal Albert Hall to create rolling platforms for its followspot operators.

Created in conjunction with James Thomas Engineering and making its ABTT debut was **Triple E's** latest product - UniTruss - a combination of truss and track conceived by MD David Edelstein. Designed to ease the assembly of complex sets and light rigs, UniTruss is capable of spanning long distances and therefore ideal for large-scale productions.

**AC Lighting** were showing the M Range of colour scrollers, consisting of the M1 (for fixtures from 575W - 1kW) the M2 (for fixtures up to 2kW), the M5 (for fixtures up to 5kW) and the M8 for eight-light fixtures - and the 'Broadway' baby Chroma Q scroller. **Rope Assemblies** showed their wide range of Black equipment for rigging, including





Steels and Luminaire Safety Bonds. Their new product, the 35kg Luminaire Safety Bond, picked up the ABTT Product of the Year award. Nice to see such recognition of a low-tech, but very important, safety measure. Well done also to **Rose Bruford College**, who picked up the Best Stand Award.



*Martin Chisnell, freelance designer (left) with Gary Falls of City Theatrical (centre) and a clean-shaven John Simpson of White Light*

**Rosco** showed the latest updates to the Horizon lighting control system, as well as additions to their Prismatics range of multi-coloured texture patterns and the highly effective image Glass, textured glass gobos. **Lee Filters** were showing the excellent designer-created 700 series of gels, as well as their new Gobo brochure with over 300 designs on offer. The **DHA Lighting** team were showing their comprehensive ranges of glass and metal gobos on stand, including the new range of gobo wheels for Martin's MAC 500.



*The hugely-generous Tracey Howell from Artistic Licence presents a Preset-6 console to students from the Mid Kent College of Further Education*

*Paul Kutchera, Coral Cooper, Sam Dean, Keith Duncan and Simon Anderson of Vari-Lite Production Services London*

*Pulsar's now familiar graffiti-covered stand, where the new Masterpiece 216 was in control*

*Graham Threder of Gradav (left) shakes on the purchase of Pacific Cool Lights with Graham Eales of ELX*

Among the many products on display from **Lighting Technology** was the Color Kinetics range of LED colour changer systems from the USA. Congratulations to LT, who report that the Caterpillar moving light effect, a familiar sight these many years, won an award at the recent Euroshop exhibition in Germany, and no, it wasn't for Oldest Lighting Effect. **Pulsar**, who had produced a new brochure and CD-ROM especially for the show, and were providing hands-on demos of the new Clay Paky Stageline, with Pulsar's new Masterpiece 216 in control.



and the new Alcora and Elara control desks from **Zero 88**, along with the latest edition to the contour dimming family - the Contour 12-10.



**Sennheiser UK** were showing Infra-Red hearing systems for theatres, along with their ubiquitous radio mic systems. **Stage Technologies** were showing the stage automation systems that have gone into a string of high-profile installations in the last 12 months. Stage engineering systems were on show from **Telestage Associates**, while **AVW Controls** had a range of rigging and scenic motion control systems. Staging, risers and seating were available from **Steeldeck**.



**CCT Lighting** were promoting the cost advantages of

distributive dimming installations with their Freedom range of luminaires. **LSI Projects** were showing **ADB's** sophisticated range of lighting control systems including the Vision 10 (see Shanghai Grand Theatre feature, p. 43). **Trantec** showed their new S5000IEM UHF stereo in-ear monitor system.

**Decoupe** were showing the Pierrot from **Robert Juliat** - a 700W HMI zoom profile with built-in DMX-controlled high-resolution mechanical dimmer. Also on show, the new **MDG Atmosphere Touring** high output haze generator and Ice Fog low fog generator, along with the Cocoon DMX-controlled IP66 waterproof copernik from **Sajem**. **Selecon's** Pacific Cool Lights were on the stand of **ELX**, whose Andy Trevett revealed a recent and sizeable sale of the fixtures to Gradav.

Like Orbital, **LMC Audio** also reported a steady increase in the level of equipment they find themselves supplying to theatre. Their stand featured demos of BSS Soundweb and Out Board's TiMax. A company supplying and installing a lot of equipment in theatres, as well as a host of pubs and clubs around the country, are **Marquee Audio**, who were again at ABTT.

Other introductions included **Owl's** new lightweight Tetrart staging system; the Red Rebel range of economical control desks, fixtures and dimmers for small theatres and educational facilities from **AVAB transtechnik**; the first ABTT showing of the Virtuoso control system, the VL7B spot luminaire and the VL6B spot luminaire given by **VLPS London**; **XTBA's** Focus, the DMX radio remote rigger's control with a full feature key pad;

Finally, praise must be heaped upon those nice folk at **Artistic Licence**, who were not only giving away free beer in their capacity as official bar sponsors, but were also giving away free gear. Several pieces of kit were presented to representatives of schools and colleges at the show, including the Preset-6 DMX512 output lighting console shown in our picture. If that's not worthy of respect, we don't know what is.

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## The 1999 Academy Awards

**For the final Academy Awards ceremony of the millennium, Oscar veterans designer Roy Christopher and lighting designer Bob Dickinson decided to do something a little different . . .**



Christopher planned an enormous, forced-perspective translucent dome (the translucent panels made from Rosco Cyc material) 70ft wide, 30ft deep and 40ft tall at its highest point, giving the effect that "the audience were lying down looking up at a dome, like the Pantheon in Rome" recalled Dickinson, whose initial thoughts were "this is impossible to light - no way of getting backlight in, crosslight difficult to achieve because of shadowing. But I also thought that it was such a cool approach that we had to do it!"

Two months of work followed, involving close collaboration between Christopher, Dickinson and Ed Kish of Kish Rigging. Dickinson recalls some of the challenges: "The dome had to be suspended by the smallest wires possible to minimise shadowing. The lighting was from four concentric truss rings, but staggered so that they were lower upstage than downstage, and the dome motors had to sit above the lighting rig. It was quite a feat of rigging up there!"

Above the dome, Dickinson specified a fully automated system from Vari-Lite, using VL7s for their zoom optics. He was slightly nervous about this, following a high failure rate with VL7s at the Grammy Awards, but Vari-Lite took the problems seriously: "They took all of the dome lights and ran

them for a week and a half . . . They really looked after us."

Dickinson also specified VL7Bs as crosslights, the shuttering system allowing him to cut tightly to the big items of scenery, avoiding shadows on the dome. VL5s were used for colour toning and VL6s for other gobo work - in all a total of 475 Vari\*Lites run from two Artisans, programmed by Andy O'Reilly and Matt Ford.

The rig wasn't all high-tech, though: nestling amongst the Vari\*Lites above the dome were a dozen mirrorballs. "I knew that we would need night-time looks and I didn't want to use a star gobo, so we hung the mirrorballs and shone the VL7s at them, which made great, tiny stars", Dickinson explains.

The fit-up started two weeks before the show, and Dickinson and associate Jim Rose started focussing and programming with five days to go. The result of the team's work was a stunning show, the lighting a progression of big, clean, clear looks.

Perhaps part of the success is that, despite the high pressure environment, the Oscar team were enjoying themselves. "I love the Oscars," Dickinson says. "It's so high profile. When relatives call to tell you they've enjoyed your work, that feels good. That makes it fun!"

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## Terrorvision with Adlib Audio

*Adlib Audio have successfully completed a short British University 'comeback' tour with Bradford chart band Terrorvision.*

For the main PA stack, Adlib chose the Martin Audio Wavefront 8 Compact system, running up to 16 high packs in conventional left/right stage stacks above their own DF3 single 18" horn-loaded subs. The Wavefronts were processed using a BSS FDS-388 Omnidrive, and according to Adlib Audio's Dave Kay "the quality of the output was fantastic, providing a flat, full sound." Front-of-house engineer for the tour was Simon Thomas, with Marc Peters as systems engineer.

At the stage end, where Dee Miller was in charge of foldback, a BSS FDS-355 was used to process the sound from a series of Adlib 152 wedge monitors.

Adlib's Dave Kay summarised: "This was the first time we've worked with the band, and following the success of Tequila, it was a case of Terrorvision dipping their feet in the water again - which they did to amazing effect."

## Elektra Goes Back to Basics

*Elektra Lighting Design Consultants designed the lighting again this year for Rare Basics stand at International Display Week. The company manufactures a variety of bodyforms and display fittings for retail merchandising.*

The show was on for three days in April at the Business Design Centre in Islington, North London. The brief was to create movement to imply the ability of Rare Basics to change and inspire. This was achieved by using pulsating lights that picked up different colours in the holographic background. The lighting rig included theatrical light fittings in Chrome that tied in perfectly with the product on the stand.



Lighting was supplied by the White Light Group, Elektra's parent company, and overseen by designer David Howe. Howe continues to design for Harvey Nicholls' and Harrods' window displays. In the last month, Elektra have also added Polo Lauren to their list of retail clients.

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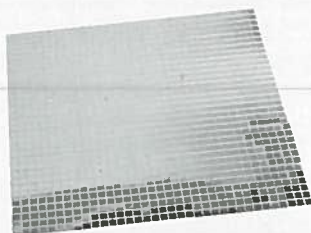
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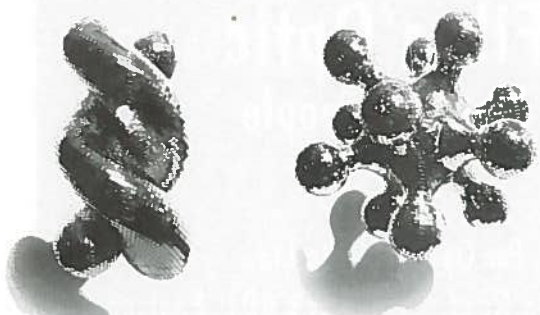


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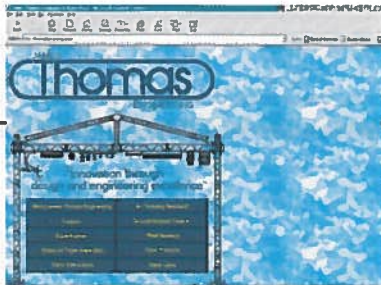


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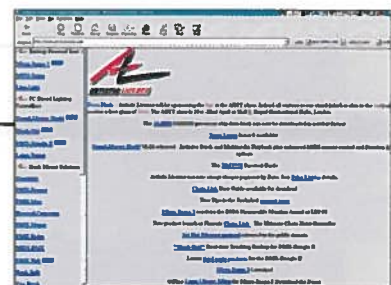
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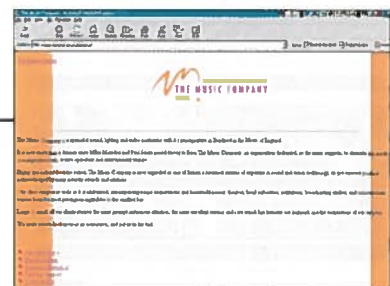
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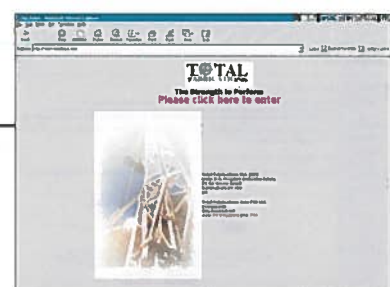
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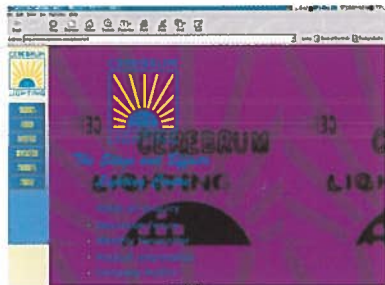
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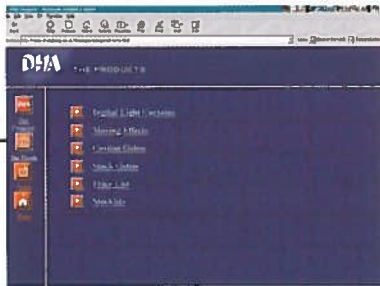
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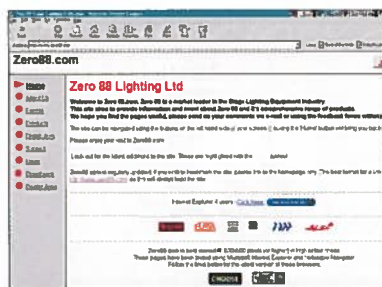
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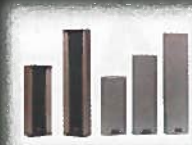
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*Tony Cottelhor*

# No Comment...

In business, timing can be everything and irrespective of where Wholehog may stand on the technology curve in the future, High End's timing of its acquisition is immaculate. As a positive move which has them 'hogging the limelight' and 'high on the hog', and all the other easily punned aphorisms which will no doubt make this month's headlines, it is at the very least a stunning publicity coup for the guys in Austin, Texas.

At the other end of the scale the product makes absolute sense as an addition to High End's product roster, and to its knowledge and skill

base with the input of the Hog team. In fact, I understand that the highly mobile Nils Thorjussen is already in residence. I assume that this move will also enable HES to divert resources from their own Status Cue desk, which never really found favour with designers, to a control surface which has been the number one favourite since its inception. No doubt, it will also bring a raft of new customers beating on the door who will also be diverted to appreciate the benefits of Cyberlights, Studio Colors and the rest.

It also sends a signal to those who may have thought otherwise that,

far from being down and out-for-the-count following the bruising battle with Vari-Lite, High End are still up there and making it happen. At the same time, they will have done themselves no harm whatsoever in terms of raising their profile in the 'fashion' stakes: the Hog has been the fashion symbol with designers from its inception. Let's hope the new proprietors maintain the humorous and dedicated swag with

which the Flying Pigs were always so inventive and which was such a successful plank of their marketing effort. One question remains unanswered, and not for want of asking, and that is: Wither AC Lighting, for so long joined at the trotter with the Pigs, in this new set-up?

If timing is everything, our colleagues at Lighting Dimensions must be ruing the day that they chose to feature the truly ghastly Marilyn Manson and his 'Mechanical Animals' tour in their March issue. Due to the vagaries of the trans-Atlantic mail system, my copy dropped on my desk on the very morning of the appalling massacre at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado, the enormity of which is hard to comprehend.

The self-styled Super Goth purveyor of heavy metal and heavy hate is an icon of the movement which stands accused of twisting the kind of mentality that led to the perpetration of this terrible crime. The fact that he has adopted the name of a mass murderer and uses strident neo-nazi insignia and symbolism in his stage set should be a bit of a clue. Rock journalists, let alone writers from the business press, would do well not to glorify such vitriolic performers, including those who bite the heads off bats, snakes and lifelike dolls on stage.

Of course, the late, great Stanley Kubrick's brilliant movie about urban violence, *A Clockwork Orange*, forecast all of these events many years ago. But then it was so censored that Kubrick refused to show it, so its impact as a dire warning of things to come was less than effective.

As I suppose everybody in the business knows, ETC are great party-throwers. The most recent shindig of theirs I was privileged to go to was a 'Kick Fred out of the UK' party.

Essentially this was to give the staff at the London office and sundry camp followers the opportunity to give Fred Foster a good send-off as he made the official hand-over in Britain and returned to his HQ in Middleton, Wisconsin. The occasion was marked by a considerable exchange

of amusing and in some cases, innuendo-loaded, gifts between all concerned, culminating in Foster masquerading as the loony Celt in full tartan bonnet and orange wig. He is nothing if not a good sport on such occasions and it was clear that he has a close bond with his team here and that they were all sorry to see him go, as indeed were we all. He has certainly been adopted as an honorary Brit.

Again, timing turned out to be poignant as we fast forward to the occasion of the next ETC party, this time coinciding with the ABTT Show. (I was not there, but my spies tell me that the festivities were galvanised by a belly dancer, who definitely was not Fred Foster in drag.) However, as it turned out they had rather less to celebrate this time.

ABTT would have been a tough occasion for Foster: he is not a man who enjoys coming second, and most of the talk at the Show was about Strand's new SL Series Spotlights, especially the zoom. Foster has a considerable emotional and financial investment in the Source 4 Zoom, launched at last year's PLASA and LDI, and it would have come as quite a shock to find Strand biting back quite so effectively after previous failed attempts. After all, ETC were encouraged to believe that it was game set and match after they successfully eclipsed, or should it be ellipsed, the Leko at LDI '92 in Dallas. Especially as it was clear that the management of Rank Strand, as they were at the time, had no idea what had hit them.

Neither company were exhibiting at ABTT in their own right, Strand because their logistical planning deserted them when it came to the facility to park their 'Stage Truck' adjacent to the Horticultural Hall. Nevertheless the redoubtable Ivan Myles was making the best of things in the aisles, where many examples of the new luminaires appeared on the stands of their dealers. We can now expect a head-to-head, with Strand fighting hard to regain previously lost ground, and now having the weaponry to do it, especially in Europe. The escape from the wasted years among the Rank undead may be about to turn into a reincarnation. Never say die!

"We can now expect a head-to-head, with Strand fighting hard to regain previously lost ground, and now having the weaponry to do it, especially in Europe. The escape from the wasted years among the Rank undead may be about to turn into a reincarnation."



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# Shanghai Grand Theatre



***Jacqueline Molloy visits  
Shanghai's state-of-the-art  
Grand Theatre - a shining  
example of the progress  
being made by modern China . . .***



THEATRE

beauty and work ethics. The design committee responsible for overseeing the birth of Shanghai's monument to the arts and modernism toured through European theatres to observe and gain inspiration from lighting and sound installations, flying systems and general technical infrastructures. It was evident that this new venue, China's first Western-style theatre, was to be a paean to the new China, a country stirring the cobwebs of the recent past, eager to absorb and purchase the best of Western technology and design.

## ***The Building***

The building was four years in construction and its US\$138million price tag was picked up by the Shanghai Municipality who also pay the salaries of the technical and administrative staff. An international competition to select the architect for the building was won by French architect Jean-Marie Charpentier from ARTE, a Paris-based architectural firm. He and his partner Andrew Hobson eventually created a structure utilising more steel than the Eiffel Tower.

Situated in People's Square, the venue is a head-turning vision for even the most hardened tourist, accustomed to viewing the world's wonders from the blasé comfort of a tour-bus. The building's design incorporates ancient Chinese symbols such as the circle and square which depict heaven and earth. At night it is a gleaming nod in the direction of pure design and aesthetic pleasure with its white, arch-vaulted roof (weighing 6,000 tonnes) curving protectively over the

Shanghai is a city of visual contradictions, with modern high rise buildings competing for space with gracious colonial structures and burgeoning residential blocks. Numerous construction sites complete the eclectic architectural landscape that stamps the city with an air of being unfinished and open to possibilities, which is the Shanghai of the late 1990's, economically, politically and culturally. Keen to do business with the West, the emerging China is a country buoyed by social reform and economic growth. A wander down Nanjing Road East, Shanghai's 'golden mile' for shopping, is testimony to this change, with huge neon billboards advertising the wares of Benetton and McDonalds, squeezed between Shanghai's top department stores with such inspiring names as 'No 1 Department Store'.

To fully appreciate this fusion of Chinese and Western culture a visit to the majestic Shanghai Grand Theatre Arts Centre is a must. The venue juxtaposes the crème of Western technology and design with Eastern





Left, the Shanghai Grand Opera House's main stage  
Inset, Mr Le, general manager of the Shanghai Grand Opera House

**"The venue was officially opened in October 1998 with a production of Swan Lake performed by the Chinese Central Ballet . . . since then over 160 performances have graced its stage"**

imported wire-reinforced glass walls. A shimmering crystal chandelier known as "The Blue Danube" looms above the foyer, suspended at a height of 22m.

Occupying an area of 1.2 hectares the building is split over eight floors, with two underground levels. The venue houses the 1,800-seat Lyric Theatre with another two performances spaces, the 750-seat Drama Theatre and the 300-seat Studio Theatre, currently under construction and due for completion in October of this year.

