

Lighting & Sound INTERNATIONAL

February 2000 The Entertainment Technology Monthly



Greatest Show on Earth

- Fisher and Woodroffe at The Dome

Brand New Day

- Sting at Le Zenith, Grand Palais in France

Fascinating Aida

- Elton John and Tim Rice's Aida in Chicago

Fact to Fantasy

- Profile of Farmer Studios

Backlot Experience

- Fox Studios, Sydney

The new

VISION SERIES

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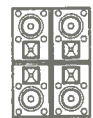
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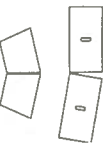
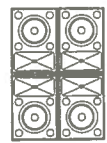
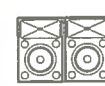
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HOUSES OF WORSHIP	●	●	●	●	●	●
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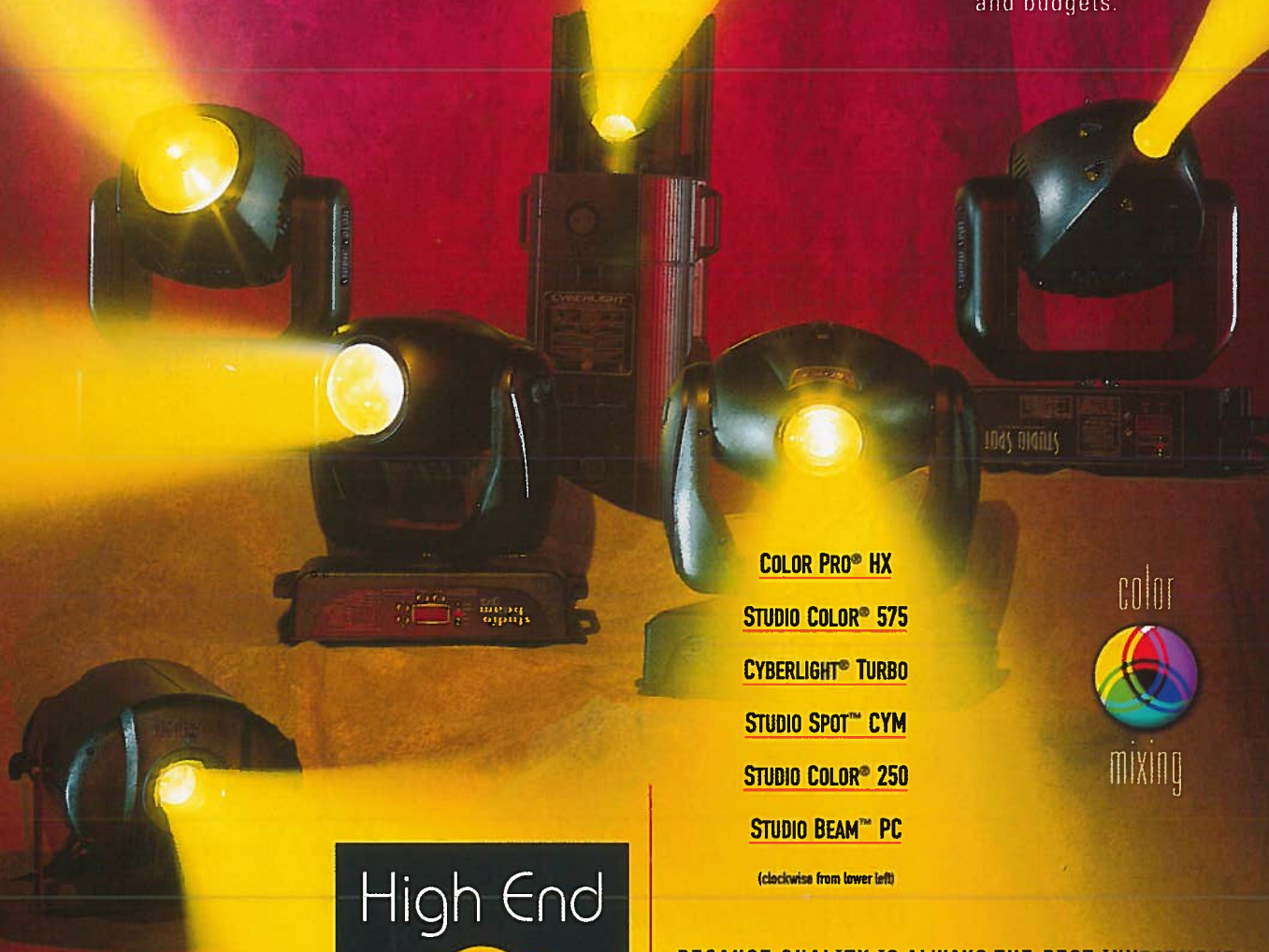
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Elton John and Tim Rice's Aida, the latest Walt Disney Theatrical Production, opened in early November at the Cadillac Palace Theater in Chicago, Illinois. Sharon Stancavage talked with the technical team

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Visitors to Fox Studios in Sydney are immersed in the craft of film and television from the moment they enter the iconic gates of the Fox Studios Backlot. Jacqueline Molloy reports

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Lighting & Sound INTERNATIONAL

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Hannaford Takes PLASA Chair



PLASA has announced the election of Mick Hannaford of Light Processor as chairman of the Association for 2000, following the vote cast by the PLASA Executive Committee at the end of 1999.

Hannaford has been a member of the Association for many years. He joined the PLASA Executive Committee in 1998, and took on the role of Treasurer in 1999. He takes over the chair from Paul Adams of P.A. Installations, who has stepped down after four years as chairman. Paul Adams has now been elected vice-chairman of the Association, while Sammy DeHavilland of Dare/Deco Leisure takes over the role of treasurer.

Mick Hannaford thanked the committee members for their support, and said that he planned to progress the important initiatives already in place and ensure that the membership continued to benefit as the industry evolved. He added: "PLASA can make a difference, but there is still a great deal of work to do."

PLASA's MD Matthew Griffiths welcomed the new appointments, saying: "We have a very strong team on the PLASA committee, with plenty of fresh ideas and real enthusiasm for building on the successes of recent years. We will certainly be seeing further important developments for PLASA as we enter the 21st Century."



Mackie Buys EAW

At the recent NAMM exhibition in Los Angeles, Mackie Designs Inc and Eastern Acoustic Works (EAW) announced that they have signed a non-binding letter of intent by which Mackie will purchase all shares of EAW.

The move unites two of the professional audio industry's most successful, dynamic developers of technology. The two companies are keen to point out that they will both benefit from the deal, while at the same time continuing to focus on their respective core markets. EAW President Ken Berger said the move was "... a win-win for both sides. There will be a cross-pollination of our best technologies, and at the same time we both remain devoted to serving our primary markets."

Greg Mackie, chairman of Mackie Designs, added: "The synergy created by bringing our two companies together is enormous. At present Mackie and EAW do not have any products which compete. Together we can help each other grow in new areas for both of our companies."

Both companies' day-to-day operations will remain separate, including their product distribution channels. EAW will remain based in Whitinsville, its current corporate headquarters and manufacturing site.

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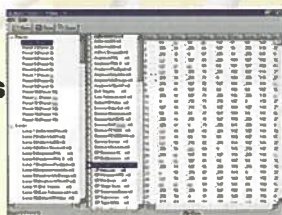
Plus, we have major coverage of the many Millennium Projects worldwide. Thanks to all those who sent copy in - and apologies to those whose events we just couldn't cover - we simply haven't enough room to do it all justice.

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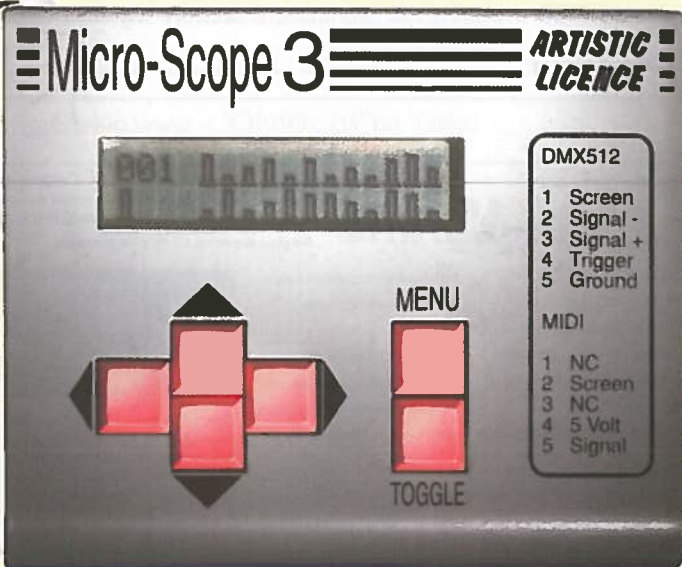
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Blackout and Triple E Merge



Blackout's Steve Tuck (left) with Triple E's David Edelstein at the recent Siel Show where the announcement was made

After years of alternating between being supplier and client to each other, Triple E and Blackout, best known as suppliers of track and drapes respectively, have announced a merger of the two companies.

The announcement was made from a joint stand at the SIEL exhibition in Paris. Apart from the connection of curtains and track, the

ties between the two go back 11 years when Triple E worked with Steve Tuck - then freelancing - on a giant 'up and over' garage door for a children's clothes show at the NEC. They first shared an exhibition stand at PLASA five years ago, since when the companies have worked together on a number of projects.

Trading as Blackout Triple E with immediate effect, the new company offers a complete in-house design and manufacturing service for custom drapes and hardware, as well as a hire service for track, drapes and rigging. Current investment plans include expanding the rigging division with the addition of 80 CM Lodestar chain hoists. With a combined workforce of 50 staff, David Edelstein and Steve Tuck will be joint MDs, with Dominic Peissel continuing as MD of the group's Paris company, and with Chris Brain and Martin Wood of Blackout joining the board of directors.

The search is on for 20,000sq.ft of office and warehouse space for the new company, but in the meantime the two can be contacted at their existing addresses.

L&SI Launches News Headline Service

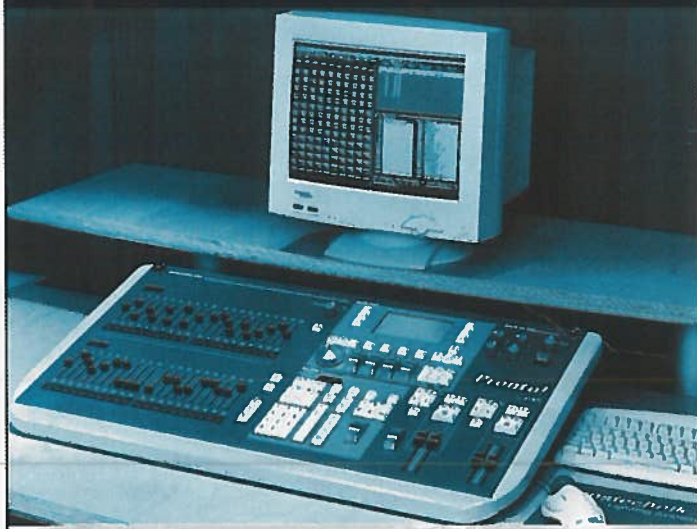
The PLASA electronic news service was started in autumn 1999 to provide a daily round-up of all the latest news from across the industry. Already, the site is attracting more than 6,500 page requests per month and the traffic is growing steadily.

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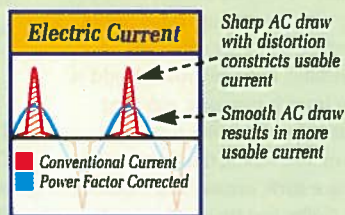
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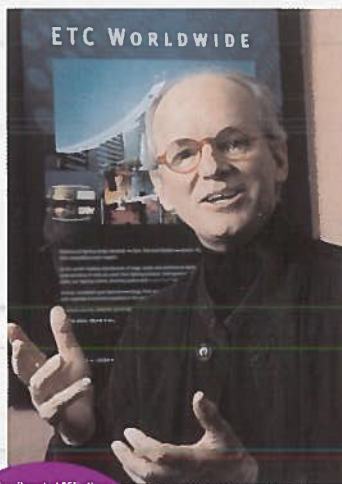


News Round-Up



Industry Appointments

As we reported on our news website at the same time as dealers were informed of the move, Electronic Theatre Controls has appointed Mike Lowe (pictured) as managing director of ETC Europe. Previously of Teatro, Lowe's appointment reaffirms the company's position as a truly pan-European player, with its growing team of employees from both the UK and continental Europe.



Subscribers to L&SI's News Headline Service were informed of this appointment within an hour of the official announcement. Subscribe now at www.plasa.org/news

Lowe formed Teatro Srl, Italy, 13 years ago and prior to this was with Rank Strand, where he was managing director of the company outside of the US, helping turn the company round into profit after continued trading losses. His international management experience makes him ideal for ETC Europe, which has been growing at an annual rate of 45% since its formation in 1995. Lowe is looking forward to the opportunities that the role will offer: "The management style and culture within ETC is so right for our industry. An important factor for me is that ETC Europe has its own identity and culture - it isn't simply an extension of the American operation."

Loren Haas has left Vari-Lite Inc. Haas has been with the company many years, most recently as executive vice-president working out of the Dallas office. His departure comes at a time of restructuring for the company, which recently announced that it was, for the first time, manufacturing products specifically for sale.

London-based Lighting Technology has announced major developments in its organisational structure including the promotion of senior personnel within the Group. Garry Nelsson is now group sales and marketing director and Bruce Kirk Group projects director. Reporting to Nelsson, Ron Knell now takes on the role of export sales manager, Dave Short becomes sales office manager and Rob Williamson field sales manager. Andy Dodd is now Manchester branch manager, enabling Graham Bassett to join the sales force and handle the task of developing the North East. Reporting to Bruce Kirk, project sales will be handled by Ray Dolby and Bruce Tompsett from London and by Ray Scott and Terry Reeves in the North. Eddie Hlrad continues as engineering manager. James Jose joins the Projects Team and will focus on retail and commercial lighting, reporting to Ray Dolby, whilst Jonathan Adkins continues to be

responsible for technical sales in London, but will become a member of the Projects Team.

Andy Trevett has left Selecon UK to join Prolyte. The company, which has its HQ in The Netherlands, with sales offices in Germany and the UK, manufactures a range of aluminium trussing systems.

Following the recent appointments of Tim Harrison and Natasha

Dawson, Fuzion has further increased its sales force with the addition of Mick Butler. Butler will concentrate on sales in the north of England and Scotland.

John Adams, formerly international sales and operations director with High End Systems, has joined the California-based loudspeaker system manufacturer Apogee Sound as director of international sales.

Following our recent news that Iain Elliott had departed the Canford Group (see L&SI January), the company has announced the appointment of a new chief executive, Lawrence Jackson, previously managing director of Farnell.

Bruce Jordahl has left High End Systems to become the editor of a new magazine - Pro Light and Staging News. The monthly title will address the touring and concert industries and will focus principally on the US and Canadian markets.

Heavy hints from lighting designer Benny Ball of BBLD, that the company is shortly to make some major announcements. Rumour has it that Ball, together with partner Stanley, is to open an office in Amsterdam to run in tandem with BBLD's office in the UK. More on this when the cloak and dagger are out of the way.

AC Lighting Ltd has appointed Sebastian Williams to its team of technical support staff at its High Wycombe HQ. Williams recently gained a degree in Theatre Design and before joining AC, worked on a number of projects, including running a series of trade shows for Virgin Cola.

The recently-expanded sound hire company Orbital has announced three further appointments at its London headquarters. Chris Briggs has left Arbiter Pro Audio to join Orbital's technical support department, working alongside Tim Sherratt and John Shemming. At the same time, Kelly Sim joins the accounts department from the John Lewis Partnership, and Tanla Archibald adds to the administration and logistics support team.



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Noumea, New Year

In the tiny French Pacific territory of New Caledonia, 25,000 locals and tourists gathered in the balmy tropical night at the Noumea town square for a celebration encompassing elements of the French, Polynesian, Indian and Chinese cultures which make up the island's community.

The celebration combined live, recorded and projected components into a multi-media spectacle unlike anything previously performed in this part of the Pacific. It began with a series of four theatrical pieces on the themes of earth, air, fire and water. The city buildings around the square were used as a backdrop for each section, and along with lighting, music and low-powered laser projection, combined to produce a powerful lead-up to the countdown to midnight. While the audience were watching the final segment of the live production, a rear-projection screen of approximately 400sq.m was raised in preparation for the animated laser show.

Sydney-based Laservision Macro-Media (see L&SI December 1999) were commissioned to handle the laser projected elements of the show. Using local popular legend as a basis, a series of full-colour laser animations were developed in a co-operative creative process that began in October. The accompanying soundtrack was assembled from a selection of traditional Pacific Island, European classical, and local popular music, with just a soupçon of the local marine corps massed-choir for flavour. As midnight approached, a 15m diameter laser-animated clock face counted down the time. This switched to a digital countdown for the last 10 seconds, then 'Bonne Annee!' followed by a 12-minute aerial laser and pyrotechnics show choreographed to classical music.

The laser projection system was located in an air-conditioned demountable office sitting on a barge moored some 30m from the harbour shore (as seen above). LMM used a dual-head 20W full-colour Argon laser driven by one of their new Sinodial Series show controllers. This also supplied the digitally-recorded audio for the laser and pyrotechnics shows via an FM wireless link to the shore-based PA system. The pyrotechnics, supplied and operated by Noumean operator Inter-Dis, were launched from a barge moored 300m from the harbour shore.

Andy Ciddor

Martin Professional Launches New Products for US

The Martin Group is introducing two new products for the American market. The MAC 500SP and MAC 600NT will replace two of the products that continue to be affected by the injunction placed on them by Vari-Lite Inc which prevents their sale in the USA.

Martin's own engineers have developed a completely new patented colour mixing system

for the MAC 600NT and both products lie outside of the American patent, which is the basis of the litigation.

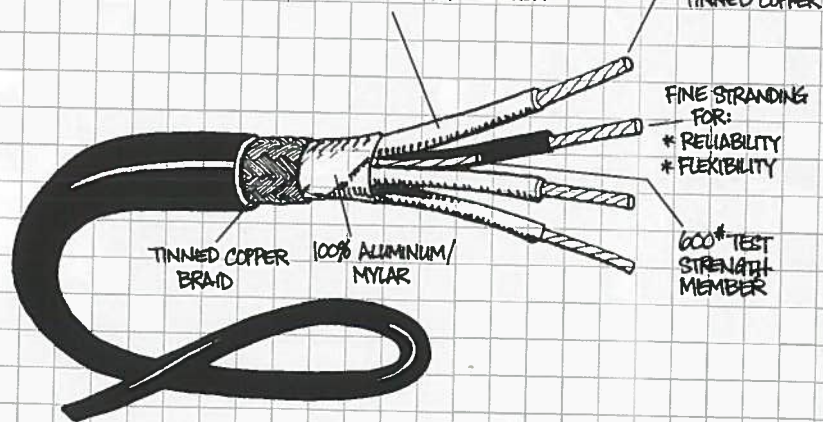
The Federal Appeals Court in Washington DC is expected to hear the appeal some time in February. Regardless of the decision in the case, Martin can sell the new products in the American market.

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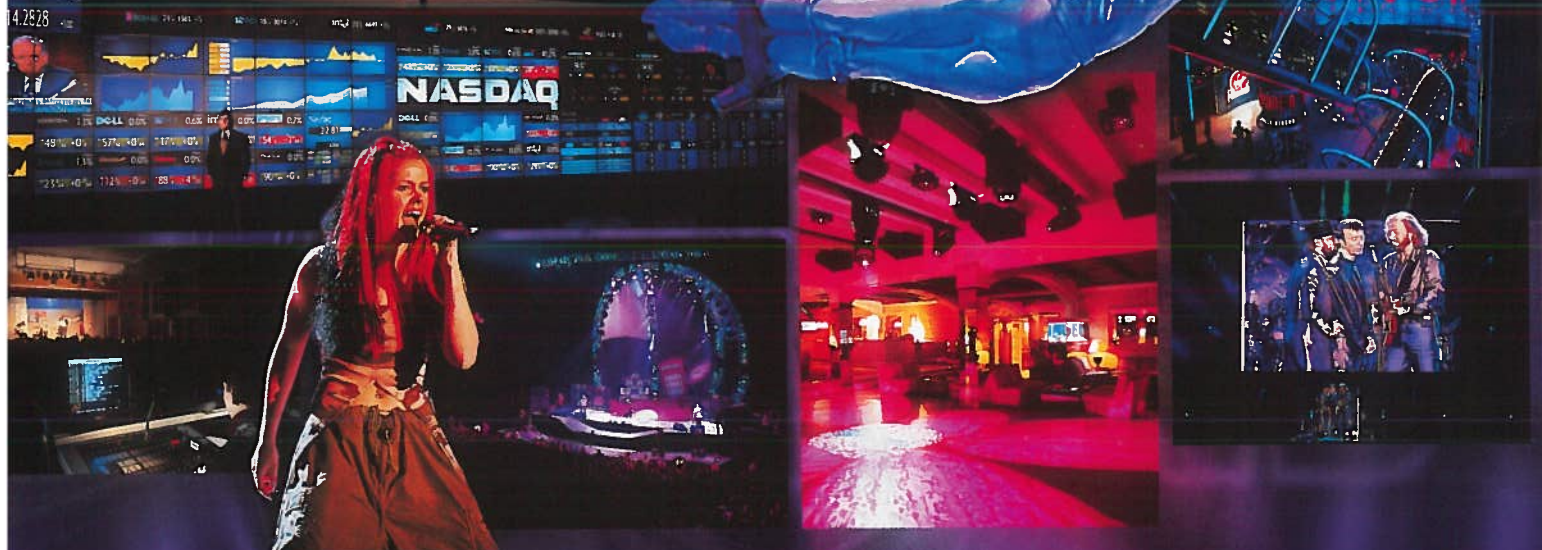
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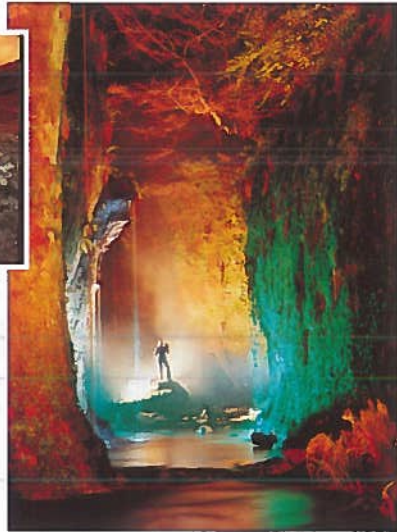
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Glen Lyon Millennium Event



Readers of L&SI will recall that in 1998 nva organisation presented the landmark 'Secret Sign' event in a deep river gorge near Loch Lomond (pictured right). The sell-out show was nominated as Production of the Year by The Herald newspaper and led to the single largest award by the Millennium Festival Company to create a new project to mark the year 2000.



Setting their sights high, nva spent a year searching the highlands of Scotland for the perfect location. The chosen site (seen above), hidden deep in Glen Lyon, has been described by writer W H Murray as "one of the most beautiful of all highland glens." From May 19th - June 4th, 300 people per night (and that includes an intrepid pair from PLASA Publishing) will travel from every part of Britain to experience a unique journey into the heart of the glen. Over a two hour night-time walk they will encounter a beautifully animated environment, lighting and sound installations and performance revealing key natural features varying from waterfalls to standing stones.

With an international creative team led by Angus Farquhar, this is the first time an event of this scale and ambition has been developed in Britain. One of the biggest issues to be overcome by the team will be how the distribution of power is handled; the choice rests with disassembling large generators, carrying them into the glen and then reassembling on site, or using small two-man lift generators. David Bryant of Midnight Design will handle the lighting design using a number of standard lighting effects and potentially several prototype effects specially built for the project. Gus Ferguson, who runs his own digital recording studio in Glasgow, is handling the soundtracks which will be relayed through a mixture of audio equipment.

nva's recent work includes creating the National Day for Britain at Expo 98 in Lisbon, international touring shows Pain and The Gimmick and the sell-out Grand Central animation of Central Hotel, Glasgow, for the 1999 City of Architecture and Design Festival.

STLD Honours Strand

At the recent AGM of the Society of Television Lighting Designers (STLD), the Society honoured the support it had received over the past 25 years from Strand Lighting. Bernie Davies, secretary of the STLD, presented a special award to Alan Luxford, Strand's long-serving sales manager, who was present at the very first meeting of the STLD which was held at Strand Electric's King Street showroom in Covent Garden, and has supported the society ever since.



Bernie Davies (left) and Alan Luxford

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GB Country of Honour at Siel

The annual Siel show has just completed its run at the Porte de Versailles in Paris and in true French style managed to bring together all that is fascinating about the entertainment industry.

Business seemed to be good on the show floor which may have something to do with the show's slightly revised format: having previously mixed both the theatre and nightclub industries together, organisers, Reed-OIP, siphoned everything to do with the nightclub sector into its own separate hall thereby making life a little easier for the visitor.

