

# Lighting & Sound INTERNATIONAL

July 2000

The Entertainment Technology Monthly

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## Glass & Gasometers

- The recently-opened Lowry sparkles on Salford Quays

## Precious but Practical

- Royal Court returns to centre stage

## Path of Light

- A Walk through the Highlands

## Supernatural

- Santana at the Ahoy, Rotterdam

## Visual Artist

- Profile of Peter Wynne Willson

## Wheel of Life

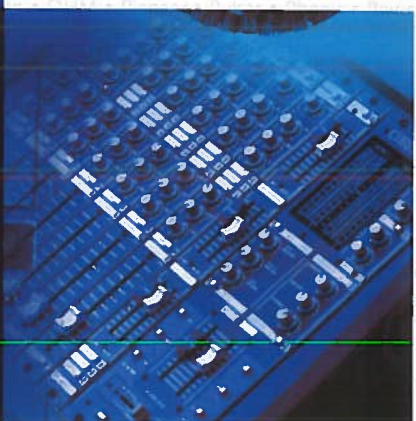
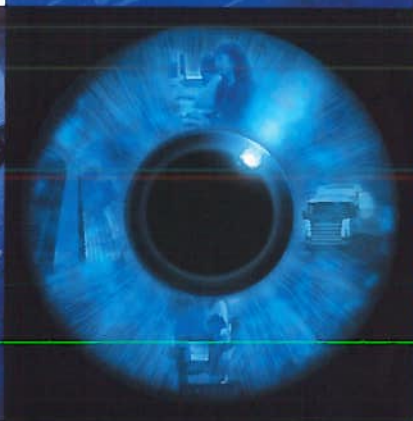
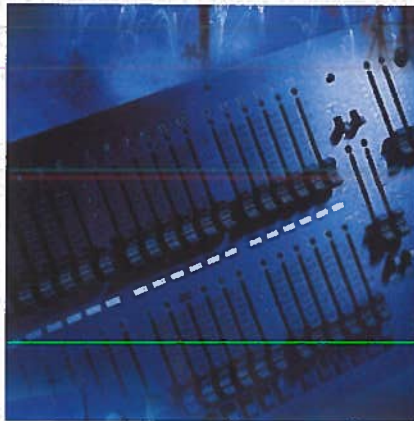
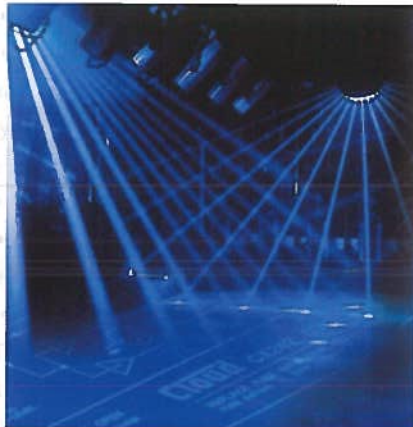
- The Shaolin Monks prepare to tour Europe

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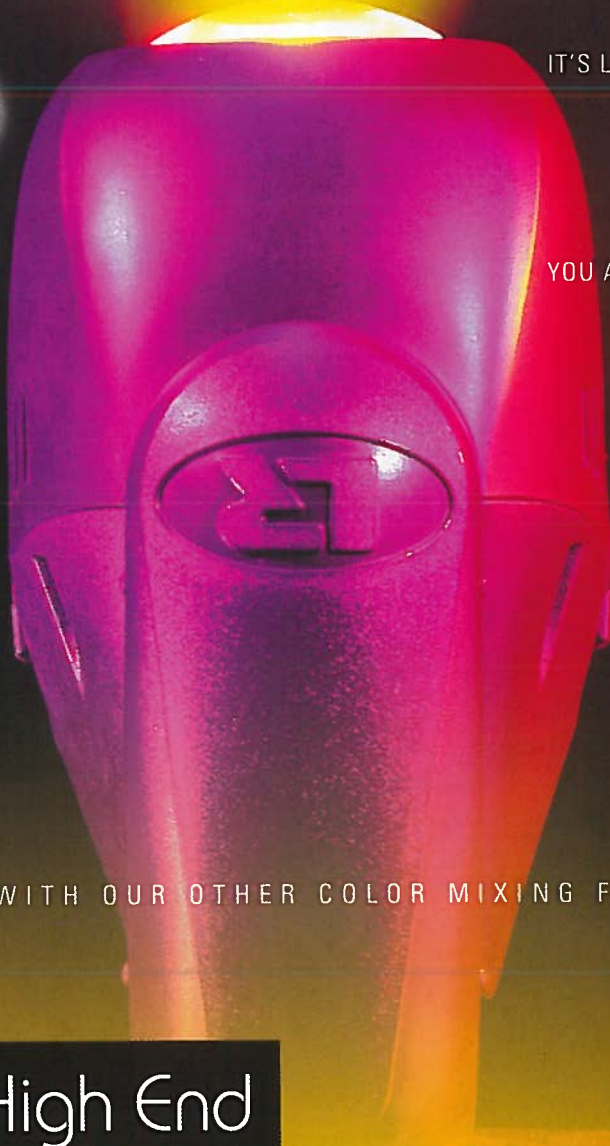
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# The Art of Light





# Lighting & Sound INTERNATIONAL

July 2000 Volume 15, Issue 7

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# Lighting & Sound INTERNATIONAL

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## Second Rigging Fatality at Earls Court

**L&SI has learnt that there has been a second fatal accident at Earls Court. The venue owners have confirmed that the accident occurred at 7.10pm on Friday 23 June and that the individual involved was working for Unusual Rigging, who are contracted to the venue.**

A spokesman for Unusual told L&SI: "The person was working for us on a contracted project under CDM Regulations. Together with Earls Court, we are working with the police, local authorities and Health and Safety Executive to investigate the incident. We will release further details as they become available."

The news comes just seven months after the death in December last year of a rigger working on a backstage event for the Spice Girls. He fell over 80 feet to his death whilst breaking down the after-show party. The investigation into that incident is still ongoing.

## Roxsett Bosses on Drug Charges

**The company responsible for trucking the Spice Girls' tour kit have landed in hot water following the arrest of two of their number charged with smuggling Ecstasy, worth £3.5million, into Britain.**

Roxsett's MD David Wilson and general manager John Lewis have both been arrested following a swoop by customs men at Dover who stopped the Roxsett truck when it arrived back in the UK from The Netherlands. Sniffer dogs found the Ecstasy stashed between audio and lighting equipment. Both men appeared at Dover Magistrates Court last week and pleaded not guilty. Bail has been refused and the two now face a Crown Court trial.

## Industry Recognised in Birthday Honours

**The Queens Birthday Honours list paid tribute to a number of those working on the creative and technical sides of the arts and entertainment industry.**

Theatre director, and more latterly Oscar-winning film director, Sam Mendes was rewarded with a CBE for his services to drama. Two of the principal talents behind the Dome were also honoured; Timothy Gardom, responsible for the content of the body and faith zones, becomes an MBE, while Mark Fisher, receives an OBE for his work as creative director of the Millennium Show staged in the Dome's central arena.

Vivien Duffield, a director of the Royal Opera House for 14 years who is credited with raising £100m for the recent £214m refurbishment, was awarded a DBE, whilst Neil Bartlett, artistic director of the Lyric Hammersmith, and Derek Deane, artistic director of the English National Ballet both received OBEs.

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### Colour Wheel



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### DMX Address



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### AL4800 Moving Light Controller

Evaluation pcb available

### AL4800

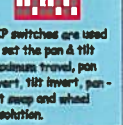
The AL4800 microprocessor provides all the control functions required to develop a sophisticated moving lamp. Features include:  
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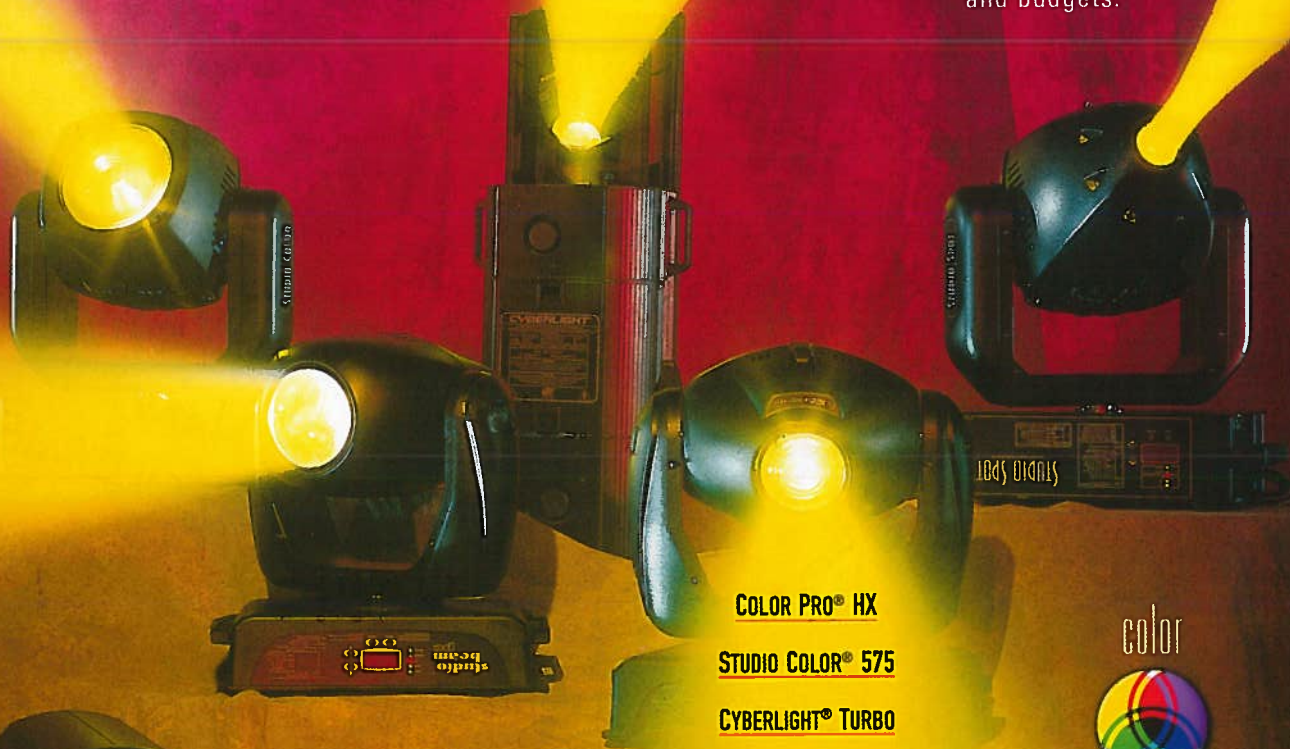
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## dB Technologies and beyer Announce Deal