The 2,000sq.m foyer is breathtaking, with natural daylight reflecting off the Greek marble flooring and sweeping staircases on either side inviting you to venture further into this sanctum of art and beauty. For 50Yuan (around £3) you can experience a guided tour of the building providing your Chinese is up to scratch and you don't mind sharing the space with hundreds of Chinese schoolchildren who race across the marble floor squealing and laughing as though it were a playground.

If you tire of admiring the building and its artworks such as the eye-catching fresco 'The Goddess of Art' which holds court in the main foyer you can always indulge yourself by shopping or eating in the building's 2,500sqm shopping centre or 1,600sq.m restaurant, or alternatively, take a seat on one of the foyer's upper levels and marvel at the view the glass facade provides across the sprawling and constantly bustling People's Square.

**The Lyric Theatre**

The Lyric Theatre was designed to accommodate a variety of performance styles including ballet, opera, symphony and traditional Chinese Theatre and is the flagship of the arts centre with an auditorium encompassing around 1,000sq.m of floorspace and a ceiling height of 19.5m. The decor is soothing and understated in tones of gold and red. The 1,800 seats are spread over the stalls, second and third level balconies and six boxes. It was reassuring to see that the quest for comfortable and appropriate seating is unpredictable worldwide: on the day I visited the box seats were undergoing a revamp to improve patron comfort.

The venue was officially opened in October 1998 with a production of Swan Lake performed by the Chinese Central Ballet

and since then over 160 performances have graced its stage. The majority of productions are by visiting international companies, with the venue frequently participating in co-productions such as Aida which was undertaken with Florence's Teatro Communale. The principal cast and production team were Italian, with local musicians, singers, acrobats and dancers making up the huge cast, with 100 local policeman drafted in as Egyptian extras. The Chinese audience experienced Aida for the first time with this production of the sumptuous opera.

Though there are no resident companies at the theatre, local organisations such as Shanghai's 120-year-old symphony orchestra are invited in on a rent-free and profit-sharing basis. Ticket prices for international productions tend to discourage all but the most affluent of locals and foreigners to attend performances with prices reaching as high as \$200US for a solo concert by Jose Carreras. Even though local companies start their ticket prices as low as \$11US per ticket there is no strong audience base in Shanghai apart from tourists, business people and the wealthy. Despite this, the venue does manage to get 'bums on seats' with the productions of Faust and Aida selling out months in advance.

The General Manager (venue manager) of the arts centre Mr Le Sheng Le says that the venue is heavily promoted on an international level and that news of the theatre spread quickly via the internet, sparking considerable international interest: "We have many links with international companies who are keen to perform here and we liaise frequently with agents around the world." Mr Le recently visited San Francisco to view a production of Madam Butterfly and he has also visited Europe, the UK and Australia to keep abreast of productions and companies that may be interested in performing in Shanghai. The Australian production of Les Miserables will perform a three-week season there in August of this year at the personal invitation of China's President, Jiang Zemin.

**The Stage**

The stage of the Lyric Theatre is impressive in its scale and versatility, being one of the largest in Asia. At the time of my visit in April of this year the Dusseldorf Rhine Opera were putting the Mitsubishi stage machinery and flying system through their paces with the massive sets they had rigged for their opulent production of The Flying Dutchman.



Mitsubishi have designed, supplied and installed a staging system that utilises state-of-the-art controls.

The stage machinery control room is located above the OP side-stage with one computerised system employed for the fully motorised flying system and another for the complex stage-floor components. The control room is equipped with a series of close circuit monitors allowing the operators full visual access to all areas of the stage.

The stage occupies a total area of 1,700sq.m and is divided into four sections: the main area, rear stage and two side stages. The main stage is an 18mx18m area that is divided into two sections that can be elevated to a maximum height of 3.6m above stage level, with an operating speed of 18m per minute.

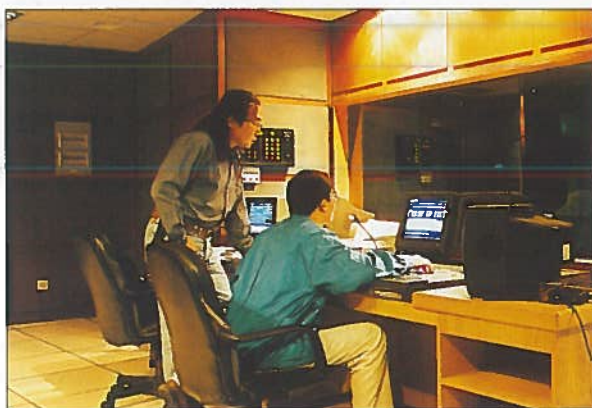
The rear stage is 360sq.m with a double circle wagon of 18m and 17m in diameter. The two revolves can rotate in identical or opposite directions allowing for an enormous amount of flexibility with staging a production. The two side stages are 270sq.m each, adding an additional facet to an already sophisticated staging system.

The orchestra pit can hold up to 120 players and can be set at several levels depending on the required mode of operation. When raised to stage height it can increase the depth of the stage to about 50metres and set at auditorium height it allows for an increase in seating capacity. Additional chairs are stored under the pit and can be simply raised on the pit lift and rolled out to their required position.

The venue has a proscenium arch opening 18m wide and 12m high, with a grid height of 30.5m. A false, motorised proscenium can be masked down to suit the staging requirements of individual productions.

The motorised flying system features four lines FOH situated over the orchestra pit, three lines within the proscenium arch, 51 lines above the main stage, 12 lines above the rear stage and eight over each of the two side stages, with an additional four motorised lines for lateral rigging. There are also 36x250kg fixed hoists and an additional 4x1000kg moveable hoists available for the main stage.

Access to the venue for loading in is via a dock fitted with a 16m x 4.2m lift capable of taking a maximum load of eight tonnes. There is no doubt that the venue is exceptionally well-equipped to take even the most complicated of productions when it comes to the staging, with Mitsubishi providing a system that has inspired favourable responses from those whose opinions really count - namely the stage mechanists.



### Lighting

The Lyric Theatre lighting system was designed, supplied and installed by ADB-LSI Projects. ADB are a Belgium-based Siemens company, and LSI Projects are the UK arm of the operation who specialise in all aspects of turnkey projects. This was the first major project the company have undertaken in mainland China, though they had previously supplied lighting equipment for seven television studios in Wharf Cable, Hong Kong.

ADB-LSI Projects worked closely with their Hong Kong-based partners, Advanced Communication Equipment International Ltd (ACE), who are their exclusive agents in China. ADB/LSI Projects were first approached about the project at PLASA in 1995 and in 1996 were invited to make a presentation to the Shanghai Grand Theatre design committee illustrating their initial ideas for the venue's lighting system. They were awarded the supply contract in 1997 and up until this point they had been providing design support for the proposed lighting system.

ADB-LSI Projects were responsible for specifying the rigging positions within the venue and designed the three FOH lighting bridges, the FOH followspot bridge, circle front lighting bars, proscenium perch locations and the onstage lighting positions. Their brief also required them to specify the control system, dimmer requirements, including location and number and also to identify the non-dimmed circuit requirements of the venue plus work light needs and GPO requirements.

They also specified the cable needs and designed the cable containment system. A DMX network was also

included, with the

result being a

distributed network with around 60 DMX outlets. ADB-LSI Projects also provided design support for the electrical power distribution, dimmer room fire protection and air conditioning and auditorium air conditioning.

They also worked closely with the venue's interior designers to satisfy their lighting requirements.

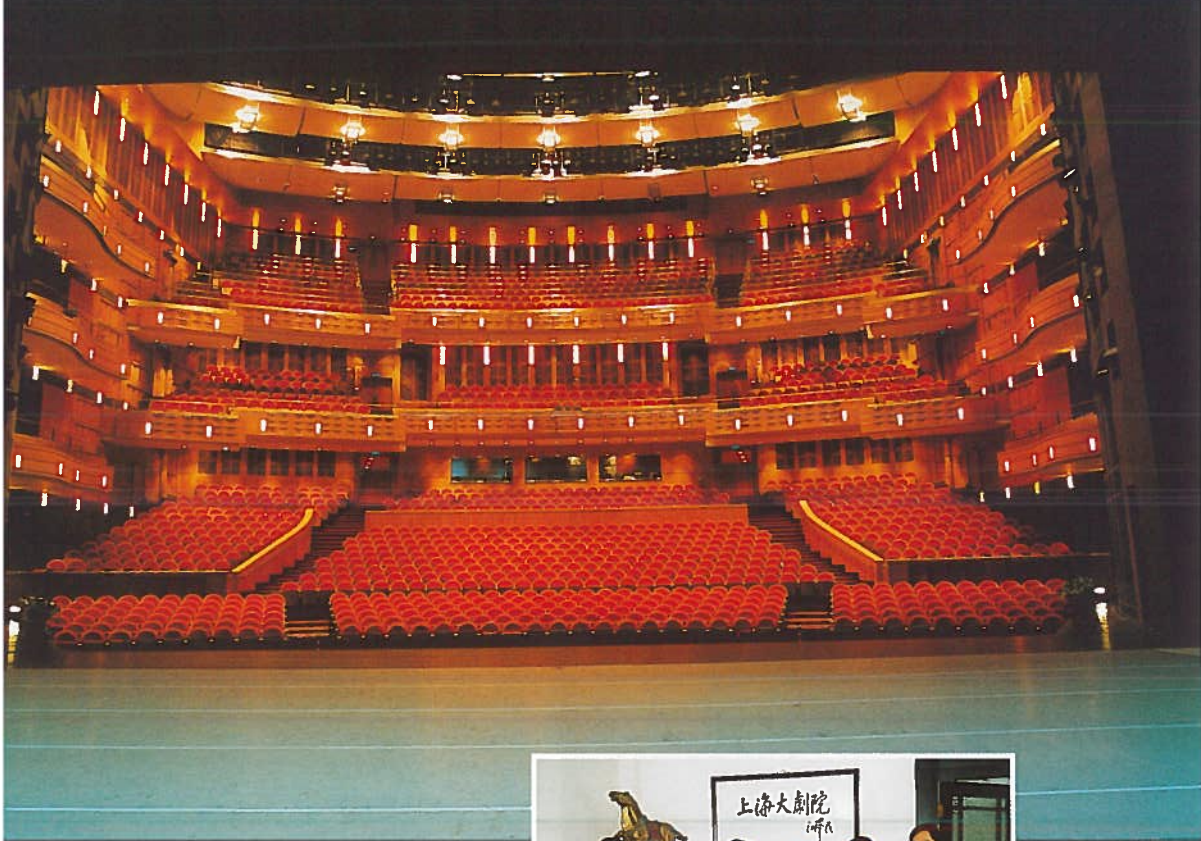
The installation of the lighting system was undertaken by the lighting projects division of ACE, who set-up a local team in Shanghai to undertake the complex installation. Wherever possible, international electrical regulations were adhered to, using a combination of Chinese and Western materials.

Since the Lyric Theatre was designed to accommodate a variety of performance styles it was imperative that the lighting system be flexible and operator-friendly. The state-of-the-art system that resulted is slick and adaptable, capable of dealing with even the most complicated lighting demands.

Technical manager Yin Houjie and lighting operator Li Shi Zhou both agree that it more than satisfies its design brief with Li Shi Zhou finding the ADB Vision 10 control desk a pleasure to use. With a total project value of around £700,000 for the design and supply of the lighting system, it's clear that the venue received a state-of-the-art-system that is appropriate for the venue's international status and its busy and varied performance program.

The control system includes an ADB Vision 10/STI-1024 channel desk with motion control, 24 submasters, chasers, effects, macros, two theatre playbacks, 2xSVGA colour display monitors plus an alpha numeric keypad housed in a desk-top console.

*Above and left, the Shanghai Grand Theatre's beautifully-equipped lighting control room, featuring the ADB Vision 10 control systems*



"It is a testimony to a successful blending of cultural styles as Western technology melds with Eastern philosophy"



Pictured left to right are Bob Peill and Brenda Dunsire of ADB/LSI Projects with Mr Le, general manager of the Shanghai Opera House with Bingo Tso, Xiang Jue and Zhou Jan Guo of ACE.



A Vision 10/CO Compact-1024 control desk acts as a back-up. A Vision infra-red rigger's control with four wall-mounted receivers was also installed. There are approximately 800 digital dimmers made up of ADB Eurodim 3kW and ADB Eurodim 5kW.

The lighting equipment list is substantial and varied and reads like a 'Who's Who' of luminaire types. ADB have supplied around 160 profiles, all with condenser optics with 88 2kW ranging from the medium-throw zoom ADB DS204s offering 13-36° beam angles, to the ADB DN204 long-throw zooms with 10-20° angles. The 66 ADB DN104 medium-throw 1kW range from 9-20° and 15-31° beam angles.

Also from ADB, there are 100 C201 2kW PCs, 40 C101 1kW PCs, 40 F201 2kW fresnels, 24 F101 1kW fresnels and 48 Cyclorama lights with asymmetrical reflectors. Other fixtures include 32 of ADB's motorised yokes fitted with C203 Prism convex lamps, and four ADB Niethammer MZU 256 long-throw 6-17° 2.5kW HMI followspots.

In case the above rig doesn't quite satisfy your needs, ADB-LSI Projects have also included 80 Par 64 lamps from James Thomas Engineering, 40 Strand beamlights, eight Clay Paky Golden Scan 3s, six Robert Juliat HMI 1.2kW profiles and 112 Oscar Lightpaint Scrollers. For those lighting designers who are into the bright, intense, minimal source opera trend in lighting, there are

two Desisti Rembrandt 4kW HMI fresnels and two Desisti Rembrandt 2.5kW HMI fresnels. Two JEM ZR 20 MK II smoke machines are also included. Even the most demanding LD would be hard pressed to do anything other than bow humbly in the face of such an impressive choice of equipment and well-thought-out lighting system.

### Sound

A panel of consultants which included a Chinese acoustician set very stringent acoustic criteria for the theatre, requiring the space to be suitable for a very broad range of performances. The natural acoustics of the theatre have to handle performance requirements as divergent as traditional Chinese productions, Opera, Ballet and Symphony concerts, whilst the PA system had to be suitable for reinforcement for productions as various as variety shows and full-scale West End style musicals. Whilst some acoustic compromises were made to provide a better and more pleasing interior, design compromises were made regarding some of the surface treatments to meet the exacting acoustic specifications. Some speaker placements were also modified to provide a cleaner look to the auditorium ceiling.

ACE of Hong Kong submitted the successful proposal in a semi-open tender process to supply a complete turnkey sound system which included design, installation, commissioning, training and

maintenance. The system is primarily based around components from JBL, Soundcraft, Crown and dbx - all companies which ACE have great confidence in supplying. "The reason that we have represented these products for so many years is because they are top class in the industry," asserts ACE vice-president Bingo Tso: "They are good quality, good sounding and reliable. We will not supply anything that we are not confident with."

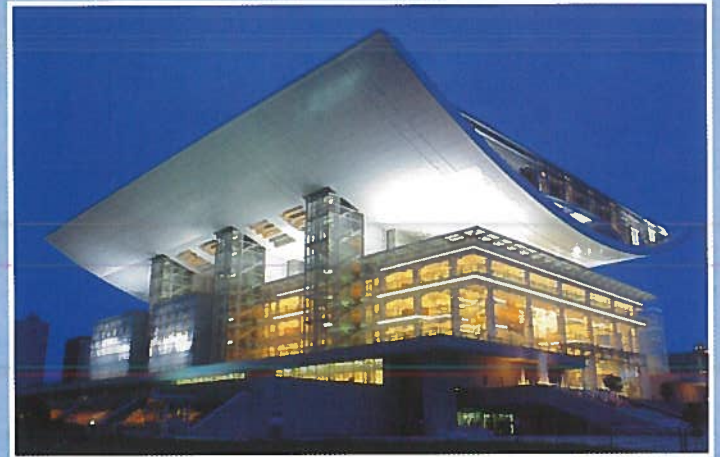
The brief for the PA was to provide a system with main left, centre and right speaker clusters which cover all 1,800 seats to +/- 2dB. The centre cluster consists of three rows, each of three JBL Array Series 4892 two-way loudspeakers, where the top row is focused to cover the third balcony level, the middle row to cover the second balcony level and the bottom row to cover the main stalls. A pair of JBL 2380 bi-radial horns are suspended beneath the cluster to fill in the sound for front of the stalls. The identical left and right clusters consist of three rows, each of two JBL 4892s with each row focused in a similar way to the centre cluster. Sub-bass for the venue is provided by a pair of JBL Installation Series SP1285 with dual 18" drivers and a pair of JBL Array Series 4893 dual 14" bass units.

The PA system is powered by JBL MPA series amplifiers - 19 1200W MPA 1100s and 13 660W MPA 600s, controlled through four JBL DSC 280 digital controllers. The main mixing desk is a Soundcraft Europa 40/8/2 with signal processing provided by four dbx160A and two dbx162 compressor/limiters, 10 dbx 3031c 31-band equalisers, a Lexicon PCM80 digital reverb and effects provided by a Digitech TSR-24s, a



# Thanks and Congratulations to Shanghai Grand Theatre

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伙伴



Control : VISION 10  
Dimming : EURODIM 2  
Luminaires : «EUROPE» Range  
Engineering : LSI Projects, U.K.

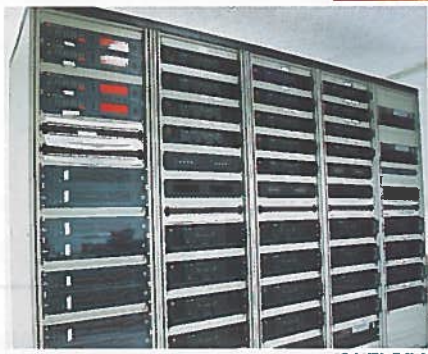


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Right, the main Soundcraft Europa mixing desk in the control room.  
Inset, the amp rack



Lexicon 300L and three DOD811s. The replay devices installed include a Studer D371 CD deck, an Otari MX55 1/4inch tape, an Otari DTR8 DAT machine, a Tascam 122MkIII cassette deck and a Tascam DA88 Hi8 eight-track recorder. Microphones include models from Shure, AKG and Crown, and the venue talkback system was supplied by Telex.

**"I got the impression that he took it as a personal failing to have allowed the backstage area to resemble the aftermath of a small uprising..."**

To assist with the commissioning, training and maintenance commitment in their contract, ACE brought American sound engineer David Revel to Shanghai, to run training courses for the Grand Theatre crews and to assist with the design and mix of the sound for the inaugural production of Swan Lake and to stand by in case there were any initial system hiccups.

#### Technical Crew

Yin Houjie is the technical manager of the venue and it is a role he clearly relishes and assumes with great pride. It was fortunate that his English far exceeded my Chinese and we were able to converse in a relatively comfortable manner though as always it is the nuances of language that lead to confusion, laughter and eventually, if you are lucky, to some form of understanding.

One point that Yin Houjie managed to convey very clearly as we toured the massive venue was his dislike of mess: his disapproval of the chaos that surrounded a set change for the German production of *The Flying Dutchman* was apparent and he explained that he was keen to get the venue cleaned and tidied up once the production had closed and the

Germans had moved on. I got the impression that he took it as a personal failing to have allowed the backstage area to resemble the aftermath of a small uprising, I argued that it looked like any venue during the final technical rehearsal for a large production but this didn't appear to appease his discomfort at the carnage of scenery that littered the side-stages. It did occur to me afterwards that Yin Houjie was perhaps employing Western humour and 'having a lend of me' as the expression goes!

There are around 30 technical staff employed across all the disciplines and I was intrigued to discover that several crew members from the venue had recently been transferred by the government to work on a major scientific installation. Many of the technical crew working throughout China come from engineering or computing backgrounds and if the government deems that their skills can be better utilised to support science then they are transferred on. Technical staff have limited access to theatre training and are either trained on-the-job or sent to Hong Kong or Japan. ACE spent the first six months onsite after the theatre's official opening training up the sound and lighting crews.