To strengthen its international credits, Siel invited Great Britain to be the Country of Honour and Reed worked with PLASA to co-ordinate a British pavilion, complete with traditional watering-hole,



Richard Caborn, UK Minister for Trade & Industry (centre) and John Hunt, director of trade policy (left) with PLASA MD Matthew Griffiths

which quickly established itself as a social hub for exhibitors and visitors alike. The UK's Minister for Trade & Industry - Richard Caborn MP - visited the show on Monday and, accompanied by PLASA MD Matthew Griffiths, met with most of the UK companies and PLASA members exhibiting at the show.

A full report appears in the March issue of L&S.

Jest Ye Not . . .

Dear Editor

Speaking from the point of view of a lighting guy (whose attempt two years ago to introduce some humour into your publication via a wry cartoon strip was turned down on the grounds that "it would be wrong to focus on this one element") I was a bit miffed to observe your acceptable level of humour in the joke you published in the December 1999 edition of L&S on page 6.

Personally, I think it is wrong to focus on and perpetuate the supposed animosity between sound and lights, but before I am reduced to coming over as a humourless prig I think it ought to be pointed out that, as everyone knows, those who have all or part of their brains removed usually end up as drum techs, if not, dare I say, in the media.

Simon Rickman
lighting designer/director

PS. You may omit the part in parenthesis if you wish!

(I could omit all of it if I wished, but I'm looking forward to the letters from the drum techs. The media people, of course, won't be able to write. Ed.)



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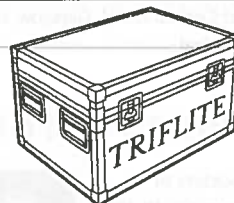
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Illuminatum: On The Waterfront

Illuminatum PLC was commissioned by DMH consultancy to design and supply a spectacular feature lighting system for the Alcatel Submarine Networks' site, just upriver from the Millennium Dome in Greenwich.



The site contains a diverse collection of buildings with architectural structures and styles spanning a variety of historical design epochs! These include a 1970's industrial office block, 18th Century warehousing, a traditional Victorian dockside house and post-modern 1980's constructions.

The lighting design was undertaken by Illuminatum's Geoff Jones and Tim Matthews, with the brief to create a high profile image for the company in the new millennium and to project their logo to be visible from across the Thames.

'Wallpaper lighting' on the structures was produced using green and blue Powerson fittings. Coe-tech supplied Coemar Panorama colour-changing fixtures were then added to create an animated 'wave' of lighting, stretching the length of the site.

Alcatel's logo was produced by eight ETC Source Four profiles beaming onto the seventies office building, itself lit in amber, simulating the company's corporate colours. The overall result completely transformed the look of the waterfront in this area.



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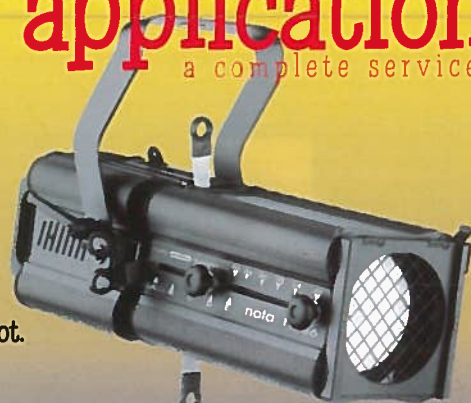
Attempting to live up to its name slightly too literally, The Moving Light Company - and its entire stock of moving lights - has moved. But not far - the company can now be found at Unit 8 Parsons Green Depot, just a few metres further along and on the opposite side of the depot from its old base. Formed in 1994 to handle the increasing demand for automated lighting technology, The Moving Light Company has since provided equipment to a huge range of productions and even a performance at Buckingham Palace! The company's growing stock levels necessitated its move to larger premises. However, as well as just providing more storage, the extra space will also be used to create a dedicated area for the WYSIWYG pre-programming service, and for an enlarged demonstration area. Other contact details remain unchanged.

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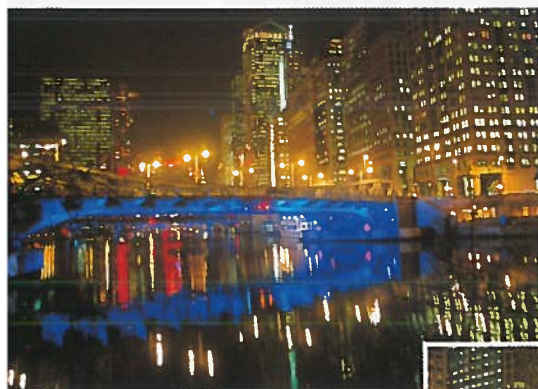
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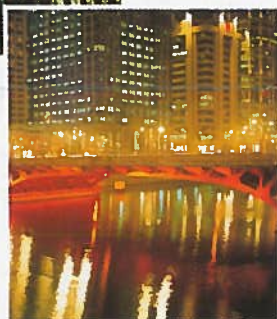
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Colour for Chicago's Bridges



As part of a downtown beautification project, the city of Chicago, Illinois, decided to add a touch of colour to the Chicago riverfront and called on Martin Professional to provide the illumination.



The Chicago Bridges project was initiated in March of 1998 when independent lighting designer Tracey Dear made a proposal to the city of Chicago to illuminate several of the bridges which span the Chicago River. The project was accepted and installation began in March 1999 completing later in the year. The final project consists of the illumination of 11 bridges, each lit with between eight and 20 Martin Exterior 600 luminaires equipped with MSD 575W lamps. A total of 144 luminaires are used to illuminate the bridges, all of which are draw bridges, and raise to allow the passing of

shipping, so there is no connection between the two shores for cable ducts or pipes. Each side of the bridge, therefore, required a separate control and power system.

A total of 22 Martin ProScenium PCs are used for control, with complete DMX lighting control and synchronisation capabilities. With

synchronisation of the 11 bridges and thus the 22 ProSceniums a necessity, a program called SocketWatch was implemented. This is a tool which automatically retrieves the correct time from several universal time sources on the Internet. The clock feature in the ProScenium is used to start each Exterior 600 after sunset and the real time

clock feature is used to turn off the fixtures at 2.00am each morning.

As each computer is accessible via a modem, the ProSceniums are remotely accessible from any PC. Because the fixtures were completely pre-configured at Martin US in Florida prior to their shipment to Chicago, the installation ran exceptionally smoothly. The Exterior 600s are performing seamlessly and the project has brought not only the entire riverfront, but the city along the Chicago River to life.

LT Newcastle Open Day

Lighting Technology Newcastle, growing out of the newly-merged Sound Electronics, will be launched at an Open Day event at its premises on Tyneside on Friday 3rd March.

The occasion will mark the launch of Lighting Technology Group's Newcastle offices, which will act as a centre for expansion for sales in the region. It will also provide the base for the resources for the Northern region of LTP, the Group's project business. Over 30 major manufacturers are lined up to support the mini-expo and people-meet and major new product announcements are expected. Early highlights confirmed include a special architectural lighting area, the presence of Strand Lighting's 45ft exhibition trailer, Pioneer's mobile DJ display truck and the launch of a new-style entertainment lamp catalogue.

Cue in Liquidation

L&SI has received confirmation that Cue Pro Audio Services went into liquidation at the close of last year.

The company offered a repair service to the audio industry and was an authorised service centre for a host of manufacturers including Carver, Denon, Furman, Omniphonics, Sony, Panasonic, Ramsa, RTS, Telex, Kramer and Yamaha. A creditors meeting took place on the 22nd November, 1999, at which point insolvency practitioners McCann Taylor were appointed as liquidators.

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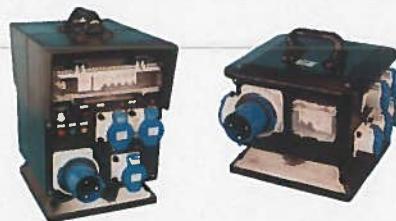
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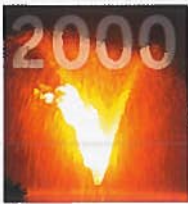
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Club QBH Melbourne

In a former life, Club QBH in Melbourne was the Queens

Bridge Hotel: one of the city's few early opening pubs, frequented by dockworkers and postal sorters at the end of the nightshift. Much of the look of the workers' pub has been retained in the exterior of the city's newest and largest club, although there is little evidence of its origins in the club's slick, turn-of-the-millennium interior.

New Year's Eve at the QBH was a \$200 (£80) per head, strictly no list at the door, 12 hour dance party; with DJs, free drinks for the first two hours, live stage acts, a motor car as a giveaway and of course, the inevitable pyrotechnics. Anxious for a different look, the club's promoters hired in guest Light Jockey Anthony Petruzio after admiring his work at Perth's Metropolis Club and recent national tour as LD with grunge band Grinspoon.



When Petruzio arrived at the club a couple of days before the show to start programming the house rig (16 Futurelight MH660 moving heads and 10 Coemar NAT 1200 moving mirror luminaires), he discovered that the trusses were on the ground for maintenance until 4pm on New Year's Eve.

Undaunted, he packed up the Avolites Azure 2000 desk and the sound tapes for the stage acts and went back to his hotel room to blind plot the show. By plotting all states with positional palettes, Petruzio was able to build the complete show in preparation for the rig being raised to its dead to

allow him to record each of the actual focus positions. Although the ball and circular truss system necessitated a full replot for each luminaire rather than the simple incremental adjustments required for straight truss, Petruzio was able to align the rig before the doors opened at 7pm.

The moment of passage into the New Year was marked by music, pyrotechnics, balloon and confetti drops, followed by the 'Carneval del Millennium' dance review from the Luis Moreno Dance Extremes. Then the clubbers got down to the

serious business of partying until dawn appeared through the glass dome roof.

Celebrations wound down at 7am, just in time for a quick clean before the start of the Monkey Recovery Session which ran from 8am to 7pm on New Year's day. The QBH closed again briefly at 7pm for cleaning; re-opening at 8pm for the New Year's Night session which ran until 7am on January 2nd. A marathon celebration to exhaust even the most hardened party-goer, not to mention the club's staff.

Andy Ciddor

Arup Acoustics in Manchester

Arup Acoustics is establishing a new office in Manchester.

The company has already handled a number of high profile projects in Manchester, including the Bridgewater Hall, Manchester Airport and the International Convention Centre, and will use the new base to offer its growing number of clients in the North of England a more efficient service. Richard Greer, Nick Antonio and Jo Webb will make up the acoustics team in Manchester.

Arup (UK) + 44 161 228 2331

Highbury House Plans to Buy Nexus Media

Publisher Highbury House has made moves to purchase rival Nexus, publishers of Live!, DJ magazine and Disco International.

The Nexus titles will add to an already substantial Highbury portfolio of around 40 magazines ranging from technical publications such as Camcorder User through to home interest titles such as Women's Health. The Group also publishes a further 50 under contract. The acquisition of Nexus will be the latest in a string of investments for Highbury: in March 99 it formed a joint venture with Internet Advertising to publish magazines on the internet, three months later it bought Wyvern Crest, a database marketing company, for £3.7m and in September 99 it acquired WV, publisher of consumer magazines, for £7m. Highbury is to call on shareholders for £37m to help fund the £40m purchase. The deal will be funded by rights issue, underwritten by Close Brothers and Collins Stewart, and has so far been oversubscribed.

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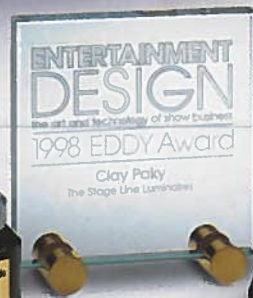


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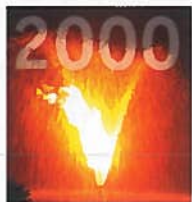
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PROFESSIONAL SHOW LIGHTING



While the rest of the world partied to that now thankfully outdated Prince song, something different was happening in the Canadian capital city of Ottawa.

Ottawa's Face of 2000

On Parliament Hill, six stage areas were positioned like the numbers on the face of a clock; each area linked a procession. In Motion: A Story of Time, presented by the National Capital Committee, was a celebration that fused dance, music and technology. The show consisted of five stages (the sixth staging area being the Peace Tower) and six processions, placed over an area measuring 600ft by 400ft, making a total of 12 staging areas, with audience in the centre of the 'clock'. Each procession leads to a stage, where a moment in the history of mankind is explored, ranging from classical antiquity to modern times.

Technologically, one of the most stunning aspects of the production was the use of video projection. Lighting designer Martin Conboy relied on Pani BP4 and BP1.2k projectors to project images on 11 square, circular or triangular screens placed throughout Parliament Hill. A Hardware for Xenon 7kW projector was also used



to project images on the Peace Tower, the final stage that served as a back-drop for the midnight countdown. For lighting, Conboy relied on simple Par 64s for back-light and ETC Source Fours for gobo projection. For front-light, he used a total of seven 3kW xenon spotlights and the NCC provided four Cyberlights.

The audio system, provided by Wall Sound of Ottawa, consisted of 48 Adamson cabinets placed in six stacks of eight. "It was quite a challenge to make it sound good on site," commented the show's musical director Michel DeMars. After trying several different locations, De Mars and sound engineer Charles Fairfield set the cabinets in the 1, 3, 5, 7, 9 and 11 o'clock positions, and ended up mixing in mono, due to the unequal distances between the cabinets.

Sharon Stancavage

Stonewood Purchases Metro Audio

Stonewood Electronics Ltd, the manufacturer of the Metro Audio intercom products, has informed L&SI that it has purchased the name, goodwill and trading title of Metro Audio, which was liquidated last November. The company has formed Stonewood Audio Ltd, which will distribute the professional intercom products together with Stonewood's new product range, which includes a full duplex multi-channel wireless intercom system. Steve Gunn has been appointed sales manager.

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Pulsar Student Lighting Designers Award

The second Pulsar Student Lighting Designers Competition is to commence shortly with the first heat taking place in Melton Mowbray Colleges' technical studio.



Pulsar's Derrick Saunders with Martin Shenton, runner-up in last year's competition and Melton Mowbray's Paul Duvall

Contestants will be able to use the latest technology recently installed by Pulsar Light which includes two Clay Paky Stage Color 300s and two Stage Light 300s, controlled by Pulsar's Masterpiece 216. A strong partnership between Pulsar and the College has developed over recent years, allowing students on degree courses access to the latest technology in lighting equipment and control. Students from the performing arts department of De Montfort University, based at Melton Mowbray, are already queuing up to participate in the lighting designers competition. Training will be offered by Pulsar at its Cambridge headquarters and the brief for the designers will be to come up with a design that will complement a short piece of

contemporary music. Two heats per month will see a number of students battling it out. Those successful in the heats will then

be invited to the finals in July where they will be asked to light a short piece of theatre specifically commissioned for the contest. Contestants will work under the guidance of last year's runner-up Martin Shenton, who is currently in his final year of his Performing Arts BA.

Further heats will take place over the next few months when it is hoped that degree students from Loughborough University and Nottingham Trent University will also participate.


Pulsar (UK) - +44 1223366798

Greenwich Meridian



The Greenwich Meridian was the scene of the true Millennium and this stunning photo shows the magic moment. It was taken by Fantastic Fireworks photographer Frank McPartland and captures a spectacular scene from the company's display for the British Gas Millennium concert in the grounds of the Maritime Museum.

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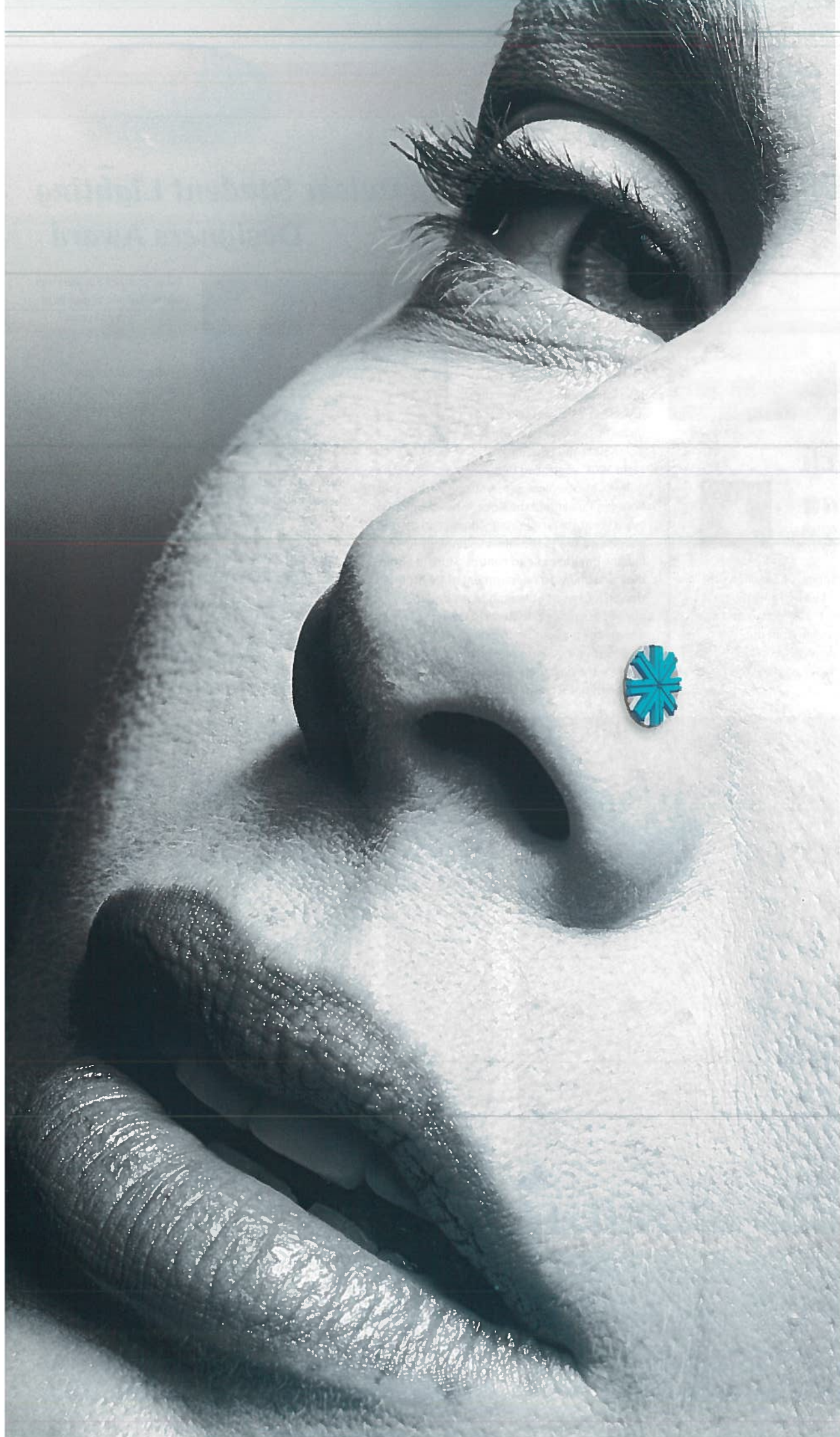
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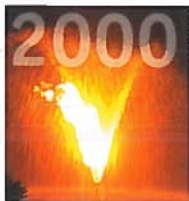
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Millennium Bugs



Millennium Eve was an unprecedented occasion in terms of the sheer number and scale of special celebratory events that took place across the globe.

For much of the entertainment technology industry, it was a one-off bonanza, made all the more successful by the happy fact that the world didn't, after all, grind to a halt at the stroke of midnight. But despite the successes of the night, a broad selection of which are covered in this issue, the bug did strike in places. Some of our favourite stories were reported by Silicon.com and include the tale of a website that for a short time claimed that it was last updated in 1900 - the fact that it was the Year 2000 Information Centre Web site is the icing on the cake. Apparently, the Pentagon experienced compatibility problems with the data from one of their satellites on 1 January. A bank customer in Germany was accidentally credited with £4m - which was then promptly taken back, and the one that just had to happen - a New Yorker was fined \$91,000 for returning a video a century late: well, he won't do that again, will he?

EAW Cinema Systems Debut in Odeon



Cinema specialist Sound Associates has, for the first time, specified an EAW cinema system for installation in a new Odeon multiplex. Asked to specify a system for Odeon's latest £4.5 million 'millennium' eight-screen cinema in Epsom, the Surrey-based company decided to break with tradition and audition EAW's CB series.

As a result, Sound Associates has installed three CB523 bi-amplified three way speaker systems into the four large screen cinemas, and CB259 bi-amplified two-way systems into the others - each stacked with SX184C subs. This combination has been found to offer clear left, centre and right sound distribution across the whole room. All the components were supplied by Sound Dept, EAW's exclusive UK distributor.

Boasting a capacity of 2,176, the all-format cinema offers Dolby digital and DTS digital sound throughout with two auditoria designated as feature cinemas.

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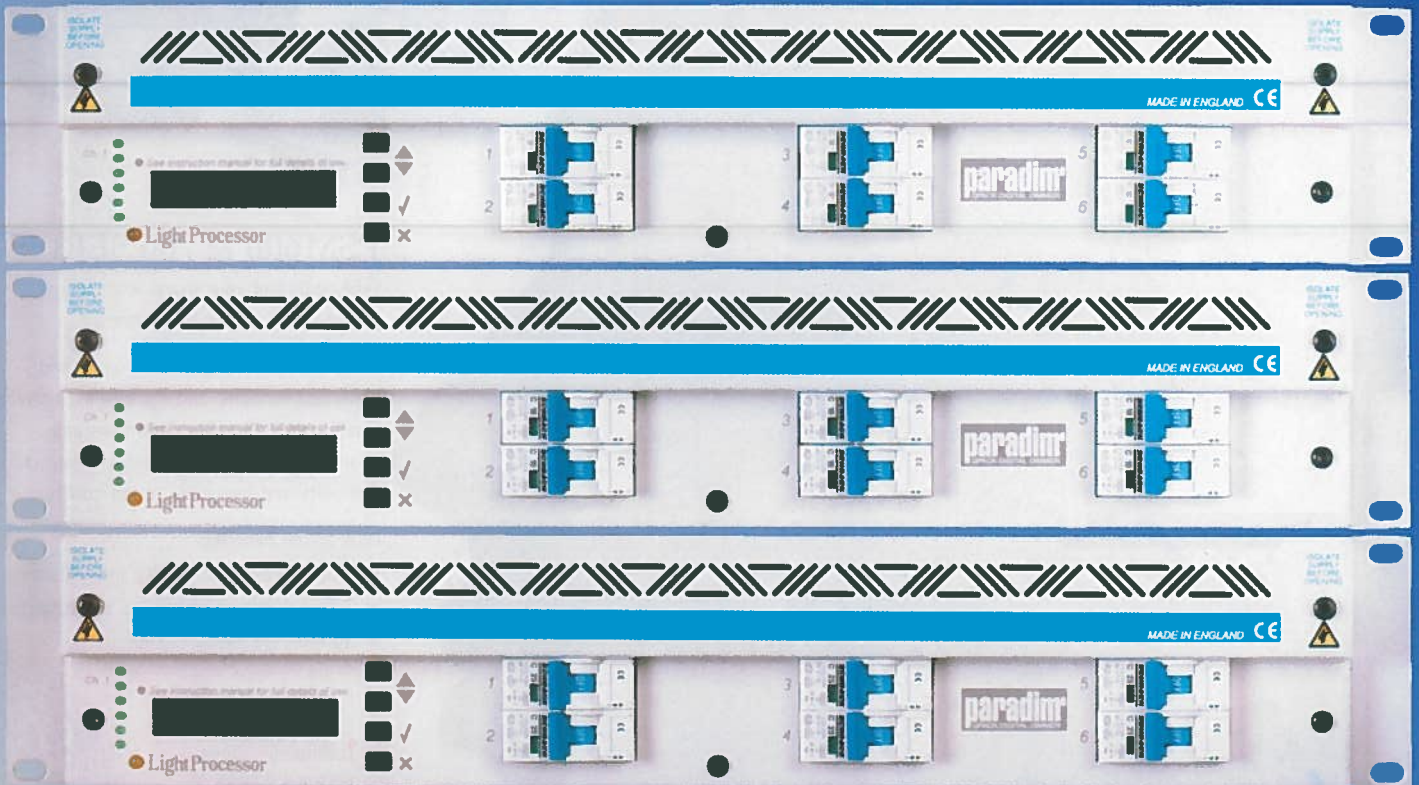
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Shelf Life

A Practical Guide To Stage Lighting

by Steven Louis Shelley

A Practical guide to Stage Lighting is a nuts and bolts look at the construction and implementation of theatrical lighting design. Combining theory and application, this textbook provides a comprehensive analysis of lighting systems along with step-by-step examples and illustrations of the technical tools and methods. Readers will benefit from experience-based tips, techniques and traps to avoid in preparing and executing a lighting design. Anecdotes illustrate why some techniques succeed while others fail.

Focal Press, ISBN 0240 80353, Price £19.99

Create Your Own Stage Effects

Gill Davies

This book draws on all the theatre disciplines to explore a range of special effects and helps readers to understand the appropriate techniques - whether lighting, sound, scenic effects, costume, fast changes, transformations, projection, make-up or inspired properties.