*beyerdynamic has announced a distribution agreement with dB Technologies of Italy.*

The company took to the London Eye to announce the deal which will see them handling dB's product line of pro audio products, including speakers, power amplifiers and mixers. However, it is with the company's wireless product range that the synergy between dB and beyer lies: the company's new range of radio microphones use

beyerdynamic's transducer elements, coupled with dB's PLL wireless circuitry.

beyerdynamic's John Midgley is enthusiastic about the union, commenting: "This is a very impressive range of equipment and we are well-placed in the UK to promote dB alongside our existing range of products. It's a perfect fit and balances what we can offer our large customer base well."

*John Midgley, MD of beyerdynamic (GB) Ltd (left) with Arturo Vicari, MD of dB Technologies, Italy and Hans Radda, export sales manager, dB Technologies*



## Marquee Launches Installation Arm

*Marquee Audio has announced the formation of a new division, which will operate under the supervision of co-director Mark Brown.*

Marquee Installations aims to respond to increasing retail sector requirements. Brown's roster of licensed-trade contractor clients, which includes many of the UK's leading breweries, restaurants and independents, had previously been homogenised into Marquee's general work portfolio, but he now believes he can give greater focus to expanding the business. Marquee Installations will offer a complete turnkey service, combining audio, lighting and visual display integration.

## Geldof Outlines Plans for 2001 Party

*Bob Geldof is planning a major New Year's Eve event in London. Through his company, 10 Alps, he has won the contract to stage a spectacular show in the capital which promises to build on last year's River of Light New Year's Eve celebrations. To help him on his way, he has managed to secure £1.5m of Lottery Funding and is now looking for sponsors to weigh in with their contributions. No details have emerged yet of what's been planned, but we'll keep you up-to-date as we learn more.*

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## Songs & Stories . . .

**Visual artist, musician and performer Laurie Anderson brought her multimedia tour de force *Songs & Stories* from Moby Dick to the Barbican Theatre in May. The production fused together Herman Melville's rich, pictorial and obscure 19th century narrative with a 21st century presentation.**

As you would expect, it looked and sounded powerful. Sound designer Miles Green has worked with Anderson since 1989: during the show he runs audio playback for the backing tracks that run seamlessly throughout. He feels having direct stage experience is a major plus in his technical role, one that gives him a real perspective of the space inhabited by other performers throughout the evening.

Front-of-house engineer is Jody Elff, who joined the production last spring, just after it had completed its first run. Elff says that the top priority is for Anderson's spoken pieces to be clearly understood. As you would expect, Anderson is also very specific about how she wants the show to sound. The Barbican shows use a Concert Sound-supplied EAW rig, a Cadac M-type handling the front-of-house mix as well as all the performers' stereo in-ear monitor mixes (delivered via Shure wireless systems from Hand Held). Headset mics were Crown CM-311s.

Also at front-of-house was a Yamaha O1V and a Yamaha Promix 01 to handle the automation of the effects sends and returns. The automation moves were sent from the Cadac computer, and onstage were two Yamaha O1Vs for playback, mixing from a variety of sources, including an Akai hard disc system, DAT, several CD players and a Tascam DA-88.



On the visual systems, operated by Daniel Hartnett, video and large format slide projection combined with lighting to produce a striking effect, with oceanic and fishy themes to the fore! In addition to the five Sanyo 9000 LCD video projectors and three live cameras, they also used two Pani 1.2 large format slide projectors with AMD-32 slidechangers (supplied by Production Arts Europe) and eight Ektographic E3 slide projectors. The large format projection part of the equation was co-ordinated by Frans van Heiningen from The Netherlands.



Lighting design was by Michael Chybowski, who has also worked with Anderson since 1989. The rig was composed from around 130 lamps, based on a traditional dance lighting plot. Conventionals were primarily ETC Source Fours, many with scrollers, plus eight strategically-placed moving lights - six High End Studio Spots and two Studio Colors. These contained custom gobos and dichroics to match the video colours and textures precisely.

The lighting director was Colleen Bonniol who also ran the show from an ETC Obsession II. As with all the production elements, lighting is very specialised: the moving lights don't visibly move, the entire stage is seldom lit and there are specials in a lot of cues.

The production also saw the introduction of a new item - the Talking Stick - a wireless instrument that can access and replicate any sound. In Moby Dick, it's a physical representation of the

disembodied voice prevalent in Melville's book. The small, tight and coherent production team worked closely with the artist and performers to produce a work of imaginative fluidity, one that left an open mind of possibilities and posed more questions than it ever answered.

**Louise Stickland**

## Dome Staff Paid to Stay

*Despite the well-publicised financial crises at the Dome, managers and staff are to receive loyalty bonuses totalling up to £3 million.*

The payments are intended to reverse the exodus of Dome personnel in recent months - over 400 of the 2,000-strong team have already left - and reward staff who see out their contracts. The bonuses seem to go against the grain of recent cost-cutting measures and come in the wake of recent crises meetings which have tackled the thorny issue of whether to close the central show early. The bonuses include payments to four board directors, with former chief executive Jennie Page, also in the line-up for a hand-out. £2 million will be shared between the Dome's 300 managers, while a further £1 million will be shared between the 900 hosts who show visitors around.

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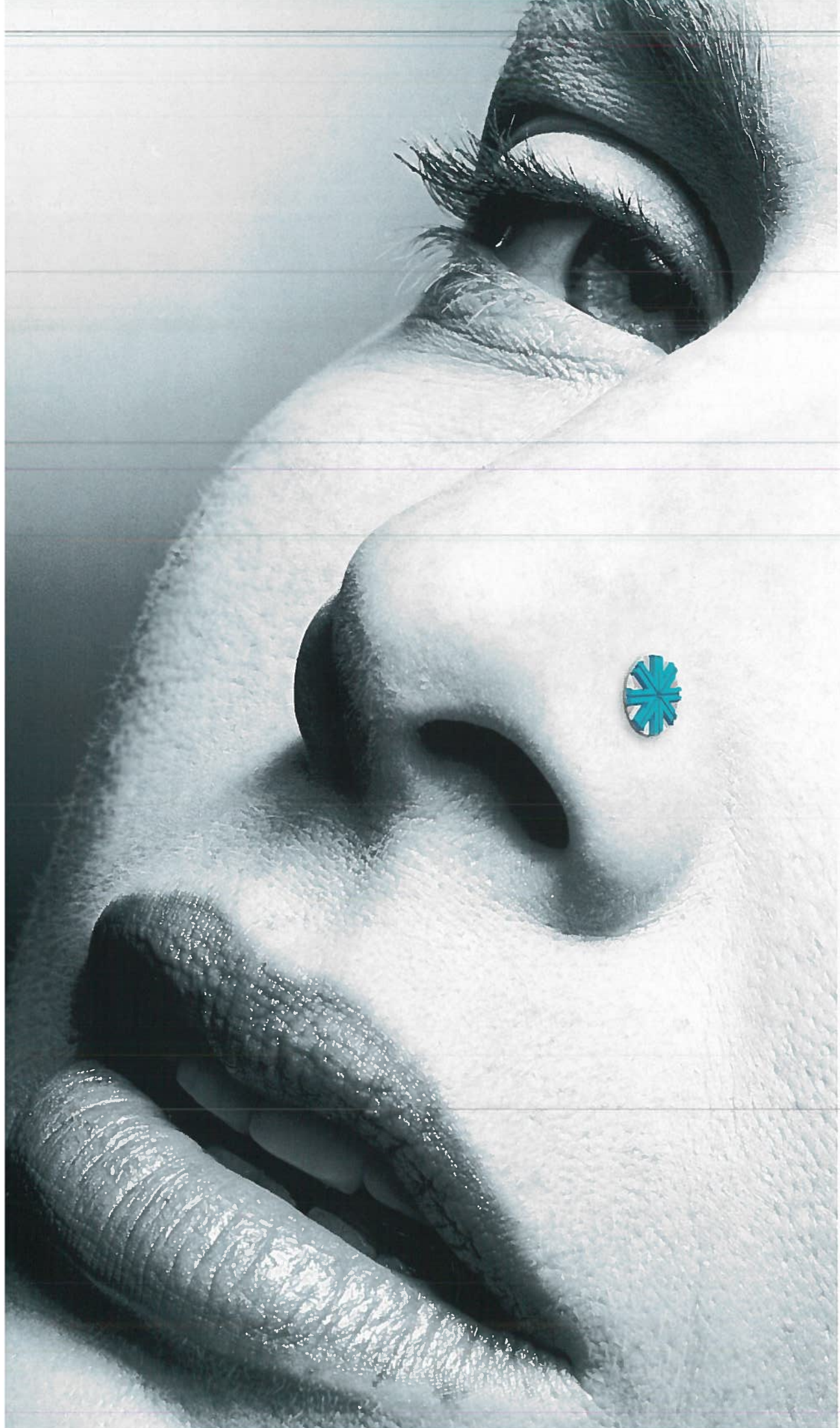
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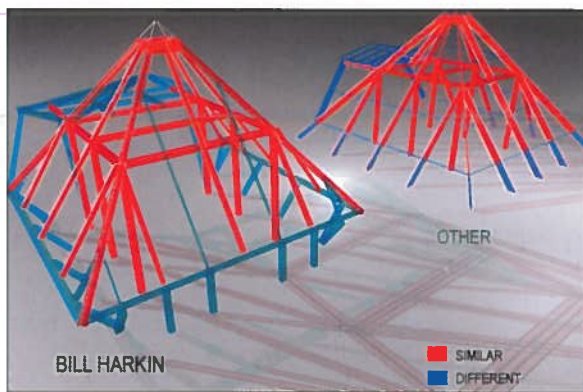
## Glastonbury Festival Pyramid Dispute