The Shanghai Theatre Academy is the only local institution that provides formal training in technical theatre and Li Shi Zhou, one of the venue's two lighting desk operators, is a lighting graduate from the Academy. He undertook four years of study and specialised in lighting design. He shares the lighting desk operating with Shi Xiaotos who is the computing expert out of the two and with their individual skills they make a compatible duo. Li Shi Zhou draws the lighting plans freehand or with stencils, and then passes them on to Shi Xiaotos who transfers the information onto AutoCAD, which makes it easier for them to exchange documentation with visiting international companies.

Many of the productions that tour through the venue, particularly from overseas, bring their own technical crew who tend to operate the lighting desk during plotting in order to facilitate the process and then use one of the two local operators to run the desk during rehearsals and performances. The language barriers can make for unnecessarily long and complicated plotting sessions otherwise. Li Shi Zhou is used to a translator being on talkback during performances, which can be a bit tedious, and his preference is for the stage manager to simply call the lighting cues by number in English. He finds it challenging and at times amusing working with foreign companies where there is no common language and is proud that he has mastered several words in Italian: the smile on his face and the chuckles from the other crew members led me to believe that they were useful words to employ during a crisis but I got the distinct impression that they were of the unprintable variety!

The lighting department employs eight permanent staff who divide into two crews and undertake alternating shifts. One of the lighting operators is always on the crew with the other three staff acting as riggers. The sound department employs two full-time staff and the staging crew fluctuates depending on the requirements of a production. Freelance crew are brought in as needed from either the Broadcast Bureau which is the broadcast technical committee or from the Cultural Bureau which deals with live performance.

One of the biggest problems facing the technical crews in other Chinese venues is their lack of access to current technology, since Chinese theatres tend to be poorly-equipped. It seems to be a catch-22 situation; with neither the government or local audiences supporting





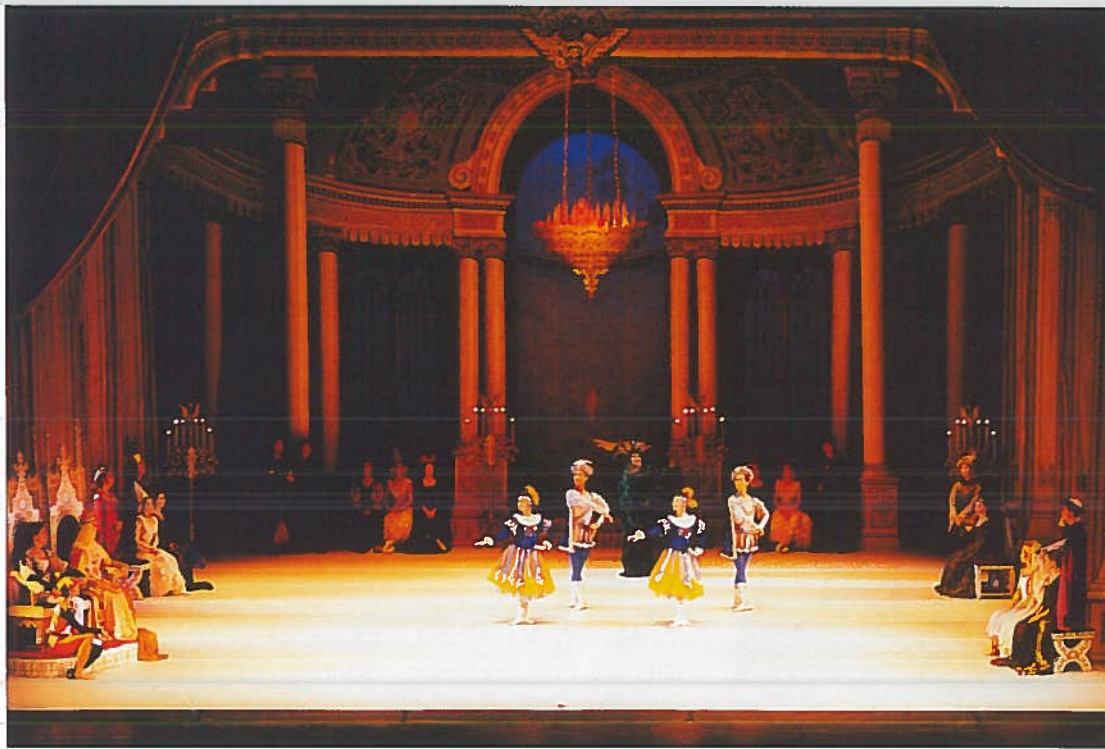
theatre, there appears to be no money and no reason to keep under-utilised venues supplied with state-of-the-art technology.

**Conclusion**

The Shanghai Grand Theatre is an impressive venue by any standards and placed against the backdrop of China's ongoing journey to emerge from its social, political and economic cocoon, it's easy to appreciate why the success of this remarkable venue is imperative and why those who work there are so determined to nurture and spread the word about their much-loved theatre. We all know that technology and design can create a shell, but it is the passion and spirit of the people who work within the shell that allows it to evolve into a breathing, vibrant, home for the arts.

Mr Le takes a very aggressive view to marketing the venue and it is considered that the arts centre is the first Chinese venue with the technical facilities, management structure, private sponsorship and government backing to enable it to make a success on the international arts arena.

Mr Le's aim is to create an arts environment where East and West can mingle and he views this



enterprise as a personal hobby, such is his passion for the venue: "It is a new monument for China's cultural society and is a bridge between Western and Chinese culture."

The Shanghai Grand Theatre Arts Centre is a remarkable building, offering patrons, performers and technical staff a well-equipped, modern and comfortable environment in which to experience a smorgasbord of artistic experiences.

It is a testimony to a successful blending of cultural styles as Western technology melds with Eastern philosophy to create a venue that will no doubt carve a niche for itself on the international stage and inspire all who come into contact with the Shanghai Grand Theatre and its staff to feel proud of their association.

*A performance of swan lake takes place at the Grand Opera House*

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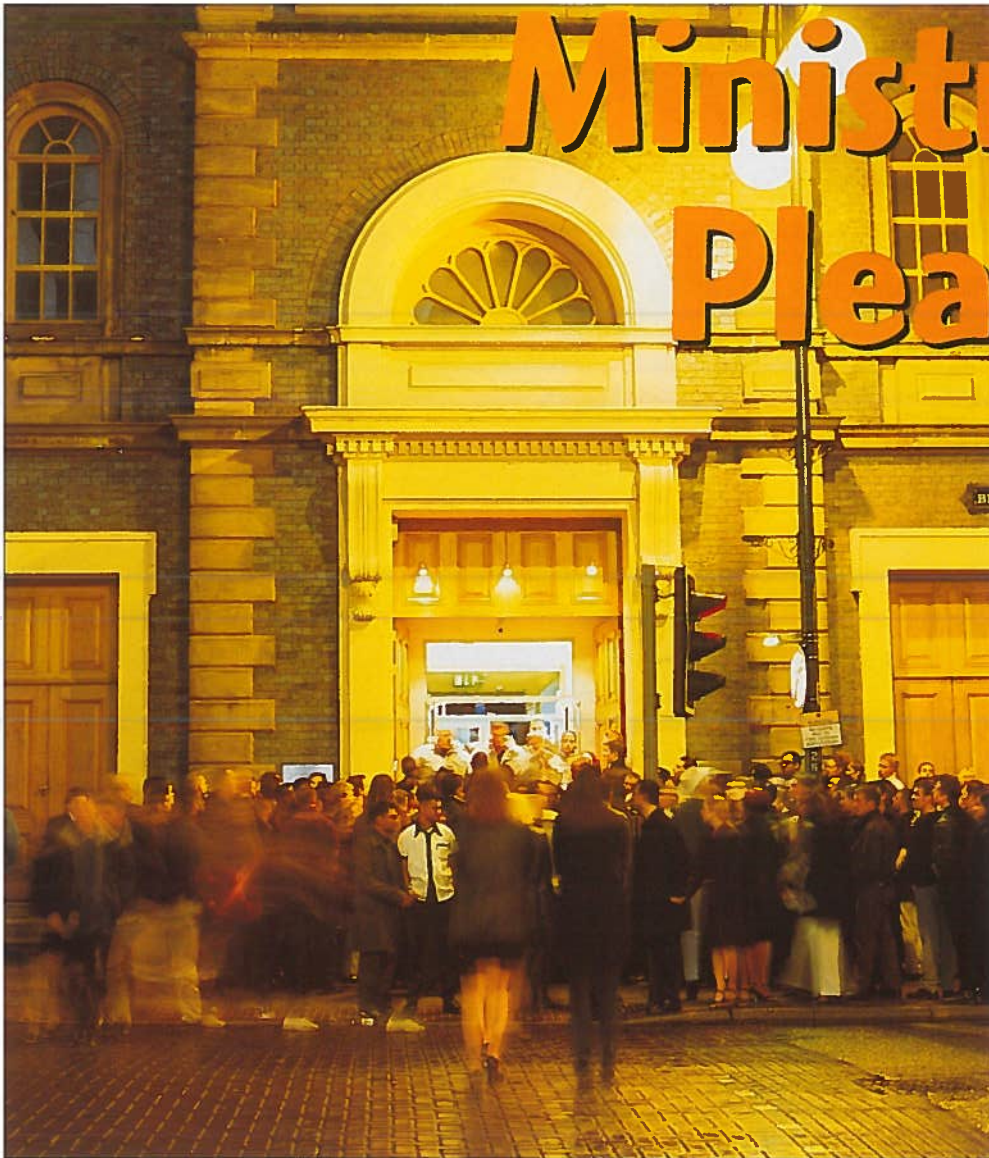
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# Ministry of Pleasure



NIGHTCLUB

*You've visited  
the club, you've  
bought the  
compilations,  
you're even  
connected to*

*the Net service  
- now it's time  
for the Ministry  
of Sound bar.*

*Ross Brown  
went along to  
its first night.*

I've only been to Birmingham once, for a failed University interview, so my memories aren't exactly the best. But, rolling into New Street station on a damp Thursday afternoon, things appeared much brighter because I had a VIP pass for the new Ministry of Sound bar burning a hole in my best jeans.

From the outside - this was an area we were to gain some degree of experience - the Ministry of Sound Bar in Birmingham, is an impressive venue - hardly surprising considering the bill for the conversion came it at a little over £1m. Although a converted church, there is little to identify its new status, save for a brass plaque, similar to those found outside solicitors' offices, to the right of the main entrance. However, once through the doors - the transformation becomes obvious.

When you're converting a church into any kind of leisure complex you've got two options: you can leave some of the basic structure intact, to produce a place of worship for hedonists, or you can strip the place bare and start again. The Ministry has chosen the latter.

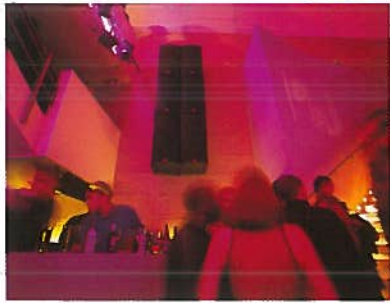
A massive open area is the first thing that hits you: two bars down the right hand wall, a sweeping staircase down the left hand wall and, along its side, a

DJ box the like of which is not normally seen in a bar. Here, four Technics 1210s (natch), vie for space with a Denon DN1100R MiniDisc player, a Tascam DA20 DAT player, a Pioneer PDF647 CD Multiplayer and a Denon 2000F twin CD player. All of this runs into the highly-regarded Cloud CXM professional DJ mixer which, importantly, is fully configurable to meet the precise requirements of the venue. Monitoring is courtesy of two JBL EON 15(A) speakers. A fairly standard installation in a club (although the addition of the Pioneer multiplayer hints at daytime background music, and four turntables is still unusual), but this is a bar. Or is it?

This is the Ministry of Sound. Think of the MoS and you think of clubs - not bars. But then again, it's inaccurate to say that the MoS is still a club. Off the top of my head, I can think of the record label, magazine and Internet service that all bear the Ministry of Sound label, so a sideways step into the world of bars isn't such a surprise really. But none of the other brand extensions - Net, magazine, etc, - demand as much of a Ministry of Sound 'feel' as the bars. The Ministry is an ethos, a concept, it maintains certain standards: in short, it carries an unbelievable amount of emotional luggage. When entering a Ministry of Sound premise, you know what to expect. And if it's not there, then you have a problem.

The rest of the extensions of the brand have been





something different, adding to the main business - the London Club - but a bar is stepping on the toes of the Club and could be a dangerous move. The Ministry's Rhiannon Sheehy explains the rationale. "A bar is a natural development of the brand. We couldn't open another club as this could detract from the Club in London." Which is a fair point, but aren't the bars just clubs with smaller dancefloors? Sheehy disagrees: "The new venues are the first of their kind, representing the crossover between bar and club culture. In this way they cater for people who love music but who are not so interested in going out late and dancing. The bars will appeal to an older crowd that wants to listen to dance music in a more relaxed environment. Equally, the bar has open spaces where people can dance should they want to and the sound system is certainly more powerful and sophisticated than most clubs." Whether the venues are the first of their kind is a moot point - as is the argument about not going out late (the bar has a 2am licence) - but the sound system definitely hints at club, rather than bar.

On top of the front-end equipment listed above, the sound for the bar is much more than you would expect from 'similar' venues with a total of 22 amplifiers (11 JBL MPX1200s, six JBL MPX600s and five JBL MPX300s), with the sound from these beauties pumping out through 32 loudspeakers - all JBL - made-up of 15 Marquis MS28s, six Venue VS3218-9s, four Venue VS125HSs, three Soundpower SP212-9s, and two each of Soundpower SP212-A and SP128s ranges.

The audio set-up at the bar was described to me on the night as: "an integrated, multi-zoned, multi-layered, computer-controlled, hi-power, high-fidelity sound system of 18,000W." Indeed - strength without control is nothing, so they say. The processing for this myriad of air-movers is via three BSS Soundweb D088/9088 controlled by a new BSS 'Jellyfish' 9010 remote. As we've seen before, Soundweb is an extremely able system but, on opening night at least, the venue design was causing a few teething problems.

The bar is on three levels: the staircase behind the DJ set-up sweeps majestically upwards to an open area (the betting - later sort of validated - is that this is the

'dancefloor' that guarantees the 2am licence), another bar with various seating areas, and the top flight, replete with another bar and a dining area.

The interior design is minimal but effective. Pale colours exaggerate the size of the space - there is really little else you could call it - and the use of a variety of levels and mezzanines increases the perception of its size. Now, as the closest I've ever been to interior design is an episode of *Changing Rooms*, I take an active interest in design concepts (and how I can adapt them to my front room).

"We've chosen a minimal design because all Ministry of Sound design is clean-cut, non-fussy, direct and simple," says Sheehy. "Also, we feel that it's the people inside the venues that make them what they are - so, really, the bar is just a frame for the colourful and dressed-up crowd you'll find inside. We want to appeal to a young, fashionable crowd." Minimal design + beautiful people = Ministry of Sound Bar. With hindsight, I'm worried that I may have upset the balance.

Each of the three mezzanines has high sides to protect inebriated punters from belly-flopping down to the open area below - and they also look incredibly stylish. The only problem is that the acoustics of the place suffer. "Setting-up was difficult - the reflections were horrendous," says Ian Westwater of installers OverAudio. "Luckily, with there being the SoundWebs installed, JBL and BSS set it up."

And there were other problems, apart from the balconies. But as installers by choice of Northern Leisure, OverAudio were swift to sort it out. "Behind the DJ box, the sound was funnelling up and down the staircase," says Westwater. "If you muted the downstairs speakers, it was amazing because the sound would travel from the first floor speakers - straight down - and we're talking the full spectrum here. We managed to sort it eventually with a bit of cancellation and delay."

As former technical manager for the Ministry and now at JBL, Santi Arribas was well placed to co-ordinate the installation. Speaking to him a few days after the opening, I asked

"The new venues are the first of their kind, representing the crossover between bar and club culture. In this way they cater for people who love music but who are not so interested in going out late and dancing."



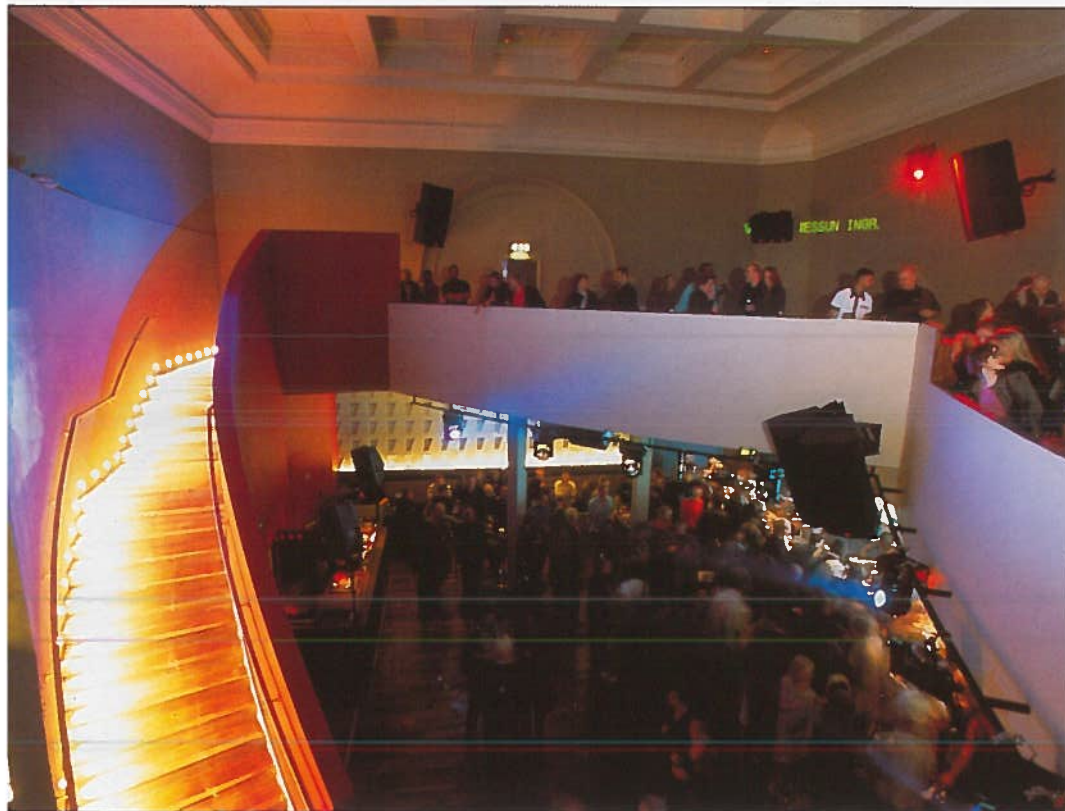
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**Cloud**



installation of the video units was performed by the Ministry themselves falling, as the rest of the project did, under the guidance and instruction of operations manager Nodd McDonagh and Keith Hardy, the bar's project director.

On my evening in the bar the images were a strange mix: one of them seemed to be projecting stills from, shall we say, a 1970s schlock horror porn movie. It wasn't, but keep that image and throw in some more 70s retro, like a Levis ad and you get the idea. The other was transmitting a show entitled 'no signal', a combination of the same static image, over and over again until, presumably, someone found the dodgy lead and then we had Ministry logos and the usual unusual promotional imagery seen in venues such as this.

The project obviously came together relatively quickly and, as far as the Ministry are concerned, this could only happen because of their suppliers: "We have a very strong relationship with JBL and Pulsar from working with them in London," says Sheehy. "They help to make the Ministry of Sound what it is and it is only natural that

we would turn to them for the highest quality sound and lighting equipment for the Ministry bar." When you discover that the entire project came in at over one million pounds it's easy to see why getting things right - and fast - is so important.