A & C Black, ISBN 07136 50508, Price £13.99

Designing for Theatre

by Francis Reid (2nd edition)

Established as the authoritative introduction to the processes of stage design. Francis Reid discusses the contribution of costume, settings, props and lighting to a theatre production, and explains the processes involved in their design. This wide-ranging book covers the role of design, the theatre building, visual style, the control of space and of time, new technologies, the practicalities of realising the design and its critical evaluation.

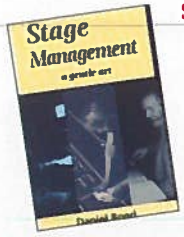


A & C Black, ISBN 07136 43986, Price £9.99

Stage Management - A Gentle Art

by Daniel Bond (2nd edition)

This book describes in detail a stage manager's job, providing students, those just starting out in the profession and amateurs, with a solid grounding in theatre stage management practices and procedures.



The disciplines of lighting, set design and sound are discussed, but the book's main concern is with the management of these elements and with the processes and scheduling that go together to provide the effective results.

A & C Black, ISBN 0 7136 4551 2, Price £11.99



Edwin O. Sachs: Architect, Stagehand, Engineer & Fireman

Edited by David Wilmore

This book is published by Theatresearch to commemorate the centenary of Edwin O. Sachs' definitive treatise, Modern Opera Houses & Theatres. Celebrating

the life and works of one of the great innovators of Victorian theatre, the book includes contributions from Sachs' son - the late Sir Eric Sachs, John Earl - an ex-director of the Theatres Trust and Iain Mackintosh - theatre consultant, as well as from David Wilmore and Terence Rees, joint editors of 'British Theatrical Patents, 1801-1900'. The book will surely be of value to anyone interested in theatre history.

Theatresearch, Price £20.00

ESTA - Supplement to the Recommended Practice

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ESTA - American National Standard E1.1-1999

This standard applies to the construction and permitted usage for the wire rope ladder.

ESTA, 1999, paperback, Price £13.00

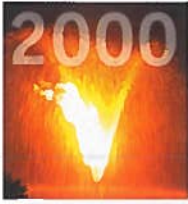
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Times Square

New York's 24-hour party in Times Square began at 6.15am on Friday

31st August and followed the dawn of the new Millennium as it crept around the globe. Every hour, as a new part of the world celebrated, Times Square celebrated with them.

Overall, it was estimated that one billion people worldwide saw the New Year celebrations at Times Square, which is the largest audience ever for the annual event. Over two million people crowded into the square itself to see the show, which featured more than 500 dancers, actors and musicians, a 12-hour musical score and 160 giant puppets, designed and built at Michael Curry's studio in Portland, Oregon. Produced by the Times Square BID (Business Improvement District) and Countdown Entertainment, this was the largest undertaking of any New Year's Eve celebration in Times Square in the 95-year history of the event: it required over 1,000 crew on the night, and took over 50,000 man-hours of labour to accomplish. A total of 18 cameras covered the celebrations.

The Times Square celebrations focus on the famous dropping of the ball atop the One Times Square building. The job this year was done by a newly-designed Ball - a translucent geodesic sphere, measuring six feet in diameter and weighing over 1,000 pounds. It was designed by Waterford Crystal and the lighting consultants were New York-based Fisher Marantz Stone. The



Ball also features the newly developed Philips Halogena 2000 bulbs, 168 of which are used on the exterior of the ball, while 423 Philips A lamps (208 no colour, 56 red, 56 blue, 56 green and 56 amber), as well as numerous GAM Star Strobes feature in the ball's interior. The ball is also covered with 504 Waterford Crystal triangles that vary in size from four to five inches per side. To make it even more spectacular, the 696 lights on the Ball as well as 90 rotating pyramid mirrors on the exterior are all computer-controlled, allowing maximum flexibility. The rigging equipment for the Ball was provided by Hudson Scenic of Yonkers, New York, while the rigging itself was done by Landmark Signs of New York City, under the close supervision of Hudson Scenic and production electrician John Trowbridge.

But the technical aspects of the show went far beyond a single Ball. To illuminate the 24-hour spectacle, lighting designer Roy Bennett used 32 7kW and 12 3kW xenon Syncrolites, provided by Syncrolite of Dallas, Texas. Four of these were located on top of One Times Square. The Syncrolites were augmented by nine Robert Juliat 2.5kW D'Artagnan Spotlights and seven Super Troupers from Strong. The main stage, located between 45th and 46th Streets on the island in the middle of Times Square, also used 68 High End Studio Spots and Studio Colors, the majority of which were on a box truss 15ft above the stage. 16 Vari*Lite VL7 spot luminaires were also located on the roof of One Times Square, on 45ft of box trussing which was placed on the parapet of the building. The lighting package also relied on a number of consoles, including two Flying Pig Wholehog IIs, a Vari-Lite Artisan and a Mini-Artisan. For the ball and its corresponding neon countdown sign, Trowbridge relied on two ETC Expression 2x consoles. "In all my years of programming, this is probably the most complicated show I have done due to the complex structure of the event," says Trowbridge.

The audio package for Times Square 2000 consisted of 18 Maryland Sound International NW2 clusters, with three cabinets in each cluster. The clusters, which weighed over 1,000 pounds each, were placed strategically around Times Square and were rigged by Landmark Signs. Finally, the show was visible throughout the area on a total of seven 20ft by 20ft screens, provided by Panasonic and Massteknick of Sweden. "The equipment was amazing," Trowbridge comments. "We had 100% of the gear working through the entire show."

Sharon Stancavage

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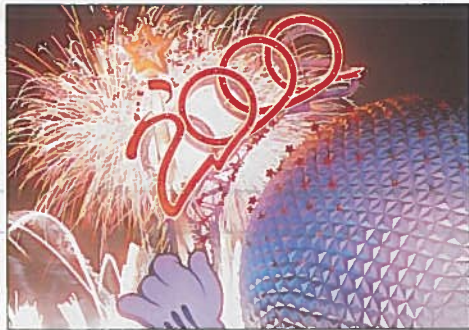
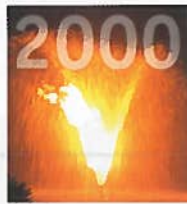
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Epcot Celebrate

For the world at large, the millennium celebrations have come and gone. But this is definitely not the case at Epcot in Walt Disney World, outside of Orlando, Florida. There, the party has been a daily event since October 1st, 1999 and will continue until January 1, 2001.



are 120 puppets, designed by Michael Curry. The puppets feature mirror-plated circles, flapping wings, gold squares and geometric patterns, and are illuminated internally during the show by Nite-Rider bicycle lights, which utilise 15W MR-11 lamps. These are custom-mounted in the factory and are physically located on the poles that support the puppets themselves. The parade is also illuminated by between 300 and 400 Thomas Outdoor Pars, which were part of the recent retro-fitting.

The celebration at Epcot is multi-faceted and includes a new 65,000sq.ft Millennium Village, where visitors can take a simulation ride to Jerusalem or experience a virtual tour of Scotland, hosted by poet Robert Burns. Then there is the twice-nightly Tapestry of Nations parade, and the finale of every evening, IllumiNations 2000. One of the high points of the Tapestry of Nations parade

The finale of the Epcot Millennium Celebration is IllumiNations 2000: Reflections of Earth, which takes place above the Epcot Center World Showcase Lagoon and chronicles the history of the world. After a cataclysm of fireworks and propane flames, the centre-piece of the show - the massive Earth Globe - appears in the Lagoon. This rotating 28ft diameter sphere, which is covered with video screens in the shape of the continents,

is located on a 350 ton floating island that houses a total of six computer processors, 258 strobes and uses an infra-red guidance system. Using 180,000 LEDs, the Earth Globe depicts a variety of pictures, from landmarks to cultural icons. At the stunning conclusion of the show, the Earth Globe actually opens up like a lotus flower, with a torch rising 40ft into the air. The show, which lasts 12 minutes, uses a total of 67 computers, four fountain barges that pump 5,000 gallons of water per minute and a 150,000lb inferno barge that shoots flames into the air via 37 nozzles. All is choreographed to a score by British television and film music composer Gavin Greenaway.

Sharon Stancavage



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Polka's Children in Need

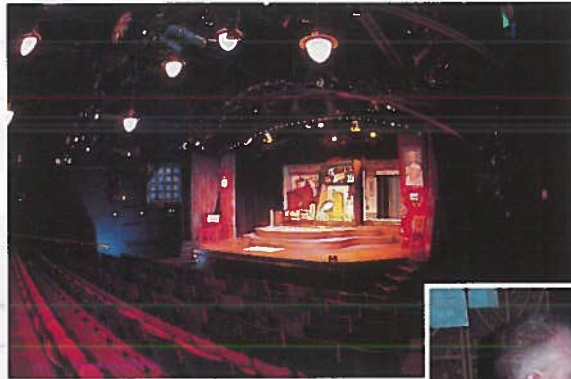
The Polka Theatre for Children on Wimbledon Broadway occupies a unique place in the thespian world.

Originally founded by Richard and Elizabeth Gill as a touring company in 1968, by 1977 it had acquired the premises into which it would become the only fixed-base theatre for children in the UK. It was on this unique footing that HRH Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother opened the Polka Theatre in 1979.

Under the artistic directorship of Vicky Ireland, the nineties has seen the exquisite theatre attract one accolade on top of another. Firstly, an Arts Council appraisal resulted in a 75% increase in grant, soon after which Alan Ayckbourn became patron of the theatre. In the mid-nineties, the Polka won the Vivien Duffield Theatre Award and was nominated as Most Welcoming Theatre. Then in 1997 it received a National Lottery award for building renovation. The problem was that through this period of consolidation, the Polka Theatre continued to operate its auditoria on its originally-installed technology

Earlier this year, through judicious budgeting and buying (and the good grace of the entertainment supply industry) they managed to get a £73,000 budget approved by the board, wresting some 45% of this from the Foundation for Sport & The Arts, with the shortfall being made up from the Royal Victoria Hall Foundation and some creative accountancy by the theatre's production manager Sebastian Hall - who is responsible for everything from carpentry to costumes to scenery.

Following a competitive tendering process, Marquee Audio were successful in winning the



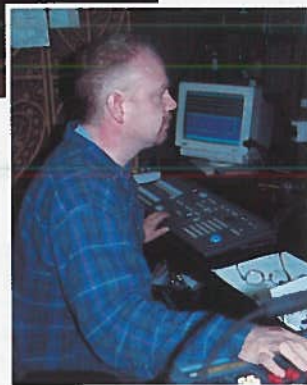
Above, the main auditorium and inset, Sebastian Hall in the control room

contract for the supply and installation of the audio system, upgrading the picturesque main house. Next summer Hall hopes to turn his attention to the tiny Adventure Theatre, aimed at audiences of up to five years old. Presently the actors control their own lighting and sound from a discrete board on the props, but later this year could see a possible doubling of room capacity. Presently the mini-truss links compact luminaires across the decades, with Strand Minim Fs and the Mini Ellipses keeping company with ETC's Source Fours.

The Polka's ambition is not confined to its four walls. They sent two shows to Madrid this spring and have had a provincial medium-scale show out on tour this Autumn. And yet despite the flurry of family matinee activity on the day that L&SI visited for the well-reviewed adaptation of Mary Norton's *The Borrowers*, and the assurance that it plays continuously to at least 90% capacity, the Polka cannot be kept alive on box office receipts alone, and requires funding from the London Arts Board and the local London Borough of Merton.

Other major contributors to its financial stability includes the Vivien Duffield Foundation.

"We can only just about raise enough money to fund performances so you can imagine how difficult it is getting money approved for new equipment," explained Hall. Nevertheless, Braveheart never won My Fair Lady (or something) and so he boldly precepted for an ideal package - "and I was amazed to find we got most of what we asked for." This enabled him to specify the Tannoy SR system of choice and upgrade the induction loop system.



The theatre already owned a Soundcraft Delta console and this now feeds a pair of BSS Soundweb 9088 digital matrix devices, that in turn feed Crown K1 and K2 amplifiers driving the Tannoy i12s and T40s. Various Sony and Denon minidisc players, for original music playback, can also be found in the control room, along with a six-way AKG WMS300 radio mic system.

The design predominantly consists of an i12/T40 combination down each side of the room, running from a concealed position in the proscenium arch back to the rear stalls. The rig has replaced the previous Mega/Bose 800 combination.

Summarising the system design, Andy Huffer commented: "The combination of the room and the budget requirements led me to recommend the eventual Soundweb/Crown/Tannoy system. The BSS Soundweb digital processing gives flexibility, the K series Crown amps are fan-free, so the control room doesn't sound like a jumbo jet's taking off, and the Tannoys give an incredibly well-defined sound. You might think that this is overkill for an audience of eight-year-olds, but in today's digitally-enhanced, compact, DVD, surround sound, interactive media world, this audience will soon let you know if the pair of 100V line columns you've palmed them off with aren't up to the job."

With the theatre in full usage, the rare windows of opportunity for installation were confined mostly to Mondays when the theatre was dark. The lighting upgrade has kept pace with its audio counterpart every step of the way. Cerebrum Lighting supplied ten Rainbow Scrollers and the existing Strand GSX board was adapted accordingly to give it DMX capacity. Some Source Fours were supplied by Lighting Technology - and all were rigged by Hall himself. Standing on the stage he pointed to the front lighting bar. "On any production you can expect to find at least 150 lanterns in operation," he said. "The problem is, we could now really do with a rewire."

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them involving the full Sydney Symphony Orchestra. Add to this the stages and parties at nearby Darling Harbour and between them they consumed a significant proportion of Sydney's production facilities.

With so many major productions taking place around the harbour, radio channels for microphones, in-ear monitors, production talkback and general communications were at a

allow it to be transported to site and attached to the superstructure by the bridge's rigging team. Consisting of some six kilometres of water resistant Flexlight, the sign was controlled by a Strand 530 desk driving 96 channels of Bytecraft Bytesize 483 dimmers. The sign was sequenced to fade up from left to right in a manner suggesting that it was actually being written on the side of the bridge. Where do you find the 150Amps per phase of mains required to power such a sign? You borrow it from the overhead feeders for the bridge's two maintenance cranes via ten, 33m drops of 240 sq.mm flexible cable.

Andy Ciddor

Sydney Harbour Celebrations



As the host city for the 2000 Olympic Games, it appears that Sydney has designated itself Australia's celebration city, with big events also scheduled for Australia Day and the opening of the Olympics.

As a major landmark and icon of Australian culture, the Sydney Opera House played host to a bewildering array of activities: serving as a backdrop for some, a venue for others, and quite literally a stage on occasion. Part of the pyrotechnics show was mounted on the building, Circus Oz performed between the sails and 'House Dance' was performed by dancers suspended by climbing tackle on the side of one of the sails. Inside the Opera House, all venues were in use for special performances and parties.

Three stages were set up for different functions in the vast areas surrounding the Opera House: 'House Party' in the forecourt, 'Momentum' at the side of the Opera House and the 'Lord Mayor's Masked Ball' in the front of the building. Each of these functions were major productions, two of

premium. Although moves were made to co-ordinate radio mic channel allocation between productions, some hardened professionals, like Pat Richardson from Jands Production Services, were not prepared to risk a major production with splits to a national television broadcast on anything but microphones with cables.

The nearby Harbour Bridge, as everyone in the world with access to a television set surely knows, featured heavily in the countdown and the seriously monstrous pyrotechnics show that marked the passage into the New Year. The Bridge was also used to support illuminated images such as a smile and a pair of winking eyes and the enigmatic word 'Eternity' in a handwritten script. The eternity sign was constructed on a steel frame in 47 sections to



Bytecraft crew and dimmers on the Harbour Bridge photo: Paul Rigby

The dark spectre lurking behind the celebrations was the possibility of infrastructure failures as a result of Y2K related problems. To this end the Opera House had hired in two substantial stand-by generators for the outdoor productions and two small trailer-mounted generator and tower systems for emergency lighting of the exterior areas. Fortunately, these were not required. However, in the Concert Hall at around 11.45pm, some 15 minutes after the house had exited to attend a party outside, the entire DMX network controlling dimmers, scrollers and robotics went berserk. Excited speculation that there may be a Y2K bug in one of the DMX devices was eventually discounted when the complex control network installed for the production was found to contain a DMX distribution device with a faulty switch-mode power supply that was causing random data corruption.



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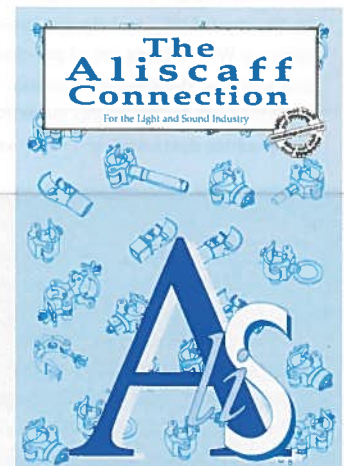
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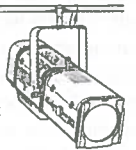
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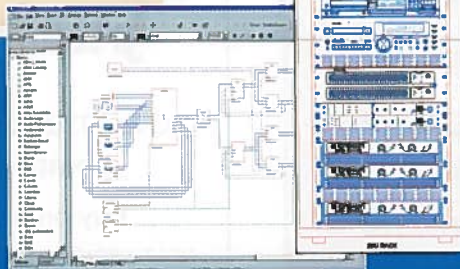
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Eiffel Tower Blasts Off

In Paris, the Eiffel Tower was the focus for a spectacular three-minute fireworks display staged by ECA2, under the direction of Yves Pépin.



The Eiffel Tower's countdown to midnight on January 31st, 1999, actually began exactly 1,000 days earlier, and the timer patiently ticked off the seconds for almost three years, until, at the stroke of midnight, the tower erupted in a blaze of light and pyrotechnics. Over 1,300 spotlights were installed on the tower, controlled by a central computer, their beam intensity adjusted to account for day and night.

To outline the Tower and achieve the 'sparkle' effect, 20,000 screw-in bulbs were fitted over the entire surface at 32cm intervals, installed over three months by a team of 20 specialist climbers. Also used were 800 strings of Christmas lights - measuring a total of 18km (11 miles). Total power consumption for the sparkle was 400kW - as much as for the main

show lighting. For the pyro, 30 technicians and pyrotechnicians from ECA2 installed 80 platforms at intervals up the Tower's full height. A total of 20,000 fireworks launches spread over the whole monument and the Champ de Mars, 4,800 of which were on the Tower itself. Firing was controlled by a central computer, synchronised linked to the Millennium timer on the Tower.

Harman to Acquire Crown International

Harman Pro Group North America has reached a preliminary agreement to acquire Crown International, manufacturers of a range of power amplification products.

According to Mark Terry, president of Harman Pro Group North America, the acquisition is expected to close within a month and is subject to the ratification of a definitive agreement. "The addition of Crown's amplifier brand will increase the power and appeal of the entire Group to customers around the world."

Osram Sets Sights on Motorola

Lighting manufacturer Osram Sylvania and Motorola Inc have signed a definitive agreement which will see Osram Sylvania acquiring the assets of Motorola Lighting. The sale, to be finalised in April, would see the Motorola Lighting business becoming part of Osram Sylvania's Electronic Control Systems business.

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British Airways London Eye



The British Airways 'London Eye' on the South Bank near

Waterloo Bridge had its official opening on New Year's Eve, lit by a dazzling display of lights, fireworks and lasers. With a host of top stars and television crews in attendance, the 135ft tall wheel - one of the tallest structures in the city and the largest of its kind in the world - is designed to give guests a fabulous view of the London skyline during its 30-minute rotation.

The event's executive creative director was Simon Tapping of Park Avenue Productions whilst the lighting designer and show operator on the night was Paul Cook. The lighting system, supplied by VLPS (Vari-Lite Production Services), consisted of six Sky-Art automated searchlights, 60 Vari*Lite VL5Arc wash luminaires, 12 VLM moving mirrors, two 40,000W Lightning Spots, one 70kW Lightning Strike and one 50kW Softsun (the latter three fixtures supplied by Cirrolite). The system was run from a Wholehog 2 desk.

The VL5Arc luminaires were used to light the giant wheel's perimeter, washing it with light in varying colours; the Sky-Art units were used to highlight the wheel's profile with four units in front and two behind, which were also used - via the VLM Moving Mirrors - to bounce beams of light across the river to the switch-on podium on the north Embankment.



The big reveal took place in the early evening when Prime Minister Tony Blair pressed a button on the podium, triggering a sequence of laser effects supplied by Laser Grafix. A 3.5W DPSS (Diode Pumped Solid State) laser, located at the RAF memorial on Victoria Embankment, was shot to the centre hub of the London Eye. A 50W Nd:YAG laser (one of the most powerful in the country), situated in a purpose-built premises behind the wheel, answered with a beam and spatial show through the wheel itself. This began a three-minute spectacle that was witnessed by millions and broadcast worldwide.

The two lasers were positioned 48 hours prior to the event, and were dismantled and removed some 24 hours after the last revellers had departed. The lasers were projected 300ft on to the wheel and were time-coded through a single clock to ensure split-second precision timing was achieved between the lights, the lasers and sound. The unveiling was followed by two and a half minutes of lasers, fireworks and lighting. The lighting was then left to illuminate the wheel for the rest of the Millennium night.

Apologies to Lighting Technology. In last month's issue when covering the work of LD Benny Ball at 30 Berkeley Square we made a mistake. It was in fact Lighting Technology who handled most of the lighting installation and supplied the Color Kinetics LED equipment.

Late to 'bed'

The launch of bed has been rescheduled for Saturday 11th March 2000. The move is a result of a routine inspection of drainage revealing two collapsed drains underneath the former 'Music Factory' nightclub at a depth of 3.5 metres.



Though not a major structural problem, interior refurbishment work will be slowed down at the 1,270 capacity venue whilst the situation is rectified to correspond with health and safety requirements. "It's a shame we're not going to open on time but these things are sent to try us. It's a pity the Victorians weren't as good at building drains as we thought they were!" Russell Pate, bed promoter, told L&SI.

In June last year, Gatecrasher acquired the former Music Factory, a venue synonymous with Northern clubbing. Now Gatecrasher plan to reinvent the 1,270 capacity venue into a forward-looking, modern, stylish environment that will reflect both its music policy and its clientele. Musically, 'bed' will be split into two areas. The main room will be good old fashioned house music all night long with resident Jon Marsh (of The Beloved infamy). The second room will be hosted by resident Simon Mu and will boast a more funky, eclectic mix of music.

CK Ties Up Patent and Equity

Color Kinetics Inc, manufacturer of full spectrum digital lighting, has announced the completion of its third round of equity financing, with Deutsche Bank as the lead investor.

This round featured significant participation from the company's existing investors as well as from several new investors, and has raised over \$13 million for the company. It will enable Color Kinetics to broaden its product range based on its LED-based Chromacore technology, which has recently been awarded a US Patent - the first issued in its field. The patent covers standalone and network control of multiple LEDs for illumination and display.

According to industry analysts, the worldwide LED market is estimated at \$1.8 billion, with strong forecasts for rapid growth.

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News Round-Up



Crashing in to the New Year

Gatecrasher hosted the UK's largest single dance music event at Don Valley Stadium, Sheffield under the world-record breaking structure Tensile 1.

In the words of Gatecrasher promoter Simon Raine, 2000GC's aim was to put into practice "ten years of promoting parties, ten years of production knowledge and ten years of contacts into one very special night."

Gatecrasher worked on the design with Martin Nicholas (Arty Particulus Design Services & LSD). The stage area incorporated two spectacular DJ platforms, raised 20ft in the air, which were sensationally linked by a glamorous 25ft cat-walk style suspension bridge. Throughout Tensile 1, steel trussing was uniquely run vertically, instead of horizontally to create a roller-coaster effect and cover the full length and height of the structure. Had the trussing at 2000GC have been laid end to end, it would have stretched well over one mile in length!

Further on from the DJ platforms were two 10-metre circular plasma screens at either end of the structure, with a third 10 metre circular truss behind the walk-way. Possibly one of the most spectacular features at 2000GC was the use of 9m x 9m Opti-Screen, provided by LED Gearhouse. This was perfect for the relay of the live video mixing fed by four internal cameras that were in use throughout the event.

LSD supplied the lighting rig which featured Icons, MAC 500s, Studio Colors and Cyberlights. Complementing these were Death Stars, Data Flash and an array of strobe effects. Controlling



photo: Donovan



the rig were an Avo Diamond 3 desk, Avo Pearl and an Icon console - provided by LSD. Frank Shields and Alistair Brammel were at the helm of the Icon with Simon Barrington and Ewan Richards on the Pearl and Diamond 3 desks.

Gatecrasher enlisted the services of Laser Creations to supply a 45W Nd-YAG laser.

The sound system and DJ equipment was provided by SSE and based around a Nexo Alpha System with 12 separate loudspeaker stacks in position to distribute sound across the venue. All the audio inputs from DJ positions and microphones were controlled using a Soundcraft SM12 console and BSS Varicurve Equalisers and distributed to all speaker positions. Time alignment for the system was achieved using Nexo NX241 digital processors.

Both of the DJ platforms were each equipped with Technics SL1210 turntables, Denon 2500 CD players and Vestax DJ mixers. The sound equipment alone weighed in excess of 45,000 tonnes and needed an experienced crew of six and 12 local crew just to load in and out!