**Designer Bill Harkin has contacted the offices of L&S I to highlight a design copyright predicament he has recently encountered with the promoter and landowner of the Glastonbury Festival, Michael Eavis.**

Harkin is a designer, based in Sussex, who specialises in design and his work has ranged from demountable stage systems and corporate event environments, to temporary lightweight structures. As a designer for over 30 years, he has faced the all too familiar problem of his designs having been copied without his permission.

In a letter to the magazine, Harkin stated: "I believe that my designs for the Glastonbury Pyramid stage for 1994-97 have been used as a basis for this year's resurrection without my agreement or proper payment. I received a nominal fee for my initial design drawings for costing purposes. Michael Eavis has stated that the design is completely different to my original ideas submitted between 1994 and 1997. However on close inspection on site, I believe it is clear that this is not the case."

As you can see from the accompanying diagrams, Harkin's design (on the left) contains six truss columns supporting a truss grid which, in turn, carries the apex with a relieved cantilevered canopy. This provides suspension points for lighting via movable load beams with buttresses forming



the pyramid profile, which is clad in silver architectural fabric. Although Eavis claims that this year's design (on the right) is original, the similarities are there for all to see.

Harkin is currently being advised by lawyers Theodore Goddard as to the best course of action, but even with the introduction of ACID (anti copying in design), copyright law remains weak and there are no easy answers. If you have had a similar experience, please call us.

## Court Affirms Injunction Against Martin

**The long-running stand-off between Vari-Lite International and Martin Professional has taken another turn, following the affirmation by the United States Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit of an injunction issued by the United States District Court on September 2, 1999, against Martin Professional.**

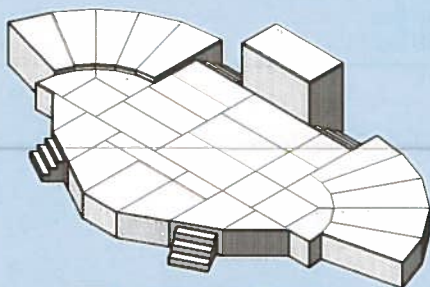
As we've reported previously, the injunction prohibits Martin from manufacturing, selling or hiring the MAC 600s, 500s and 300s, and also extends to the Case series controller when sold in conjunction with any of these. Martin had already appealed against the decision when it filed a motion asking the District Court to lift the injunction in July 2000, the date on which it believed the patent would expire. However, the Court of Appeals ruled that the patent held by Vari-Lite did not expire until March 2001.

## White Light and Strand Lighting: 300 In Soho!

To celebrate the launch of the new Strand 300-series desk, and to introduce it to the London theatrical community, White Light and Strand Lighting collaborated on a successful open day at the Soho Theatre in London at the end of May.

The star attraction of the event was Strand's new 'baby' lighting console, the 300-series. The desk was demonstrated by Strand's Bill Richards, using the Soho Theatre's White Light-supplied and recently-installed new rig of conventional lanterns driven from Strand LD90 dimmers and automated lanterns including Strand Pirouette PCs and City Theatrical AutoYokes. Soho is one of the first venues in the world to install a 300-series.

## Alistage

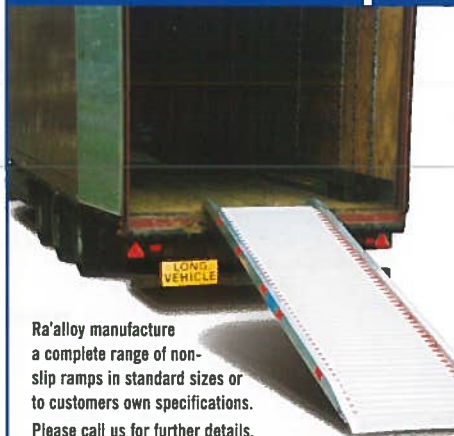


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## 10 Years of Hand Held . . .

*August 1st 2000 sees Hand Held Audio celebrate 10 aspirin-taking, hair-pulling, black coffee-drinking years of purveying radio mics and in-ear systems to the famous, the corporate and the rest of the world.*

Back in the late eighties, Nick Bruce-Smith and Mick Shepherd were rattling across the North American prairie in the back lounge of a tour bus, swapping ideas about alternative ways of making a living. The rest, as they say, is history.

Starting with five Samson radio mics purchased from the Thompson Twins, the business evolved slowly at first. Nick and Mick were still on the road, taking it in turns to tour - with two bands amongst the first to try the new in-ear technology - the Pet Shop Boys and Erasure. This brought an early association with Garwood, the IEM pioneers, and set the course for the company to be part of the in-ear monitoring revolution.

As touring productions expanded their use of wireless, corporate event organisers also discovered how useful radio mics were and Hand

Held experienced a period of rapid growth. The issues of licensing and frequency availability became paramount and remain so today. The company now has hundreds of radio mics and in-ear systems and is able to meet the most demanding production specification.

### PSL's New Audio Division



*PSL has set up a new audio division, and pledged a multi-million pound investment in a new hire fleet.*

The bulk of the equipment will be purchased through Marquee Audio, while other suppliers will include LMC, SES, Total Audio Solutions, VDC, Kelsey Acoustics, d&b audiotechnic and Shuttlesound. Gil Rabinowitz (pictured) has been brought in to configure an inventory which the company believes will make it competitive in its own right, at the same time offering a resource that will enable the Gearhouse Group to quote turnkey packages to conference and exhibition clients.

### Digisoft Music Joins Arbiter France

*French company Digisoft Music, which distributes music software, has become a member of the Arbiter Group. Laurent Akriche and his team, who will be part of the Arbiter France division, will handle Music Technology products sales.*

Akriche and wife Patricia are joined by sales assistant Annie Gauthier, who will manage sales on Music Technology products, and Michel Vachal, who is in charge of technical support, software development and French websites. Anne Sophie Ogee joins as sales assistant to Regis Monnerie, who will continue to manage sales on drums, pro sound instruments, Arbiter Karaoke and the newly-acquired AKG consumer line. Regis Monnerie will continue to manage marketing and relations with suppliers.

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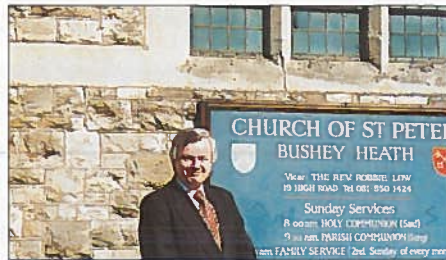
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When Terry Douris of Stage Two Ltd (right) was approached to quote for a new sound system for St. Peter's Church in Bushey, the brief was far from simple. The company was asked to provide an amplified sound system which could cater for live performances within the church but...



"We went the route of running everything in low impedance wiring rather than 100v line, because of the possible reduction in the frequency range," explains Douris. With advice from Andy Austin Brown of RCF, the Monitors were eventually positioned on the ceiling beams with coverage of the main body of the church coming from speakers positioned in the sides of the church.

## Candover Concentrates on Club Sector

Just months after buying the chain from First Leisure, Candover has sold its 14 Brannigans bars, along with six other pubs, for £67 million.

The new owner is Mustard Entertainment Restaurants, a recently-established venture backed by investment company Phildrew Ventures. Candover secured the Brannigans bars last November, as part of its £210.5 million acquisition of First Leisure's 40 nightclubs and 25 bars. It intends to keep the remaining bars and has also signalled its intention to expand its portfolio of nightclubs.