Aside from the obvious money spent on the refurb and the equipment, a venue cannot succeed unless it has the right location. Get it right and you're more than half-way to a successful endeavour. The Bar is located on Birmingham's Broad Lane opposite Ronnie Scott's Brum outlet. Also on the street are other assorted bars, clubs and restaurants: so the location is pretty much sorted.

The building itself stands out a mile among the glass-fronted venues around it - converted churches tend to do that. The interior is classy, chic, well appointed and the staff were friendly. But, here's the crunch: this is the Ministry of Sound. Not the Ministry of Nice Staff or the Ministry of Top Décor - but Sound. And on my opening night visit it wasn't as fantastic as it should have been. Maybe I'm more overtly critical than most or maybe I'm just a pedant. Anyway, as I've said, go back and listen now and you won't hear a problem.

Birmingham was chosen as the first in a proposed string of Ministry bars (my money's on Manchester, Leeds, Edinburgh, Glasgow and Newcastle in the near future) for the obvious reasons: established nightlife, large student population and perceived niche in the existing venues. Whether that niche exists or not I'm not convinced, there are plenty of bars where you can hear dance music and drink 'til the wee hours. But this is the Ministry of Sound and, niche or not, you just know it's going to succeed.

how he felt it all went? "It's an old building, with lots of drivers and a DJ: combine them all and you can have a lot of problems. It took us four days of tweaking until we were happy. Changing delay times, listening to the responses and then changing them again. But, overall, on that first night there were a lot of industry people there and you were the only person who thought there was a problem." Well I did, sorry.

But I'm judging the sound as an impartial outsider: technical enough to hold a conversation but still naïve enough to put myself into the shoes of a punter easily enough, and I though it sounded 'muddy'. Now, as I appreciate first night problems and make allowances for them, I know that this 'problem' really won't have been an issue because if I was to return to the Ministry bar tonight, these things would be sorted.

There was another glitch of a more immediately sortable nature: Says Arribas: "We ensured there were the relevant protectors and limiters in place - without compromising the sound - but on the first night, some of the amps were clipping, because DJs are DJs. I've tightened things up, they won't be destroyed by a DJ now!"

Forgetting the sound for a minute, the lighting in the Bar is, like the décor, minimalistic, but with the lightly-coloured walls and the general ambience of the place, it works. Six Clay Paky Stage Colour 300 automated washlights (with Osram HMD 300W long life lamps) and, oh, that's it. Scenes and patterns are programmed with a Pulsar Masterpiece, and stored and played back using a Masterpiece Replay Unit, with the various patterns stored onto its removable RAM card. These patterns can then be recalled using the four Masterpiece Outstations located within

the DJ box, allowing the DJ or his accomplice to trigger the pre-programmed patterns as required. Chuck in a Jands DD8 DMX eight-way buffer box and that's the extent of the lights.

The lights are used sparingly but to great effect. Other than a small amount of house lighting (behind the bars and along the stairways for instance), the Clay Paky units supply the majority of lighting by which punters see where to go, find the toilets, etc, and it's an idea that works well. Although the ceiling is high and there could be a feeling of isolation on the top deck, the lighting somehow manages to create an ambience, reducing the distance between the top and the bottom - which must be a good 40 or so feet.

The lighting installation was carried out by AC Lighting, with responsibility for the Ministry job falling under the auspices of P.K. Keiderling, known by all and sundry simply as P.K. He recalls: "The timescale for the job was the only problem we faced, with five weeks from our initial meeting to completion of the job," he says. "The Ministry came up with the design aspects and we guided them towards suitable products. The idea was to do solely architectural lighting, to provide a mood rather than fill the place."

As he's currently working on another project involving a few dozen of the Clay Paky units used at the Ministry, he's obviously a fan: what's so special about them? "They're a great little unit. They can be used as an architectural effect or, with some programming, you can achieve some dynamic effects," he replies.

Finally, video. Unusually, the two video projectors are from different sources: one Sony VPL S900E LCD Digital and one Sharp XG NV2E LCD Digital, each transmitting the images from their own Panasonic VCR AG 5260E. The

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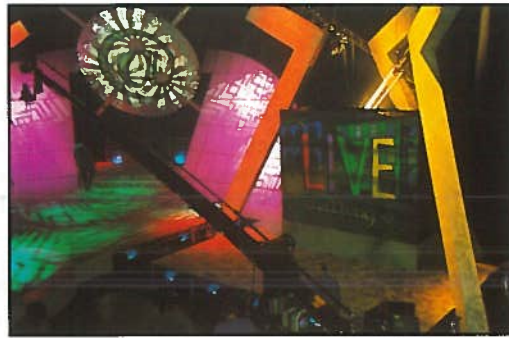
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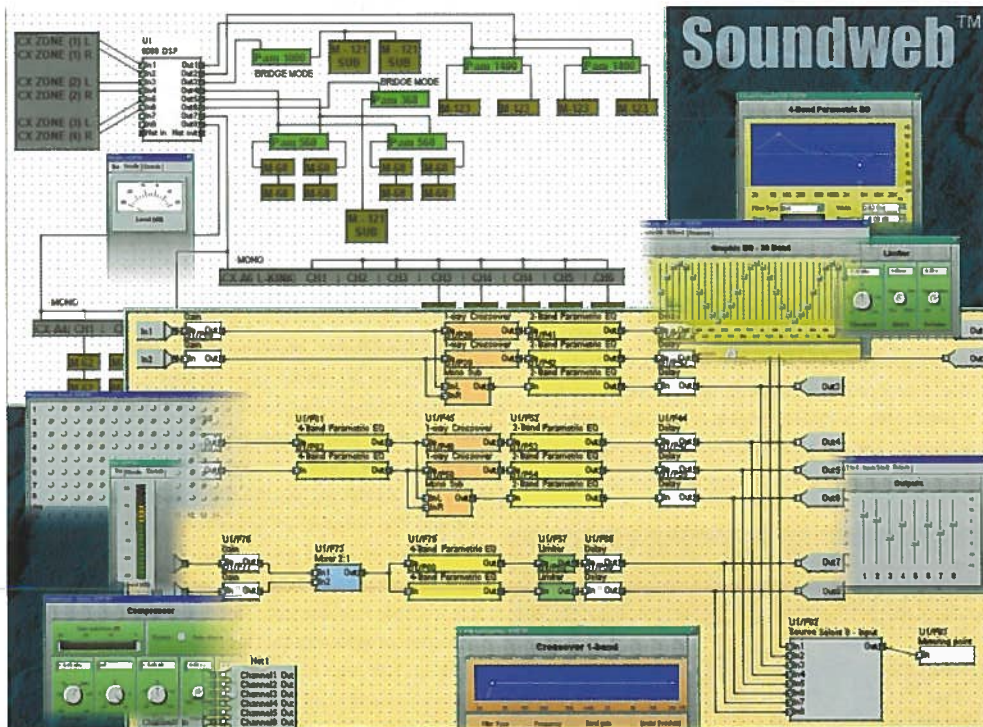
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# John Watt

## Second Take...

John Watt's view from beside the camera

I suppose if you have an 'ordinary' job you get your batteries charged by going on the best holiday you can run to. If you're lucky enough to earn a living in lighting, then you probably prefer not to go on holiday and miss out on the fun. If this seems strange coming from an old cynic like me, it happens to be true, and is only

in any doubt when the phone stops ringing. Nonetheless, the odd inspirational experience doesn't go amiss in reminding you what lighting is really about.

I MUST confess to zapping around the satellite channels after midnight most nights whilst muttering "60 channels and nothing to watch." Occasionally, your past indiscretions leap out at you - programmes whose lighting in the memory is much better than in reality. Once in a while I get rewarded: where else but on West Deutsche Rundfunk could you stumble upon two hours of Manhattan Transfer, for instance? Last night on N3,

there was a complete performance of 'Tap Dogs', which made Riverdance look like a slow motion replay of Come Dancing.

AS USUAL, the credits went through like the proverbial dose of salts, but our very own Rick Fisher's name was in there (it was recorded in Australia) and the whole thing looked just stunning. Yes, I do go on about it, but an economic rig, never using two lamps where one

will do, takes some beating: just two floor-mounted moving lights formed the backbone of much of it. An all-steel set provided lots of reflective opportunities and Rick didn't miss a trick. Maybe I should forgive Rosco for making all those blue gels after all. As someone once said, I would give my right arm to be as ambidextrous as him. The point of the story is that it sent me to bed vowing to do better in future.

COME TO think of it, I'm not sure my current producer would know Art if she fell over him. Have you tried explaining that in imitating bright sunshine, some reasonably dense shadows amongst the bright bits give a high contrast feel? The comment "if you took that paper off the lights it would look brighter" leaves me wishing I had read English at University - then maybe I wouldn't be stuck for words. Incidentally, don't try putting paper over your lights without having an adult standing by. In this case it was actually old faithful Lee 263, half tough spun, but producers these days don't slow their progress to becoming commissioning editors by bothering too much with learning production techniques.

BACK AT Nottingham this month for a series of game shows, and putting my updated vocabulary of moving lights to use and not taking my own advice (see above). Moving light op' Darren Fletcher is a good teacher and generous with ideas, John Crawley (a closet swinger) looks after the conventionals. As in many out-of-town studios, they manage to remain enthusiastic and helpful against a dwindling number of productions coming through the door. Time was when the place was busy, but now that we have dozens of channels featuring cheaply-produced stuff shot either on location or in four-wallers, it leaves good (and in this case very good) studios idle. Some peculiar accountancy principles make it preferable to cobble together lash up 'studios' in disused offices or old industrial units rather than use the real thing. I suppose this explains

the proliferation of edit suites, which in general are a poor substitute for normal multi-camera techniques.

NOW IT'S Pebble Mill again to do battle with a studio built for radio, complete with a very nice timber floor. Look up and it's not quite so classy, with a fine example of the scaffolder's art from which Herbie and I attempt to hang lights roughly in the right places. My usual habit of getting them in the wrong places proves much slower to fix, necessitating as it does a Genie lift, a spark who doesn't suffer from vertigo and half a hundredweight of assorted swivel couplers, long safety bonds, gaffer, etc. All I need is some sprog cameraman to suggest yet another position for the foreground table and I'll have to do another circuit of the car park to recapture my equilibrium!

I'M NOT at all sure that lighting ability improves with age, well not in my case anyway, but I'm equally certain that attitudes mellow and a certain amount of cool can be a bonus. A few days ago we did a pilot for an American job in an existing set here. The predictable hype burst on us with a jet load of presidents and vice-presidents of this and that swarming all over us and justifying their titles of personal assistant to 'the star'. He had asked apparently to meet the lighting designer, a man of vision and good sense I thought, but this proved rather less than short-lived, as with a perfunctory 'Hi' he turned on his heel and ignored me for the remainder of the production. I guessed they would want it flat and had already decided on some decoy lighting, i.e. an array of floor pups far enough away not to do any harm, but near enough to the cue cards to make sure he noticed them.

THE REGULAR Brit' presenter does all that you could wish, hits his marks, talks to the appropriate camera and doesn't sweat. This lulls us into thinking that the people lighting is easy and we can concentrate on making it look pretty. Our American, on the other hand, rolled around like a dollop of lard on a griddle and only came to a halt long enough to say "We'll be back after this" before we launched into yet another commercial. The decoy lighting was soon augmented by the boxing ring lighting, (I'll soon have no secrets left and you can cancel your course at Evesham - they'll only tell you the same, but in a posher accent) which is a lamp at each corner: now let him try and find a dark bit.

WHILE WE'RE on the master class, don't mix up the boxing ring lighting with the sit' com' lighting, which is a lamp in the two back corners and some soft along the front. At least I think that is how Messrs Reed and Constable do it. The film look is achieved in a similar way but with an old sock over the lens.

"I guessed they would want it flat and had already decided on some decoy lighting, i.e. an array of floor pups far enough away not to do any harm, but near enough to the cue cards to make sure he noticed them."

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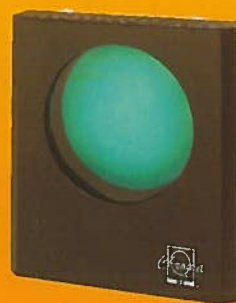


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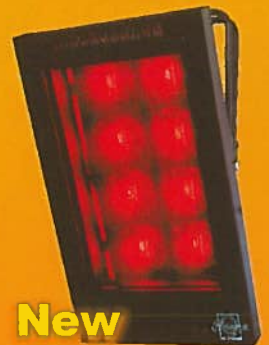
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# Classic Touches

*Steve Moles catches up with Toto at the Parc des Expositions in Strasbourg and James Last performing at Sheffield Arena*



*Above, Toto live at Parc des Expositions, Strasbourg*

**T**oto - no, no - not the small dog at Judy Garland's heels - the rock band composed of session musicians. You remember? How about 'Rosanna' or 'Africa'? There you go, 'tis no other than they. What's more, they've just completed an eight-week sell out tour of Europe, and not small gigs either. Toto have toured Europe almost every year of the nineties, and for 1999 we are talking 4-10,000 seaters. Now purists will seize on this fact as yet another reason why we shouldn't join a Federal Europe - our musical tastes are completely different. But are they?

The tour was so successful that it's returning to the continent in October for another six to eight weeks, and Kennedy Street are staging the first show at the NEC. Besides nostalgia, there are other reasons why you might choose to pop along to Birmingham and see them. Like my mum always used to say, 'You can actually hear the words, not like these modern pop groups'. Add to that some astonishing guitar playing from Steve Lukather and the ephemeral pleasure of hearing Simon Phillips prove that drum solos can be entertaining, nay riveting, and you have begun a compelling list of pluses. And there's the show itself. The band besport themselves like a superannuated Fun Lovin' Criminals - they have a ball on stage, a characteristic conveyed by their music and actions. For two-and-a-half hours we can all join in. Cue: old men in faded denims punching the air.

Production was full of surprises. On sound we had Colin Norfield, a house mixer, historically closely associated with Cliff Richard and Flashlight systems, (and lighting saw Andy Doig, who's spent not a little time with Chris de Burgh, similarly using the most esoteric of rigs). "I've been away from Cliff for almost a year now," Norfield began. "As for the PA, I've been using lots of different systems, X-Array for a big pop star in Japan, and here the Martin W8 system from Capital Sound. I still look for that 'Turbo' sound, but can say I'm getting to like this system." Norfield has adapted to the new PA aided by systems man Kevin Hopgood, experimenting most with deployment. "It's that 50° horizontal dispersion that took some getting used to." Said Norfield. "We started off with the

cabinets too close together, six wide and the front wrap was almost flat. Things started beaming. Now we just have four wide for most halls, and the cabinets are wide apart and pretty tightly curved." Capital provide the MAN Transformer flying system with its adjustable bumpers. A free-floating beam balance type device, it allows almost infinite flexibility on how PA clusters are shaped and where they point. For a wide, shallow hall, the 200° of coverage this afforded was more than adequate, and just 12 boxes a side in the air and another eight on the floor was more than enough.

The prevailing sound was open and uncompressed. Norfield is a naturalistic engineer, next to his beloved PM4000 his typical FOH rack is small. Five dbx 160XTs lightly applied to all the vocalists; a brace of BSS 402DPRs; an M5000, SPX900 and 990; a Roland SDE3000; and just a pair of Drawmer gates for the drums. "I just need one for the second kick peddle," (Phillips uses a double Kick kit), "the one that's linked to the hi-hat mechanism. It's just to cut that light thud on the drum head when all he's really doing is working the hat".

On stage, Ian Newton has run monitors for the band since '94, "Our first gig together was at a festival," he said. "The monitors were from Clair Brothers, the band liked them and we've used them ever since. The wedges have a nice tight sound that really suits them. They are especially good for the vocals, I run this close to the edge as far as feedback is concerned."

There is one performer, lead vocalist Bobby Kimball, who uses the Shure in-ear system, "he's so loud," reported Newton, "that if he was on wedges he'd deafen the band." All the vocalists use Shure SM58s except Kimball who's on an Audio Technica 4053, "Which handles his voice really well." A sentiment endorsed by Norfield; both men admitted chomping at the bit for an AT radio version of the same microphone.

"I put mainly rhythm and guitar through the side-fills," continued Newton. "Dave Paich on keys has his own Shubert wedge as well as a CBA one, Phillips has his own Mackie mixer - takes a feed from me - and mixes his own preference through a pair of Meyer UP1Ps, Steve Lukather likes mostly mid-high info, lots of 6 and 8 kHz. I do start the show at low level, but usually by the second or third



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number I've run out of headroom." Hence his comment about close to the edge. Newton mixes from an XL4 with a 16-channel XL3 stretch, he has a rack of 16 TC1128s, using the programmable feature to recall some varying EQs for distinct songs in the set.

This is a lighting and video spectacle, but not in any conventional sense.

Doig and video director Blue Leach have both worked for the band for several years, and have attained the band's confidence to such an extent that they can really be exploratory. "It was apparent on

the last tour that we had gained their trust," said Doig. "The important thing for them is for the timing to be on the money, otherwise they are happy to let us come up with the ideas."

The show is challenging technologically, though simply presented. A curved RP screen hangs across the back, taking image from two Telescan TPS projectors each side backstage, and

downstage left and right a pair of Telescan MK Vs. To complete the screen projectors, Leach has a pair of Barco 9200s from PSL positioned upstage centre.

"The TPS is a 6kW HMI with a double scroller on the front," Doig explained. "One of which can rotate, and they also have Telescan three-colour mixing." Doig has always been a strong exponent of all things Telescan: with this item under DMX control he is particularly pleased. "I'm not stuck to it, I like using the PIGI system too, its greater accuracy can be really useful, but with DMX for the TPS I can run them from the Wholehog II."

Doig's rig is quite expensive in content; one of the ways he stretched his budget was to eschew production rehearsals and pre-programme using WYSIWYG. His other components include six Skylights (from Skylight in France) complete with scrollers and dowers. Not a lamp you expect within the confines of an indoor arena, in close quarters they were perceptibly smooth movers and at 4.2kW of Xenon source, a punchy item. Sat on the floor across the back-line Doig often bounced Skylight beams off a dozen static mirrors mounted beneath the front and rear trusses. "I like to recycle light," he quipped, but joking aside these lamps are big



That's essentially how Toto escape the pomposity label - they don't take themselves too seriously. By the same token, both sound and light could be over-blown, but manage to maintain the humour that makes this show such fun. For two-and-a-half hours that's good going. Finally, thanks from L&SI to Toto for treating us to a trip to Strasbourg, and to Snakatak, especially Frank, for providing such marvellous cuisine on a day when France was shut.

hitters and could easily overwhelm a show but Doig has managed to balance them with other equally striking effects. Neg Earth as main lighting contractor provide a rig comprising a dozen High End Cyberlights, split between the two trusses, and 16 Clay Paky Miniscans in four clusters of four across the back. The Cyber's are Doig's main lighting instrument; the Miniscans, "are my Pars" he says, underlining the complete lack of conventional lighting in his rig. (On a technical note, lighting man Phil De Bossier reported a problem with the Miniscans, "I'm not sure if it's a bad bulb batch from Osram or the lamp itself, but the bulbs tended to explode on fire-up first thing each fit-up. This often took out part of the optical train. I've discovered that removing the lamp cover and heating the bulbs with a shrink-tube gun for a few minutes each morning, then igniting them soon thereafter seems to solve the problem." Something he was tempted to try one particularly cold morning in Estonia early in the tour).

Leach has produced a fair amount of imagery for the show: "About 65% of what I use for the set is material I shot and edited myself. I explained what I had in mind to the band and they said, 'go ahead and do it'." Leach uses adjectives like 'ironic' and 'humorous' to explain his work - 'surreal' was the lasting impression I was left with. The show opening is typical: Doig has the two TPS machines project a bowler-hatted man's head (not unlike the famous Manet painting), scroll gently up from the stage floor. He is sporting a pair of binoculars onto the lenses of which Leach superimposes video. It's an exposition of seamless multi-media - add in equally potent projected images from the Mk Vs downstage and it is often hard to tell where one ends and the other begins. The Telescans provide a constantly different framing, Leach then uses video footage and four live cameras to produce an ever-changing montage of active image.