The final part of the equation was a pyro display masterminded by Pyro Production Services Ltd.

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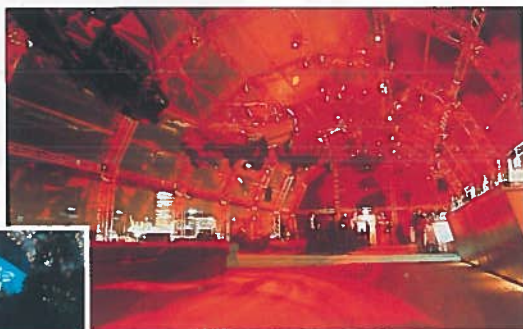
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New Year's Resolution!

Blue Box Systems has chosen the new Funktion One R-2 Resolution Series loudspeaker cabinets for its sound installation into the Pure Group's new Superstructure, currently situated opposite the Millennium Dome - the first installation of the Resolution Series outside of The Dome.

The Superstructure is a unique, multi-purpose state-of-the-art mobile venue (see news December 99). The



Above, The Superstructure ready for the End of Days premier party. Inset, Jeremy Millins Pure Productions MD at the industry launch.

sound design for the Superstructure had to be versatile enough to cater for the variety of events to be staged there. Blue Box's Mark Metcalf had initially envisaged utilising 12 boxes for coverage, but it turned out that six would be enough to cover the Superstructure's dimensions - 65m long, 14m wide and 8.5m high. The speakers are powered by OSC PLX 3402 amplifiers chosen for their transparency, with system control from the XTA DP226 processing system. Using six-way 226s offers the option of adding sub-bass as required, without tacking on processing outside the existing signal chain.

The system was put to the test in January when the Pure Group invited the industry press to view the structure at its Millennium Dome site.

Triflite Go Light

Triflite Cases has added lightweight shock-mounted 19" rack flight cases to its range.

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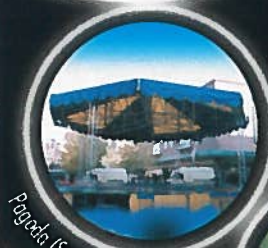
A new speaker system has been installed into the Metaforum auditorium at 'The School of the Future' in Holland.

Affiliated to the Koning Willem I College in s'-Hertogenbosch, The School of the Future is a modern college used for showcasing new technologies in education and evaluating new media. Netherlands-based MCM carried out the Tannoy audio system install which comprised two individual speaker systems; a Dolby Surround system for film presentations and a central cluster and distributed speaker grid system for speech reinforcement. The Dolby Surround system consists of three pairs of Tannoy i12 speakers with a Tannoy TX2 controller for each pair and two Tannoy B950 sub bass speakers, all mounted behind the screen. An additional 10 Tannoy CPA5 compact speakers are mounted at the rear of the auditorium to provide surround effects.

The central cluster and distributed speaker grid uses eight Tannoy CMS65 ICT 6.5" ceiling monitor speakers for vocal reinforcement towards the rear of the auditorium, with the speech system comprising a cluster of two i12 speakers flown centrally above the screen.



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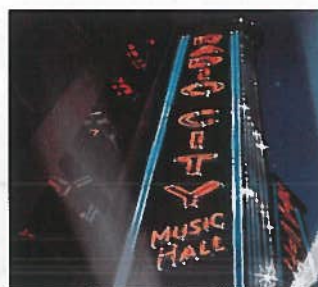
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In the British scale of things, it's hard to conceive of a theatre with a stage 144 feet wide - the full width of a New York City block.

Radio City Music Hall



It is equally hard to conceive of a theatre with four full-stage elevators plus a revolve. Or of an auditorium holding 6,000 people. Perhaps the largest of European opera houses might match these facilities - but none of them would require 700 dimmers just to deal with the houselights!

The venue that actually generates these outrageous figures is the Radio City Music Hall, part of the Rockefeller Centre in New York City. Designed by Samuel Lionel Rothafel to be the finest theatre in the world, the auditorium with its spectacular curved proscenium arch and auditorium roof is familiar even to theatre fans who've never actually visited New York. The on-stage facilities were way ahead of their time when the theatre opened in 1932: the hydraulic system controlling the lifts was so advanced that it was placed under armed guard by the American Navy during World War Two, lest its technology be stolen by enemy agents!

The Radio City Music Hall has just completed a seven-month, \$70million restoration project that has seen the refurbishment of the auditorium and foyers, as well as upgrading of the technical facilities. 700 ETC Sensor dimmers were installed to control the houselight system that gives three-colour mixing at every bay in the auditorium ceiling. New circle-front and side-auditorium lighting positions were also installed under the guidance of lighting consultants Fisher Dachs Associates and Fisher Marantz Stone.

In the basement, the hydraulic systems for the lifts were updated and placed under computer control, though this system is generally felt to have not yet reached the level of refinement of the old hydraulics! The manually-controlled swag system for the house curtain has been retained - as has the original three-preset

lighting console located at the front of the stage, though its function has been usurped by an ETC Obsession 2!

The first full-scale production to play in the refurbished venue was the legendary Radio City Christmas Spectacular, a 90-minute song-and-dance show performed up to six times a day for eight weeks. Lighting for this was by Ken Billington, celebrating his twentieth year with the show. His rig featured the full array of ETC Source Fours (the width of the stage requiring the use of five-degree units as cross-lights from the ladders!) and Wybron scrollers along with Vari*Lite VL6s, VL2Cs and VL4s. Some were on custom side trusses designed to follow the curve of the auditorium, and the Vari*Lites were all controlled from a Wholehog 2 console programmed by David Grill. Billington and associate Jason Kantrowitz also made full use of Radio City's 12 FOH followspots, these arranged in pairs with one operator running two spots simultaneously - and doing so to tremendous effect in a spectacular, over-the-top and beautifully-lit show.

Rob Halliday

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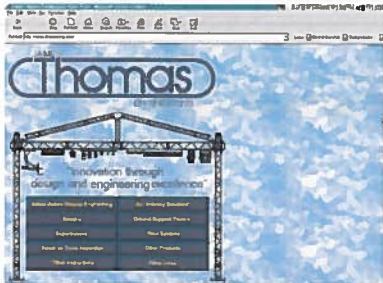
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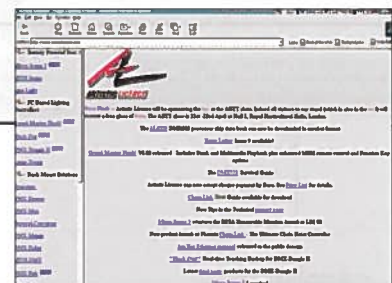
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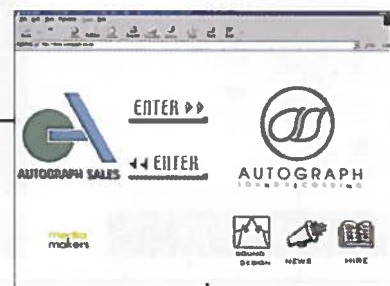
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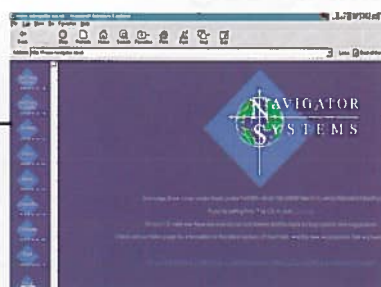
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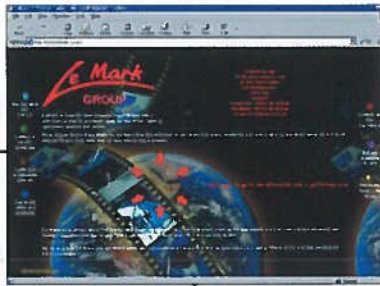
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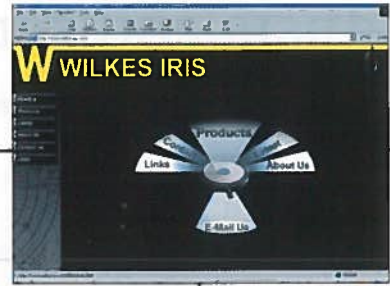
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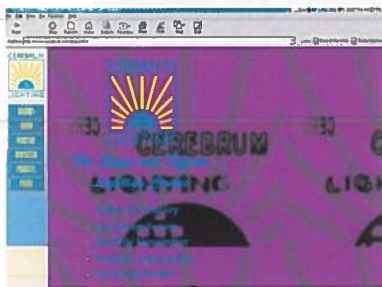
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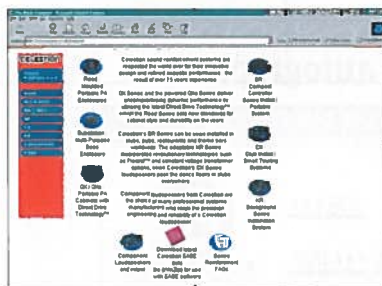
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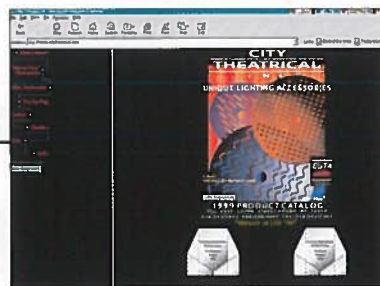
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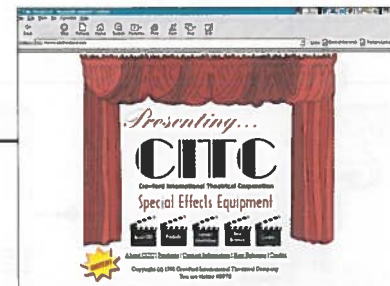
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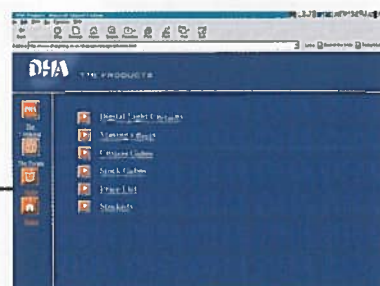
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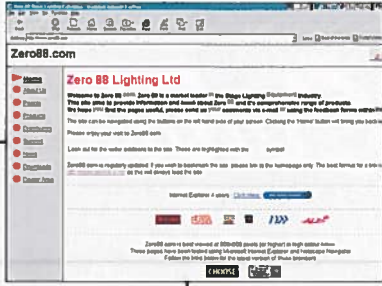
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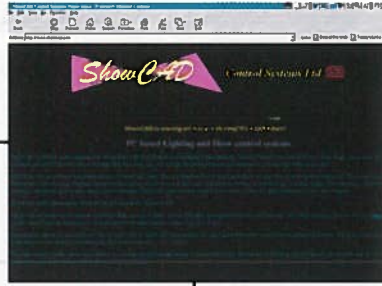
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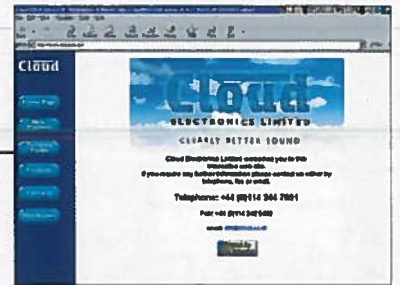
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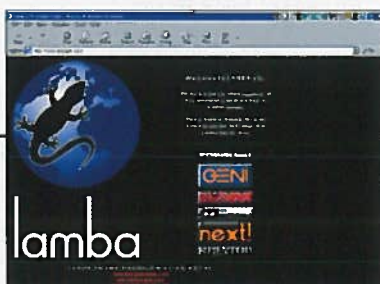
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Sport-Spectacle, des pièces de Théâtre. Le monde de la Télévision comme celui de la Vidéo ne leur sont pas étrangers non plus. Au-delà des grandes productions pour lesquelles ils sont si souvent appelés, ils aiment apporter leur expérience à des spectacles 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 Vano Vanni, assumendone il ruolo nel 1991.



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

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



Hans-Åke Sjöquist has worked as a lighting designer in his native Sweden for almost 30 years.

From 1978-79 he studied in the USA at the Yale University School of Drama. He worked at the Royal Opera House in



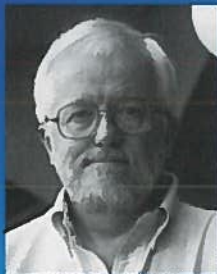
Stockholm for six years as Resident Lighting Designer from 1980 to 1986, lighting over 20 major productions during this period.

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

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



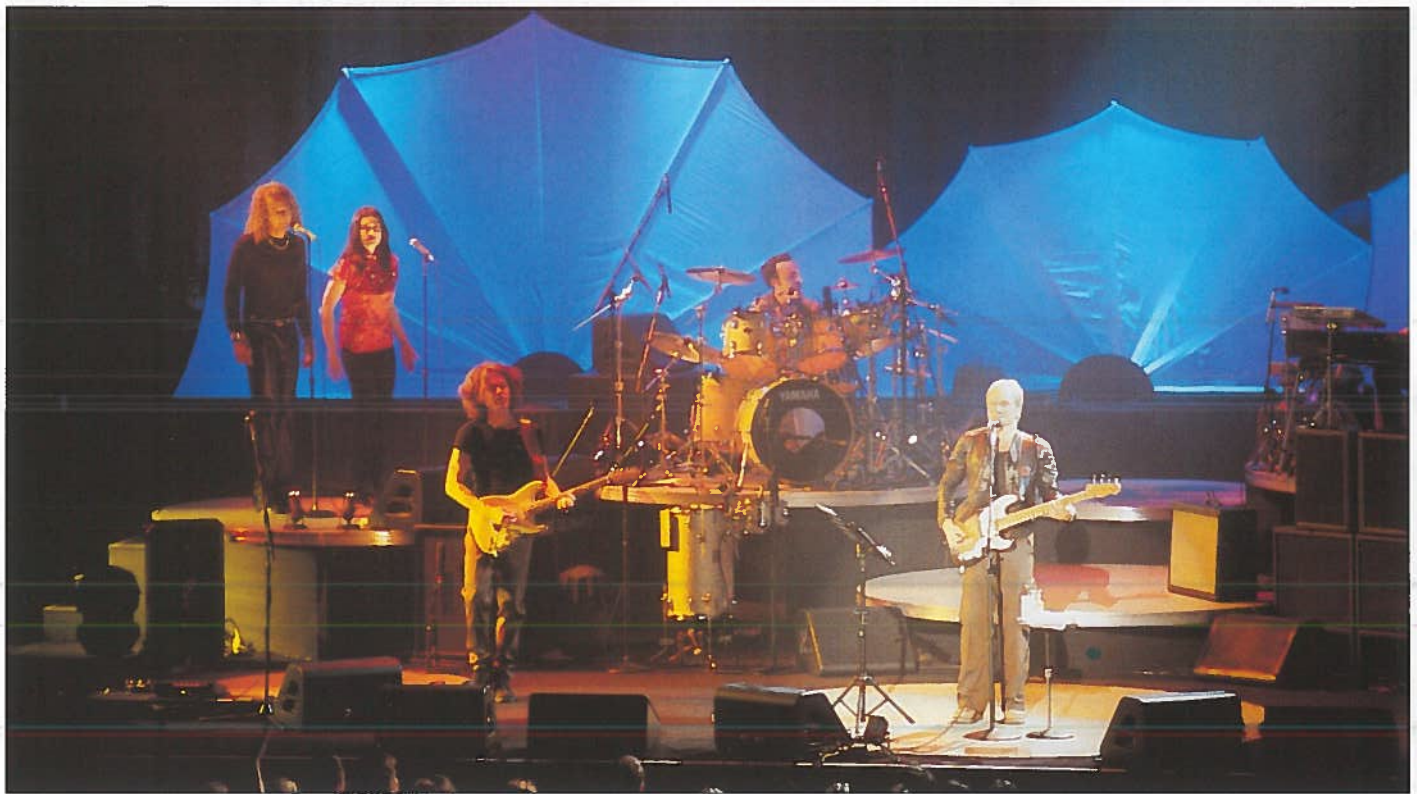
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Brand New Day

You can probably count on one hand, the number of performers who've managed both a successful group and solo career. Sting, it seems, has lost none of his bite as Steve Moles found out when he caught the veteran performer in fine form at . Steve Moles Sting at Le Zenith, Grand Palais in France

"It's bright. I couldn't see a damned thing, so it must be all right." Mr Sting commenting to lighting designer Nick Sholem after the first show. Faint praise indeed, especially in light of the fact that this is unquestionably Sholem's finest piece of work to date. The past four years spent flitting between Yes, Metallica, the Eagles and Blondie, have obviously done wonders for his muse. Funny thing is, house sound man Mike Keating appears to be similarly disregarded. "I'm still flattered to death that an artist as talented as Sting trusts me to do this for him," he said.

They might both remind themselves they've been with the man a long time; Sholem's in his nineteenth year, which is quite typical for the Sting camp. Tam Fairgreive, his production manager, has been there even longer, so the apparent indifference may just be comfortable familiarity. After all, this is the man who discovered he was being ripped-off by his accountant and went for the jugular. He doesn't appear to conform to the role of complacent or stupid artist. Far from it, the impression I came away with after this show was that Sting is continuing to grow; he is a songwriter at the height of his powers who, on stage, is relaxed and appears quite delighted at the pleasure his music gives. Sholem and Keating's contributions to that equation should not be taken for granted, and however off-hand Sting's remarks might seem, I don't believe they are.

Sound

No one was more surprised than Mike Keating when a Clair Brothers I4 system turned up in Lille for the European tour.

"We didn't use it at all for the US tour before Christmas," said Keating, and then added cryptically, "Thank the Lord. It just wouldn't work in the type of venues we were playing - mainly theatres - which Sting loves. The trouble with those venues is you really need to stack it." Which apparently is rather tricky. Keating's system's man, CJ, who it must be said had more than a few gripes about how they'd been dumped into the bath-tub of I4, without even a towel, had this to say. "It's like trying to stack apples on water melons." He was not a happy bunny.

For those who are unaware, the I4 is Clair Brothers' response to the growing popularity of Christian Heil's line array system V-Dosc. "There's one big advantage with this system," said Keating, explaining his belief that Clair Bros have taken that established piece of fundamental audio physics and made it better.

That's as maybe, but as was said, all was not happiness and delight at the front-of-house encampment, and you could see one reason straight away. Instead of the expected single column of hung cabinets, there was a rather curious arrangement that saw four old S4s in column hang, right alongside the I4s. "The people back in the States are saying this is the hot ticket," explained Keating.

"There are no subs with this system and what we are doing here is using the low end in the S4s." Which in a way is a curious admission of the failure of their design, but then if the resultant solution works, who cares? Keating was also reassured by having the S4s along.

"I've got a bunch more of them, and more I4s, for when we play bigger venues." (Big arenas demand two hangs per side - a far off axis hang will have up to six more I4s and a pair of S4s.) These are series II cabinets, the S4x as



TOURING

brand new day



I heard him here a few years ago off the older S4. I also walked the floor just before the show (punters in, full house), listening to Maxwell's Silver Hammer from the Beatles' Abbey Road album. It's a simply-produced song, not cluttered with instruments, a feature that makes it interesting in that you can easily perceive the frequencies that are working in there, all others being excluded. Although not a full spectrum sound, what I listened to varied not one jot in level, content or clarity from one side of what is a quite wide room, to the other. I won't say more - this was, after all, Keating's first ever live show with this PA, but there was nothing wrong here, and that's no small achievement.

Briefly, and to do justice to the rest of the audio set-up: monitors were run as ever by Vish Wadi, this time using the new Paragon monitor console from ATI (see Cher, *L&S* December 1999). The only real thing of note is that there's not an in-ear system in sight: the stage is littered with Clair AM12, but level is low and presents no problems in the house. Even the exceptional Arabic vocalist Cheb Mami (listen to the latest Sting single *Desert Rose* if you're not familiar), who likes his stage sound loud, has to bow to the boss's idea of level, which is to everyone's benefit. Keating is still using a Yamaha PM4000 for all the usual reasons, and has much the same house racks as the last tour, just some new Lexicon PCMs for reverb, and the Wendels have gone. He too was expecting a Paragon, the long-awaited new house board, "but I guess they haven't got there yet," he said. This was the least of his worries.

Lighting

The show was programmed in New York in September using WYSIWYG, with the help of hardware supplied by tour sponsors, Compaq. Despite my opening comments, Sholem's design is, in structural terms, remarkably simple. Essentially a theatre rig, it has six single trusses cross stage: rear truss for a complex drape system, four lighting between, and a minibeam down-stage just for the Wybron Autopilot sensors. Many of Sholem's familiars are here - multiple Kabukis, the Autopilot, which runs 10 High End Systems Cyberlights variously tracking Sting, plus guitar and trumpet players, and his beloved DHA pitching, scrolling light curtains also in attendance. But one of the key features from the last tour, the wall of BP screens and projectors, is gone. "They

were expensive - not that they weren't effective," said Sholem, "but releasing that money has enabled me to indulge more on the lighting."

The one big change for Sholem from last time is who to choose to service the tour? Although Upstaging remain the preferred supplier in the US, in the past Europe has been managed by Meteorlites - no longer an option. "In the end we've gone with Neg Earth, and I have to say Dave Ridgeway - and Upstaging for that matter - have both been brilliant." Although Sholem is easy with his praise (and equally with his critique, when it's due) this is not just hot air. Upstaging have spent time and money developing and modifying instruments for this tour, a pattern Neg Earth have continued over here. Both companies, it would seem, are drawing ever closer on some projects, whilst not declaring an outright alliance. Sholem adds: "I'm really thankful to Steve Kellaway at Neg Earth for his great programming skills in keeping me sane."

"My crew chief Mike Hosp (from Upstaging) developed the 'Flame' lights for me," he continues. The flames are an old trick. Hosp, with the assistance of David Headfleisch at Upstaging's metal shop, took some CITC fans that Upstaging already owned, and stuck a 5 gallon paint pot on the snout with the bottom cut out. They then fitted a Par 38 bulb with orange dichroic lens within, and added ragged strips of red and orange silk at the business end. That they work so well as a campfire effect for *Desert Rose* (I counted nine of them dotted about the stage) is as much due to Sholem and Fairgreive's set design, as it is to the trompe-l'oeil of the flame lights.

The set is simplicity itself: black carpet (when did we last see that on a rock stage?) with each musician on their own circular dais decked with grey carpet. Thus the band, "Float on grey discs in a sea of black," as Sholem would have it. More to the point, when the lights are

dimmed for the song named above, the intimacy is completed by the inky darkness of the backdrop and surroundings.

Of even more interest, from an amusement point of view, was the presence of four Genie single air towers behind the back-line. "We got four of Airstar's balloon lights," explained Sholem. "We've had to air fill them because the Helium gas they normally use is so noisy when vented," an indication

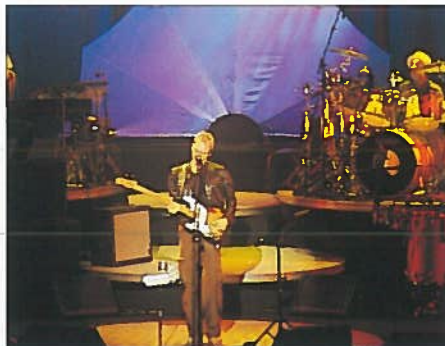


they are called - just a slightly different horn arrangement - but I really like them."

More to the point, the I4 system is going out in the US accompanied by dummy S4s that are only loaded with the low end drivers, Keating is thus much reassured by having enough fully-loaded S4s if needs must. Add in the floor cabinets that he uses for front-fills, and he almost has a full S4 system should he really get into trouble. "We didn't want to jump too far, too fast," he says, summing up exactly how he feels about the situation at the moment. Bear in mind that the previous day was the first time Keating or CJ had ever seen the new system, so his obvious discomfort at being thrust into a whole new ball game was understandable. "But I was surprised at what I heard. It does have incredible horizontal dispersion - 90 degrees - and this is a lot more seamless, you don't get those areas in the audience where you get honked at by the mids." As for the extra low end afforded by the S4s? It would seem there's more to them than just bass: "If I turn them off the whole image moves up," said Keating, pointing to a position up with the lighting rig around 26ft above the stage.

One of the logistical advantages of rigging the line array (along with less truck space, although if you're going to tour it with a bunch of half-empty S4 boxes, it kind of blows that argument all to hell), looks to be straightforward. The I4 frame is hung directly beneath one side of an old S4 two wide bumper, the weight of the S4s alongside almost balancing the load. Where the system departs from the V-Dosc model is the cabinet wheel plate. The Clair's version attaches to the bottom of each cabinet, instead of the face, so you don't need a long piece of open floor downstage to hook your column together before lifting. But then that may be marginally slower, as with the I4 you have to land and detach, box by box, going up or down.

As for the sound, smooth is right - I felt particularly that it flattered Sting's vocals much more than when





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"In spite of Sholem's propensity for varied settings, we're never presented with lighting for its own sake. He studiously adheres to lighting each song on its merits - no doubt a reason why he's still on the payroll after almost two decades."

of just how fast they have to go up and down for the purposes of this show, and why they've been popped on top of the Genies instead.