## Manna from Heaven

... the installation had to adhere to the strict criteria of the diocesan authorities. Terry Douris takes up the story: "Whatever we spec'd had to meet the requirements of the diocesan architect - we couldn't have large speakers hanging from a central cluster, so we looked for speakers that were discreet, but had excellent sound reproduction and could actually handle the input."

Douris opted for 10 RCF Monitor 5s in a black finish mixed through a Soundcraft desk and fed through QSC and Inter-M amplifiers. The speakers were positioned throughout the church to provide the best coverage. They also had to fill the role of fitting in with the church itself. Initially they had planned to mount the monitors in the white finish on the stone pillars of the church, but this was vetoed by the architects, so they had to reconsider their plan.

## Stage Electrics' Virtual Lighting Studio

Stage Electrics has confirmed the opening date of its new London Branch as 7 August, but to ensure that its new WYSIWYG facility and Virtual Lighting Studio is operational in the meantime, the company has taken temporary accommodation at 81 Oxford Street. David Stewart, formerly with Lightfusion, has joined Stage Electrics as studio manager and will operate from the London branch.

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# Classical Brits

*The Royal Albert Hall recently played host to The Classical Brit Awards, which not only recognised the talents of some of our finest classical musicians, but also gave them an opportunity to perform to a television audience of just under five million viewers. L&S invited lighting designer Durham Marengi to give us his view of the production . . .*



A beautiful theatrical set designed by Peter Bingemann afforded the the opportunity to produce a style of lighting design which was unusual in its treatment of this genre. The brief from the executive producers Lisa Anderson and Mark Wells and the show's producer Helen Terry and director Janet Fraser Crook was for the lighting to produce a new and different image from previous TV awards, whilst not ignoring the opportunities for the exciting and kinetic lighting of classical music. The style was deemed as being somewhere between *Batman* and *Gormenghast*: it needed to possess a film-like quality whilst producing broadcast quality pictures.

The most obvious manifestation of this brief was the desire to light the set and the stage rather than use the structure of the set and any available floor space to place moving lights. The 12m height of the gauze cyclorama pushed the rig height up to 13m, thus the nearest source to an artist was some 40ft. This necessitated a careful look at the specification of the lanterns. The orchestra was placed on the arena floor in a conventional 'pit' and again had to be lit unobtrusively - but well enough to provide good close-ups from an unusually long throw.

Having recently been impressed with Martin's vastly improved range of moving head lanterns whilst designing Saturday Night Fever in Germany, where we had some 200 Mac 600, 500, 300 and 250s with very few problems, Macs were chosen as the workhorse of the rig. Starlites were utilised as bright profile sources to cut through the arc washes as the specified VL7s and VL7Bs were unavailable, and the key lighting was provided by compact 5k tungsten fresnels and six spots. We did have two VL5s on the show as close quarter uplights: when will we see more tungsten version dichroic washlights from their competitors?

The spots were a combination of three impressive Robert Juliat 2.5ks from the gallery, a Pani 1200 in the front box to allow spotlighting in the Arena, and two Stark truss-spots at the rear of the rig. The operators were supplied under the direction

of Linford from the London Palladium and were as professional and accurate a team as you could wish for, British theatre once again matching the world's best in all sorts of different and often unsung talents.

The truss design fulfilled a desire to create an architectural presence above the stage and provide the ability to throw light from closely-grouped lanterns in large clumps of beams, as opposed to the 'string of beams' normally associated with runs of truss. To this end, LSD's hexagon pods were placed at key points above the set and connected with box trusses to provide decent angles for lighting the cyc.

Using WYSICAD I was able to model the venue, the set and the lighting rig and could show the director how it would look from any of the 13 camera positions. From this we realised that the set should move slightly to improve the background for the presenter, Sir Trevor McDonald, and a few minor camera moves in the FOH boxes improved the camera coverage. I also placed a view at each of the spot positions and was able to determine the optimum position for reverse lighting of performers in the arena. We also noticed that the truss-spots were compromised by certain truss elements and so they were cut or moved. WYSICAD is a fantastic tool and regardless of the obvious advantage of pre-programming, it can help make important decisions prior to any production.

We were fortunate to have Simon Honywill as the live show designer and with his input were able to place 3D models of the V-dosc loudspeakers (supplied by RG Jones) into our show model. Again WYSICAD gave us the chance to see what these boxes would block and lights were moved accordingly. He even had the courtesy (and the audacity) to inform us of a slight change in their position two weeks in advance which saved us at least two hours on a tight fit-up! The organisation of the fit-up is fundamental to the success of any event, as any time overrun is always at the expense of lighting programming and rehearsal.





Kahren Williams, Kate Wright and Lisa from MJK did a marvelous job in this respect.

LSD, under the direction of Robin Wain, who has in the past hung some 'spectacularly' difficult truss shapes in the RAH for the classical son-et-lumieres which I design for Raymond Gubbay, placed the truss and the curved cyclorama within 20cm of the drawing position, an astounding feat in this venue and again, in my humble opinion, this represented some of the finest stagecraft that Britain is proud to offer. Most of the fine technicians that I have worked with during my forays around Europe have expressed a desire to extend their skills by working in Britain or with British designers, and bemoaned the lack of training in their own countries. Britain is lucky to have some fine courses and teachers, some working abroad, but during this current wave of corporate take-overs we seem to have lost sight of a fundamental need for lighting companies to offer patronage to young designers such as the support Richard Pilbrow pioneered with the original Theatre Projects.

The imperturbable Tony Simpson led the lighting crew who soon had the rig up and running even though they were slightly held up by the V-dosc system. This speaker configuration is designed as an articulated caterpillar that trundles straight off the truck into the arena and then can be quickly flown - but not at the Albert Hall. It remains to be seen whether the get-in improvements under the current refurbishment will actually improve access to this awkward stage.

Programming, on Wholehog II desks, was by long-time colleagues John Sinden and Paul Cook, with the rig split evenly between them to facilitate fast programming during rehearsals. The attentive 021 TV facilities team provided us with comprehensive monitoring of the pictures, even supplying a monitor for Linford to assist his spot direction.

Another bone of contention of mine was happily swallowed as the 021 rack engineers actually came into the building to view what the show really looked like, rather than engineering their own special 'blue' version as often happens. Thanks guys - the resultant range of colours we were able to see was a pleasure to behold and made a big difference to the look of the show.

The programming time is always a challenge at the RAH, not least because any visits to the truss to service the rig involve the declaration of a hard hat zone on stage. I fully agree with the safety aspects of this regime, but it can become highly

embarrassing if you need someone up there during rehearsal. The rig, supplied by Stage Electrics, provided me with a really important first: having used intelligent lighting since its inception with the VLI, this was the first show

ever where we did not swap out one single light! Those lighting professionals who work in the stores preparing the equipment and who are never recognised - in this case the guys at Stage Electrics in Bristol - I take my hat (hard, focusing for the use of) off to you.

We tried to create a different look to the show by not moving the lights live, apart from a bit of searchlighting during Nigel Kennedy's escapades in the auditorium: all the Mac 500 gobos were changed from the standard wheel to a DHA Lighting texture wheel, and groups of lights were used from specific directions for specific performances, with others being faded out. The range of the colour palette was unusually wide, due to my desire to see favourite theatre colours on television and the skills of the vision engineers.

**"...during this current wave of corporate take-overs we seem to have lost sight of a fundamental need for lighting companies to offer patronage to young designers such as the support Richard Pilbrow pioneered with the original Theatre Projects."**



Using theatrical lighting techniques for set and cyc backgrounds with some extra attention to contrast and colour choice, combined with the science of lighting performers for television and keeping most of the equipment out of shot, produced some very exciting results and allowed us to light the artists and their environment in sympathy with their outstanding performances.

Any success that the set and lighting design of the show achieved was underpinned by a combination of equally important influences: producers and a director who had the wit and bravado to attempt something different with a prestigious first time event; a production team who understood and reacted appropriately to the disparate needs of all the departments involved; and the stage crew, bar staff, technicians and operators, from preparation bench to get-out ramp, without whom designers would never see their work realised.

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## Stage Technologies Upgrades Studios

Forced by an expanding project portfolio, Stage Technologies has recently relocated to new premises. Clients won't have too much difficulty finding the new place though, since it's in the same Aberdeen Studios complex in London as the company's previous home. The new facility, however, will provide the company with a significantly improved working environment, not to mention much more space (10,500sq.ft) which will allow for future expansion of the business.



Pictured left at the Open Day are Stage Technologies' founding directors John Hastie and Mark Ager (centre) with commercial director Nikki Scott (left) and software development director Stephen Trainor (right).

It's hard to believe that it's just six years since Mark Ager and John Hastie founded the company. In the intervening years, it has grown to become one of the leading providers of automation equipment for the control of scenery movement. The company's innovations have earned their place in opera houses, theatres, conference facilities, visitor centres and cruise ships the world over. The company now has a staff of 30, most of whom come from a background in theatre, whose expertise covers a wide range of disciplines from mechanical design to software engineering.

To christen the new premises, the company hosted an Open Day in June to which they invited clients and colleagues from the industry.

## Ambient Sets Up Audio Division

Cambridgeshire-based Ambient Lighting has set up a new pro audio division - Outline UK - primarily to distribute the Italian-manufactured Outline range of loudspeaker, amplification and audio processing equipment.

Outline's latest product, the Kangaroo (pictured here in the back of an estate car), is an active two- or three-way system featuring a 500W 18" bass cabinet and a 250W pole-mount mid/high satellite.