"The lyrics can be quite ambiguous" said Leach, "It means you can interpret what you want. In the song 'Cruel World' for example, the narrative is quite painful. But I've been able to look at it and poke fun at it." To which end he includes some classic archive B&W footage from early Tom and Jerry cartoons replete with anvil/head collisions. "Though I did ask the band first" he added, "can I mock your song?"

**B**ig and small, from Fairfield Halls to the NIA, this man sells tickets year after year. You have to admit, for some James Last is excitement personified. Good heavens, a man died at one of his concerts in Croydon last week! 'Says something about the average age of punter' I thought. Until that is, someone pointed out to me that punters often die at concerts, and one famously died at a Stones show a few years back. 'What's that got to do with James Last?' I thought. 'Only the fact that both bands are of a similar vintage.' Now that is saucy. I wonder how Jagger would like being compared with the Teutonic King of Swing? Of course, Last (real name is Hansi - German for James, apparently) is a tad older than Jagger - 70 the week of my visit in fact - but his rise to real fame more or less coincides with the 'Stones. "Tonight we vill play songs from over zee past 35 years," he intoned at the start of the show.

This is the second time I've reviewed this band, (June '95 was the last time, so I'm not looking for any medals). This time around, I stayed to the end. A great show - who else could you go and see where security can be laid back enough to let the audience dance in the aisles? - fan clubs performing on-cue stunts to the songs, and a pacey, two-act, 150 minutes of music. I have discovered his secret: "I belieff zat wiz all ze bad news around you nid to listen to moozic to keep you young." A fact no better evidenced than by a fabulous swing arrangement of Cher's latest hit 'Believe'. His simple key is to take contemporary music and make it danceable in the man/woman, arm outstretched, joined at the hip kind of fashion. Thing is, he's done this to 35 years of contemporary music; thus we were treated to everything from Modern (Cher) through a Beatles medley to La Paloma. Jaw-dropper of the night was a re-working of Puff Daddy's own re-working of the Police classic 'Every breath you take' complete with rap vocals. James Last? Puff Daddy? Pass the Valium please.

*"It's an exposition of seamless multi-media - add in equally potent projected images from the Mk Vs downstage and it is often hard to tell where one ends and the other begins."*

No longer able to blow the tunes himself, James Last spends most of the time keeping his band in time. Conducting is not quite the right word, but he is the father figure that keeps them all in check. In total there are 40 musicians on stage so house engineer Paul 'Paddi' Addison has his work cut out. "He's not averse to rocking it up a bit," he said. "Which in a way is my biggest problem - the audience like it quiet."

Addison is using a mainly Turbosound Flashlight system from Britannia Row, and lot's of it. Plenty of flown low-end as well as floor stacked, and fill cabinets for delays: "It's all about distribution - the last thing I want to do is have the low end thumping into the chests of the front rows, or the highs razoring someone's head in the middle." An ironic statement, coming from the same engineer who fronts the Beastie Boys, but then Addison is nothing if not versatile. There are 16 string players on stage, all violins, nine horns, plus an ensemble electric band, a couple of other acoustic instruments, and six vocalists. Addison's biggest difficulty is without doubt the horns: "Acoustically they're very loud and directional for the front rows. Because the band are very much part of the live show - they jump up and down and move all over the place - putting the usual Perspex screens in front of them is not an option." Thus Addison is to be found constantly riding the faders of his PM4000 keeping the system level tied as closely as possible to the prevailing level coming off the stage from the horns. OK for a room like the Sheffield Arena, "a real nightmare in a small hall like Croydon."

Bernd Weinz runs an open monitor system from an XL3, a mix of mainly Turbosound single 12", with a pair of 15"s in the middle for Last. Which gives Addison yet another little conundrum to solve: "He likes to hear the room." Which leads to the curious state of affairs where the PA is flown up stage of the front line. 'He won't take side fills?' "No. Doesn't like them, it has to be the room," which in turn presents feedback problems with the string players: "so I put them all together in a single group and run them

*James Last, 'the Teutonic King of Swing', gets 'em dancing in the aisles at Sheffield Arena*

through a Varicurve, and take large notches out." That's probably the only significant compromise in a fairly natural-sounding show; the strings are audibly artificial in rendition, compressed through a BSS 402, doubled via an H3000, and 'Large Church' reverb from a Lexicon 480, makes for a powerful but unnatural sound. However that element of compression is distinctive to Last's recorded oeuvre as well, so what the heck?

Lighting design is by a man of similar vintage; while Last was planting his flag on the mountain of easy listening, Phil Freeman was producing his first glimmers for Simon Dupre and the Big Sound. Unlike Last, Freeman has changed radically over the years, lighting any and every kind of music (in L&S1 most recently lighting Jamiroquai). As such, he brings an adventurousism to the show that Last revels in. "At the end of the first show the production manager came up to me," said Freeman. "He said 'You've passed. Last just came and said, I like zis bloke - he's psychedelic.'" And there are some classic touches - not least Freeman's spot-on gobo selection.

Supplied by Neg Earth (spring always seems to be a good season for them), Freeman's rig at first appears quite conventional, front truss plus two boxes cranked slightly upstage in the middle, and largely filled with Pars. But he does have 11 Clay Paky HPEs, half a dozen Studio Colors, and three 5kW with Colorams tucked in amongst them. Upstage is a cyc', lit top and bottom, the



rear box truss is raked slightly to force the perspective at the rear, "It stops it looking like a letter box," said Freeman, "especially for the front rows." He has all the Pars (230 of them, eight strings of ACLs) all

ganged into just 2 and 4kW groups on an Avolites Diamond III. "It would be easy just to use all those Pars in big 16kW washes, but this way I can get lots of different looks out of six colours."

Apart from a clutch of Altman Shakespeare sil's which he uses to tease up the principal musicians, Freeman's show is an exploitation of his wash armoury, coupled with the HPE's doing a ton of work either on the cyc or the band, to give the show some animation. He also puts light into the audience, something not done on previous tours, which seems to help encourage the punters into the aisles.

Freeman is a man known to me for almost 20 years: he is a rock 'n'roller, so to see him punching in vintage 60s flower gobos, and contra-rotating patterns onto the cyc, says much about what fun a Last show can be. Call me old fashioned, but I don't care who knows: if I had to go to any concert hall this coming New Year's Eve, Last's would be a top candidate.

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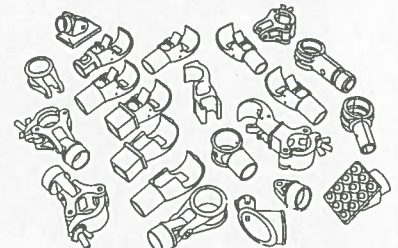
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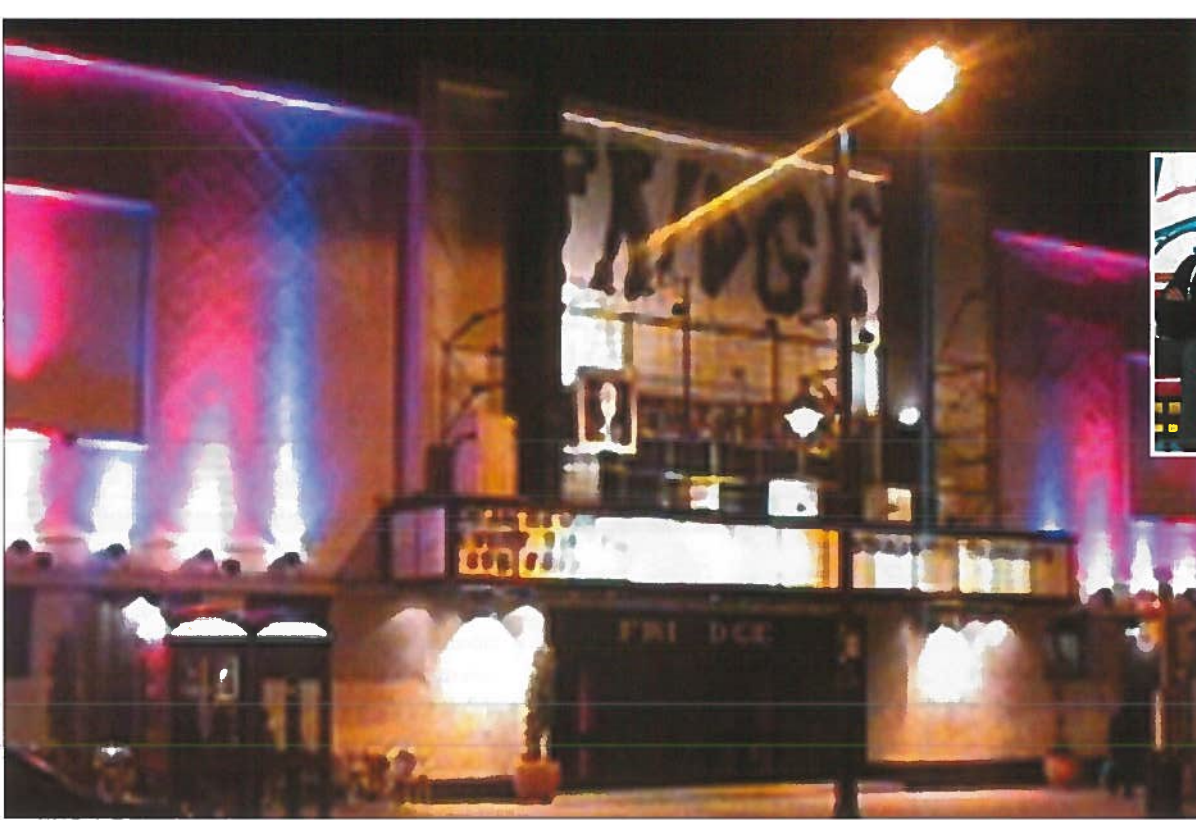
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Mike Mann  
takes a peek  
inside the  
Fridge and  
finds Soul  
stew on the  
menu

# Dead Monkey Alive in the Fridge

**D**avid Soul is nothing if not brave. The *Dead Monkey* by Nick Darke has twice received mixed reviews, firstly when it opened with the RSC in 1986 and then again with Soul and his partner Alexa Hamilton taking the lead roles at the Whitehall Theatre. And choosing the Fridge Club in Brixton for the play's latest production can hardly be said to be a conventional move. Co-produced this time by Soul, Hamilton and Fridge owner Andrew Czezowski, *The Dead Monkey* is directed by Lisa Giglio. Souls's former co-star Antonio Fargas ('Huggy Bear' from 'Starsky and Hutch') completes the cast list.

## WIPEOUT

The 'bizarre black comedy' portrays the deterioration of the relationship between burnt-out Californian surfer Hank and his upwardly-mobile wife Dolores. The plot moves swiftly from the couple's problems of self-esteem and marital jealousy into the taboo areas of bestiality, rape and finally murder, yet is punctuated with a series of one-liners that prevent the play from ever really gripping the audience. Disappointingly, perhaps, the eponymous monkey is already dead at the start of Act I, and its replacement (a Macedonian Curly Pig called Dogduck!) is never actually seen. Music plays an important part, and the original concept of this production of *The Dead Monkey* was to weave live music into the dialogue. However, space restrictions in the 86-year old ex-cinema have necessitated a few compromises. Music cues and sound effects are controlled on-stage by DJ

Mickey Smith, whose silent presence keeps the tempo alive through the two-act play. Indeed, the slow start to Act II was notable for its lack of mood music. Live music with David Soul, Smith and Saint Bean's band The Religion is included as part of the evening, as is a club session, both following the end of the play.

## WRITING ON THE WALL

Technically speaking, it is surprising to see how a very limited budget has been used to great effect. The seedy set from the Whitehall Theatre production has been resurrected and modified by the Fridge's Tez Granger, who also works as a sculptor, and local graffiti artists have been employed to update the eighties decor. The lack of wings and rear-stage space has meant that the set stays on stage for the live concert which follows the play, with the cut-up VW camper van body being used as a keyboard console - complete with working headlights. Production manager Andy Glancy pointed out that the stage was not the only area with space problems: "We can't store the set in the building, so it has to be struck every Friday morning, taken to our outside store and rebuilt on Monday to allow our usual weekend club nights and shows."

## BLACK LIGHTING

The Fridge is very well-equipped with conventional club lighting, and in-house LD John Brown only required a clutch of extra fresnels, Cantatas and a ripple tank (all supplied by White Light) to adapt Adam Crossthwaite's original concept to a smaller



THEATRE



"We can't store the set in the building, so it has to be struck every Friday morning, taken to our outside store and rebuilt on Monday to allow our usual weekend club nights and shows."



stage. Brown comments: "This is an unusual project for us; though the crew members are almost all ex-theatre, we are used to

having total control over the design, so working to a very tight brief was a challenge." Clever use was made of the Fridge's in-house rig, with doubled-up Par cans being used for a variety of effects including a convincing seashore sunrise. Hank's steady degeneration into violence is matched by a hardening of the look as the plot unfolds.

One strange element is the use of an almost serene ripple-tank effect during what appears to be the play's unpleasant climax - but when the violence actually peaks in the following scene, a pair of asynchronous gelled strobes lend an air of surreal madness to the acting. Lighting for the play is controlled through the Fridge's Avolites Azure board, while the concert lighting was run from a pair of Jands Event desks. This necessitates some re-patching during the 45-

minute changeover, and the large number of scanners in the building means that Brown and his crew are forced to power down any unused moving lights to reduce on-stage ambient noise levels.

#### NOIZE IN DA HOUSE

The sound design for this production is similarly basic; radio mics were rejected partly for cost reasons, but also as Alexa Hamilton appears semi-clad for much of the play and it was felt that a visible belt-pack would detract from the visual power of her role. Tim Blennerhassett, resident FOH sound man at the Fridge, contacted Autograph Sound for advice on a cost-effective solution. "Autograph have been very good to us. This is really a case of reinforcing, not over-amplifying. I'm leaving all

the mic faders open throughout the play, and just riding individual mics when I can see that there will be trouble." Crown PZMs were chosen and their placement on the restricted stage carefully selected to avoid mechanical damage and foot noise. Three mics are used as downstage floats, with a further two upstage left and right and a sixth built into the set. The end result, using the house Martin Audio system through a TAC Scorpion desk, belies the simplicity of the system. Rather than being conscious of amplified voices, it seems as though the cast was performing on a particularly ambient stage. Music, though cued from on-stage, is mixed from the FOH position and, though loud by normal theatre standards, blends appropriately with the vocal level. One unfortunate side-effect of the Fridge's normal club use is its lack of acoustic isolation from the neighbouring Fridge Bar, whose choice of music risks spoiling the quietest moment of the play. For the live set, Dean Gainsburgh-Watkins is responsible for on-stage sound and juggling the eight vocal mics packed onto the small stage. The monitor system comprises a Midas Pro 4 console with Peavey and Gauss wedges and sidefills.

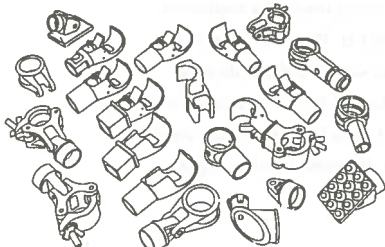
#### SOULFUL HARMONY

The Dead Monkey is a play of miscommunication and friction - which contrasts perfectly with the creative harmony of the Fridge crew who have clearly worked hard on this unusual concept. Ultimately, it is the paying public who will decide whether this unconventional mix of black comedy, live and recorded music will work. The loyal members of the David Soul Appreciation Club that I spoke to were certainly convinced, and if they will give it a try, so should the theatreland cynics.



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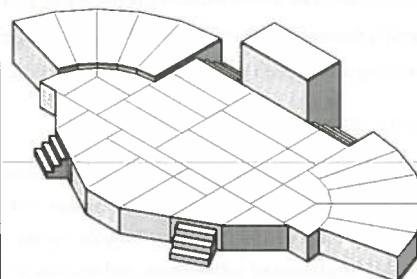


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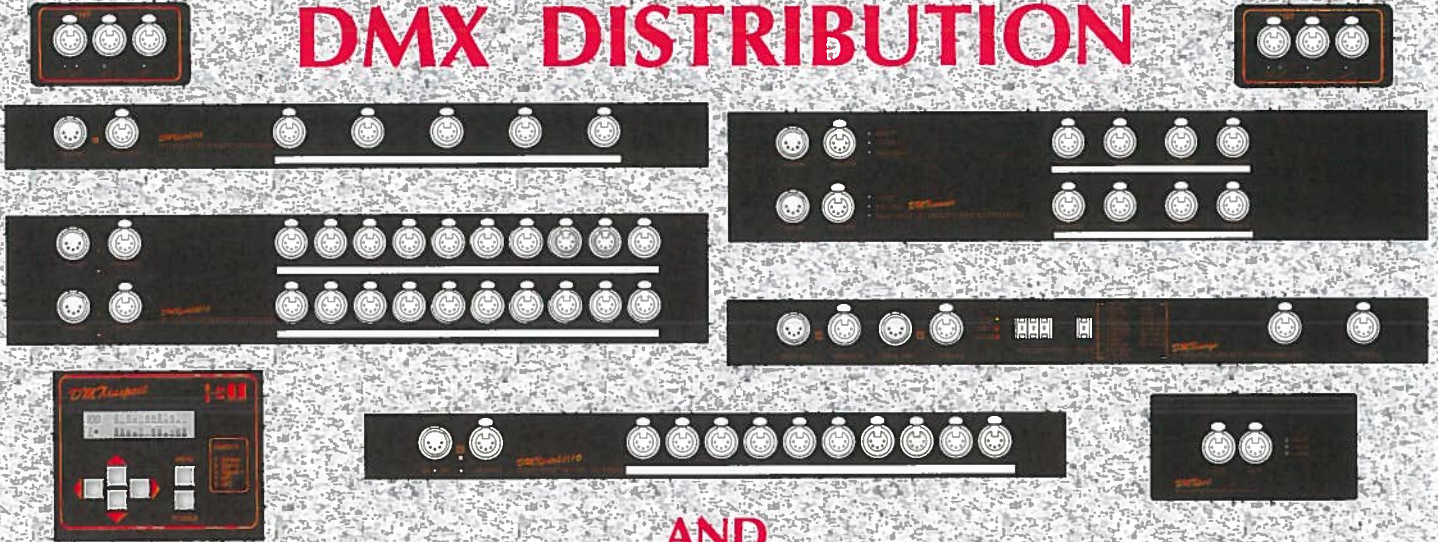


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# Ian Herbert, Asleep in the Stalls...

**H**ave you heard the news? They're wearing mikes at the National. Well, of course you've heard about it; you probably read the specification for the refurbishment of the Olivier which put in the new sound enhancement system a while back. It seems to have come as a terrible surprise to some arts correspondents the other week, however, and part-opened a can of worms at the same time.

**THERE'S NO** problem about smoothing out the sound in the Olivier: it has some awful dead spots, and the enhancement is there to deal with them. End of story, as explained in a defensive article by Trevor Nunn in the Daily Telegraph. "The overwhelming majority of the sound that the audience receives is the actor's live voice, projected to the fullest capability of the company, with full use of the diaphragm and extreme attention to articulation." (He really does talk like that, I'm afraid.)

**SO WE CAN** all sleep easy, except that one of the stories had it that the actors in *Betrayal*, played in the Lyttelton by a cast including Mrs Nunn, were also miked. I'm sure this was just a malicious

rumour, except that when I put it to Genista Mackintosh she kept a diplomatic silence. Or perhaps she didn't hear me - after all, the Olivier does have its dead spots.