"The bulbs within have also been changed: the bright floods that are the Airstar standard have been replaced with 500W bulbs. They're all for the song Bourbon St; I've got three to represent street lamps, the fourth, larger balloon I use as a full moon, projecting an accurate rendering of the actual moon surface from a Cyberlight."

Further set-pieces include three Japanese fans - simple, strutted semi-circular sails that open and close quickly, courtesy of high-torque electric motors at their hub, the sails/fans being yet another device to pull down the eye for the more intimate numbers, Fields of Gold being a classic example. Most of the set-pieces, fans and circular risers were supplied by Brilliant Stages (no longer headed by the inspirational Charlie Kail) with Perry Whittacker Productions taking the leading role for the many drapes on the Kabuki mechanisms of the back truss. "Dave Perry's people have done a fantastic job," said Sholem, "particularly renovating some of our old drapes. Do you remember the so-called 'Knickers', from the Albert Hall five years ago?" Indeed we do. Fairgreive then added pointedly: "Since returning to Europe we are reviewing some of our set build requirements, something PW Productions are helping us with a great deal." Read into that what you will.

Sholem's freed-up lighting budget has stretched to quite an array overhead and on the three Torms he has each side of

stage, 54 High End Studio Colors rub shoulders with 26 Studio Spots, and there's the five DHA Light Curtains mentioned earlier. Hardly a conventional light in sight you might think, but he has some little floor light teasers in there - a mixture of old Altman 3" fresnels with 150W ETC Source Four bulbs in them (another Upstaging conversion) and some Par 20 bodies with MR16s. "I've put in either 1/2 CTO or 1/2 CTB depending on bulb type and skin tone of the target."

It's been my observation that Sholem has been obsessed with finding the right lamp for this job for many years. Having seen him work through Lowells, Nook lights etc, he now appears happy with this solution. He is preoccupied not so much with high output level - he's only looking for some tone to lift the players - but with physical size of the source and the ability for it to be easily concealed, especially across the front line. "The Fresnels are especially good," he said. "They don't leak any light out the back - not in this modified form anyway."

In realisation, back-drops come and go, constantly changing the viewer's perception of scale. Sometimes they're very much part of things: a lush pleated red is 60ft wide, making for the big presence you need to build to the finale, while the opening look features asymmetric swags of grey concentrated across the centre 40ft. At other times, drape function is invisibility, a flat black canvas turning the back of stage into an undefined void which can be either claustrophobic, as in Desert Rose, or wide open as for Englishman in New York. In spite of Sholem's propensity for varied settings, we're never presented with lighting for its own sake. He studiously adheres to lighting each song on its merits - no doubt a reason why he's still on the payroll after almost two decades. He runs his show from a Wholehog II, except, that is, for a cigarette break during Roxanne when son Matthew (12 years old and already imbued with better timing than his dad) takes over the faders. Could this be a lighting dynasty? Only time will tell.

Finally, and at the time of this concert it still being the season of goodwill, many thanks to Sting's production company for their indulgence, and to Snak Atak for keeping the portly Moles waistline up to Christmas standards.



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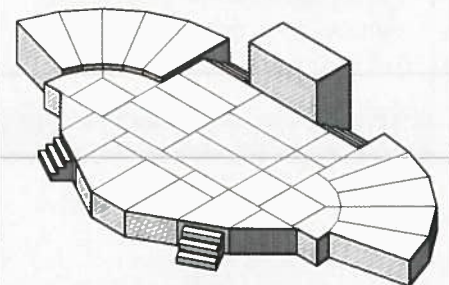
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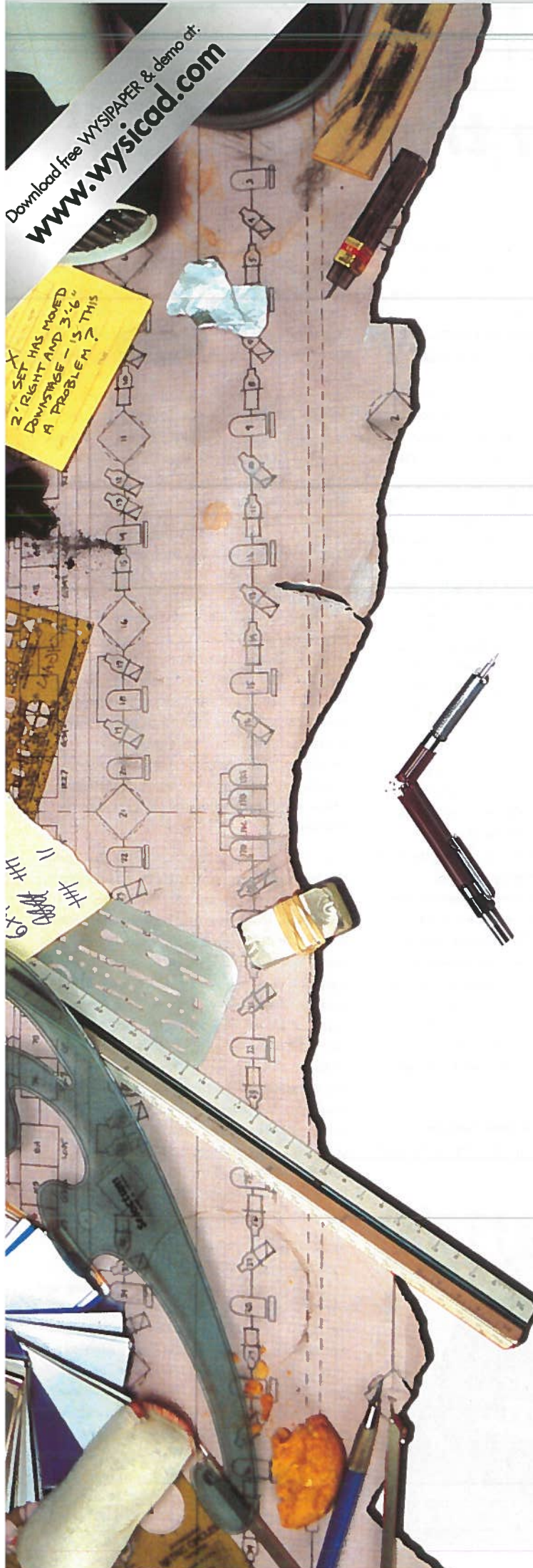
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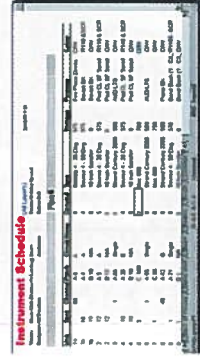
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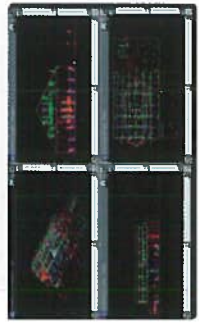


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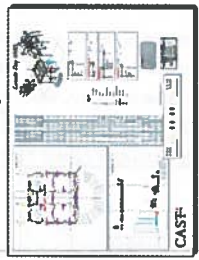
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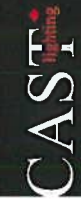
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Ian Herbert, Asleep in the Stalls...

Last time, I told you that a Dome visit was higher on my priorities list than Covent Garden. It so happens, however, that the Covent Garden tickets arrived first, so let me offer you a punter's-eye view of what is quite a mind-body-spirit experience in itself.

I WAS ABLE to do some homework by reading the excellent Geoff Joyce's account in the latest ABTT News, which also has a fascinating kiss-and-don't tell piece by the Royal Opera House's last technical director, John Harrison. Quote: "The House has gone through one Board, one

Chairman, three Chief Executives (one temp) and a Finance Director since closing. This quality of leadership defies belief (I will say no more)." John is now the commercial director, and full of contractual diplomacy, but when he does say more, it should be fascinating.

THE FIRST PERSON I bumped into on the tour of inspection was Geoff Joyce himself, who has been working on the development for two years. He's full of proper pride in the results, which I could well understand after an hour wandering the front-of-house and backstage

spaces. All the folk I met backstage, in fact, were very happy people, be they dancers working out in the airy studio, workmen putting in the last trimmings or Alison Chitty dashing off to a design meeting for *Gawain*. There's a great sense of space everywhere, from the light backstage corridors to the pièce de résistance, the stunningly-restored Floral Hall. Deep down

below was Geoff's favourite bit, the pallet store, which copes with deliveries into the House's restricted delivery space by dropping them, untouched, on to a mechanical carousel, like a giant set of library stacks, which can accommodate 28 truckloads of sets and costumes at a time.

MY FIRST VISIT to a show was not to the Big Room, but to the 400-seat Linbury Studio for the National Youth Music Theatre's *Kissing-Dance*. Built under the new block of workshops and offices next to the Floral Hall, which completes the Covent Garden piazza once more (and very effectively too), the Linbury is a three-sided courtyard, a less flexible version of the Cottesloe, which can nonetheless quickly clear the floor of its bleacher seating to make room for, say, a full orchestra rehearsal. The Linbury's foyer and bar are almost as spacious as the theatre itself, yet were pretty crowded as the audience milled there in the interval. We had expected to be able to use the Floral Hall's socialising space as well, but a strict no-peasants code was in operation.

THE PERFORMANCE SPACE itself seems usefully fluid, though it was not possible fully to judge the acoustic: the NYMT had seen fit to equip most of their cast with head-mics, although the on-stage band was playing the kind of light, singer-friendly scoring that one associates with a Howard Goodall musical. Nor was the lighting anything special, but it all worked well enough and Mr Goodall seemed suitably surprised when the band tucked in a snatch from his 'Blackadder' theme during the curtain calls. Audience access, up two narrow staircases serving three levels, is much worse than in the Cottesloe: although emergency exits abound, the official way in and out is painfully cramped.

NOT A LOT OF general public were in evidence when I was finally admitted to the posh

area, for Harrison Birtwistle's *Gawain*, although there was a stand-out gay couple in matching lumberjack outfits of check shirt and jeans who were determined not to look like the Great and the Good. To precede what must inevitably be a certain amount of nit-picking, let me repeat that the Opera House and all that goes with it is a huge success. Even the Great and the Good are rather good - they all seemed to know one another in the stalls, which gave it a pleasant, family atmosphere. And the staff are wonderful, from the smiling, efficient young cloakroom attendants who rush to get your mink, to the witty ushers camping about in the entrances.

IT WAS A DELIGHT to wander around the Floral Hall in the interval, bypassing the 'special offer' of champagne at 'only' £19.50 a glass, then mount the very London Transport escalator to the amphitheatre bar. You can see its observation shelf as you go up, stuck like a pod in the otherwise totally mirrored back wall of the Hall. Here is one of the few signs of the new House democracy at work, since the ambience here for those paying a fiver to stand in the roof is just as attractive as that for the nobs downstairs. The roomy bar, with a restaurant area to one side, leads out on to the terrace, where we all enjoyed one of the best views in London.

AND THE SHOW? I was coming to that. John Harrison says, in a remark that one hopes will not come back to haunt him, "Ten years ago I decided we would not use theatre consultants - if we could not make it work ourselves, then we should not be working in the industry." On my night, we did not suffer the breakdown of stage machinery that held up the première for an hour, but we did miss out on surtitles, which sputtered dimly for a couple of lines of the prologue and were never seen again. There was also a strange squeak from the iron (WD40, anyone?), and - alarmingly - some of the sharper percussion in Birtwistle's marvellous score came bouncing back as echoes from the balconies. Lord knows what will happen when those little fellows in the Ring start hammering.

BUT GAWAIN IS A visual feast, which stretches any opera house's resources to the limit, with plenty of flying (people as well as flats), a tilting revolve, lasers and everything you can think of in designer paraphernalia. Rather too much, at times: there is a distinct feeling of overkill about some of Alison Chitty's special effects, and I think most opera-lovers would prefer to hear the music without quite so much distraction. Behind the whole performance was a tiny but nagging thought: this magnificent production has been seen twice already under the House's old, primitive staging conditions, and I recall no stories of it not working. Now, it all looks a bit difficult. Please God it's only teething troubles.

"... some of the sharper percussion in Birtwistle's marvellous score came bouncing back as echoes from the balconies. Lord knows what will happen when those little fellows in the Ring start hammering."

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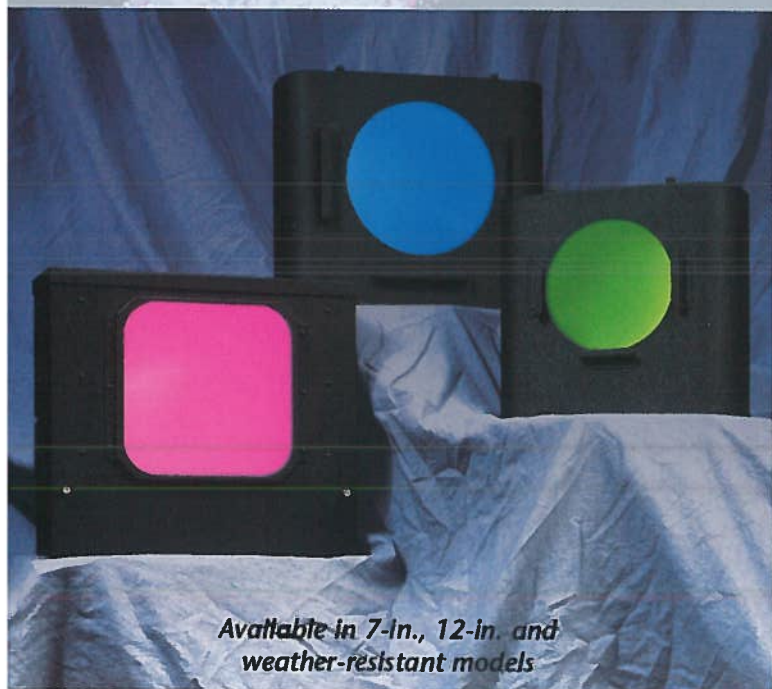
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Fascinating Aida

Elton John and Tim Rice's Aida, the latest Walt Disney Theatrical Production, opened in early November at the Cadillac Palace Theater in Chicago, Illinois. Sharon Stancavage talked with the technical team . . .

This fresh look at the classic Verdi opera is directed by Robert Falls, with sets and costumes by Bob Crowley, lighting design by Natasha Katz and sound design by Steve Canyon Kennedy.

In John and Rice's *Aida*, the operatic score has been replaced by a pop score, which was released several months before the premiere of the show. The story begins in the present day and moves into ancient Egypt, retaining many elements of the traditional *Aida* story. "Forget everything you ever knew about *Aida*," advises set and costume designer Bob Crowley. "This isn't a spectacle," he states. "The conversations I had with Bob Falls dealt with telling a love story, and how best to convey it, rather than visualising how we put ancient Egypt on the stage," he explains. Consequently, the spectacle of old has been replaced by ample use of backdrops and

the sparse use of large set pieces that gives *Aida* a very non-traditional, visually clean look.

As set and costume designer, one of Crowley's biggest challenges on this project was to be rid of the preconceptions that audiences have regarding *Aida*. "When you think of *Aida*, you think of all those gigantic productions," he explains. "That was the most difficult part for me - trying to redefine the kind of world that has been so over-designed in the past, with multi-million dollar budgets. When I came to the project, I wanted to clean the visual palette."

For Crowley, colour was the crucial visual element in his set and costume design. "The colours of this show are quite intense - they, together with the texture of the production, give the show a certain exoticism." Crowley's

ancient Egypt is a heavily saturated world filled with intense colours that dominate the stage. "I use very, very hot colours - pinks, deep oranges, intense reds, shades of sand, deep blues and aquamarines. At times, the scenery and the costumes are of the same kind of value, and I've deliberately put one against the other so that you get an incredible contrast."



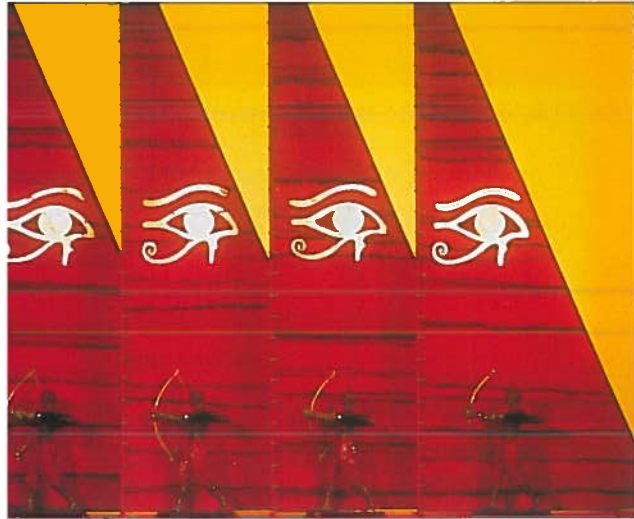
THEATRE

This version of *Aida* opens in the Egyptian wing of a contemporary museum, where the show also concludes, bringing the story full circle. At this point, the stage is filled with antiquities, many of which are housed in glass cases. "Everything in the cases is later found in the show," explains Crowley. "Including our leading lady, who eventually comes to life," he adds. When the Egyptian Princess steps out of the glass case, the set transforms taking the audience back to the days of the pharaoh. "The side walls turn 90 degrees," says Crowley. "I think it's thrilling for the audience to see a scene change, to see one world disappear and another appear in front of their very eyes - it's part of the magic."



The lighting of the museum scenes are quite unlike any other part of the show. "The museum scenes lean towards an architectural style of lighting," explains lighting designer Natasha Katz. "In fact, there's very little colour in it at all."

The audience is then taken on a visual journey from the museum to Nubia, where Egyptians, bathed in intense red light, stand atop a large red hanging scenic piece that represents the sails of a ship. The Egyptians take their captive slaves to a visually conceptualised Egypt that is starkly different to previous concepts. The colours are more intense than can be described; the set pieces are minimal, yet when they are used, they augment the look perfectly. "In terms of the technical aspects of the show, it's not that complicated," Crowley explains. "It's quite traditional in its use of flying scenery etc."



Crowley's visual treats include a stylised birds-

stark Nubian slave camp that provides an unsettling contrast between wealth and poverty. "The Nubian slave camp is definitely earthier than Egypt," Katz explains. "The camp uses more earthy tones so there's little colour in those scenes, there's a lot of Lee 154, and that's pretty much it," she adds. Another factor in the Nubian slave camp is the lack of moving lights. "When we get to the Nubian slave camp, I don't even turn the moving lights on," says Katz. "I primarily use ETC Source Fours - they feel much more natural than any of the moving lights will ever be, because the moving lights don't have incandescent bulbs in them. The minute you turn on a non-incandescent fixture in an earthy sequence, you feel like you're in the present day, and I didn't want it to feel that way."

Katz also makes use of a variety of house lighting positions, including a 60ft balcony rail, four box booms, five Lycian Starklite 1272 spotlights and a 70ft truss. "The truss is at a 45 degree angle to the plaster line, and is located about 30ft from the stage," she says. The truss is filled with an abundance of ETC Source Four units, as well as two VL7s. "We've assembled a truss that gives us the exact same positions that we're going to have at the Palace Theater in New York," says Katz. "The angles at the front of house vary so much that the whole feel of the show can change. We definitely didn't want to go through that."

While Crowley had the task of overcoming the expectations of *Aida*, the biggest challenge in the project for Katz was one that was purely technical. "Upstage is a cyc, with a bounce drop two feet upstage of it. The cyc is 40ft high and 30ft wide, and normally you need four to five feet between the two drops to hang lights. We only had two feet," Katz admits. "I ended up using Par cans with scrollers that are on 10" centres and they completely ring the entire cyc. They're in two circuits, so I ended up using around 200 units."

"While Crowley had the task of overcoming the expectations of Aida, the biggest challenge in the project for Katz was one that was purely technical. Upstage is a cyc, with a bounce drop two feet upstage of it. The cyc is 40ft high and 30ft wide, and normally you need four to five feet between the two drops to hang lights. We only had two feet."

eye view of a swimming pool, awash in hues of aquamarine, and a silhouetted row of palm trees with a reverse and repeat, representing a reflection in water. There is also a 34ft wide by 24ft long piece of silk that at first represents the Nile River, flowing below the palm trees and onto the stage where the slave women wash clothes, then later magically transforms into a canopy when the palms fly out, before metamorphosing once again, this time into the tent of Ramades, the male lead. But, scenically speaking, the most visually stunning moment in the show comes when a 35ft long staircase appears in the sky for the finale of Act I. "It's a huge piece that is flown in and jack-knives its way onto the stage," Crowley explains. "As soon as it's in place, people walk down it. Of course, this is done in full view of the audience and it's rather impressive, because they don't quite know what the piece is going to do."

"From a lighting standpoint, Egypt has a very strong colour palette," explains Katz. "I use a lot of oranges and a lot of yellows. It's clear, it's bright and it feels a little more polished . . . more saturated and vibrant than the museum scenes, or the scenes in the Nubian slave camp." For the Egyptian scenes, Katz has relied on Rosco 312, Rosco 22 and Rosco 23. Visually, the lighting, rather than simply completing the set, becomes a design element in itself that is just as important as the scenery. Katz also uses a total of 79 Vari-Lite luminaires, including 11 VL7 spots, 24 VL4 washlights and 20 VL2C spots with control via an Artisan console. "I use the moving lights in almost the entire show," Katz explains. "I think the VL4s are certainly right for the show. The VL7s have incredible zoom optics and they work quite well." Her use of gobos throughout the show is fairly conservative, but effective.

When the action isn't taking place among the visual opulence of the Egyptian royalty, the performers are in a



While Crowley and Katz were dealing with their complex elements, sound designer Steve Canyon Kennedy had challenges of his own. "The most demanding part of any production is the changes that take place every day," Kennedy explains. "The orchestrations are changing daily, as is the dialogue and you don't get a sense of any kind of continuity."

The system that Kennedy designed for *Aida* is slightly larger than what is typically found in a musical. "It's

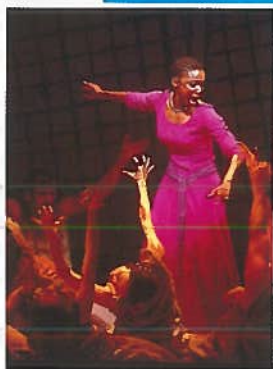
not your typical Broadway show - it's a LOUD Broadway show," he says. "We're dealing with pop music with heavy orchestrations and electronically-generated sound, so the sound system is really more for the band."

For the main speaker system, Kennedy chose the EAW KF 695. "We typically use a smaller cabinet, a Meyer UPA or something similar, but in the case of *Aida* I felt a more substantial cabinet would be appropriate." The proscenium system consists of four EAW KF 695s, four EAW KF 300s and a further four Meyer USWs. "I like the 695 because of its wide dispersion. With most large cabinets you'd have to

use two speakers in order to achieve the same coverage," Kennedy comments. There is also a centre cluster of four EAW KF 695s, and two KF 300s, as well as six pairs of EAW JF 80s that are used as front fills. The front-of-house system is completed by a surround sound system, comprising 12 EAW JF 80s located on the sides and in the rear of the audience.

Aida has an 11-piece orchestra, located in the orchestra pit, as well as a four-piece string section which plays in a room offstage. "With all the electronic equipment in the pit it gets very crowded," Kennedy explains. "We wanted a present string sound. By remoting the strings, the other instruments don't get into their microphones, and we gain a great deal of control," he adds. But physically isolating the strings from the rest of the orchestra brought up other dilemmas. "The challenge was establishing good communications between the pit and the string room," Kennedy explains. "They are so isolated that both visual and audio monitoring become crucial."

Overall, the Aida sound design doesn't rely heavily on effects. "I really don't like using much



the music play itself."

Kennedy is also prepared, as are Crowley and Katz, for the move to Broadway in February. "This is the same system that is going to Broadway," Kennedy confirms. "Except that on

in the way of effects," Kennedy confides. "I use a vocal reverb, a band reverb and one special effects processor. I wanted to keep it simple and just let

Broadway, we're going to add under-balcony and under-mezzanine systems."

In the end, the lovers are doomed, as in the traditional opera. The death scene takes place in a stylised tomb, which was also part of the original museum scene. The audience is then taken back to the museum and the ending is very different to that Verdi had in mind, but is still satisfying. Previews for Aida at the Palace Theater in New York begin on February 25th, with the official opening on March 23rd.



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Tony Gattiker

No Comment...

If I didn't pay a great deal of attention to an earlier announcement that Vari-Lite had sold VLPS Australia to Jands, I was certainly startled at the subsequent leak, not yet fully official, that VLPS Europe is also on the verge of being sold.

SOME WOULD SAY that the convincing arguments which were put forward for the creation of V-L Production Services through the merging of three separate in-house identities - namely that the market was demanding pan-global one-stop entertainment technology production outfits - are no less potent today. Some, PRG to name but a few, are backing that particular horse with very large stakes indeed. Or is it that V-L are in a different theatre of experience in the rock and roll business? After all, world touring, with the US linking to the UK as the jump off point for Europe, is not what it was only a few short years ago. So, is

having regrets about certain things, but none greater than the fact of being forced into selling product against all his instincts. Though there was also a tinge of regret that he had not seen the writing on the wall a great deal earlier. The great challenge ahead, he acknowledged, was how to maintain V-L's traditional rental business, with a sales and distribution system alongside.