A unique feature of the system is that the mid/high section fits snugly inside the bass cabinet for easy transportation. The new division will be headed by Dave Finlay, formerly of Celestion International, who brings eight years of experience in the music industry to the role.

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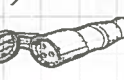
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## L&S Eye

*"Would the last one to leave, please turn out the lights."*

The rather lonely message on the website for Leeds Town & Country Club following the announcement of its closure.

*"At Skipton cattle market, farmers sell sheep on a Wednesday and watch Shakespeare on a Thursday. We have had letters apologising for missing the show because of lambing."*

Barrie Rutter of Yorkshire's Northern Broadsides Theatre Company, who collected the £100,000 Creative Britons award in recognition of his rare talent for staging Shakespeare in bizarre venues.

*"In 14 days we've prepared the arena and built all on-site facilities, created an auditorium seating 12,500, an additional 40 hospitality boxes seating 800 and built a 160-metre long mini-railway along which motorised 20-ton screens will run."*

Mike Kent, project manager for Caribiner, talking at the press launch for this month's Royal Military Tattoo.

*"Large lighting companies should take note that although Brussels may be the financial centre of Europe, in most eyes, Britain remains the acknowledged centre of excellence for technical theatre skills and training: ignore this at your peril."*

Lighting designer Durham Marengi praises the crew behind the Classical Brits Awards at London's RAH.

# Projecting the Future

## Roskilde Raises Issues of Crowd Safety

*An investigation has been launched following the news that eight fans had been crushed to death at the Roskilde Festival in Copenhagen.*

Several others were also injured in the incident which occurred around midnight on Saturday 1st July when American rockers Pearl Jam were performing on stage. The front section of the 50,000-strong crowd slipped (a situation exacerbated by heavy rain during the festival) and the injured were trampled underfoot.

Worryingly, the news reports that emerged in the days following the event did, in part, point the finger of blame at the sound system, claiming that some elements of the loudspeaker rig were not working, thus forcing the audience forward. Oasis and the Pet Shop Boys both pulled out of the festival as a mark of respect for the dead, although other bands chose to play on.



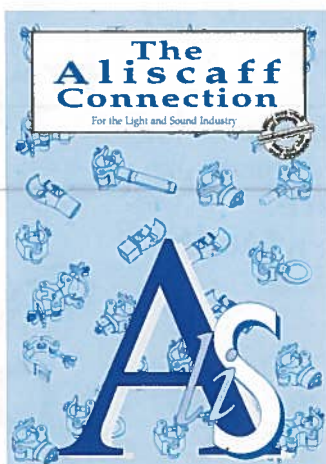
*Parkview, the owner of Battersea Power Station, has launched a new website to air its plans for redevelopment of this famous London landmark.*

Courtesy of a Pani BP12 projector, supplied by Production Arts, the URL ([www.thepowerstation.co.uk](http://www.thepowerstation.co.uk)) is being displayed loud and clear to catch the eye of passers-by. The website and the projection follows Parkview's submission of The Master Plan concept and detailed planning applications to Wandsworth Council. The plan is to construct an 'urban quarter' with the Power Station as its central feature. The redeveloped site will contain diverse elements including an entertainment complex, restaurants, hotels, a residential area, product showcases and offices.

## Is Live Music Going out of Fashion?

*One of the UK's best known live music venues, the Leeds Town and Country Club, has closed its doors.*

Formerly the Coliseum, the venue first opened in October 1992 and has played host to many high-profile acts. It's not clear at this point what will become of the venue, but there have been suggestions that First Leisure plan to re-open it as a theme bar and nightclub. Live music is taking something of a bashing in Leeds at the moment. In March came the announcement that the Duchess music venue, a stalwart of the national gig circuit, was closing.



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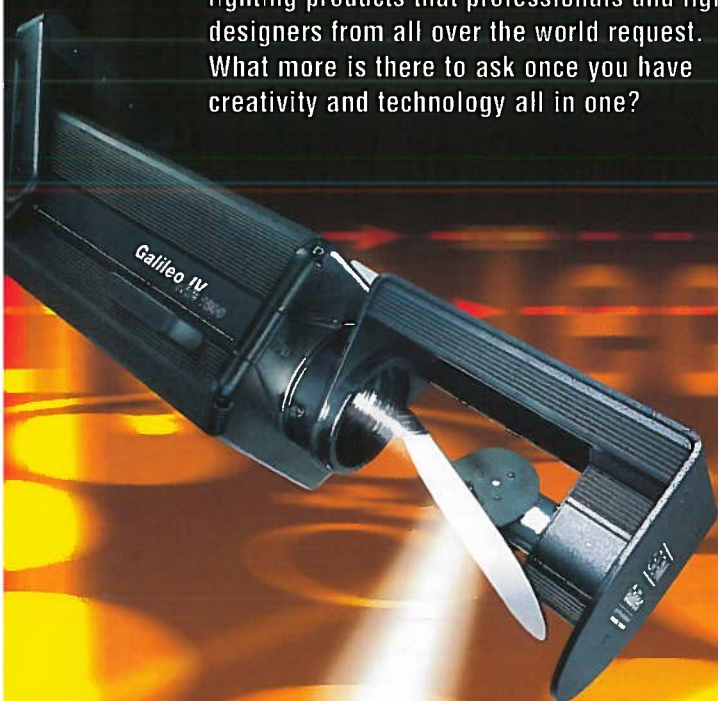


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## News Round-Up



### Complete Theatre for Brighton Dome Complex



*Pershire-based James Thomas Engineering won the tender to design and construct a completely demountable theatre for the Corn Exchange Building, one of the most beguiling of the Brighton Dome buildings.*

This includes a full ground-support trussing system that forms the stage and overhead grid, complete with all necessary stage lifting machinery. Sixteen Columbus McKinnon Lodestar chain motors (supplied by PCM) are mounted on tracks in the grid so they can be moved to any position over the stage. James Thomas also supplied 32 hemp line sets and a full fly gallery, together with pulley wheels and all necessary peripherals.

The ground supports for the stage are built from modified 30.5cm Thomas Towers, and the main upstage/downstage trusses of the stage grid are made from heavy duty Supertruss with a modified bottom level to accommodate the pulley sets and hemp ropes for the manual raising and lowering of scenery. Custom trusses are used for the cross-stage grid and header truss and a full proscenium arch is also part of the package. JTE also supplied all drapes and soft goods needed for the stage area which were made by J & C Joel of Sowerby Bridge, West Yorkshire. In the auditorium, JTE supplied 50 metres of general purpose trussing and a FOH catwalk/lighting bridge, whilst at the back, the company built and installed a rear seating platform and control platform.

### Palmer Amplifier Recall

*Distributors Adam Hall have issued a recall notice for part of the Palmer Power Amplifier product line.*

The move follows the discovery by the manufacturers of Palmer amplifiers of a component fault in the soft start circuitry. The amps affected are the P500LX, P800LX, P1400LX and P2000LX. If you have any of these, call the Adam Hall helpline on +44 1702 613922.

### Sound Savers is Launched

*A new consultancy company has been formed to oversee sound system installations in all areas of professional audio.*

Sound Savers' founder Brian Levine is using the services of Stephen Court to look at sound system quotations and proposals. He told L&SI: "Over the last few years, we have been asked to look at quotations for new sound systems. We were asked to vet some of these quotes, and in many cases, saved the clients several thousand pounds." Sound Saver's latest project is a stadium in France where the overall sound distribution was increased by 4dB whilst the budget for sound was reduced by 15%. The company is also working on a new club installation in London to reduce problems with sound leakage.

Sound Savers (UK) - +44 01237 424508





## Star Mobiles for Music Live

**Star Hire (Event Services) Ltd enjoyed its busiest weekend ever for the fleet of mobile stages used over the BBC Music Live Bank Holiday weekend.**



Star Hire's technical director Roger Barrett at Somerset House

Star Hire's Mobile Stage sales manager Jane Russen

explained that she had experienced unprecedented demands around BBC Music Live weekend. "The Bank Holiday weekend is traditionally busy - we could have hired the stages two or three times over with the increased activity BBC Music Live generated. All of our trained mobile stage crews were employed across 11 shows."

Jan Russell and his team had a busy weekend, starting in Kings Lynn for the South Quay Street party on Friday night, celebrating the opening of the Green Quay as part of the North Sea Haven Millennium project. The SS11-09 then moved to Leicester to set up on Saturday night for Leicester City Council's BBC Music Live shows on Sunday.

Leo Tierney was team leader in North Shields for the WOW festival, where two mobile stages flanked the quayside. The SS11-09 was sponsored by Orange and featured a range of local and international bands, whilst the CS10-08 stage hosted Galaxy Radio roadshows and guest DJs. Tim Wright was also in the North East, for the Newcastle Quayside festival. The Quayside festival had stages being positioned along the redeveloped area beneath The Tyne Bridge. A CS15-12V stage nestled under Tyne Bridge for the show on 29th, whilst a second mobile stage was hired in for bands further down the Quayside. North of the border into Scotland, Tim Venn was team leader on the CS10-08 for the Leith Waterfront weekend, in Edinburgh on 27th and 28th May. Meanwhile, in Perth city centre, a CS10-08 was installed on St Johns Square for a Music Live festival managed by Unique Events.