**ENHANCEMENT OR NO**, we've been having some super times in the Olivier lately with the new resident rep company, NT Ensemble 99. The technical work on *Candide* is as assured as that for *Troilus*, which I raved about last time. Paul Pyant has lit both with obvious enjoyment, using some very strong gels for the Bernstein. This opens with Simon Russell Beale, the narrator, in a single spotlight centre-stage. He then walks round the amphitheatre edge, which lights up as he goes, to complete the circle. Throughout both productions the lighting assumes as much importance as the sets, a feature of several recent shows. For *Candide*, John Napier practises a similar economy to Rob Howell's *Troilus*: apart from the amphitheatre surround and a hanging hollow circle which give a vague suggestion of a Voltairean scientific instrument, say an astrolabe, there's just a set of chests which fit into one another, like Russian dolls, to do most of the scenic work. The *Troilus* sound is pitched carefully at the invisible enhancement level (though Gary Yershon's score sounds as if it's in Sensurround at the Odeon), while that for *Candide* respects its status as a chamber musical, fading in just enough to raise the singing above the large but lightly-scored band. You barely notice the transitions from unmiked speech to ever-so-gently assisted song, which is a real compliment to Paul Groothuis's levels. And the singers, incidentally, are terrific. In both shows, what you really notice is the work of their splendidly large casts, which is as it should be.

**STRANGE TO REPORT**, there's a similar economy of set in favour of lighting and sound - and especially actors - in the new blockbuster musical, *Mamma Mia*. Mark Thompson may have been given a smaller budget than usual, but the Greek taverna he has supplied as the main stage decoration does all that is needed, revolving to give interiors and exteriors and leaving plenty of stage space for the big cast to exercise itself.

**THE POINT** of the show is to deliver a couple of dozen Abba numbers, affectionately sent up but backed by a very recognisable soundlike

band. This is all very efficiently achieved, with Howard Harrison's lighting so unobtrusive that you're quite surprised to see a whole trussload of moving lights come down on stage, as if to take their own curtain call, and unleash their full whirling, colour-changing capabilities on the finale.

**ALL IN ALL** it's been a good month for lighting designers, with Hartley T A Kemp turning up trumps again with a plot that contributes most of the spatial definition to *Good* at the Donmar; Simon Corder fighting (and winning) against a very red John Gunter set for *Mefistofele* at the Coliseum - and incidentally forcing you to take seriously a production that its director, Ian Judge, was prepared to view simply as an exercise in low camp; and Nigel Edwards a key operator with the very light-conscious Jeremy Herbert in the superbly clear RSC production of *Roberto Zucco*, a play I had always thought to be almost impenetrable.

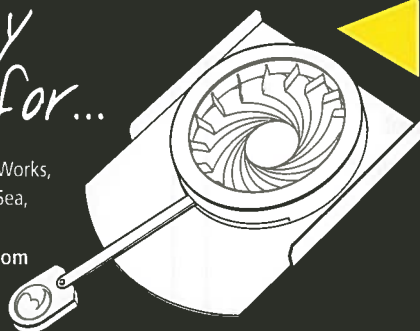
**WHAT SHINES** through all these examples is designers putting their skills at the service of actors. For too long we've been coming out of shows humming the sets and almost forgetting the tiny figures scrambling about them. Now, I suspect, we're returning to the proper use of design as an integrated part of the production rather than its leading edge. Only one of the recent big new shows jars, and it's not Tim Hatley's magnificently decadent jungle (suitably backed by Mark Henderson's baroque lighting and John Leonard's literally thunderous sound score) for *Suddenly Last Summer*. That's what the magnificently decadent Tennessee Williams needs, and without it the play's desperate thinness of construction would be much more apparent. No, I mean the *Hamlet* at the Young Vic which Paul Rhys is leading so excitingly. At first sight, Es Devlin's slightly Japanese wooden platforms seem the model of restraint, but as they sprout extra protuberances and begin to waggle up and down you begin to wonder where it's all leading. A simple traverse production, with maybe the possibility of bringing in bridges, would be fine. As it is, you spend too much time wondering what will be the next unnecessary twiddle to the stage: when we came back from the interval to find a whole army of miniature soldiers lined up beside it I could hardly restrain my laughter. It doesn't help Adam Silverman's lighting either; he's chosen to accentuate the raised traverse by putting most of his lanterns straight up and down it, but since he has also chosen to hang them from the Young Vic's low balcony he puts a lot of strong light straight into the actors' eyes, and the audience's too. 'More matter and less art', as someone says during the play's four hours. It's wonderful to see a *Hamlet* that plays the full text, but annoying that it should be strung out even further by all those fiddly little set adjustments.

"What shines through all these examples is designers putting their skills at the service of actors. For too long we've been coming out of shows humming the sets and almost forgetting the tiny figures scrambling about them."

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# Technical Talk

*The exterior of the  
Liverpool Community  
College Arts Centre*

*Inset, Mike Moran, head  
of sound (left) working  
with a student*

**Photos: Tim Hall-Smith**

**N**estling downtown amidst mile upon mile of beautiful, decaying historic buildings and the distinctive skyline dominated by the austerity of the Anglican Cathedral at one end and the gawky, unsure modernism of the Catholic Cathedral at the other, is a brand new purpose-built four storey construction. This is the Liverpool Community College Arts Centre - the largest further education arts centre in the country, offering the widest range of courses. Louise Stickland visited Liverpool to find out more.

The facilities and feel of the place have been designed, planned and developed by those with vision, a modern, progressive mindset and a realisation of the importance of technology and training within the performing arts of the future.

The Arts Centre of LCC amalgamates all the College's performing arts sections with Production and Music Technology, Music, IT, Professional Media, Printing, Photography, Design, Clothing Technology and Fine Arts departments - into one vibrant, creative melting pot in the centre of town. Previous to the Myrtle Street merge, the College's performing arts sections had operated out of 16 dilapidated, inadequate sites dispersed across the city, with nil chance for inter-course cross-fertilisation.

Over £7 million pounds of funding came from a combination of the sale of the existing college buildings, the Further Education Funding Committee (FEFC) and from an ERDF European Community grant. This was topped up with a further £1 million which went towards the equipping of the new facility. The IT installation alone was worth a million pounds, undertaken by Holdens Computer Services of Preston, including iMacs scattered throughout every department, and a pool of Mac G3s in the Media Studies newsroom. With paint wet on the walls and Kangos lurching in the background, the contractors were still in residence when the first pupils and staff moved in.

The buzz and energy is evident as soon as you set foot inside the light wood-laminated foyer and the continental-style café that looks out

onto the street of the ground floor, ideal for people-watching during breaks. People at LCC are incredibly friendly, helpful and communicative, exuding a natural air of openness and accessibility. It's the sort of vibe that makes anyone feel immediately comfortable . . . and this is just one aspect of a very unique atmosphere.

Liverpool Community College as an umbrella incorporates all FE and technical establishments in Liverpool, offering over 600 academic and vocational courses, with a total population of over 18,000 students and 1,000 staff. Apart from being the largest and most pro-active performing arts higher education college in the country, LCC was also the first FE establishment in the area to offer performing arts courses - dating back 14 years.

Running in tandem with the performing arts courses is the forward-thinking Production Technology section of LCC. This is also well established, launched 12 years ago, initially evolving from the need for technical support within the performing arts section's own dance and drama production projects.

The formative years of the Production Technology course saw close associations evolve with two local theatres - The Liverpool Playhouse and The Neptune Theatre, both of which offered support and access to a full repertory programme. The course was also developed in close association with LCC's Music department, a link that has taken on an increasing significance with the development of both the live touring and dance music industries as legitimate and valid career paths.

The move to the new building with its impressive facilities, combined with the march of technological advances in entertainment and commercial production over the last decade, has led to LCC's Production Technology course being completely restructured and relaunched. Now titled the somewhat grandiose 'BTEC National Diploma in Applied Theatre Technology' for accreditation purposes and nearing the end of its first year, it is intended to produce production technologists for the Millennium and beyond. The core modules of the course are electrics, IT, the production process, business and professional skills, multi-



media technology, health and safety, an introduction to recording studios, lighting, sound and production management. In the second year, students go on to specialise in lighting technology - live production, sound technology - live production, advanced recording studios, advanced multi-media technology and specialist projects. Students have to produce a research thesis and complete work experience.

Lecturer Jonathan Hartley is one of the course's key advocates and activists. He collaborates closely with Peter McDevitt from First Lighting who looks after lighting and electrical elements and Mike Moran, (previously of Ad Lib Audio), who heads up the sound department.

Hartley is acutely aware of the seminal role played by technology in shaping and changing the production industry. He keenly embraces new methods, multi-skilling, the digital age and the huge advantages it offers to production technologists both now and in the future.

He's also enough of a pragmatist to recognise an often overlooked technological dichotomy - that students leaving LCC need to go into the 'real world' armed with practical, theoretical and improvisational skills and knowledge needed to use all types of equipment - new, old, bizarre, obscure and often ridiculous - in all scenarios - not just the latest and the greatest high-tech wizardry.

Hartley, McDevitt and Moran were fortunate to have a certain level of technical and design input into the construction of the Arts Centre. Having all encountered the eccentricities of production realities before

entering academia, they were cute to several things. The two vital elements for them were Space and Power. If these were in abundance, then performance-wise, virtually everything would be possible! Their advice and desire for 'total flexibility' were enthusiastically endorsed and enshrined in The Arts Centre.

The main venue at The Arts Centre is called G2, measuring 16.5 metres by 14.5 metres. Headroom to the all-over rigging mesh (installed by Unusual Rigging) is just under six metres, seven metres to the internally-wired bars and eight metres to the ceiling. It has a 300 amp three-phase supply with a further 300 amps available as a breakout from the main distro. G2 also has a two-thirds sprung dance floor - one of only a few in Liverpool

The secondary performance space, G26, measures 11.5 metres by 8.5 metres with a clear seven metres headroom to the grid (accessed by Tallescope) and a further metre to the ceiling. It has its own 100 amp three-phase supply. The idea

with the second space was for it to be tall, black and empty. The two rooms are adjacently positioned, divided by a removable partition for combination if desired.

The get-in for both venues is via a sensible two metre by three metre ground level



Above and left, the recording studio, just to the side of G2, is fully functional but not yet complete.

access corridor from the rear car park with plenty of headroom for tall scenery pieces.

Hartley explains that the absolute essence of both performance areas is that they provide totally unrestrained and flexible spaces for both performers and technologists working within them. Staging is demountable Top Deck modules, supplied by MSL. Bleacher seating is from Design Seating Ltd with additional seating from Sandler Seating, offering the option of raising the performers, the audience or both in a variety of formats.

The attitude to equipment followed the same philosophical route. Although the Arts Centre needs certain core items, Harley was determined to avoid purchasing specifics in certain areas, e.g. moving lights. He felt that this would effectively force students down a one-dimensional route of using what's there as opposed to that they want or need to incorporate into their shows. "If they are staging a production and they want to light it with a certain type of intelligent fixture because they feel that is the best instrument for the job, then we will hire it in. They can shape their own designs and productions as opposed to having the existing gear do it for them," he states emphatically.

Flexibility is the buzzword at LCC. There are two elevated control room positions available in G2 and consoles can also be run from the floor. In G26, the options are an elevated position or the floor. The entire building has been cabled for maximum inter-departmental connectivity. Video feeds and sound tie lines mean that performances can be recorded in G2 and G26, as well as in a number of other recital rooms on different floors throughout the building.

The performance spaces are thus enabled as utilities to more departments than just production technology. A live band or a dance piece might be filmed, recorded and then mixed onto CD or mini disk as a project by Music Technology, IT,

Media Studies or any other department that so desire for an exercise or project. Category 5 data lines also connect every area throughout the building, theoretically allowing packets of digital information to be passed between departments and facility areas across the network - without ever having to leave the servers.

Dimming is provided by ADB digital Euroracks, giving 96 ways in G2 and 48 in G26, and the house desk is an ADB Tenor, all of which was installed by Northern Lighting Systems under the direction of Lee Forde.

Console-wise, again the emphasis is on allowing students to experiment and experience all types rather than locking them in to one brand. In the last 12 months they have worked with Jands Events, Avolites Pearls, Zero 88 XLs and Sirius 24s, Strand M24s and an assortment of manual desks. "It's important for our technologists to have the confidence to operate a broad cross-section of desks, because that's what they'll encounter when they start their professional careers," explains Hartley.

Again, the course juggles the creative possibilities of cutting-edge equipment with realistic expectations of the theatre, club and venue circuit likely to be encountered in early stages of professional life. Those leaving LCC are unlikely to walk straight into a job working with a top 10 band or a prestigious arts organisation with a bottomless production budget!

LCC currently own a miscellany of traditional theatre lanterns and Par cans, much of it purchased second-hand. On the day of my visit, a batch of ex-RSC Touring Company lanterns had just arrived. Six-lamp bars and Source Four profiles are planned for the near future. Another locally-based company, PCM, make Lodestar Motors and rigging available as and when they are needed.

The building exudes a massive creative dynamic. Wandering the colour-coded floors brings blasts of different types of music from various practice rooms, dance classes rehearsing their productions, the highly-regarded theatre costume section creating masterpieces, and in the foyer an

The two vital elements for them were Space and Power. If these were in abundance, then performance-wise, virtually everything would be possible!

exhibition of final year projects and the latest in 3D design from the top floor.

Mike Moran, head of sound, studied Music at LCC in 1983 before becoming a musician and then a sound engineer. In January he took up a full-time teaching post at LCC and the new environment suits him. I encountered him setting up both the college's mobile PA systems for students to do a comparative test in G2. Their two sound systems are a brand new Ad Lib Audio system designed by Dave Fletcher, and a quality antique Zeck (EV) system which is 12 years old, but still giving good active service. The mobile systems can be used with any of four consoles - a Soundcraft LX7, Spirit Live or Spirit Folio or an elderly Allen & Heath 12/4/2. Once again, as with lighting, the idea is not to restrict students to using any one type of system. If they design an audio rig for an event which doesn't utilise the in-house equipment, it can be hired in.

Having the Music department located in the same building is a great asset in terms of a good supply of readily available students of rock, jazz, digital and classical music, all engaged in on-going and assessed projects needing sound systems or acoustic treatment of varying degrees. Moran feels LCC's ability, via close proximity of the Music department, to continually challenge the production technology students - with something problematic such as acoustic jazz - is a huge plus.

A recital room on the first floor hosts a concert every Tuesday lunchtime. The necessary equipment - dependent on the style of music performed - is taken up there and set up each week. A myriad of other internal events take place throughout the week, and external bookings (both from other off-site sections of LCC and the commercial world) are steadily flowing in for G2 and G26 - without a single advert.

The recording studio, just to the side of G2, is fully functional but not yet complete. Its spacious environs currently offer fully



Above, the learning resource centre and library

Right, Lecturer Jonathan Hartley, one of the course's key advocates and activists



Photograph: Louise Stickland

computerised mix down and multi-track recording facilities. There's a comprehensive array of outboard effects for creating and enhancing analogue or digital, live or pre-recorded music, plus a Soundcraft DC2020 40-input console and full monitoring system. A digital recording studio will soon be ready for action. Its Mackie D8B console, sourced by Hartley at PLASA 98, has just arrived.

Central to the teaching structure of the Production Technology course is the on-going organic network of relationships between LCC and various rental companies and venues in the North West. Hartley sees this as fundamental to ensuring students leave informed and with practical knowledge and experience of how the production industry fits together at grass roots level. Students working on placements for these companies have the added bonus of being engaged into the pervasive semi-social infrastructure necessary to maintain a healthy freelance career.

Two years at LCC will see students working on shows at all levels. Companies currently involved include Ad Lib Audio, First Light and DBN Lighting from Manchester, and Hartley is hoping to develop closer ties with many more. Legendary local dance club Cream also

participate and their lighting operators are frequently supplied via LCC and Blueprint, a production company which exists within LCC.

Blueprint was set up by Hartley as a technical support network and community resource for LCC. It operates out of The Arts Centre and offers paid training leading to an NVQ qualification for up to 10 people per year - some of whom will be recent college graduates. Blueprint trainees are responsible for technical production for all Arts Centre events, as well as working with the associated companies outside the college on shows and events. Because of the diversity of the in-house events, they get to light, stage and engineer audio for events including fashion shows, physical theatre, dance, studio theatre shows, community drama festivals, live music of all sorts, sitcoms and quiz shows - the latter for the media studies department who have full TV broadcasting facilities within The Arts Centre.

Hartley also intends to encourage production industry manufacturers, suppliers and service companies to take advantage of the Arts Centre's facilities to run their own technical training or programming courses. He feels this will be mutually beneficial, and will give Blueprint and students access to another avenue of expertise and learning.

LCC have a strong allegiance with the TUC Centre, which has its own venue, The Picket, complete with in-house lighting and sound system - another point of exchange for Blueprint engineers. The TUC centre also has a professional spec recording studio, which is hired out at commercial rates when not in use by themselves, and LCC's Music Technology students specialising in MIDI will often work there.

The Media staff room is relaxed and convivial, featuring plenty of lively, cross-disciplinary debates on contemporary issues. LCC is a modern place of learning that genuinely wants its students to focus their ambitions and enjoyment into their chosen professions. It's late twentieth century education at its most motivated and positive.

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# Jem





THEATRE

**T**he seventies revival is now off and rolling: the start was heralded a few years ago by the West End revival of the musical *Grease* (a 50s story, but firmly rooted in the 70s thanks to the film), continued through a series of films about the disco days and the stage version of *Saturday Night Fever*, and will reach its zenith in the next few weeks with the appearance of the new *Star Wars* film.



# Mamma Mia!

The return of the highlights of that era is perhaps not surprising: those who grew up then are now established in their careers and have money to spend; yet they don't seem to want to leave their childhood behind. Perhaps the absence of war or other big, defining issues mean that they (OK, time to declare my position: we!) are the generation that never really grew up, never really had to grow up. Whatever the reason, they are keen to seek out - and happy to pay for - the entertainment they remember from their youth.

The latest arrival to satisfy this craving is *Mamma Mia!*, a new musical based on the songs of 70s Swedish supergroup ABBA, which opened at the Prince Edward Theatre in London on April 6th this year - by a happy coincidence or masterpiece of PR planning, 25 years to the day after ABBA won the Eurovision Song Contest with *Waterloo*.

What's noticeable about all of the successful '70s revival' projects is that they have been controlled by people who were originally involved in creating them - Robert Stigwood for *Grease* and *Saturday Night Fever*, George Lucas for *Star Wars* - and benefit from some degree of integrity because of that. *Mamma Mia!* is no exception. The idea for the show was formulated by Björn Ulvaeus, and he and Benny Andersson - the two 'B's of ABBA, and the writers of all of their songs - were involved with putting it on stage as writers and producers. The two men are not strangers to theatre: even during the ABBA heyday they were interested in the musical genre, and three songs from ABBA *The Album* were grouped together as *The Girl with the Golden Hair: Three Scenes from a Mini Musical*. Their music was used as the basis of the short-lived show *Abbacadabra* in 1983, and the reason cited for ABBA being put 'on hold' was the two men's desire to work on the musical *Chess* with Tim Rice. *Chess* finally made it to the London stage in 1986, enjoying a reasonably long run there and a much shorter, and much more controversial, run in New York a couple of years later. Subsequently Andersson and Ulvaeus wrote another show, this time in Swedish: *Kristina van Duvemala* is still playing in Stockholm.