PERHAPS THIS IS PART of that grand design, though the logic is not obvious to me just yet, but in some ways perhaps more important is that Vari-Lite desperately need a coherent strategy that they can stick to. There have been altogether too many disconnected announcements emanating from Dallas over recent months, just in relation to VLPS Europe alone, which together seem to indicate a sense of incoherence, not to say panic. But then I guess if any of us were running a USD91.5 million turnover company which continues to make losses, and clings on tenuously to the edge of the NASDAQ, we would be entitled to hit the panic button. Nevertheless, Vari-Lite can't afford to lose the plot and need to appear to keep their nerve, at least in public.

FROM THE MACHINATIONS that have gone before, one could guess that VLPS Europe has been identified as a marginal distraction, and its US counterpart has certainly been very troublesome. So I suppose that the temptation to retrench, while raising some readies, is too much to resist. I still say, forget the patents - they're a huge diversion. Go back to minding the shop.

NO SOONER HAD I WRITTEN a piece for this month's column commiserating with Mike Lowe over the demise of Teatro and reporting that Lowe was down but far from out, than it came back from the editor with a note saying 'you'd better rewrite this in view of the latest developments - see attached!'

HIS APPOINTMENT AS MANAGING DIRECTOR of ETC Europe is a very canny move by both parties and some compensation for Lowe in that ETC's Source Four probably had more than a little something to do with his problems at Teatro. Mike has both the character and the business experience, with his previous background at Rank Strand, to give ETC a real European personality.

WE SHOULD ALL BE DELIGHTED that Mike will continue to make a significant contribution to the industry he loves, though I hope that he and his delightful wife Penny will not find it necessary to remove from their beautiful Italian farmhouse which they have been painstakingly restoring. Both he and Fred Foster are to be congratulated.

THE EVENING STANDARD ran a page-long article in the pink (financial) section in recent weeks with the novel revelation that the nation's dancefloors are under the control of a bunch of dinosaurs.

THE JURASSICS IN QUESTION were Clive Preston of Northern Leisure, McClusky's Fred Lawrence, Springwood's Adam Page, Bill McGregor from the slimmed-down First Leisure, and the ever-youthful-looking John Conlan of Chorion. (It must have been a relief not to have been included, and a rare occasion on which publicity would have been unwelcome, for the Mesozoic Pete Stringfellow. Perhaps a case of plastic paying off?)

EVEN THE 46-YEAR-OLD Steve Thomas of Luminar was handed the Stone Aged label, whereas Big Beat's Ron McCullough, the phenomenally successful creator of Home in Leicester Square, who must be in much the same age bracket, escaped unscathed. It is a reminder, of course, that there was a time when the City of London wouldn't even look at you unless you were a wrinkly, or at least had a few grey hairs and wore a suit and tie, and certainly sported a long and successful track record.

THE E-CONOMY HAS CHANGED all that and there are hopeful signs that new disco entrepreneurs are springing up all over the shop. Piers Adam of K-bar fame, Jamie Palumbo of the Ministry of Sound and Christian Arden of Po Na Na, are leading examples of dance tycoons in the making, to say nothing of the originators of Fabric, La Scala, the Leopard Lounge and others. Furthermore, today's club DJs can get mega-rich in no time at all, and a natural place to recycle some of that cash would be in the creation of their own venues. So, one way or another, I see a new age coming with the imminent departure of the aforementioned disco dinosaurs as they stomp off the dancefloor and are let out to grass. Don't expect them to go quietly, though.

"The Evening Standard ran a page-long article in the pink (financial) section in recent weeks with the novel revelation that the nation's dancefloors are under the control of a bunch of dinosaurs."

Rusty Brutsché selling the family silver, or does he know something that we don't?

I INTERVIEWED RUSTY at LDI last autumn, and despite my searching questions, and a speculative article in my concurrent column, he didn't strike me at all as a man who had parted company with his marbles. Indeed, this was a refreshingly open and candid discussion in which he admitted

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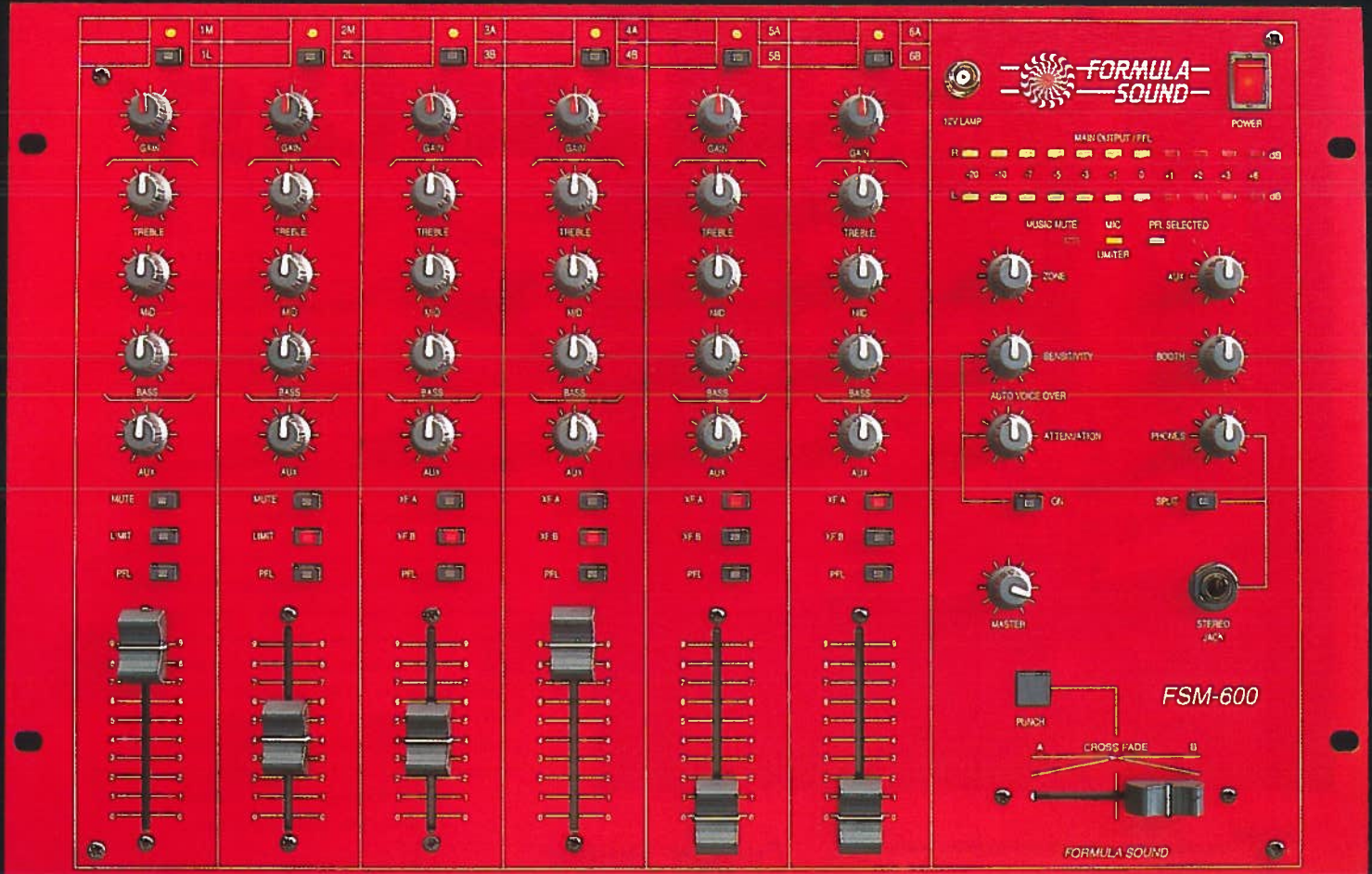
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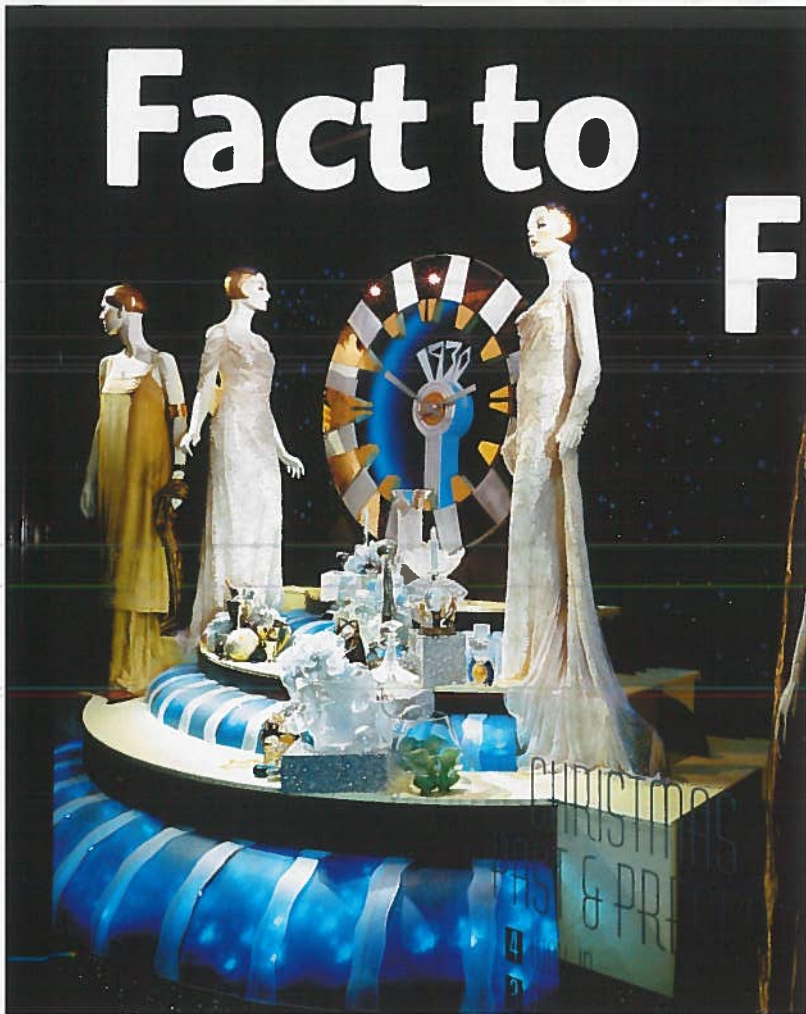
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COMPANY PROFILE

spark of an idea to the finished ride, attraction or experience. This often starts with the research, conceptualisation and creation of a story – although this stage can also be bought, already

formulated, into the project by the client. This is followed by the subsequent artistic direction of the story, creation of characters and storyboard and both freehand illustrations and CAD drawings to establish a workable plan.

The technical department provides the sound, lighting, special effects and animatronics whilst three sculptors design models, props and scenery – anything from robots, ghouls and buskers to syrupy reindeers and all in between. The costume department, meanwhile, designs and makes clothes for all the models and characters involved in bringing a story to life. A tour round the premises is a revelation in itself. Every room is a frenetic, buzzing hive of activity, with evidence aplenty of fun, stimulating things happening in every corner of the rambling premises.

In the run-up to Christmas the team were working on the creation of the lift ride for a visit to Father Christmas at the Bluewater shopping shrine in Kent. Being Santa's Grotto this was no ordinary lift cage! A 3D model mock-ups in the project office showed the layout of the lift – which has three potential exit doors at the top through which visitors pass into the grotto, following a maze-like trek towards Santa. Naturally, Farmer Studios also engineered the hydraulics for the lift – a good example of the variety of its work.

Music for the lift's 30-second ascension was being composed and recorded by Jim Bishop, secreted in the recording studios section of the factory – which features a selection of digital and analogue effects, samplers and recording equipment, including a new Yamaha O2R console. Composing music is something that Bishop often does, although his speciality is making animatronics for monsters!

Nick Farmer expands on the benefits of multi-skilling. He feels it's vital for employees to have a more rounded overall perspective on projects, enabling them to fully appreciate the breadth of the work that Farmer Studios undertake. The creative opportunities are also there for anyone to take advantage of if people have a good idea that's not necessarily contained in their department. For example, graphic designer Graham Edwards is a

The company is based in Leicester and was founded in 1976 by Nick Farmer who previously worked in marketing in the toy industry. Farmer Studios originally produced toy displays for product launches, department store displays, etc – a logical start given Farmer's background.

The theme park industry and the 'Experience Economy' as we know it was non-existent in the mid-seventies. However, Farmer found he was increasingly being asked to produce sets and costumes for the more amusement-style visitor attractions that were beginning to germinate during that period. At that time they were involved more in the amusement end of that market, rather than the more sophisticated, high-tech theme park, museum and science-based exploratoriums which have burgeoned in the last decade.

Farmer Studios now has a staff of 45. They originally moved in to one unit of their trading estate – at what is now the up-and-coming end of Leicester, and have gradually spread out across the whole estate, taking over units as and when they have become vacant.

Nick Farmer himself is modest and unassuming about his business and its obvious success. He prefers to concentrate on talking about the more unique elements of Farmer Studios, like its ability to produce creative and novel ideas, the lively and fun working environment and its investment in multi-skilled staff who can comfortably switch between roles within the company.

Farmer Studios is completely self-contained and has the ability to produce everything in-house – from the initial

Farmer Studios produce the stuff that fairytales are made of – literally.

They are one of the UK's leading suppliers of imagination, talent and technology for the theme park, visitor attraction and experience market as

Louise Stickland discovered



Left, one of Harrods Christmas windows from last year

Above, the company's fully equipped recording studio

Inset, the design team working on a model

published science fiction author. Farmer admits that for some this does bring problems in focusing, but as an overall strategy, employing dynamic people has worked for him: "It's a far more exciting way of working and it delivers a far better product."

In an employee he looks for people who are passionate and committed to making things and tinkering and those who have that creative spark, whether it's mechanical, musical or artistic. "I guess it's because I've always been into everything - so I imagine everyone else is too," he explains.

Across the road in an atmospheric Victorian warehouse - blessed with a fantastic influx of natural light - is 9,000sq.ft of space newly acquired by Farmer Studios. There I meet Patsy Pearce, making all the garments required for the models destined for Lollipoppet Castle, a new attraction for Sundown Adventureland near Newark, currently undergoing a complete make-over. Being based in Leicester with its large Asian sub-continent population gives Farmer Studios the advantage of being able to choose from a constant and rich source of exotic yet reasonably priced fabrics from those regions.

The Lollipoppet concept was designed by Dean Weal and features caricatures of a royal household. Patsy was partially dressing a model with a Prince Charles face and very pert pair of bare buttocks to illustrate The King's New Clothes section of the attraction. Farmer raises his eyebrows, commenting: "Our clients often allow us to inject a sense of humour into their projects!" Just as well!

Fabrics, materials and technology used and constructions produced at Farmer Studios must be robust enough to withstand the rigours of theme park life, which is hugely more demanding than anything used in a conventional concert or theatre stage application. They also have to comply with the most rigorous safety regulations.

At the end of the sewing room is a detailed 3D model of one of Farmer's favourite rides which opened this summer - Storm Force 10 at Drayton Manor Park in Tamworth. The ride has been endorsed by the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI) - the first time any ride has been approved by a charity in the UK.

Farmer, who loves the theme park industry, but also has specific reservations about some of the naffer imitations around the world, likes the additional credibility given by this type of arrangement. Both the park and the RNLI benefit from the publicity. There is the chance of increased public awareness for the organisation and its role, and financially the RNLI receive a percentage from those who use the ride. The massive water ride cost £3million. Farmer Studio's task was to design the exterior of the ride, reduce the scale and

overpowering feeling of physical enormity of the concrete boat launch building - achieved by clever architecture, scaling and coloration of the building structures - and to design the queuing route.

The pre-ride queue line is a long, complex and highly important part of any attraction - short boredom thresholds must be alleviated while anticipation should rise as punters get nearer the experience - even for us Brits for whom the activity is an institution! The surrounding buildings through which the Storm Force 10 queue passes have a seaside good-time feel to them and are bright, lively and entertaining.

Farmer doesn't really have a 'favourite' project as such. They are all demanding and challenging in their own right; naturally, they are all completely unique, and they all "Have exceptional charm and imagination." However, there are a few that stand out from the crowd. At the time of our interview, Nick Farmer had just returned from Hollywood, where he collected a Themed Entertainment Association TEA Award for Excellence on a Limited Budget for a dark-walk show at Liseberg, Sweden's largest theme park. A limited budget in theme-speak is under \$5million!

The show is set in a dilapidated grand 1930s hotel which turns into an increasingly nightmarish supernatural scenario as the experience progresses. For Farmer Studios it was interesting from the outset as accurate replication of the interiors of the hotel required meticulous research in terms of attention to period detail. The walk descends into the cellars of the hotel, inhabited by an ancient sea captain who has stashed his various plunders from civilisations around the world.

The client invented the story and presented the initial ground plan. Farmer Studios then developed the layout and the creative and scenic design of each room in the hotel. They then constructed and installed the animatronics, sound system, lighting (not substantial as it was a dark show!), interior props, décor, graphics and scenic painting. The creative directors from Liseberg and Farmer Studios then collaborated on the overall production direction of the attraction.

It is a 12-minute experience - a long time in relative terms - and the soundtrack in particular is complicated. It consists of over 20 different soundtracks, synchronised together so as one travels through the hotel the music appears completely seamless, gradually becoming increasingly menacing and sinister.

The attraction is controlled by one of Farmer Studios proprietary show control systems which triggers lighting, animatronics, sound and AV effects. It works under Windows

"I can't think of many other industries," comments Farmer, "where the client relies on you to deliver something they don't necessarily understand. They have to have absolute faith in the fact that we can do it and that they will love it!"





Left, climax to *Hotell Gasten*, a dark walk at Liseberg, Sweden; above, the Entrance Arch to *L'Oxygénarium*, Parc Astérix's new spinning rapids ride; below, one of the team working on a clay sculpture for an animatronic crocodile designed for a crocodile farm in Singapore

NT and constantly monitors where everyone is in an attraction in order to cue the events. Various triggers can also be operated by actors within the attraction. Farmer comments: "It may appear to be a decaying old thirties hotel, but it's bristling with nineties technology."

Their control system is called Animation Workshop and, in Farmer's own words it is "in a continual process of development!" Each version is customised to suit the individual attraction, experience or ride. It evolved because there was nothing available in the UK that would provide a specific type of overall control for the projects in which they were involved.

Another recent and enthralling project for the company was the development of *L'Oxygénarium* - a new water ride at Parc Astérix. Farmer Studios invented the story - an eccentric French inventor at the time of Le Grand Exposition in Paris in 1860 who toured his 'LunaPark' device in a travelling fair. It was a machine aimed at elevating stressed-out city dwellers to a higher altitude so they could inhale clean air specially piped in from Mont Blanc. After a couple of minutes, they felt revived, invigorated and ready to fight on! "It's really a piece of French dottiness," says Farmer - but it's also charmingly plausible - you could just imagine some barking Victorian scientist devising the very contraption!

The ride resembles a Victorian air-conditioning plant - Heath Robinson meets Albert Robida - the (real life) French satirical cartoonist whose work was one of the inspirations for the stylistic

development of *L'Oxygénarium*. It is colourful, absurd and eccentric, an amalgam of many creative influences, carefully guided by the creative gurus at Parc Astérix to ensure that it retained a distinctly French flavour.

Farmer Studios designed the entrance arch with the beam engine (which takes mountain air, delivered by balloon to Parc Astérix, and pumps it into the system and up to the top of the ride) and an extraordinary set of pipework, nozzles, air vents and associated effects leading up to the start of the ride. They also wrote music and sound effects, installed sound, lighting and bubble and water spray effects and customised a version of Animation Workshop to work in conjunction with Programmable Logic Controllers (PLCs) that activate and synchronise the numerous moving parts with the music. They also designed and built all the themed features in the station building and ride conveyor.

"I can't think of many other industries," comments Farmer, "where the client relies on you to deliver something they don't necessarily understand. They have to have absolute faith in the fact that we can do it and that they will love



it!" He continues by saying that they also often have situations where the project is in a constant process of evolution, so the client benefits from the flexibility of the contract.

Today's audiences are also very demanding in the quality - although not necessarily the scale - of what they expect during their 'experiences', which in turn is pushing out the technical boat for those who produce them.

Farmer doesn't feel that technology is the be-all-and-end-all - it's purely a mechanism to enhance storytelling. One of the most revolutionary advances in the theming industry for Farmer Studios has been in the availability and total reliability of digital sound techniques. Gone is the fear of the tape not starting in sync with the animatronic. The more recent advances in digital video and its easy controllability are also now transforming their work.

"Electronic technology does give you the ability to play with elements that are of immense value and we'd struggle without them," he says. Recording technology has also changed radically and it's now possible to have high quality sound recording and playback systems at a reasonable price, a fact which has done much to improve the overall quality of these Experiences.

Farmer also agrees that there's plenty of mediocre and naff theming happening alongside and often on the back of that which is highly innovative and superbly produced. I ask whether he thinks that theming is now being heralded as a catch-all panacea for a whole variety of businesses with little or no charisma? Farmer, naturally, feels that their own projects and many of the one-offs avoid this pitfall, while acknowledging that there are plenty jumping on the contemporary bandwagon! He feels that the restaurant business is one area that's in danger of theming itself into complete banality. "You need good food and a great atmosphere to make a restaurant buzz," he says. "No amount of embellishment can compensate for a dearth of these two elements."

For attractions to work, a good story is at the very essence. The narrative criteria can also be applied to other expressive mediums like film which is why *Trainspotting* and *Four Weddings And A Funeral* succeeded where mega-budget and instantly forgettable blockbusters like *Waterworld* bombed.

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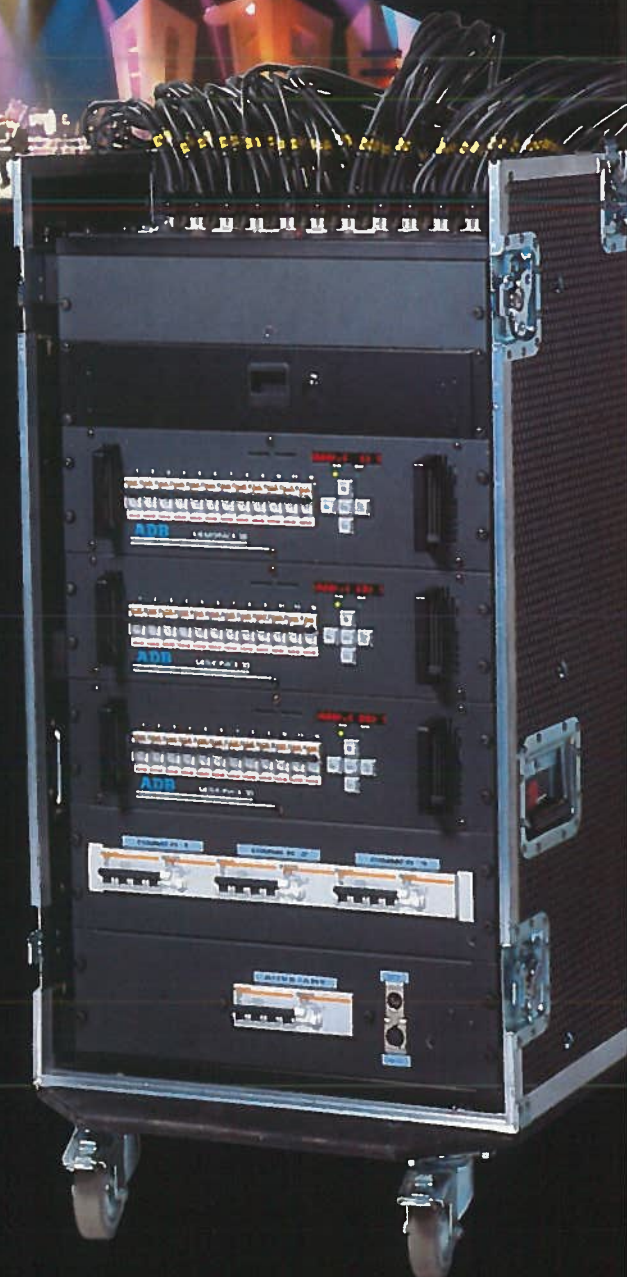
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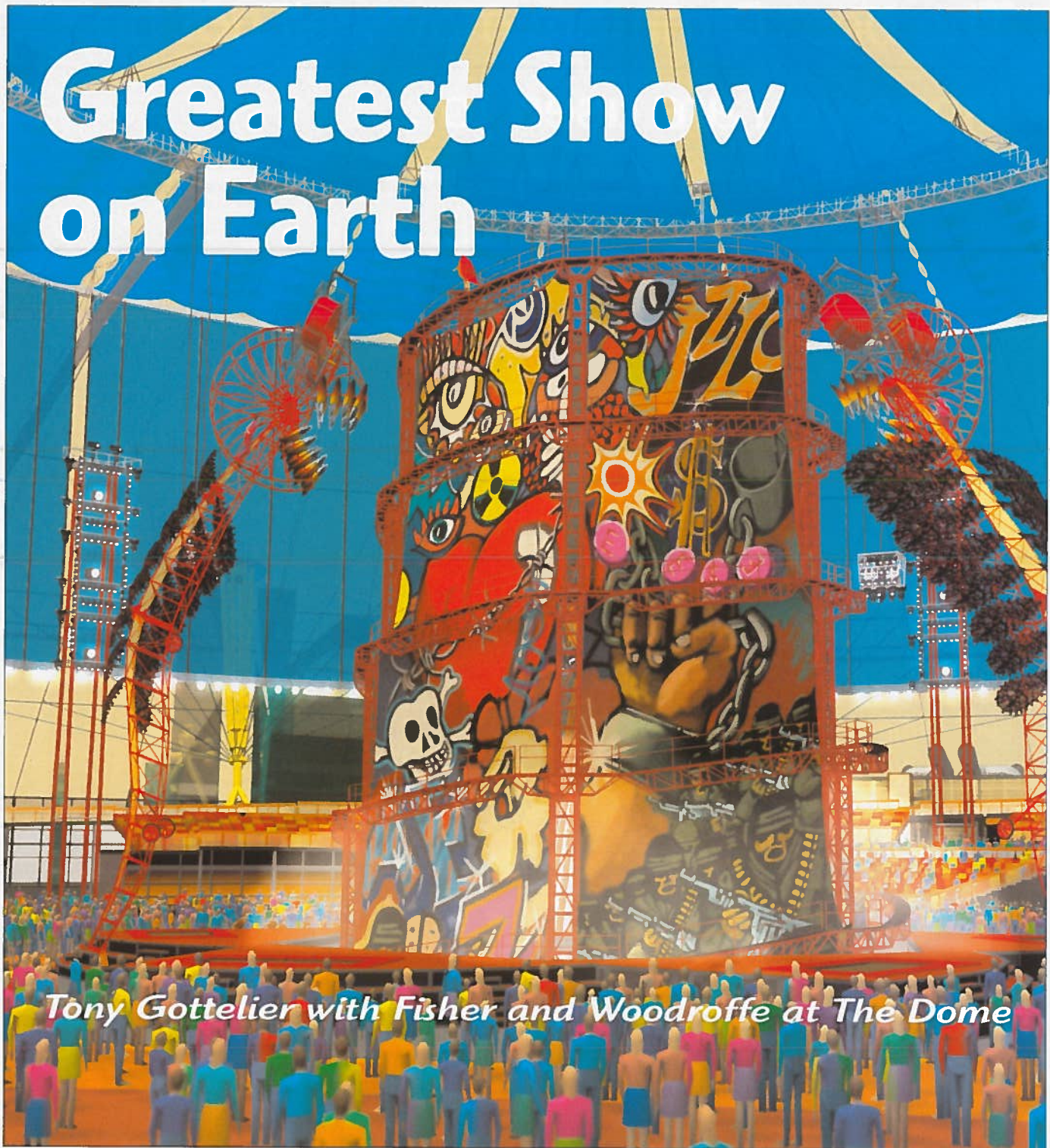
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Tony Gottelier with Fisher and Woodroffe at The Dome

At Greenwich Marsh did Tony Blair a pleasure dome erect . . . and the rest is history, upon which we shall not dwell for fear of getting embroiled in the politics, which of course has been at the root of the Dome's problems from the start. No, what we are here to do is to tell the story of Mark Fisher and Peter Gabriel's creation, known to them as OVO, to the eponymous company as The Millennium Show, and to the rest of us as the Central Show - anyway, it's the show in the centre of the Dome.