Crew chief Oz oversaw proceedings at Somerset House, where a CS15-12 was the chosen stage for the official opening concert in this historic building, the stage being installed the day after the venue was opened by the Queen Mother. The CS15-12 was erected in torrential rain, in about six hours. The PA wings were used to fly two daylight screens from Screenco in addition to supporting the PA from Canegreen, whilst lighting company Entec flew a box truss with spot operators from the stage roof. Star Hire also designed and constructed the FOH tower and camera towers for the BBC to film from.

## Pulsar's LD Finalists

**Having now completed a series of heats at Melton Mowbray College, four competitors have been chosen to participate in the final to be held at Melton Mowbray Theatre on July 17th.**

From the original 20 students that applied, it was William Jones, Sharon Darby, Matthew Randle and Glen Worne who demonstrated an appropriate level of creativity and understanding of lighting techniques. They now have the chance to win £2,000 worth of Pulsar lighting equipment and will be aiming to impress a panel of professionals from the industry with their lighting skills by lighting a specially-commissioned piece of theatre using only intelligent lighting. The panel of professionals will consist of Andy Voller (Millennium Dome), Martin Hawthorn (Hawthorn Theatrical), Mel Sinott (Grantham Guildhall Theatre) and Ian Hanson (Leicester Haymarket Theatre). *Full report next issue.*

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**News  
Round-Up**



## Counting Them Out



*Our two pictures show changing times at the Royal Court Theatre. The one to the right shows all the theatre's staff leaving in 1996 prior to the theatre's refurbishment, whilst the one above records their return in 2000. For the full details, see feature starting page 51.*



## Red Hot Aids

Sensible Events has recently staged, "the most prestigious charity event of the year," to use the mercurial Mr Andy Zweck's own words. For once the hyperbole is not over-blown, if only for the cast list. Red Hot Aids is supported by Elizabeth Taylor, or rather Dame Elizabeth Taylor, her recent ennoblement being a primary reason why so many of the great and good chose to support her and her worthy cause.

Broadcast by Sky and with a multiplicity of artists, TV recording, and an 80-piece orchestra to contend with, this was never going to be an easy show to manage, least of all from an audio point of view. Dick Hayes of Entec was called in, Entec being one of the few preferred regulars at the RAH (they were in there again for Fuji TV just one week later). "The set up was a single centre cluster," said Hayes, "a seven-wide, six-deep quarter hemisphere of d&b C4 cabinets."

Paul Ramsey (he of Skunk Anansie fame) took the Yamaha PM4000 for the electric bands, while Richard Sharrat (honours too numerous to mention) mixed down the orchestra on a Midas XL4, Entec's own star of monitor world, John Roden, managing both the stage and a Midas Heritage. "I call him a star," confirmed Hayes, introducing a battle story. "We'd been rehearsing successfully Wednesday, and again on Thursday night, when the TV director arrived late that second evening and announced a major change." In essence, the stage layout was to be completely reversed, he announced - "a total pain" - as Roden characterised it, but not unusual. Besides, Roden had a surfeit of riches in his retinue of helpers, none other than Chris Barton, Graham Blake, and Paul Keeble, accomplished monitor men all, in their own right.

All the string section was mic'd with Greg Jackman's custom gooseneck fitted with B&K elements. Not so unusual, but certainly a pointer to the excellent separation achieved on the night. The strings were in turn mixed down, along with brass, woods et al and sent to stage along with the choir, mixed down separately on a Soundcraft Folio console. Shure radio systems were used throughout for the stars - Beta 87 hand-helds, and the PSM600 system for the in-ears.





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Over 70 people from 51 countries joined members of the Clay Paky and Pulsar teams in Bergamo in mid-May for a conference outlining the long term goals of both companies.

## Clay Paky - Convention 2000

In his opening speech, president Pasquale Quadri welcomed delegates and highlighted the continuing growth in sales, ongoing research into ISO 9001 certification and the company's plans for expansion, which include a move to new headquarters. Senior sales executive Enrico Caironi then took to the floor to illustrate the company's intention to raise its profile, not only in the architectural sector, but in other market areas too.

Jane Monk of Pulsar talked of the joint enterprises between two companies before paving the way for a number of distributors from across the world to outline numerous projects where Clay Paky and Pulsar equipment had been part of the project specification.

Technical matters were covered by Clay Paky's Angelo Cavenati and Pulsar's Paul Mardon, both of



whom discussed the ongoing development of new and existing product. Hans Schwabe and Carsten

Setzer from Osram informed the delegates of further improvements to their lamp technology. Clay Paky's product manager, Pino Tinti, then introduced the new features of the Display Line, while Giovanni Zucchinali, project support manager, gave a preview of a brand new technical course for dealers.



## Web Five

If you're surfing the net then take a detour to the following web sites

5

1. Have you ever wondered how the engine in your car works or what makes your refrigerator cold? Then this is the site for you, you fool!  
[www.howstuffworks.com](http://www.howstuffworks.com)
2. A useful industry site, with a forum, technical production links and technical books.  
[www.shepperd.co.uk](http://www.shepperd.co.uk)
3. This naughty site delights in the production and continuity mistakes you often see in television and film.  
[www.tv-mistakes.com](http://www.tv-mistakes.com)
4. This site has everything - directory enquiries, electoral registers, road and street maps, even aerial photographs.  
[www.192.com](http://www.192.com)
5. A performing arts portal which has just brokered a deal with Firstcall Tickets to develop an online ticketing service.  
[www.greenroom.com](http://www.greenroom.com)

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## People News

**Ivan Myles** has been appointed general manager of UK Trading at Strand Lighting. Myles has been with Strand for many years and his knowledge and experience will allow the company to concentrate on sales in the UK, whilst co-ordinating European service and training operations. In his new role, he will report directly to Horst Eickmann, general manager of European Trading.



Ivan Myles

Stagetec has recently appointed **Mick Cocker** as Compulite product manager for the UK market and **Peter Humber** as sales executive.

Selecon has made three appointments in the sales and marketing division of its UK operation. **Nick Gale** has joined the company from Hawthorn Theatrical as sales manager. Selecon UK marketing consultant **Mike Goldberg** has seen his role broadened to sales and marketing director for Europe. A third member of staff, **Lorna Parsons** joins the Selecon team from Theatre Vision. Working for Zero 88, (which provides Selecon UK logistics out of Wales), she will serve the Selecon customer base from the Wales office.

Celestion's Professional Systems division continues to expand, with the addition of two new sales people. **Mark Percy** is taking over responsibility for system sales in the South of England. Also new to the company is **David Jackson**, who is handling export sales to Europe, South Africa and Israel.



Mark Percy

Martin Professional UK's sales director **David Faulkes** is leaving the company to form his own distribution company, Miltec, which will concentrate on the distribution of audio and lighting products within the UK and Ireland.

A number of new faces have appeared at White Light's Fulham base. The sales department has welcomed **Eleanor Strathie**, who until recently was working at Northern Light in Edinburgh, and **Mark Smith**, formerly from Stage Electrics in Exeter. White Light's hire team also has a new addition in **Emma White**. White Light North also has a new member of staff in **Richard Kilburn**. Meanwhile, **Bryan**

**Raven, Mike Crossman, Richard Wilson and Dave Isherwood** have been appointed to the Board of Directors of White Light (Electrics) Ltd. Bryan Raven and Dave Isherwood have also joined the Board of Directors of The Moving Light Company.

LMC Audio has appointed **Graham Allen** as head of sales and marketing (London). Allen has 10 years' industry experience and has worked for Behringer, Shuttlesound and more recently Sysco. A further addition to LMC is **Iain Gregory**, a physics graduate from Birmingham University who has joined the London sales team.



Peter Hind

After six months in the US, **Mads Hald** is back at Seelite in Denmark. He will work both as a service technician and as the company's regular technician in the two big Copenhagen concert houses - Pumpehuset and Vega.

**Grif Palmer**, vice-president of sales, is to leave High End Systems. It is understood that he is leaving the company to pursue interests outside the lighting industry.

The latest recruit to Orbital is **Andy Robinson**, who has joined as head of production engineering. Robinson has spent the last three years touring with Michael Flatley.

**Tony Rodber** is to join Stage Electrics as business development manager for Wales and the West. He brings with him a wealth of experience from the industry, principally with Lighting Technology.

**Julie Meadows**, health and safety officer of Unusual Rigging in Bugbrooke, has received the prestigious British Safety Council Diploma in Safety Management in an awards ceremony in London. Meadows was among 19 safety professionals presented with awards at the event.

Lighting effects manufacturer Ryger Electronics has announced a management re-shuffle.

**Matthew Cano**, who has been test engineer for four years, takes over the role of production manager from **Andrew Eastwood** who after nine years in the role, moves up to the position of general manager.


**Peter Hind** of Total Fabrications Ltd has recently been appointed to the Council of the Institution of Structural Engineers. The Council - a body of 12 appointed members - is charged with the running of the Institution for a term of three years. TFL's sales team got a boost recently when **Laura Robertson** joined the company to fulfil the new role of sales assistant to **Gary White**. Robertson comes to TFL from Nomadic Displays.

TMB has appointed **Stephanie Algarin** as marketing administrator. Algarin will work with TMB's marketing director, David Downey.

The Production Services Association (PSA) Council has announced personnel changes: **Kelth Ferguson** is to step down as general manager and will now concentrate on the Training and Qualifications initiatives and the PSA's Welfare & Benevolent Fund.