*Mamma Mia!* is something slightly different. It is not a new musical, in the sense that the songs aren't new. But neither is it just an 'official' concert

*Rob Halliday looks at the latest slice of 70s revival to hit the London stage*

of ABBA's greatest hits, though that must surely have been tempting given the success enjoyed by ABBA tribute bands such as Björn Again in recent years. Instead, award-winning playwright Catherine Johnson, best known for her work at the Bristol Old Vic and the Bush in London, was brought in to create a story that intertwines itself around 21 ABBA songs ranging from the obvious (*Dancing Queen*, *Money Money Money*) to lesser-known album tracks. Perhaps inspired by the film *Muriel's Wedding*, which featured an ABBA-led soundtrack, Johnson's tale is also based around a wedding, that of 21-year-old Sophie Sheridan who has been brought up on a Greek island by her mother Donna, but who has never known who her father is. Finding her mother's diary, she discovers that there are three possibilities - so she invites all three of them to the big day, with predictable consequences.

As a device for holding the show together, the story works - helped by the fact that it is well-written and funny. The surprising part is that the songs are then dropped in with scarcely a lyric altered, the later songs, which were always self-contained stories in their own right, here finding a larger context.

## Design

To bring the show to the stage, Ulvaeus turned first to Judy Craymer, who served as the executive producer for *Chess* in London, and they then turned to director Phyllida Lloyd, who has enjoyed considerable success in the worlds of drama and opera but is relatively new to musicals. In, too, came set designer Mark Thompson, who played a big part in the nostalgia-musical trend with his designs for *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat* at the Palladium a few years ago and who



Left, Production electrician  
Alistair Grant with set and floor

Below, Andrew Langtree as 'Sky'  
and Lisa Stokker as 'Sophie'

other crosslighting a flown tree, two Wildfire UV units, 90 Wybron scrollers and an assortment of Par cans - including two that are actually confetti blowers from MTFX in Bristol. This rig is backed up by six followspots: two Source Four 10 degrees with City Theatrical spot yokes on the perches and four Pani 1200s front-of-house (how can you do an ABBA musical without Super Troupers?!). An extensive array of M16 battens are also used to help add depth to the

'blue box': the side and back walls are actually boxes with the visible blue walls on one side and what is effectively a bounce cloth on the other. On the floor in between are lines of M16 battens that light the cloths by a mixture of direct and reflected light that works very well. The side wall units have also been given neat little doors upstage to give the crew access when required while sealing the light in at other times. The conventional rig is run from the theatre's own Bytecraft



dimmers (plus one radio-controlled dimmer in each truck, used for some on-set candles) with these, the scrollers and the floor controlled from a Strand 530i console - the show retains two operators rather than trying to link the desk because both are kept so busy. Production electrician Alistair Grant also put the 530's flexible patch and DMX-in system to use by routing the output from the Vari-Lite UDM through the 530 and using it to patch the UDM's 100 sequential DMX outputs to the dimmers that were actually driving the VL5 and DLC bulbs. The rig was installed by the Prince Edward's crew of Gavin McGrath, George Green, Jerry Ball and Roz Evans, with Grant joined by Steve Reeve and Chris Dunford and David Holmes acting as Harrison's assistant.

In performance, it's the lighting that is the first to concede to the audience that they don't have to take the show too seriously if they don't want to, as it breaks away from naturalism and into stronger colours in one of the early numbers. But Harrison always returns to a naturalistic base: big strong backlight dressing the set, often heightening this quite effectively by lighting narrow strips of the upstage wall using tightly-shuttered Source Fours from the upstage booms, this quickly suggesting distant clouds or sunsets. "We always felt that we were driven by the story, not by the need to make it feel like a gig," he notes. "To my surprise, this even meant I kept saying 'turn the haze off' - because with haze we didn't get the clean, clear look of Greek sunlight!". Yet when the rig has to rock, it does, particularly with some wonderfully-timed 'whiteout' moments in Voulez Vous, created by a combination of Vari\*Lites, the floor and Dataflash strobes.

has been on a roll over the last couple of years with shows such as Art, Doctor Dolittle and The Blue Room.

For Mamma Mia!, Thompson has created a fairly minimalist design, giving the show what it needs to support the music and the story with no excess. The Prince Edward's stage is filled with a big blue box with blue borders overhead, the blue representing the Greek sea and sky and textured with painted clouds which give it depth and scale. It is also fastidiously well masked, thanks to the efforts of Thompson, his associate Jonathan Allen and production manager Rodger Neate, along with production carpenters Mickey Murray and Colin Le Genre and the theatre's master carpenter, Simon Grant; even the prompt desk, perhaps visible from two extreme seats, has matching blue masking!

"... how can  
you do an  
ABBA musical  
without Super  
Troupers!?"

Within the box sit two curved Mediterranean-style walls which can rotate and be moved around the stage to give the various locations around the taverna which Donna owns and runs. This is not a high-tech 'mega-musical' though; these pieces are not automated, other than their hydraulic brakes, and are moved around by a team of costumed stage hands who speed on and become part of the swirling, bustling transformation sequences. The only automated element is the central pathway that snakes through the floor and, late in the show, is revealed to a hydraulic lift that rises into the air, leaving the daughter and her fiancée silhouetted against a giant, neon-lit moon that flies in upstage for the final scene.

Beneath the scenic trucks, the floor looks like Greek stone blockwork, but Thompson and lighting designer Howard Harrison have a trick up their sleeves here. What appear to be solid 'stones' are actually translucent lids covering a three-colour-mixing neon system created by Mick Syrett that allows the floor or any part of it to light up in virtually any colour. The floor lighting was installed by Martin Chisnall prior to

the start of the fit-up proper, and run back to a White Light-supplied ETC SmartRack dimmer system installed substage. It works remarkably well, with little trace of neon flicker, lightning-fast reaction and a huge range of colours - enough to allow Harrison to use it both in the obvious 'disco' scenes, but also to give a gently glowing 'sea' of underlit low-smoke (courtesy of two fabulously effective Le Maitre LSG low smoke generators) later in the show.

#### Lighting

Away from the floor, Howard Harrison's rig now looks relatively sparse - the result, as is now so often the case, of finding that your automated lighting rig manages to do not only its own work but the work of many of the conventionals too; these can then be cut and sent back to the hire company to find a life on other shows!

The automated rig in this case is a mixture of old favourites and the very newest products: 18 Vari-Lite VL4s (a firm Harrison favourite for their distinctive beams) sit alongside 10 VL6s, eight VL7s and three VL7Bs. These are the latest variant of the VL7, with a four-blade shuttering system replacing the fixed gobo wheel and iris. Mamma Mia! has one on the circle front and two on the perch booms, allowing shuttered crosslight or frontlight to miss scenery or light to the shape of steps or doors as required. There are also 24 VL5s in the rig, 16 of these painted white and mounted to what looks like a goalpost truss that flies in at the end of the show for the inevitable but hugely enjoyable OTT 'mega mix' finale; the top and sides of the truss are actually split to allow the top line of VL5s to be used during the rest of the show. Control for the Vari\*Lites is from an Artisan, programmed by Vari\*Lite's Andy Voller; the Artisan also runs 11 DHA Digital Light Curtains through a UDM interface.

The conventional side of the rig, all from VLPS/Theatre Projects, includes around 150 ETC Source Fours, two Robert Juliat 2.5kW HMI profiles, one backlighting the lifting path, the

## Sound

Though they're quick to deny it, there's a rumour that Autograph picked the sound design team for the show based on their initials: take the names Andrew Bruce and Bobby Aitken and work it out for yourselves! Aitken claims that it is mere coincidence and that he only noticed when completing the title block for one of the show's drawings. In any case, it's unlikely that Andrew Bruce would have let anyone else beat him to this particular sound design job, given that the show's leading lady is his wife, Siobhan McCarthy - who is on cracking form and gives a wonderful performance. This has also resulted in Andrew being perhaps the first theatre sound designer to feature in Hello magazine . . .

Mamma Mia! is quite a departure from what is now thought of as the 'standard' Autograph Meyer-based system. Instead, the principal loudspeaker system is the V-dosc, backed up by the ARC, both from L-Acoustics. "Björn and Benny were very keen on this system, having used it on their show in Sweden," explains Bobby Aitken, "so we went to hear it and were very impressed. The imaging, in particular, is astonishing; you can almost be right in front of the speakers on one side and still hear a centre image." The speakers are driven using the Lab Gruppen amplifiers with which Autograph were already familiar. Rigging the speakers proved more challenging, the task handled by a Vertigo Rigging team led by Paddy Burnside who had to drill new holes in the Prince Edward's listed ceiling and install custom-made shelves to support the cabinets; Vertigo also carried out all of the other rigging and flying system diversions for the show.

Sound for the show is collected from 34 Sennheiser SK50 transmitters, the nine-piece band plus a series of vocal booths around and below the stage; this and sound effects from the DAR TheatrePlay effects system are then marshalled at the 88-input Cadac J-type, with all of the vocal faders fully automated. Control for the console is from Cadac's new Sound Automation Manager (SAM) software, for which Mamma Mia! provided some valuable testing and suggestions! The sound is then fed out through Out Board Electronics' TiMax multiple source/multiple delay system which Aitken first used on Tosca at the Royal Albert Hall. "Here we use it both for delays and for dynamic cues, moving the sound around at the top of each act," Aitken notes. These three control systems take three computers which need three delays, but production sound engineer Chris Full has used flat-screen LCD displays to keep everything as tidy as possible. Unusually, the installation also places a lot of the processing above the side wing of the desk rather than below it: "so that the operator can see the stage while changing settings, rather than having to burrow around on the floor," Aitken explains. A second desk, a Midas XL3, is located sub-stage and feeds the band monitors.

During the technical period, the Autograph team had perhaps the most pressure on them because of the composers' fascination with



sound. "Björn and Benny were at the desk all the time," Aitken recalls. "Their main interest in life is music and sound, and they always had constructive things to say." An early part of the plan was to try to re-create the sound of the singles on stage, and to help with this Autograph were allowed access to many of the original multi-track tapes to hear specific sounds, which keyboard programmer Nick Gilpin re-created. Even though changes had to be made during rehearsals - "the energy required in live theatre is sometimes very different from that needed on a record," Aitken notes - much of it remains, particularly the distinctive 'jangly' piano sounds. "We've also tried to create a distinct feel with the vocals," Aitken explains. "The main vocals are usually very tight, almost mono, but there are a lot of complex harmonies going on, generated from singers in the offstage vocal booths. We treat these almost as part of the orchestration, spreading them out and around in stereo to create a bigger sound around the lead vocal."

The show is mixed by Brian Beasley, who is clearly having a great time, hopping around the desk with a manic grin on his face declaring "I can't believe that I do this for a living!". In his hands, the show sounds fantastic - orchestra dropping down to gentle underscore before rising up again to support the vocals from the universally strong cast, the show loud (especially in the finale. Beasley: "Let's rock!") but, helped by the clarity of the V-dosc system, upbeat and exciting rather than overwhelming.

Watching the show from the sound desk provides another source of amusement: the SAM playback screen means that you always know what the next song will be. The audience don't have that information and hearing the appreciative cheers or laughter (at the cornier links - the intro 'Chiquitita, tell me what's wrong . . .' could never be anything else!) as the crowd suddenly recognise where they've been taken is entertainment in itself. It feels as

though the creative team had intended the show to be taken more seriously, were surprised by the reaction of the first preview audience but then, fortunately, realised that the laughter was supportive rather than mocking and went with it (and, as part of this, re-edited the programme to list the songs in alphabetical, rather than performance, order, to maximise each number's surprise).

The show is marvellously entertaining, and clearly appeals to an enormous cross-section of people: those expecting a tribute band gig quickly get into the story, those who came for serious theatre stand up and dance with the best of them at the end (and the bar are happy throughout, since takings are exponentially higher than for the other more 'serious' shows the theatre has housed recently!).

It immediately overcomes the biggest problem any new musical has, that of people not knowing the songs. Here everyone clearly knows every note, every word. They're all delighted that their enjoyment of ABBA no longer has to be considered an embarrassing secret. Most probably wanted to be one of ABBA at some point in their lives (some come dressed up to prove it!). They're loving every minute of it. Even after Dancing Queen returns for the finale they don't want to leave. The show is sold out for months, a kind of success that the Prince Edward hasn't enjoyed for a while.

Perhaps they'll all grow up one day. But not just yet . . .

*"It immediately overcomes the biggest problem of any musical, that of people not knowing the songs. Here everyone clearly knows every note, every word."*

# New High for Shanghai



TRADE SHOW  
REPORT

**T**he Shanghai of 1999 is a bustling metropolis that never seems to sleep; the flare from arc welders lights up the city into the wee small hours as construction sites toil on, oblivious to nightfall. Those exhibitors who attended the show in 1998, its inaugural year, would possibly have noticed that construction sites seem even more plentiful than before, and the weather was a great deal chillier. Shanghai still appears to be a city on the move and judging by the 5,713 visitors who attended this year's show; a 15% increase on last year's attendance figures, that's definitely the case. Jacqueline Molloy reports . . .

There was a different buzz to the show this year, with many of last year's exhibitors returning armed with knowledge and a sense of what they could expect. The first-time exhibitors had the benefit of the trailblazers' experiences to learn from, with associations such as ESTA passing on their valuable feedback to companies such as Rosco, who were there for the first time.

Zero 88 was a well-satisfied first-time exhibitor at PLASA Shanghai, there to support their local distributor, Macostar. Zero 88 were exhibiting their full product range and launching three new products into the Asian market, including the Alcora and Elara lighting desks. The third launch was of their Level Plus range of lighting desks, aimed at the entry level end of the market.

Mad Lighting were also first-time exhibitors at Shanghai, though they have been dealing in China for the past three years. They had an excellent first day at the show and a lot of interest was shown in their rather funky-looking range of lighting equipment. On show for the first time anywhere was a pre-launch model of their itm-2, the latest model from their ITM-250 range of scanning projectors. The itm-2 has been designed with Mad's latest optical system and the new MSD 250/2 lamp. Other features include the ability to take six interchangeable E-size gobos and a separate colour wheel with six colours plus white. It is available in a range of case colours to suit all applications.

Audio Design Services had a successful return to this year's show with the establishment of a new agent and the prospect of opening a Shanghai office in the near future which will handle all their Far East operations, including China, Singapore, Australia, Korea and Taiwan. Audio Link System Co Ltd will still continue to distribute ADS's products from its Hong Kong base, while their new agent will act as a product showroom. The ADS team were pleased to see that a large number of visitors who had attended last year's show were back again this year, and they felt that there was serious interest in their products. Their ADS Matrix Routing panel, Voice Alarm/PA System and Sigma Firebird all attracted strong enquires.

MGC Lamps are well on their way to developing their market potential in China and are already well established in Asia as a whole. Phil Bullock felt that the enquires he received throughout the course of the show were



Above, P&O Events' managing director Jonathan Goold speaking at the show's opening ceremony



Left, the aisles fill with visitors



Below, Avolites' Tony Shembish draws a crowd

genuine and from serious buyers, and noticed that the majority of interest came from buyers wanting non-Chinese product. MGC were looking for a small group of distributors on the mainland who already have import licences in place.

Pulsar were part of the trailblazing expedition to the first PLASA Shanghai last year and this year were demonstrating all of their moving heads. On show for the first time was Pulsar's Masterpiece 216, a 216-

channel version of their well-known lighting control system. Pulsar had their entire catalogue translated into Chinese this year and felt that it was a worthwhile undertaking, as the majority of their stand visitors were of a high calibre. Clay Paky were also showing a wide range of their products, supporting their local distributor, ACE

Tarm were here for the first time showing their laser systems, and were pleased with the response to their products. Represented in Asia by Sanecore, the company are involved in a large number of projects in Asia. Tannoy's representatives were very impressed with the show overall, though they did feel it was difficult to identify which sector of the industry visitors were from. This was a comment made by several exhibitors who suggested that the registration system for local visitors needed a little refining, so that name badges could be more specific.

Roland Connor from Laser Creations International (LCI) was very pleased about the company's latest coup in China, which is to design a laser installation at the Stone Forest, a natural tourist attraction in south-west China. The project will feature three giant waterscreens, video projection, architectural illumination, dancing waters and an extensive surround sound system (more on this project in a future edition of L&S!). This is LCI's biggest

project to date and their range of projects in China has led them to hire their first Chinese staff member and to open an office in Southern China.

**Stage Technologies** were also first-time exhibitors in Shanghai and Nicky Scott found it to be a fascinating experience: "We came here with no expectations - just to see what we'd find, and we've made some good contacts and found it to be a valuable experience." On display was the PLASA award-winning Nomad motion control system, which counts the new Royal Opera House among its high profile users.

Mervyn Thomas from **James Thomas Engineering** believes that realistically it takes several years to establish yourself in the Chinese marketplace, and the PLASA show is a good way to open the door: "I can see the difference already between this year's show and last year's in terms of the quality of visitor. Last year we had visitors asking for information to take back to the boss, whereas this year the bosses themselves are visiting, which I believe says a lot about the developing reputation of the show." James Thomas Engineering was back in Shanghai exhibiting for the second time and supporting their Hong Kong-based distributor, **Prosperity Lamps & Components**. On display was their new outdoor fixture, the Par 56 HMI.

**Celestion International** showed their Road Series and QX Series loudspeakers, along with their KR Series installation speakers aimed at the pub, club, restaurant and theme bar market.

**Nu-Light Systems** have worked on projects in mainland China before, but this was their first time as exhibitors at the show. They were actively looking for a distributor for their range of products and had serious talks with two companies. Debbie Clayton said they will go through the DTI to save time and be sure that the company they choose to deal with has all the necessary licences for importing. Nu-Light launched WinCommander 2, the latest version of their DMX show control system. Version 2 offers additional features such as enhanced product database, printer support, Wizard-based set-up with programming facilities and 32 new definable scene templates.

David Bissett-Powell from **Martin Audio** felt that this year's show was extremely well-organised and offered an excellent level of support for exhibitors though he did feel that the 9.00am start (due to a printing error with the tickets) was a bit hard to take! Martin have provided equipment for a variety of Asian projects of late and have been involved in the installation of the sound system in Hong Kong's newest and largest nightclub, 5th Avenue, which covers some 57,000sq.ft of floor space.

Ian Gair from **Fane Acoustics** had a profitable first experience of the Shanghai show when he sold two Crescendo 10MB speakers as a sample order. One of the more difficult aspects of doing business at the show in Fane's opinion was not really being sure who he should be speaking to in terms of establishing business relationships, due to the communications barrier.

**DHA Lighting** made their first trip to Shanghai as exhibitors this year and were pleased to find

a market hungry for information about gobos, although Vicky Fairall explained that the Chinese had a bit of trouble understanding the term 'gobo'. "I think we needed to have a definition of the term 'gobo' on our literature as it's not a

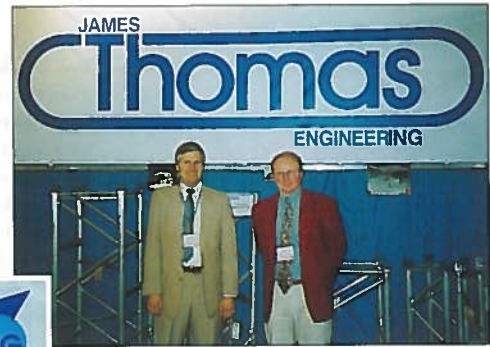


familiar word for the Chinese. It took a bit of explaining at times, though we eventually got the concept across and found the response to be extremely positive to our product." Fairall believes that in general the Chinese lack high-quality profiles for projecting gobos but are very keen to use them. Fairall found the experience a positive one for the company and believes they would benefit from making a return trip to the show next year.

One of the happiest men at Shanghai this year would have to be Tony Shembish from **Avolites**, whose stand appeared to be constantly under siege from interested visitors. Fortunately for Avolites, the interest in their products resulted in several sales, with a Diamond III and two Pearl 2000s being purchased during the show. The Chinese army have expressed interest in purchasing a Sapphire 2000 console to use for their military performances, which are apparently a key tourist attraction constantly touring around China. They are after a robust control desk that can withstand a hectic touring schedule and also control their small rig of moving light fixtures, hence their interest in the Sapphire.