It all started for Fisher some two years ago, after Cameron Macintosh's original proposal fell foul of budgetary considerations: "To be fair, it would have required a theatre to be built inside the Dome and there simply wasn't the money," explains Fisher. "And so, I was asked in a very English way, whether I thought it might be possible to mount a show of some kind in the open space thus vacated. I said yes, I thought it would be, and by the time the meeting



MILLENNIUM

finished I found myself being invited to be the creative director of a new show, which had not yet even been invented."

Admitting that he was somewhat sceptical at the beginning as to whether this was really something he wanted to do, it took a telephone call to his long-standing touring cohort Robbie Williams to convince Fisher that he should proceed. With Williams on board

as technical co-ordinator, Fisher felt able to start thinking about a concept and to begin building a creative team, originally with Peter Gabriel, with input from Robert Lepage, and later adding Micha Bergese, Keith Kahn and, of course, lighting designer Patrick Woodroffe.

The Fisher and Gabriel script which eventually evolved, imagined a performance which glued together elements of circus, street theatre and, inevitably with the pedigree of many of the participants, rock and roll. Most importantly, it was a production that must fill the vast space - a volume of space three dimensionally as huge as Trafalgar Square - which is why I have called this article The Greatest Show on Earth, simply because the performance is so BIG, and not in the judgemental sense of the



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Above, the central Dome Show and below and left, a sequence of Mark Fisher's Animation Stills from Act 1.
Copyright: New Millennium Experience Company Ltd 1999. Animation by Adrian Mudd at the Mark Fisher Studio

word 'greatest' which is for others to convey. In short, the show would be a 30-minute arial extravaganza making as much use of the space as possible, but when not in performance it had to evaporate into the ether as if it had never happened.

Realising that the political hydra would rear its ugly heads again and again, Fisher had the bright idea of making an animated video visualisation of the show, which was as well because it wasn't too long before he was asked to do a presentation at Number Ten. "The funny thing was that, despite assurances given in advance, when I pitched up, it became clear that there was no television and certainly no VCR anywhere near the Cabinet Room, where the presentation was to be made to the PM and selected cabinet colleagues.

Eventually, they dragged an ancient combo up from the kitchen." Despite the fact that the quality was appalling, due to the substandard transmission, the Ministers loved what they saw, apparently, and gave it their blessing. At subsequent events of this sort, and there were three in total at Downing Street alone, Fisher was sure to take his own equipment; on one occasion, at Gabriel's insistence, fitting half the Cabinet out with headsets. "When I looked around the room and saw

all these Ministers with 'phones on, it was all I could do to contain myself," mused Fisher, "Rock and roll in the Cabinet Room has to be a first!"

By now it would have been time to get real, and for Patrick Woodroffe, and sound designer Chris Hey, to make decisions about which equipment to put on the tender list. Woodroffe had started out thinking that he might use a relatively small number of really big lights: "You know that I was thinking of using your RazorHeads," Patrick told me, "But then I realised that, to really fill that space, it would be preferable to use masses of lights, always in the field of vision."

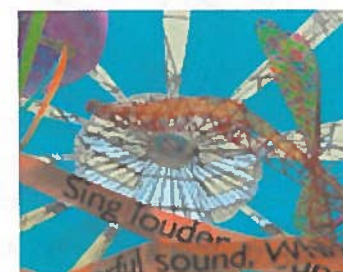
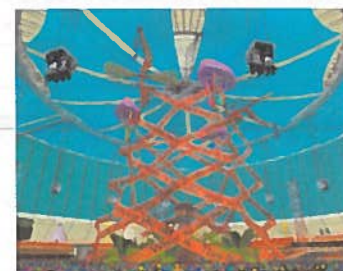
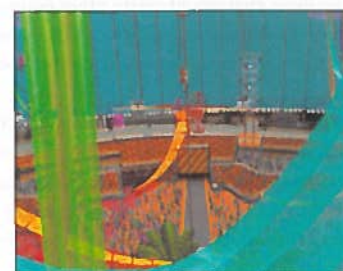
One major issue was that the show was to run in daylight, dusk and night conditions, under a tensile construction which is translucent. A giant leap forward was made when permission was obtained to drape the sides of the arena above the tiers and below the dome, the latter as an active part of the show, which would have the effect of equalising the conditions across the three planned daily performances. "Steve Nolan and I did some tests from a crane when the Dome was still a building site, and we were delighted to find automated lights registering at 45 metres," adds Woodroffe.

The next problem, which affected all concerned, was that the load-

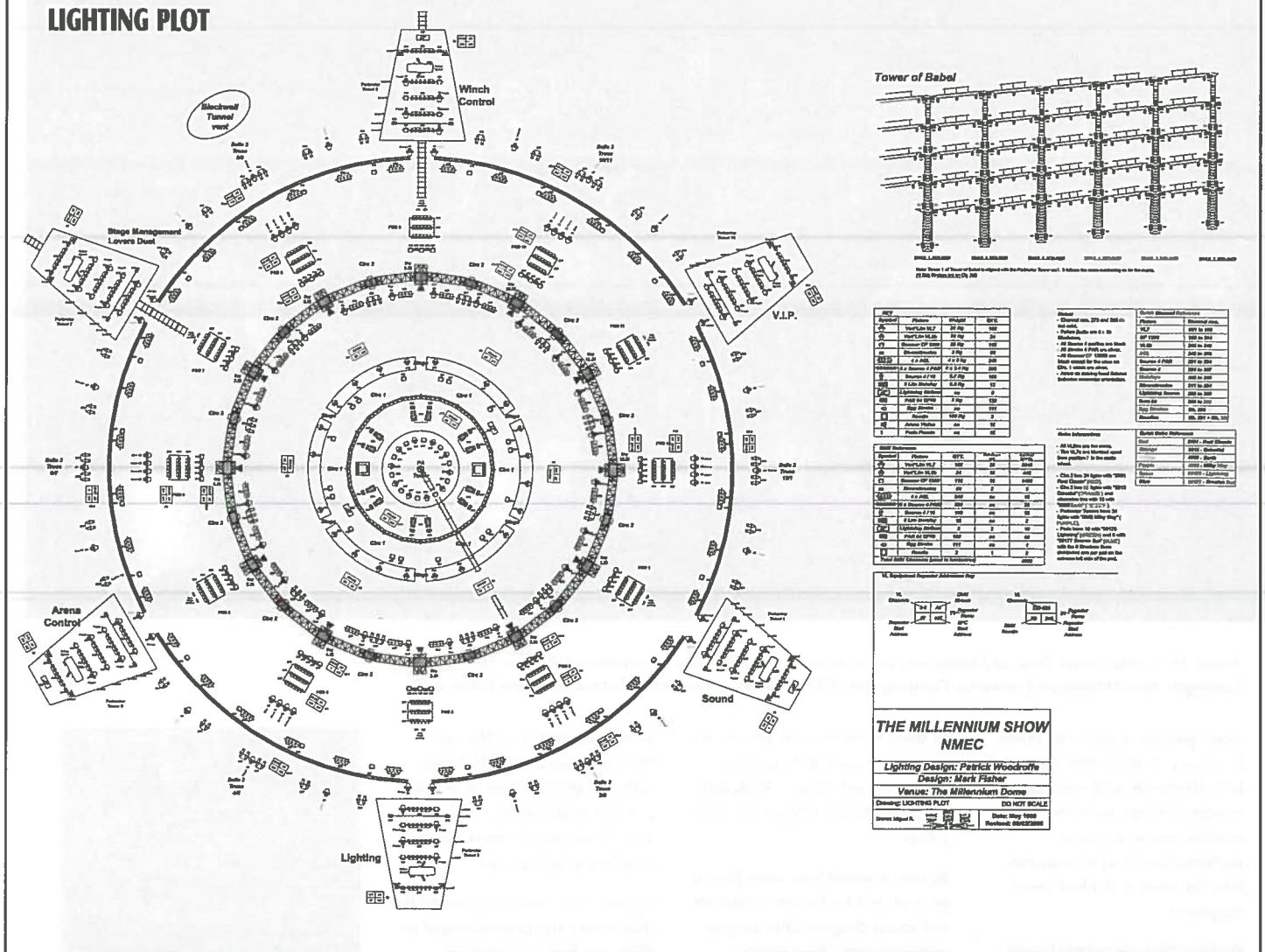
bearing limitation on the roof of the Dome was a mere 15 tonnes. "Who, in their right mind, would put up a building like this with that kind of limitation?" Mark Fisher, qualified architect, asks.

Anyway, since needs must when the devil drives, the team managed to find a solution, in a series of concentric circular trusses tied together with steel cables reminiscent of the spokes of a bicycle wheel, and so named. The ultimate structure was sufficient to support the numerous winches and their controls needed for the epicentre of the show, the soloist's arial support structure, the various drapes, the dimmers, some sound and some of the lighting. The design of this substructure was by Atelier One, a close Fisher associate, built by Tomcat USA and implemented by Unusual Rigging. In total, there are over 100 Stage Technologies computer-controlled winches in use in the show, and they have also provided two ST Acrobat scenery systems.

With that resolved, Woodroffe settled on his other lighting positions, six lighting towers which were already part of the Dome's original design, and 12 flown gantries, which he calls pods, which reveal themselves when lit above the seating at the start of the show, but at the closest possible position to the stage, roughly 20 metres away! In addition, the structure of



LIGHTING PLOT



the show itself would create other positions from the stage area and below. Of course, most of these structures had to incorporate speakers as well (we will review the sound system, as well as the equipment used in the zones in a follow-up article in the next issue). Now, at least Patrick could send his shopping list out to the tendering process, not a system he is very used to in the normal way of things. "It had been decided to purchase all the kit, with the exception of the Vari-Lites, so it had to be done in a proper way," is how he describes the

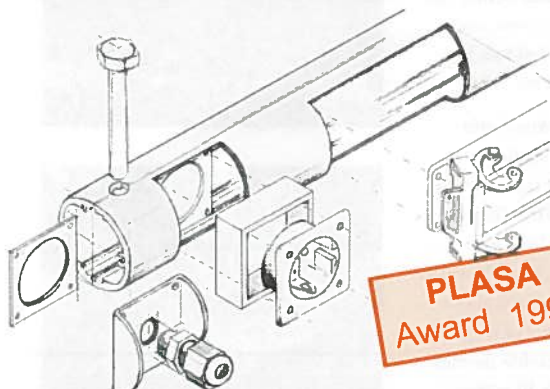
methodology. The total list included 162 Vari-Lite VL7s, 34 VL6s, 112 Coemar CF 1200s, 360 ETC Source Four Pars, 108 Source Four profiles, 60 Diversitronics 3kW strobes, Lightning Strikes effects, 240 James Thomas ACLs, 120 Thomas Par cans, 12 Arena Visions, 12 Floods and six 3kW Gladiator III followspots from Strong International. There are also two JEM Roadies.

AC Lighting won the tender to supply most of this equipment, plus two Wholehog II desks, each with remote control and tracking back-up

from a Hog II rack-mounting Replay unit. Coupled with this would be a custom-made 5,000 DMX channel WYSIWYG visualisation system from CAST Lighting. This system takes DMX signals from both controllers, or their back-up units, to create a graphical image of the show area while programming and has the added advantage of making production of paperwork an automatic by-product of the process. All of this control equipment was to be linked together via MIDI. Additionally, an Artistic Licence switchover unit that allows manual changeover from the main set of controllers to the back-up set, would be incorporated into the system.

Lumination won the Coemar CF1200 supply bid and the Vari-Lites were rented from VLPS Europe. By now, life was getting progressively tougher for Robbie Williams and Simon Brophy, head of lighting at the Dome, as they struggled with the installation of miles of cable, and planned for the integration of equipment within the constraints of often opposing safety and service access regulations. Issues of maintenance were also complicated by the fact that it could only be carried out overnight in a venue which would be open seven days per week for an entire year.

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photo courtesy of AC Lighting

In parallel with all of this, Fisher had launched his strategy of training large numbers of the performers in the art of circus from scratch with a view to creating a pool of new performance talent in the UK. As the result, 85% of the two casts of 81 performers come from the UK, the biggest arts training programme connected to a single project ever. Mark Fisher is passionate about this aspect: "As entertainment disseminates itself across a broader base and percolates across the UK into our daily lives, these guys can play a crucial role in the future."

Meanwhile, the staging structures, incorporating a series of huge special effects, had to be designed and built. At this point it might help if I gave a brief outline of the script as interpreted by Mark Fisher, and he should know, because it is somewhat surreal and the PR description as issued by the Dome press office has been saccharined to the point of candyfloss. "There are three Acts: in the first, we are in the Garden of Eden which represents innocence," Fisher explains. "In the second, we move to the industrial revolution with corruption and violence, whilst in the third we are in the future, full of hope for the benefits of greater communication." To put over this magical, modern, biblical tale, and to fill the vacuous space, Fisher needed some big structures, but they could not be visible until showtime, and obviously they could not be dropped in. So they had to create a pit eight metres deep in the middle of the floor to conceal a stage and all the machinery below. In view of the history of the site, I bet that went

down a treat with the management and the health and safety people!

The main elements of the sub-floor equipment are the water tower-like structure which carries both the central PA system and some lighting, and which changes its role throughout, and the extraordinary Tower of Babel which grows upwards from within itself to a height of 15m - a major feat of engineering. To facilitate all of that, and a couple of other major effects which had not yet been introduced, the circular stage itself has to be capable of moving in sections and to work as a reveal. A heavy reveal at that: it weighs 75 tonnes. The stage and PA tower were built by Brilliant, and the Tower of Babel by Sheetfabs Ltd.

As well as the bicycle wheel, Tomcat also built other vital elements, namely the 20 metre long mobiles aka the Sperm. "The idea was that these big pieces would represent the life force

in the Garden of Eden, but would subsequently become weapons in Act Two," Fisher explains. "Sadly, we have not been able to implement them fully because in the end we simply ran out of rehearsal time and I was forced to cut parts of the show."

The reason, it seems, is that there were times when it got so cold last year that the cast simply couldn't rehearse. "The Dome had special dispensation not to install insulation," Fisher told me. "Consequently, as soon as the temperature drops below zero the heating cannot cope and it is simply too cold for the aerialists to function. You can't take risks with this kind of performance, everything has to be painstakingly planned and practised over and over for absolute precision." The street theatre element is used as a guise for the set-up, when quirky characters put on a comic pre-show in the area while surreptitiously preparing the area.

"Currently, the issue is, will Fisher be allowed to finish the show as he conceived it? In fact, I was witness to the first meeting between him and the new Dome supremo, Pierre-Yves Gerbeau who, apparently, assured Mark that he was very keen to see the show operate at its full potential and promised his full support to that end."

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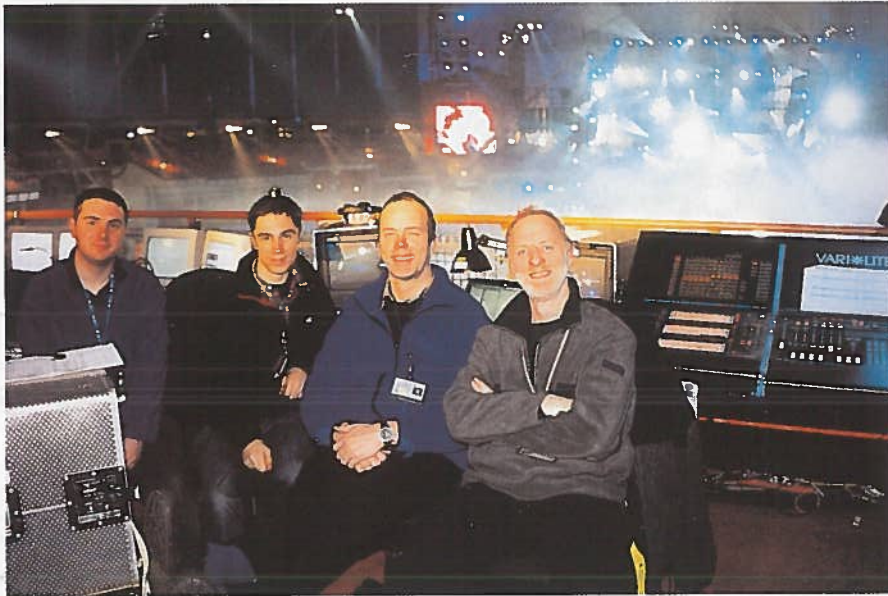
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At about the same time, and at quite a late stage, Patrick Woodroffe sat down with his board team of Dave Hill and VLPS's Andy Voller, and with support from the NMEC's chief electrician, Lee Threlfall, set about plotting the lights. Meanwhile, Adam Bassett, a student seconded to assist Woodroffe from The London School of Speech and Drama, was responsible for the focusing end of things. "It has been quite some experience for Adam," Patrick says in a typical understatement. "He is staying on as my assistant at the Dome for the duration." Quite a start for a career in lighting!

The resultant show succeeds at every level: it fills the space, it sparkles, it excites, it terrifies - in short it is a 360° piece of aerial theatrical art which enthralls and thrills. 5,000 people can sit and watch the performance from the tiered seats, and there is capacity for a further 7,000 standing in the arena or sitting on the floor with the school parties. On the day I went along to see for myself, there must have been about 6,000 in the audience, and they certainly loved it.

Currently, the issue is, will Fisher be allowed to finish the show as he conceived it, including the two effects which were to make the climax of Act Three, namely the 'Tree of Life' made out of

The lighting crew at the Dome - Andy Voller, programmer, Adam Bassett, Woodroffe's assistant, lighting designer Patrick Woodroffe and Dave Hill, programmer.

photo: Mike Lethby

netting, and 'Ribbon Weaving', an effect in which the bridle winches are used to weave a nest out of giant ribbons? In fact, I was witness to the first meeting between him and the new Dome supremo, Pierre-Yves Gerbeau who, apparently, assured Mark that he was very keen to see the show operate at its full potential and promised his full support to that end.

Mark points out that with the current TV commercials, his concept has moved from being just the show in the middle of the Dome, to being, in Domenclature, 'The Jewel in the Crown'. "So it would be a great pity not to see it finished and I hope that P-Y, as he likes to be called, will be just the impetus we need." Meanwhile, it's back to the day job for Fisher and rehearsals for Simply Red and Tina Turner to think about in the next few months.

Audio aspects of the Dome, plus the zones, will be covered next issue.



CREDITS

Structure:

Bicycle wheel gantries - Tomcat

Tower of Babel - Sheetfabs

Stage - Brilliant Stages

PA tower/Maypole - Brilliant Stages

Mobiles (Sperms) - Tomcat

Swaypole - Kimpton Walker

Rigging:

General - Unusual Rigging

Lover's Duet - Ocean State

Tree Nets - Maritiem SA

Tree leaves - Banks Sails

Blue sky sails - Banks Sails

Winches & control - Stage Technologies

Ribbons - Blackout Ltd

Lighting:

Installation - CPL

Generics & Control - AC Lighting

Moving lights - VL/Coemar/Lumenation

Sound:

Installation - Spencer Hey Associates

Speakers & amps - Funktion One

Technical Consultants:

Structural engineering - Atelier One

Mechanical systems - Mike Barnett

Tech. project manager - Robbie Williams

Other Credits:

Conception - Mark Fisher & Peter Gabriel

Creative Director - Mark Fisher


Music - Peter Gabriel

Artistic Director - Micha Bergese

Lighting Designer - Patrick Woodroffe


Costumes/3D props - Keith Khan

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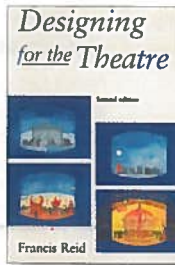
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TV/FILM

Backlot Experience

As an ex-resident of the glorious city of Sydney, it is intriguing to think that Fox Studios Australia has created an international state-of-the-art film production complex on a site previously occupied by the Royal Agricultural Society since 1882. The showground, as the site was known by locals, was a prime piece of real estate in a residential area about 10 minutes from the heart of the city and five minutes from the ultra-hip area of Oxford Street, where nightclubs and restaurants jostle for attention with minimalist-inspired clothing shops and groovy bookshops that stay open until the early hours of the morning.

Once a year the site used to host the Royal Easter Show where you could buy everything from candy floss to a prize bull, take a ride on the latest heart-stopping attraction or marvel at the dexterity of a blue heeler (Aussie farm dog) which could round up a flock of sheep before a crowd of several thousand and not break a sweat. The Easter Show was an event that was marked on every family's calendar and it is not surprising that the Fox development was not without a measure of controversy, including debates focused on heritage, residents' concerns and public money issues.

Despite the controversy the show went on, with Fox taking over the site in 1996 with a 40-year lease. It is the first Fox studio complex to be built outside of North America and it is anticipated that it will generate around A\$85m (£35m) worth of production annually. That Fox has come to town is both a boost and a vote of confidence for the local film industry. So far, the high profile and hugely successful film *The Matrix* has been shot there, as well as the Tom Cruise vehicle *Mission Impossible 2*. George Lucas has signed up to shoot the next two *Star Wars* movies there, which is sure to raise the profile of the studio and generate an unprecedented amount of interest in what the Australian film industry is up to.

In addition to the six operational sound stages, the complex also boasts ancillary film-related facilities and a huge array of public attractions. Bent Street is one such attraction, offering the public a range of activities from eating and shopping to an array of entertainment. Hoyts have developed an Art Deco-inspired 12-screen cinema complex, plus four more theatres in Cinema Paris, an ultra modern facility. For the hungry visitor there is a wide choice of restaurants and for those in need of some retail therapy the shopping precinct features familiar names like Sony, Esprit and Mambo.