**Peter Maddison** has joined Performance Light & Sound as sales representative. Maddison has extensive industry experience, and has worked for a number of companies, including Adam Hall.


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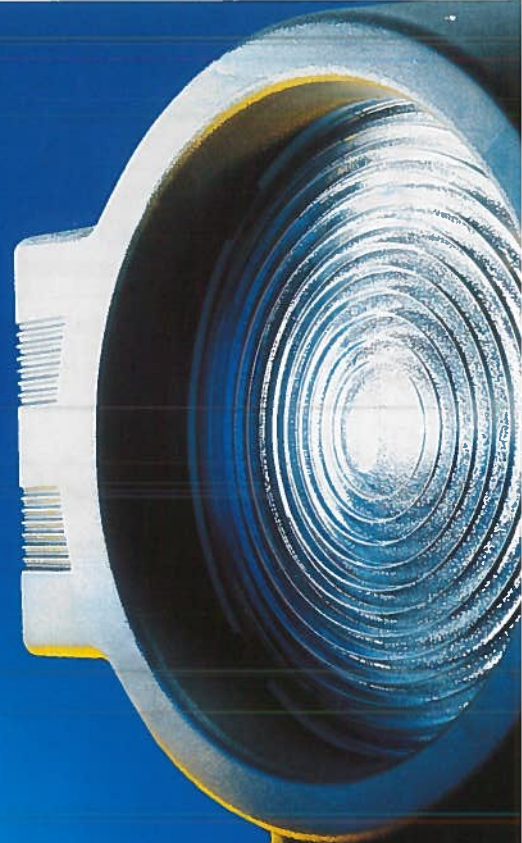


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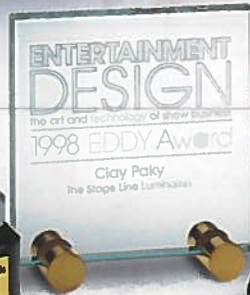


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# Association NEWS

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## PLASA AGM 2000

The Professional Lighting and Sound Association (PLASA) held its AGM and Industry Dinner at The Belfry Hotel near Birmingham on 15 June.

Around 60 representatives of member companies attended the event, which was for the first time held over the course of a single day, with the meeting itself preceding the evening Dinner, after which writer and broadcaster Frances Edmonds and comedian John Martin entertained the assembled guests. During the meeting, PLASA Chairman Mick Hannaford reported on a successful year for the Association which had seen important advances in the range of services and initiatives offered to members.

A key development at the meeting was that the Members voted in favour of adopting PLASA's proposed Code of Business Ethics. This Code has been drawn up to outline standards of practice expected from PLASA members, and to detail the procedures for Complaint, Appeal and Action which will be followed in cases where the provisions of the Code or of the Constitution of the Association are breached by members.

The Code demonstrates a common commitment to ethical practice among PLASA members, and gives the Association more power to act in the best interests of the membership as a whole by taking action against companies who fail to meet the expected standards of conduct.

PLASA MD Matthew Griffiths referred to one of the key projects PLASA is pursuing this year - that of qualitative and quantitative industry research. PLASA is shortly to commence on a comprehensive programme of research, concentrating initially on the UK marketplace. Such



research, which has never before been undertaken in this industry, is vital to its future, both in enabling PLASA to promote the entertainment technology industry to a wider audience, and in relation to its continued recognition and funding by the British Government for activities such as trade development. The plans for the research programme were outlined at the meeting, and members were encouraged to participate fully. The process is expected to get underway in the coming weeks.

### Hinkly Joins PLASA Committee

During the course of the AGM, PLASA also welcomed a new Committee member - Paul Hinkly of LMC Audio Systems - who joined the committee following the resignation of Celco's Colin Whittaker in the week prior to the meeting. Hinkly was brought in having narrowly missed election to the Committee earlier in the year.

► The PLASA AGM in progress - members voted to adopt a revised Code of Ethics

► Comedian John Martin, PLASA vice-chairman Paul Adams, writer and broadcaster Frances Edmonds, PLASA Chairman Mick Hannaford and PLASA MD Matthew Griffiths

► Derek Gilbert of Northern Light, David Hopkins of Audio Design Services, Colin Freeman of Penn Fabrication and Michael Leaver of Adastr

► PLASA's Anna Pillow with DTI representatives Mike Macguire and David Payne

► Mondiale's Justin Gawne (left) with new PLASA Committee member, Paul Hinkly of LMC Audio Systems

### PLASA

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E-mail: [norah@plasa.org](mailto:norah@plasa.org)

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## New MEMBERS - The following companies have recently joined PLASA.

**Freestyle Music Ltd** - a manufacturer of flightcases and rack systems.

**Yamaha-Kemble (UK) Ltd** - a company which caters to the top end of the pro audio market, focusing on the installation, live, broadcast and recording sectors.

**Nitenday Industries** - provider of a complete line of high-performance fibre optic lighting products and systems.

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To obtain the latest catalogues and product literature from any of the companies advertising on these pages simply post or fax the slip, indicating your choice(s) by ticking the relevant numbers.

A number of these catalogues also appear on PLASA's website. For direct ordering visit

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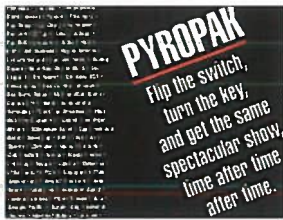
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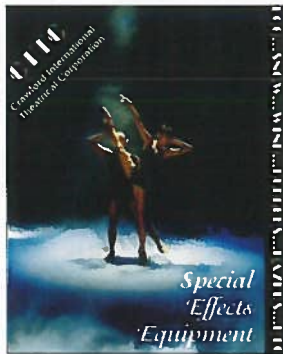
UK Distributor: Pulsar Light of Cambridge  
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**17**



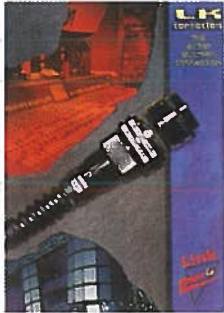
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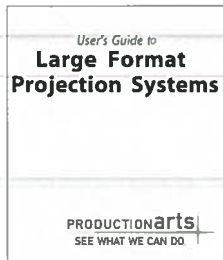
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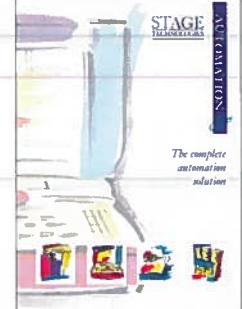
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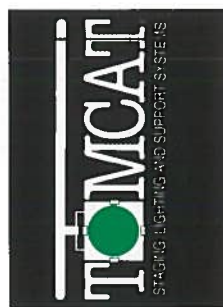
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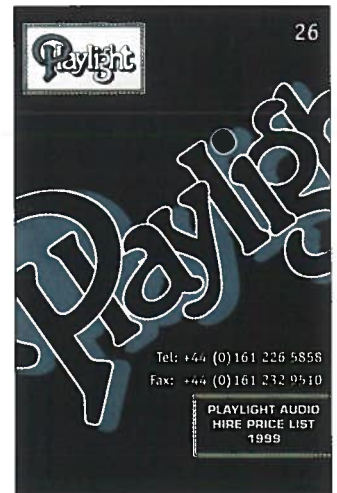
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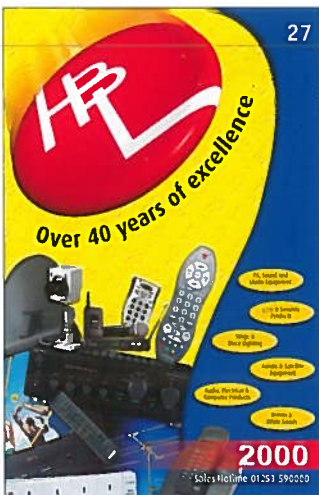
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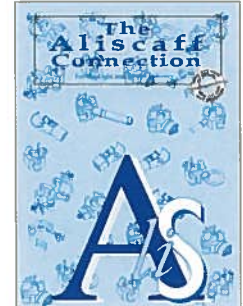
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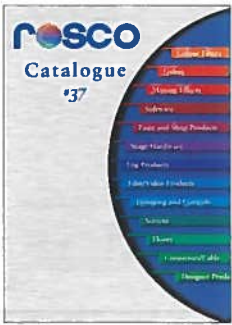
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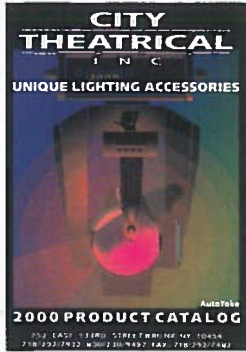