**Matrix Audio** exhibited last year to gauge the market potential for their product range and to negotiate with distributors. Matrix's Clive Kinton says he likes the Chinese's "slow and steady" approach to business. He has delivered a sample order and is negotiating for one of Matrix's four product ranges to be distributed into China. "I believe our STR series of amps would be ideal for the Chinese market as they are very versatile. We would send in the components and they would assemble the amps here, which would benefit everyone involved."

**LA Audio** were showing their line of analogue signal processors, along with the new digEQ Total Network Processing system, aimed at applications ranging from concert sound to clubs and fixed installation PA. **Metro Audio** meanwhile, were showing the new PMZ88 programmable digital mixer zoner aimed at the sound installation market, alongside their established ranges of wired and wireless intercom systems.

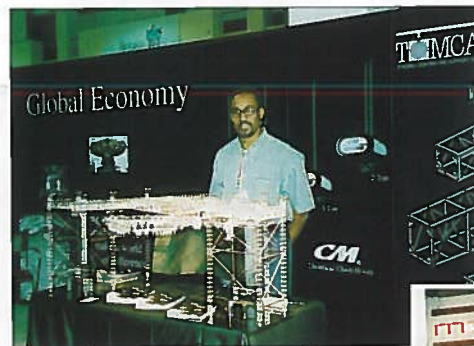


Top, Mike Garl of James Thomas Engineering Inc and Mervyn Thomas of James Thomas Engineering

Left, Garry Nelson of Lighting Technology and Scott Callis of Mad Lighting

Below, John James of Tomcat with something he prepared earlier!

Below right, Clive Kinton of Matrix Audio Developments with the STR Series amplifiers



The team from **CEEP** were a little hard to track down this year, as they were exhibiting under the banner of their recently-appointed Chinese distributor, **Shanghai Charles Industries**. Their connectors have already been used as part of the Shanghai Grand Theatre installation, though they did say that business dealings move slowly with the Chinese, and you can't rush things, a sentiment that is now common knowledge for those exhibitors who are already dealing into the mainland Chinese market. The CEEP guys scored an added bonus with their distributor who happens to be a retired Chinese chef who insisted upon taking them to a selection of the finest local restaurants. Those of us not brave enough to cope with some of the more unusual aspects of the local cuisine on our own could have benefited from his expertise!

Another first-time exhibitor at Shanghai, **Allen & Heath** appointed Hong Kong-based company **Pacific Audio Supplies** as their exclusive distributor in the Hong Kong and Macau region about two months ago. Gary White from **Total Fabrications** experienced a fair bit of activity on their stand from local visitors, many of whom were curious to know how often they had to polish their truss to keep it so shiny. White believes this highlights a major difference between the quality of their product and local product: "There are a lot of local manufacturers but no quality assurance, and the Chinese are now interested in quality product." A major





Top to bottom, Wally Blount (centre left) and Craig Johnston (centre right) of Columbus McKinnon with Chinese associates Zhang Han Wei (left) and George Chen

Udo D. W. Bartsch, export manager of Osram's photo-optics division

Crowds gather around the stands of Martin Professional and Shure

Mike Fisher, sales manager of Lightstorm Trading on the stand of Chinese distributor Prosperity Lamps & Components



was Stageline Mobile Stage Inc from Quebec. Yvan Miron, president of the company ventured to Shanghai on the strength of what he'd heard about last year's show, and also because he believes the industry is ready for their product: "We build structures that go up quickly and I believe this is an advantage for the Chinese market where events often take place in public spaces and you don't get huge amounts of time to assemble structures, as performance areas are heavily used by the public. We've been exploring and working the market here for a while and firmly believe this is the right time to make a move but I'm conscious and prepared for the fact that it will take time."

John James from Tomcat UK was back for a second time and was pleased that he had no time to attend the scheduled after-show events as he was too busy keeping

business appointments. The team from ADB-LSI Projects also noticed the quality of visitors to be considerably higher than last year and the overall look of the show, particularly the Chinese stands, greatly improved. Brenda Dunsire summed up their approach to conducting business in China as "friendship first, business second" - an approach that obviously works given their successful work on the Shanghai Grand Theatre.



growth area as White sees it, is the Chinese touring circuit, with acts expressing interest in Total Fabs' truss and ground support systems.

Unusual Rigging were exhibiting at Light & Sound Shanghai for the second time, promoting their range of rigging and engineering skills and services to the Chinese entertainment industry.

The first Canadian exhibitor to attend the show

Mike Fisher from Lightstorm was in Shanghai this year to 'wave the flag' and support their exclusive distributor, Prosperity Lamps & Components. On the stand were products from Celco (including the Ventura lighting control console with version 2 software), Anytronics and MEC Truss. Sammy De Havilland from Dare

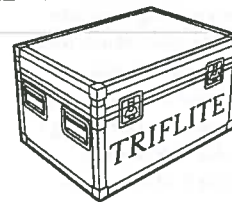
There is no doubt that exhibitors found the 1999 show a positive place to do business, with the number of visitors seriously interested in Western product on the rise. Shanghai's booming economy appears to be having a major impact on the entertainment industry, with the Chinese eager for Western technology and expertise, recognising that the money spent on high-quality product is a long-term investment. This year, instead of testing the waters, exhibitors were negotiating distribution deals and expanding on relationships initiated last year, though of course those there for the first time were getting a taste of what it's like to do business in China. From all accounts, it's a fruitful venture to embark upon.

Professional Audio/Deco Leisure was hopeful of securing a distributor and was happy to be back in Shanghai, "The show is much better looking and I've noticed how some of the stands are starting to add levels and look a lot more professional, which benefits all of the exhibitors. I think there's been good press on the show since last year and it's reflected in the standard of visitor."

The Columbus McKinnon team were very optimistic about their market opportunities in China. They now have a sales person operating out of their Chinese manufacturing base and will use this as an opportunity to promote their product. Martin Professional, whose products are also distributed in China by Sanecore, were displaying their range of moving heads and confident they were attracting the required calibre of customer. Steve Rawlings felt the show was well organised, particularly the way the sound levels were controlled. Sanecore were also representing Shure microphone products, including the latest in-ear monitoring systems.

Udo D. W. Bartsch from Osram was showing their new 55 volt lamp with spec charts that have never been seen publicly before. OSRAM have a thriving office in Shanghai and Bartsch is pleased with the interest they received from the show. Garry Nelsson from Lighting Technology said he came to Shanghai with two objectives: to raise awareness of their products and to find a partner in mainland China rather than deal through Hong Kong. He was a first-time exhibitor at the show and found it to be a productive experience.

From all accounts, it's a fruitful venture to embark upon.



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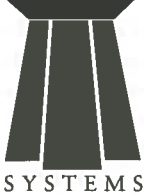
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# In Profile... L&SI Talks to the Industry Trend-setters

Roger Barrett first brush with safety at events came in 1973, when he fell through a hole in a poorly-constructed scaffolding stage while working on a sound system. When he and partner Maddy Sheals began Star Hire in 1976, it was a sound company, and there were several causes for concern in later years. An instance in Germany saw the legs of a riser go through a stage, bringing the PA system down with it. Later, on a tour with David Bowie, German safety experts insisted on the stage being supplemented by additional scaffolding, despite the staging company's calculations showing it to be safe. The extra scaffolding made access underneath the stage for Star Hire's sound racks untenable, and Barrett decided that something needed to be done.



the outdoor events industry and begin working on the Pop Code. Their work was to supersede the work on the British Standards.

This change of direction by the HSE was not Barrett's only frustration; there was also animosity from promoters who were

afraid of losing money. Barrett still has a letter from a major UK promoter questioning "the need for a British Standard on technical standards at events". Those same promoters are today championing the Pop Code!

In the absence of any support, Barrett became disenchanted with the status quo, and with five other people called the inaugural meeting of The Event Suppliers Association (TESA) as a focused lobby group for the outdoor event industry. This experienced resistance from the rock'n'roll production companies, however, and Roger felt TESA never had the teeth to achieve its lobbying potential.

At this time the Production Services Association (PSA) was forming and Barrett was eventually persuaded to join Tim Norman of Edwin Shirley within the PSA, and now sits on the council. The Institute of Structural Engineers' report was a serious threat to the whole industry and was successfully changed by the PSA.

"The PSA succeeded where all others had failed in producing a rock'n'roll enhanced lobbying situation that completely flummoxed the establishment," Barrett explained. "There is no doubt that we surprised the HSE and ISE, and we've been on a three-year bridge-building exercise. The success of this is borne out by the level of consultation currently between the PSA and HSE."

The issue of safety has been an integral part of Barrett's ethos for many years: "Whilst I am

delighted that safety has become such a buzzword, I have mixed feelings when I see people jumping on the safety bandwagon and then not doing things properly," said Barrett. He predicts that the whole issue of defining competence will be the next challenge facing the industry: "With the learning curve in system design and use there is far more importance on future training."

Over the past three years, under Sheals' direction and with the help of Training Enterprise Council grants, an advanced training programme has been implemented. Star Hire conducts a series of structured training schemes, developed in conjunction with companies like SGB Youngman.

Barrett's ongoing crusade to raise standards within the industry is underlined by the launch of The Event Organisers Hardware Handbook. For the first time, there is an easy-to-read guide available dealing with specifying and hiring equipment and technical services for outdoor event organisers, providing invaluable advice and expertise. The Hardware Handbook is aimed at the less-experienced organiser, with an eye on the increase in event activity over the Millennium period. Up to now, event organisers have only had Health and Safety publications as guidance. The Hardware Handbook deals with the whole gamut of topics relating to event production, ranging from the planning and licensing of an event through to on-site infrastructure, including drinking water, plant and machinery.

In those areas referred to but not covered in great detail, Barrett points the reader in the right direction. This Hardware Handbook could save organisers some tough personal lessons. It is published by Star Hire (Event Services) Ltd and is now available by mail order from: Star Hire (Event Services) Ltd, Milton Road, Thurleigh, Bedford, MK44 2DG. Telephone: +44 1234 772233 Fax: +44 1234 772272 Price £15 (including postage & packing). ■

**Lighting & Sound** MARKETPLACE

**L&SI talks to Roger Barrett, technical director of Star Hire, one of the UK's leading staging suppliers**

Star Hire entered the marketplace of building outdoor stages in the early 1980s: "A lot of our work was outdoors," said Roger, "and a lot of the staging we worked on was crap, so we decided to build our own. I tried to research the . . . relevant legislation from libraries and government departments, only to find very little!"

In the absence of established benchmarks, Roger looked to bridge the gap between the theory and the practicalities

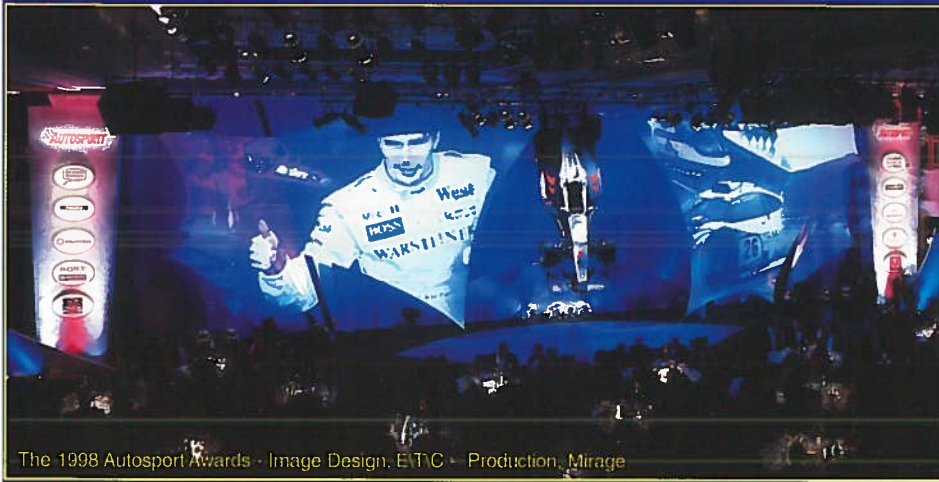
of a working outdoor stage. As that research developed he increasingly realised how much the rest of the events industry was liable to abuse at the hands of unscrupulous operators.

Roger felt the need for an industry manual or code of practice, but experienced very little interest from the HSE, so he and Maddy chaired the NOEA Standards and Working Party with the aim to get British Standards for the industry. Meanwhile, the tragedy at Donnington in 1988 spurred the HSE into taking a greater interest in

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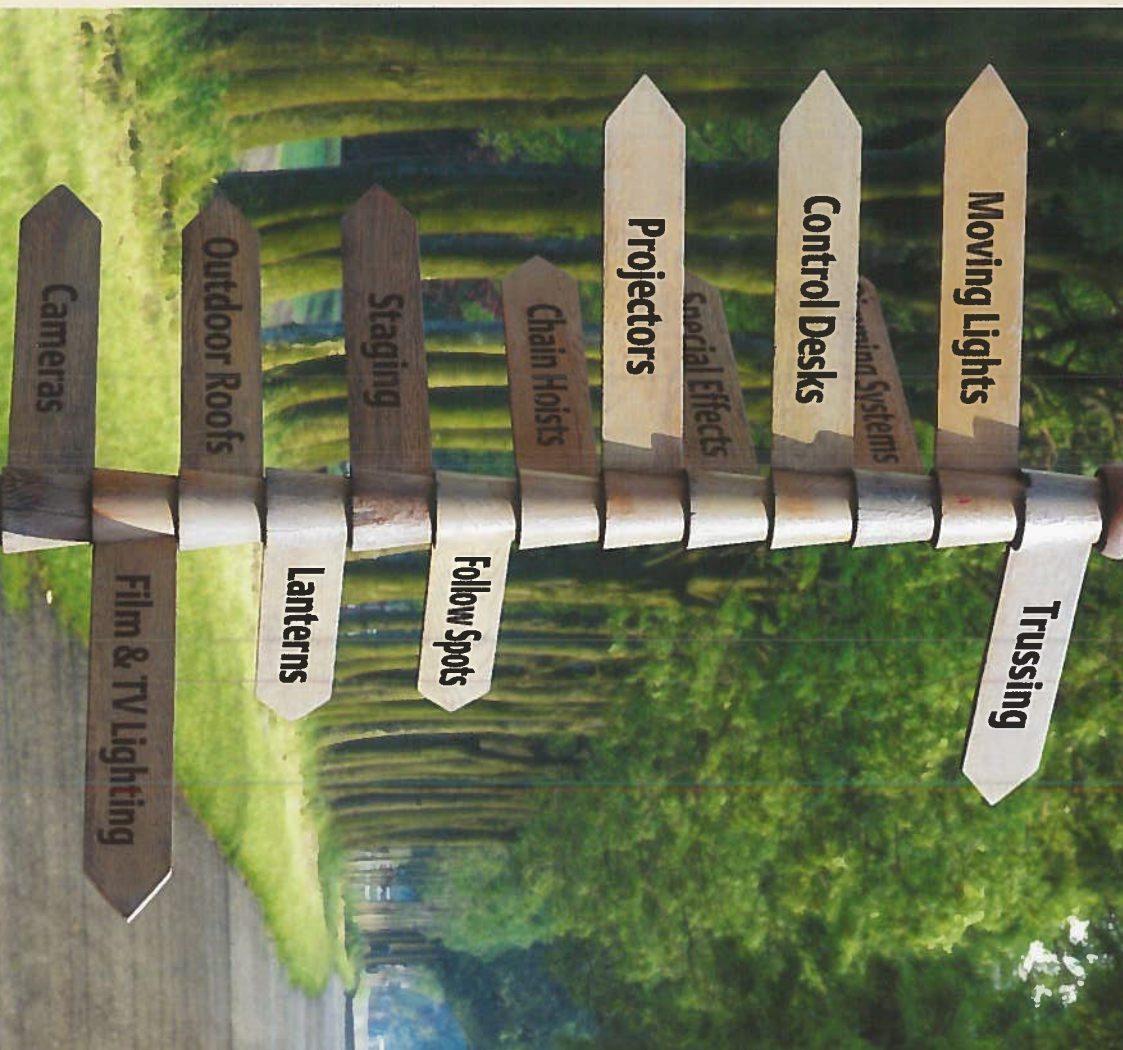
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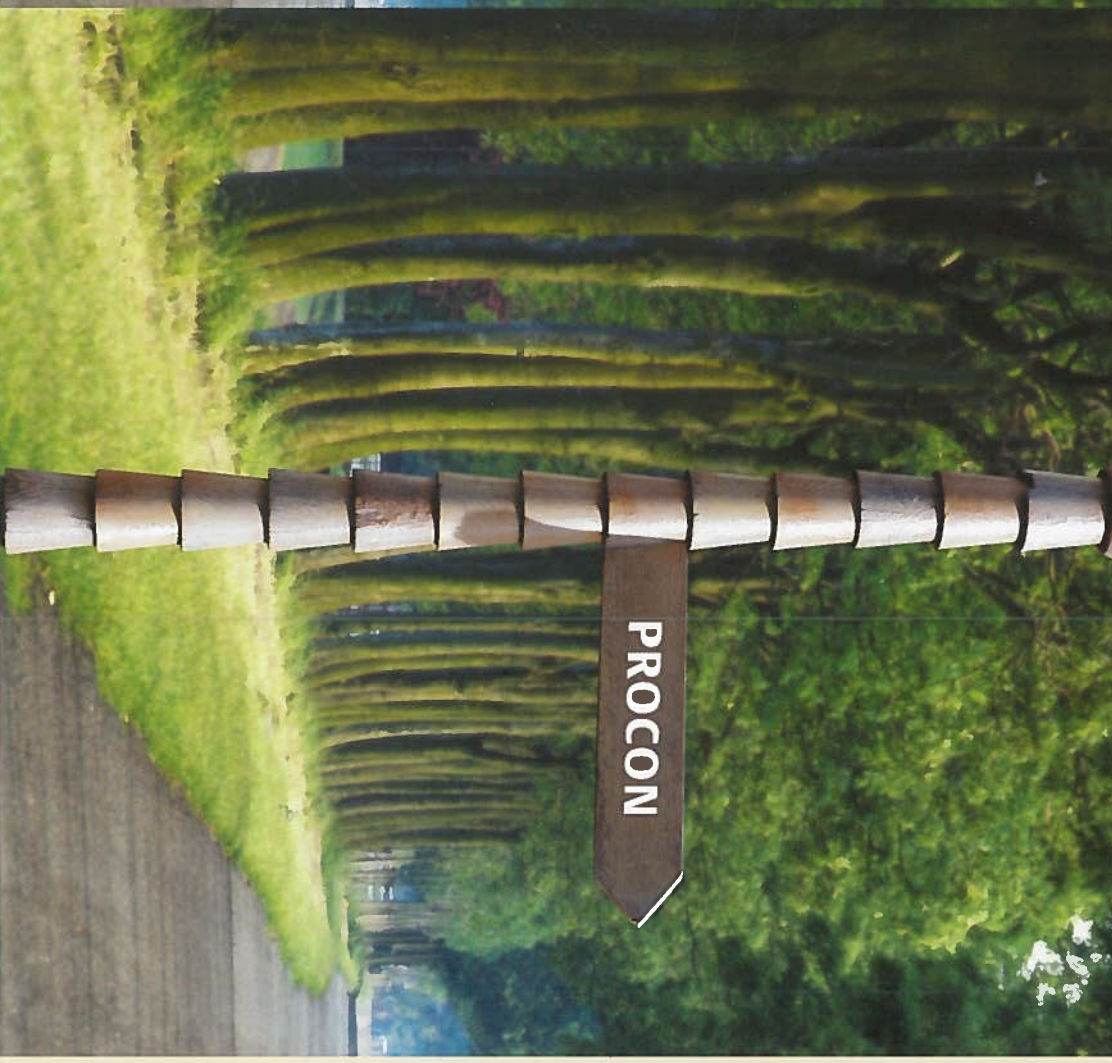
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