The event that perhaps attracted the most publicity for the Fox Complex was the November 7th gala opening of the Backlot area, a public 'infotainment' project that includes attractions such as *Titanic: The Experience*, where you get to be an extra on the movie just as the iceberg hits (I have it on good authority that your fate rests with your choice of queue - pick the right one and you live, pick the wrong one and you meet with a nasty, wet ending!), *Star Dressing Room*, which gives you the opportunity to reinvent yourself as a Hollywood star; *The Simpsons Down Under*, *The TV Tour and Sound Stage* where the art of Foley (sound effects) is demonstrated, along with a hands-on chance to have a crack at film sound mixing.

Lights! Camera! Chaos! is a high camp piece of populist entertainment with influences that range from Jackie Chan and his Hong Kong action movies to *The Sound of Music*. The 20-minute theatrical production takes place in a purpose-built 1,200-seat theatre, exposing the audience to the disasters that surround the making of "the most expensive film ever" - *Space - The Musical*. The creative team behind the production reads like a Who's Who of Aussie talent, with the show being produced by writer/director Baz Luhrmann's company, Bazmark Live. Luhrmann is the creative force behind the hit Australian film *Strictly Ballroom* and more recently the edgy film version of

Visitors to Fox Studios in Sydney are immersed in the craft of film and television from the moment they enter the iconic gates of the Fox Studios Backlot. Jacqueline Molloy reports



Cover page, the main backlot area at Fox Studios

This page, the grand staircase – the central feature of the Titanic Experience



*Inset, LD
Nigel Levings*



Romeo and Juliet with Leonardo Di Caprio. The 20-minute spectacle was conceived and directed by Barrie Kosky, one of Australia's most innovative stage directors and was lit by internationally-respected lighting designer, Nigel Levings.

Levings and associate lighting designer Damian Cooper were also responsible for lighting areas of Bent Street and the spectacular Fox Backlot gates. Levings is at ease working on high profile projects and received an unprecedented amount of publicity for a lighting designer in Australia when he was nominated for both a Tony award and Drama Desk award for his lighting on the 1996 Broadway production of *The King and I*. The Tony went to Jules Fisher and in typically nonchalant Aussie fashion, Levings was relieved not to have won: "Fisher's winning lighting design was extremely powerful and I would have been embarrassed to have beaten him as I studied under him in New York for a while."

Lights! Camera! Chaos! is based around a group of temperamental animal film makers with characters such as Walter Crockberg the producer, Eric Von Roo the director, Leonardo de Kangaroo the demanding male star, Carmen Cockatoo the screen siren and the Emu Showgirls, complete with stils and batting eyelashes most supermodels would kill for. The show starts in the foyer with the audience participating in a gossipy TV-style entertainment show, where juicy details are revealed about the celebrity animals. Once inside, the auditorium is lit harshly as though under work lights for an operational film set; eventually the lighting becomes more theatrical and over the next 20 minutes some 350 cues are executed via the Wholehog desk.

Levings and Cooper came on board the project some 15 months before the Backlot experience opened and were hired directly by Bazmark Live. Levings has a long relationship with Luhrmann and has lit all of his stage productions to date. The Bent Street aspect of the lighting project didn't hold much appeal for Levings initially, as he explains: "I do around three major architectural projects a year and they always involve too many meetings, so I really wasn't interested in the streetscape aspect of the Fox project, but they brought in architectural lighting designer Peter McClean and between us we worked on Bent Street."

McClean was responsible for the 'nuts and bolts' of the streetscape, while Levings provided the conceptual inspiration by breaking the project down into fixed areas and giving McClean ideas of colour temperature, direction of light etc. Levings explains how the lighting of Bent Street was initially conceived as a fairly complex affair, with show control playing a major part, but unfortunately scaled down as financial cuts were made: "Fox wanted to know why we needed such complicated lighting when the area would not be open at night. Unfortunately, our arguments failed to sway them."

Show control unfortunately received the chop, though Levings is happy that the provision was at least made with the cabling to reinstate it at a later date: "The lighting of Bent Street became a much more straightforward affair than we had originally intended. I was planning on a fairly detailed level of control which unfortunately didn't happen, which was disappointing. But at least it made for a much faster and simpler focus and plotting session."

McClean was responsible for negotiating the lighting team through the maze of electrical contractors and the various authorities who dictated the way work could be carried out, and Levings was relieved to have McClean handle this aspect of the project.

Bent Street was designed by Catherine Martin to represent a film set and show influences of urban and rural Australiana whilst also being a functioning retail area. The design process of this area had already commenced when Levings and Cooper came on board, with the eating district showing strong influences of Golden Fleece service stations, an integral part of Australian family life, particularly on long outback car journeys when the brightly-lit golden fleece symbol would offer a brief respite for weary travellers.

Practical period lighting fixtures are placed throughout the area, as well as conventional film lights, neon, bud lighting, festooning and fluorescent lighting. Levings had an excellent film props buyer retro-craft metal weatherproof Par lamps to fit in with the period style, and he divided them into high output fixtures for pointing and illuminating and glow fixtures which pointed into the street areas with low intensity and minimal glare.

The lighting designers were fortunate in that they had an extremely detailed model of the backlot area to work with. They spent around 20 hours going over it to plan their approach, gaining a good idea of how the whole area was going to look and feel. Part of the set for *Babe 2: Pig in the City* had been left behind on the lot and the team lit this, as well as the Fox gates which carry both the studio's famous logo and the Australian Coat of Arms.

A more theatrical approach was taken with the lighting of *Lights! Camera! Chaos!*. Australian motion control systems specialist Bytecraft was the theatrical contractor for the Fox Backlot project and supplied Levings with a wide-ranging list of equipment to satisfy the eccentric situations encompassed by the 20-minute show. Though it was a more conventional lighting scenario, it was not without its complications. The area set aside for the show had originally been slated for an external stunt show, and had no provision for a closed building that was sound-proofed and capable of taking an extensive lighting rig. This oversight had fallen through the budgetary net and though they eventually ended up with a purpose-built 1,200 seat theatre, it was an inauspicious start to the project.

"McClean was responsible for the 'nuts and bolts' of the streetscape, while Levings provided the conceptual inspiration by breaking the project down into fixed areas."

The lighting team had four weeks to bump in the show and then four weeks to programme and rehearse before the previews commenced. Levings and Cooper had a fairly logical division of labour and although both men had other work commitments throughout the project period, they managed to work it so that one of them was always on site. Levings explained that Cooper physically did the focus from his notes and whilst Cooper was away, Levings did a skeletal blocking of the cue structure based on the script, rehearsals and the CD.

Cooper was responsible for the programming of the moving lights or, as Levings so deftly put it: "Damian was responsible for fixing up the train wreck that always seems to happen when moving lights are involved!" There were very few major technical problems that the lighting crew had to deal with and Levings believes this is partly due to the calibre of lighting crew they had on the project: "Ever since Cameron Macintosh shut down its Sydney operation we've had the crème of the crew available again for local projects, which has been great." Ian (Gooch) Backburn was head electrician and Sam Hopkins the board operator.

Romeo and Juliet, The Sound of Music, Aliens and Riverdance all make an appearance in the show, as does a 12 metre high hydraulically-operated Sydney Opera House which rises out of the stage floor. An 18m high Sydney Harbour Bridge also features, as does the Eiffel Tower. Other elements include the flying fox, which operates over the audience's heads, and the space ship itself, which is constructed from four 10m wide by 2m high flats. A 1.2m by

The rows of
Bytecraft
dimmers
on one
of the
sound
stages



2.5m trap door is set in the stage floor embedded with Par 56s, while Par 64 VNSs are focused from above.

With around 350 lighting cues in 20 minutes the Wholehog II desk is given a good work-out. The whole show runs off time code, as the cues are very tight and need to be precise. Above the huge stage which covers some 60ft are two lighting pods consisting of rectangular flat truss rigged with four pitching and four non-pitching DHA Light Curtains, eight High End Studio Colors and 20 High End DMX Dataflash AF 1000 strobes. The cyclorama is lit with 15 Iris four-cell cyc units and 15 Orion 4 groundrow units.

Levings had hoped to have Wybron scrollers in the rig, but the budget wouldn't stretch to it and they had 118 Colourset and Rainbow scrollers which Levings said they had several problems with, but they eventually settled down. Also included in the rig were six Strand SL 26s and 10 SL 19s, 20 Cantata

18/32s, 10 Leko 6 x 22s, 60 Leko 6 x 16s, eight Molefay duets, 17 High End Studio Spots, two High End Cyberlights, 11 500W Kombi floods, 100 Spark Lx, two F100 Smoke machines, two DF50 Hazers and one snow machine. Around 150 Par cans completed the rig.

Control was via a Wholehog 2, 22 Bytecraft 12-way, 2.5kW racks, four Bytecraft six-way 5kW racks

and 36 Bytecraft Byteswitches and six Custom Bytecraft Byteswitches for the LM2. A Wybron Autopilot system provided two followspots which Levings described as "being as good as any matinée followspot operator - not always perfect but there most of the time!" Cooper added that he felt it was the first time in Australia that the system had been used as successfully. Levings particularly loved the High End Studio Spots, which he used extensively and he felt the DHA Light Curtains provided a "terrific and powerful linear sheet of colour."

With the Sydney Olympics coming up in September 2000, the spotlight of the world will be on Sydney and the various attractions the city has to offer. By the sound of it, Fox have added one more string to that already impressive bow with their smart choice of location for their latest studio/infotainment complex. Just remember - if you're visiting the Titanic experience, pick the right queue or as an added precaution wear your bathers!

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John Watt

Second Take...

John Watt's view from beside the camera

No, of course I don't watch daytime television (I light it occasionally) - there's something almost immoral about turning on the box before the sun is below the yardarm isn't there? Obviously this is not a view shared by the broadcasters though, who make sure there are moving pictures of sorts available 24 hours a day: in the main these aim at a new low in standards, and then fall short.

"I must say I've more than a sneaking regard for people who stake their lighting decisions in concrete and hard wiring, with little room for manoeuvre if it turns out to be the wrong lamp in the wrong place."

ANYWAY, AS I SAID

I don't watch daytime TV. I record it and watch it at night! There is the obvious advantage of being able to spin through the five-minute commercial breaks, pause for recuperating drinks and so on. 'Why does he watch if it's so

lousy?' I hear you say. Well, there are surprising nuggets buried there if you're sad enough to search. Usually, these are programmes originally made for terrestrial television with a real production team and now being recirculated as a nice little earner for someone who doesn't pay residuals to the lighting designer.

THIS WEEK I'VE FOUND more lighting inspiration than you can get in a long day's march around Earls Court on the Discovery, Home and Leisure channel. Not one, but two painters each demonstrating lighting almost without knowing it. The old techniques of suggesting an atmosphere without painting every detail, or concealing more than they reveal as my mentor Bob Gray used to say, serve to remind me where I would start should anyone let me loose on a drama again.

ANOTHER GEM UNEARTHED THIS WEEK on the same channel was a visit to the Lightolier Tech Centre in Massachusetts, a company which manufactures domestic and architectural lighting. Apparently, they were the inventors of track lighting, though I'm surprised anyone claims that as their own. Their demonstration areas were a copybook example of simple, but effective, lighting. I must say I've more than a sneaking regard for people who stake their lighting decisions in concrete and hard wiring, with little room for manoeuvre if it turns out to be the wrong lamp in the wrong place. A flexible rig and a willing crew have corrected 75% of my mistakes before the 'client' has noticed.

ANYWAY, LIGHTOLIER (pity about the name), have a demonstration area which stylishly says it all. Maybe there's one on every high street in America, I wouldn't know. Mr Klages will e-mail me no doubt. Room one is just a semicircular wall with a foreground plinth with a vase. Cue one shows 'intensity' changes on the plinth. Cue two, 'distribution' - a balance between plinth and carpet. Cue three 'colour' on the wall and cue four 'change', with mixes between the elements. Cue five 'Theatre' colour-mixes and fades and chases.

THEN THE WALL DIVIDES to reveal a row of bursts from downlighters in a black void; another cue lights a ceiling, turning the space in to a corridor, another lights textured walls. You get the picture; very fundamental stuff, but either forgotten or never learned by some. Succeeding room settings put it all together so maybe there is life beyond the humble table lamp, but am I brave enough? After all, a table lamp is portable isn't it?

IF I EVER WRITE A BOOK I think it will have to be a look back at unlikely small spaces which have been turned into TV studios. A snappy title requires some thought: 'Loos a Million' or 'Slopping Out', perhaps. When 'in vision'

continuity announcers were in vogue, they were jammed in all manner of unlikely places. I remember a triangular broom cupboard in Manchester lit with two pups and a scoop, which featured a desk on wheels so that the announcer could be seated and then the desk follow him in. So imagine my joy in being able to luxuriate in a studio in Gloucester I visited last week. It was about 18ft long (should I have gone metric?) and at least 12ft wide. A bit of scaffolding and a rickety pair of steps enabled me to rearrange things into my version of proper lighting; some of us enjoy simple pleasures. An added bonus was a window with a view over the nearby British Waterways Marina. Nice people too, not a clipboard or ego in sight. In the summer we may talk them in to some dimmers - I've gone mad and suggested four.

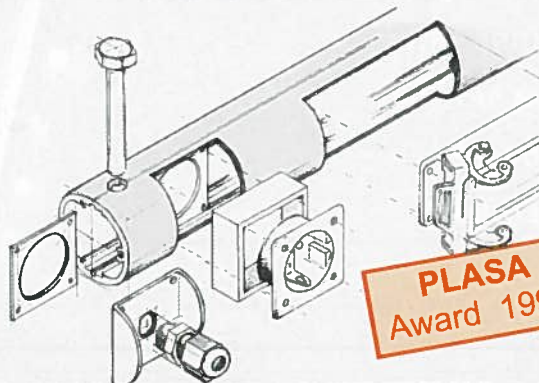
EVEN I CAN'T THINK of a lighting angle on 'Castaway 2000', a programme following the fortunes of 30+ people who volunteered (mad fools) to be marooned on a Scottish island for a year by a TV production company. This is a clever concept as there are no actors, sets or studios to pay for, and the cast even has to grow its own food, which is one stage worse than the Nottingham studios on a Sunday. The bit that we've seen so far has been filmed 'documentary-style', but once the group is abandoned on the island we are promised video diaries from their camcorders - it's not easy to avoid holiday videos these days is it?

I FOCUSED ON THE WIND generator being installed, two-and-a-half kilowatts! Not much for lighting, but I guess the mixed bunch they have assembled will produce someone who used to light the school play who will lash up a lamp in a bean can. The lady psychiatrist is fun; if she would really like to go for broke she could tackle a TV crew next. Lofty, the ex-SAS trainer, can come on my crew any day - his ability to survive in an alien environment could be invaluable at LWT.

TWO DRAMA SERIES serve to reinforce the old adage that the lighting is about right if you don't notice it. 'Clocking Off' on Sunday nights on BBC 1 and 'At Home With the Braithwaites' on ITV during the week. Sorry, the Radio Times doesn't credit the DOPs anymore so I don't know who's behind them, but they both get my vote. Similarly 'Dinner Ladies' which would be terrific under house lights, is quietly lit by Graham Rimmington complementing a funny, touching and superbly cast piece.

AS FOR THE ROYLE FAMILY, that opening shot of them all slumped on a sofa looking in to camera, their POV of the 'tele', while I slump on my sofa looking back at them... a bit unnerving isn't it?

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Candidates will have a proven sales track record with a minimum of 5 years experience. The company will consider candidates from any sales background including Exhibition/TV/Touring/Films etc, and are looking at expand into these new territories.

Director of Signal Processing

Location: Midlands • Salary: 40K + benefits • Job Ref: 101/KT1
Candidates must have at least 10 years industry experience and held a senior design or development role within pro-audio. An excellent understanding of project management, close liaisons with customers, good commercial acumen with some knowledge of sales and marketing is essential.

Audio Technician

Location: Nottingham • Salary: 17K+ • Job Ref: 19/1
Do you have several years experience with sound system and installation work and the ability to liaise with clients, consultants and contractors? Candidates will explore new ways of achieving satisfactory solutions and have computer skills with CAD.

DSP Project Engineer

Location: Midlands • Sal £30-35K • Job Ref: 101/KT2
Candidates will be degree qualified with at least 5 years experience in the audio industry. A good hardware understanding and a working knowledge of software design tools is essential to help build and test prototypes.

Project Engineer

Location: Midlands • Salary: £20-25K • Job Ref: 101/KT3
Successful candidates will be educated to degree level in electronics/software, have an understanding of software design methodologies and a knowledge of microprocessors and DSP technologies.

INTERNATIONAL - Sales Manager x 3

Location: USA (LA, NY, FL) • Sal: \$60,000 + bonuses
Candidates will have a proven sales track record with a minimum of 5 years experience. The company will consider candidates from any sales background including Exhibition/TV/Touring/Films and are looking at expanding into these new territories.

European Sales Executive

Location: South • Sal: OTE £40K plus benefits
Candidates will have a knowledge of loudspeakers and acoustics. Spoken German is essential - any others will be an advantage.

Field Service Engineer

Location: London/Southeast • Salary: £12-15K • Job Ref: 506/1
The position includes scheduling regular maintenance visits, covering preventative maintenance, the cleaning and checking of equipment and diagnosing faults.

Field Service Engineer

Location: National • Salary: from £15K • Job Ref: 156/1
Candidates will have experience in lighting, audio and video products. The position includes the servicing and maintenance of existing installed equipment.

Installation Engineers x 2

Location: London/Manchester • Salary £12-15K • Job Ref: 551/2
An experienced audio, TV re-distribution and satellite engineer is required who has a knowledge of cabling systems and basic installation and servicing principles.

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Salary £18K+ incl. Accommodation Location Hong Kong
Candidates will be a team player with the ability to train others and have at least 5 years experience with audio and live music.

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Location: Hong Kong • Salary £30K+ incl. accommodation
Candidates will be a team player with the ability to train others, and have at least 5 years experience with audio and live music. Candidates will be Vari*lite trained and have knowledge of Auto-Cad.

Sales Manager (Audio)

Location: Southern England • Salary: £25-30K • Job Ref: Sal 023
The successful candidate will have an excellent track record, a good knowledge of market conditions and also dealer and competitor's products.

Field Sales Executive

Location: Surrey • Salary: £18k basic with OTE £24k • Job Ref: 231/1
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Please send your cv and a covering letter to Glen Steggall, Production Human Resources, NMEC, Gate 1, Drawdock Road, Greenwich, London SE10 0BB. Or email: productionrecruitment@newmill.co.uk

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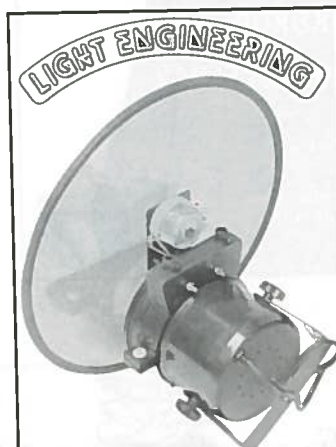
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In Profile...

L&S Talks to the Industry Trend-setters

Our story of scenic designer Gerard Howland begins in London where, as a teenager at a loose end, he picked up a job at the Fairfield Hall in Croydon as a painter. "Not painting scenery," he explains. "Just the backstage area of the theatre." And then one day the performers appeared, a fun loving bunch wearing, of all things, pantomime costumes. Howland was hooked. "I loved it immediately and got a job as a stage-hand in the evenings. I couldn't believe I was actually being paid to do this!"

whole premise lacked any theatrical structure. It just died the very second you got a member of the audience up on stage," he recalls.

'Spin of the Wheel,' opened in Watford to almost universal condemnation but was nevertheless contracted to transfer to the West End. "You were on death



government - we'd be dealing with an individual, and he'd be ousted a week later," he remembers with a laugh.

Despite this experience, it proved to be the start of many themed entertainment projects, the most recent of which is the concept, scripting and production design for 'Titanic' at the new 20th Century Fox studio park in Sydney, Australia. Howland is currently working on the Sky Church/Experience Music Project in Seattle, as well

Gerard Howland once vowed never to work in our industry again. He didn't manage to keep his promise as Sharon Stancavage found out

That's where Howland began his love affair with scenic design. "I enjoyed making and painting scenery and it just seemed logical that I should end up designing scenery," he explains. "I entered a competition and won a bursary to study at the English National Opera Design School. Following my time there I then went to Germany to begin life as a designer with the Dortmund Opera Theatre."

For the next 20 years, Howland considered himself principally a stage designer, and worked on literally hundreds of shows in every theatrical genre - some more successful than others. "The most painful production I ever worked on was a terrible production of a musical in the West End called 'Spin the Wheel,'" Howland recalls. "It cost millions of pounds to produce, opened on a Thursday and closed on the Saturday."

'Spin the Wheel' was, to put it simply, a musical about game shows. "They had this insane idea that they were going to get people from the audience up on the stage, get them involved in a game show, then somehow turn it into a musical," says Howland. "It was absolutely apparent from the first time an audience member got up on the stage that the

row, but you were able to leave every night and go home. Then you had to come back to death row in the morning," Howland reports. "On opening night in the West End," says Howland, "the leading lady came up to me and said 'The reason this show sucks is my shoes!' And I actually had to give her an answer to that!"

In 1990, after numerous shows for the Royal Shakespeare Company and the English National Opera, Howland felt in need of fresh challenges and re-located from the UK to the United States. "I went to the US with the express wish of giving up the theatre completely," Howland confides. "I came to paint and sculpt. I didn't plan to spend another day or night in a darkened auditorium."

But the theatrical world provided Howland with structure and deadlines, which he found to be a necessary part of his life. So he got back into the business, working as the principal set designer at the San Francisco opera, later becoming involved with commercial and corporate work. His first themed entertainment project was with Disney, working on a proposal at the Epcot Center for the Russian Pavilion. "I quasi-produced the proposal for the pavilion with very elaborate models and storyboards. I started doing things that I wasn't known for doing in the theatre, and enjoyed it very much." Unfortunately, the timing of the project couldn't have been worse. "It was never completed because when we were designing the pavilion, the Wall came down and Russia was in disorder. We couldn't get any cooperation from the Russian

as the Coke and Old Navy exhibits in the new Pac Bell Park in San Francisco.

Howland's commercial work in California eventually led to another venture that would change the course of his career. "I wrote and directed a TV show with my father in Germany called 'Hidden California,' which was about the icons of California," Howland explains. "It ran in Germany and was quite successful, so we formed a company on a house boat in Sausalito, California. Because the company and studio were based on this boat, and because we literally floated, we called ourselves The Floating Company." In the years since, the company has grown from being a partnership producing a television show into a company that handles concept design for attractions, expos and rock concerts.

Howland has worked with many notable clients, ranging from the Rolling Stones through General Motors and on to The San Francisco Opera. When asked about his favourite projects, he barely hesitates. "My favourite projects are the ones that I haven't yet designed," he says with a smile. "The project that you haven't got yet is the best project, because that's always the one that you can have a great time working on, in theory at least!" ■

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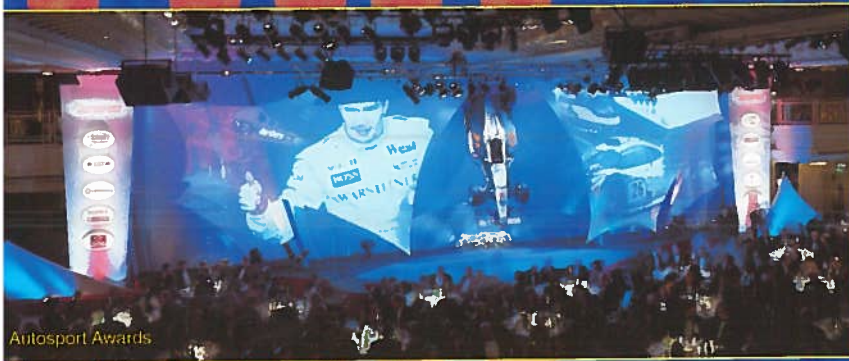
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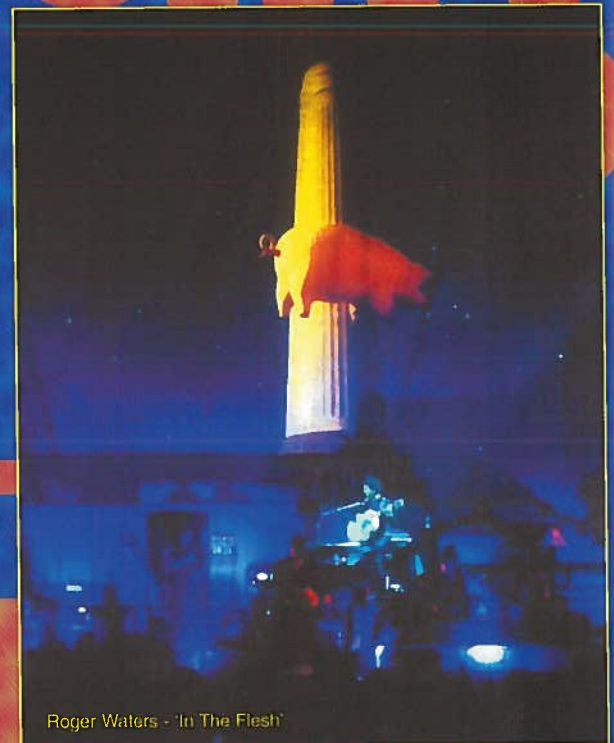
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