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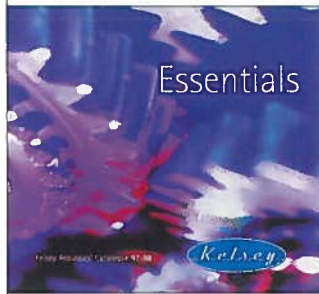
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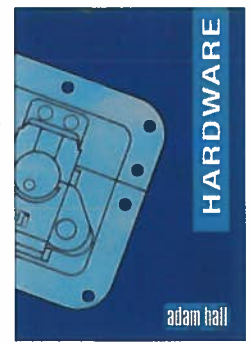
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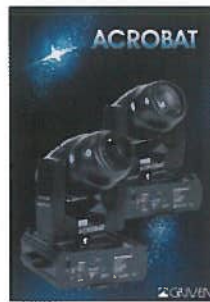
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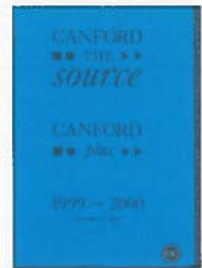
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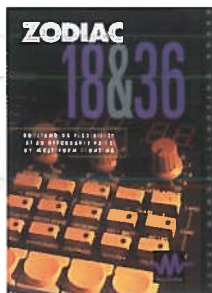
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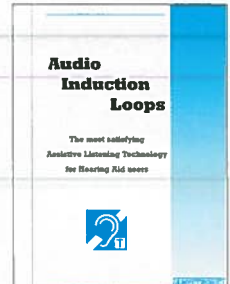
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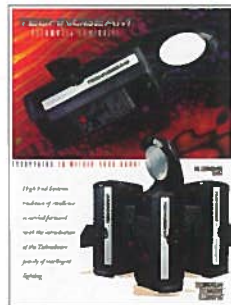
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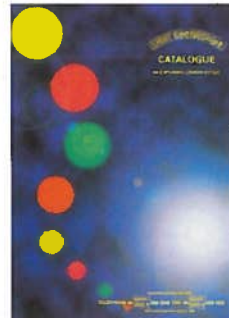
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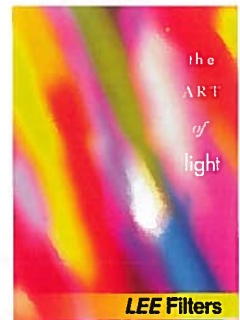
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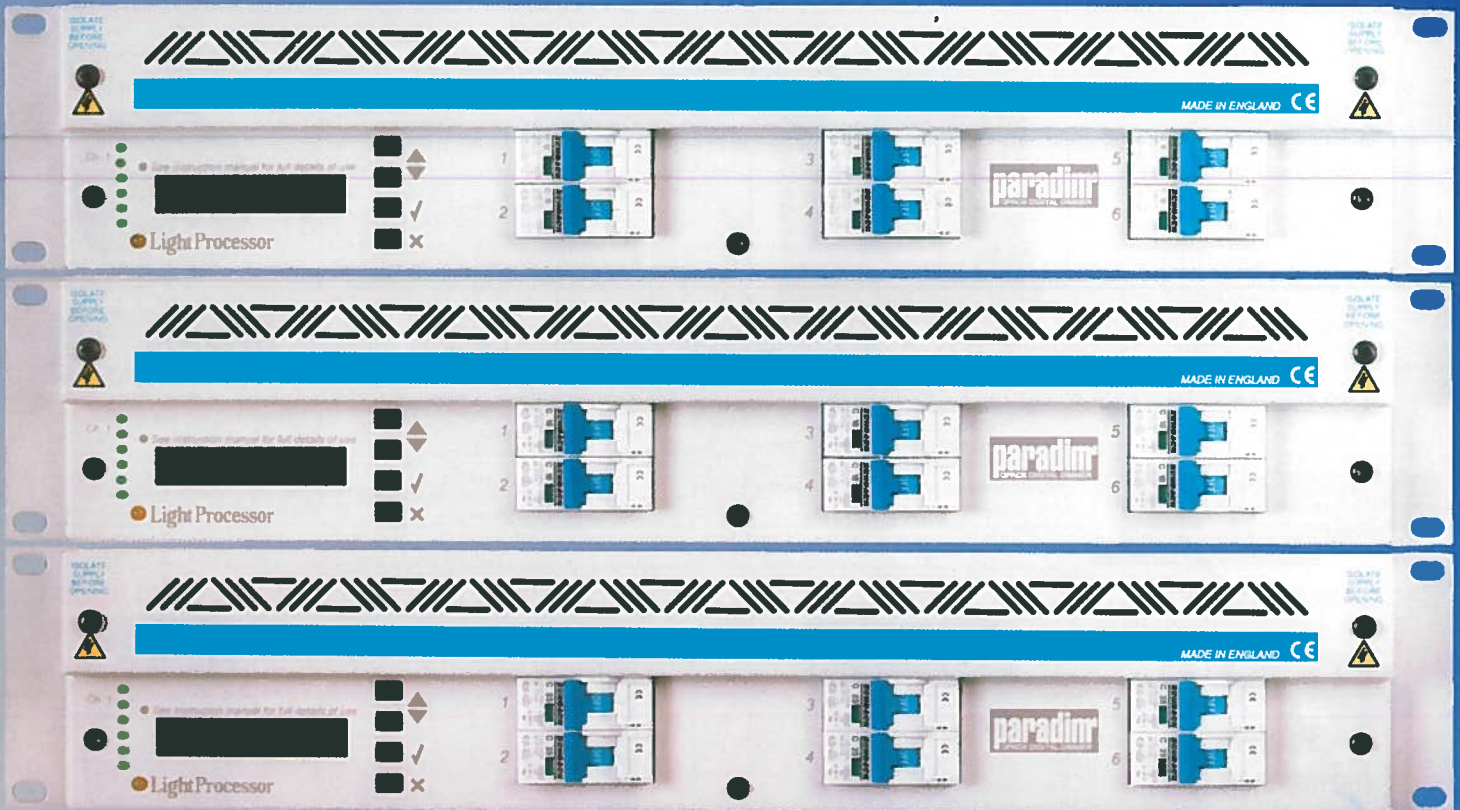


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# Glass and

# Gasometers



**T**he Manchester Ship Canal doesn't go to Manchester at all, but to Salford, best known for Albert Finney and L S Lowry, which has up until now been content to sit in Manchester's shadow. Its heart was the docks at the head of the canal, and when the docks died, so did much of Salford.

The turn-around of the city's fortunes and in particular those of Salford Quays has been led by a lively city council and latterly by the local charitable trust which has been entrusted with the £170 million Lowry Project, focus of a regeneration programme for the area which has already attracted the same amount again in total investment. Lottery money came in from all sides - the Arts Council, the Heritage Fund and not least the Millennium Commission, which made the Lowry its National Landmark Project for the Arts. Added to this was a sizeable contribution from Europe's Regional Development Fund and a number of private sector contributions. Salford City Council had to find just £4 million for themselves, but theirs has been much of the hard work to make what must have seemed a very distant reality come about.

This April, the Lowry opened, on time and to all intents and purposes on budget. It cost, in all, £105.9million. That's enough in the way of figures - and you must treat even those with care: the various items of literature about the Lowry that I've seen contain estimates that seven, eight, even nine million people live within an hour's drive of the site. I guess it depends on how fast you drive . . .

The master plan for the regeneration of Salford Quays was drawn up by the partnership of James Stirling and Michael Wilford - probably best known for the remarkable city art gallery in

*20 Years after Lowry's death, the City of Salford gets its own world class performing arts facility in his name. Ian Herbert travelled north to find out whether it was £70million well spent*

Stuttgart. Almost immediately after it was drawn up, Stirling died, so its execution has been both a personal challenge for Michael Wilford and a memorial to James Stirling.

The centrepiece of the development was originally going to be called the Salford Opera House, but this was quickly perceived to be rather ludicrous and the planners came up with the Lowry Centre. Research showed that the word Centre didn't go down too well either (in all honesty, even the word Lowry wasn't all that popular), so what sits and shines beside the canal is now the 'Lowry'. One good reason for its title is that as well as housing two theatres, it also contains a gallery for a rotating exhibition of the 350 paintings the artist left to the City of Salford. The gallery, for which Lord Cultural Resources were the consultants, is of equal importance to the theatres, looked after by Theatre Projects Consultants, giving the building a dual purpose unique in Britain. The big difference, perhaps, between the two partners is that the galleries are free - any revenue must come from the Lowry's theatres, shops and catering. You can reach the Lowry by water, by road or by tram - the sparkling new (and rather expensive) Manchester urban tramway sets you down a short walk from the



building and it's a pity that this route brings you up on its blind, metal-clad services side, so that your first close-up is of the loading bays. Another unfortunate first impression comes from the pavement lighting here which, instead of being recessed, sticks out, and when not lit in daytime is more likely to cause accidents than to show you on your way.

Our tour is led by David Staples of Theatre Projects Consultants (TPC), who has been closely associated with the Lowry ever since it left James Stirling's drawing board and is obviously very fond of the building. We are joined by Sam from the Lowry press office, who is rather surprised to find that we are expecting to go backstage as well as inspect the bars - you can tell she's been used to showing theatre critics around. Sam's office is in the large, airy and open-plan 'backstage village' overlooking the waterside on the first floor, where most of the staff have their desks. It's intended to produce team spirit, and to that end has a canteen next to it where the Lowry's admin and technical staff, as well as visiting companies, can relax. David and I lay bets on how long it will be before the partitions go up in the office, and the techies find a cubby-hole of their own to relax in.

In the public areas, the main thing that strikes you - between the eyes - is the violence of the colour scheme. Michael Wilford is no blushing violet about colour, more of an ultra violet.

You can walk all round the perimeter of the building in a promenade which leads you past the galleries, theatre entrances and ample public areas. Usually you will have glass on one side, offering views of the as yet semi-derelect surroundings, and a wall in some powerful colour on the other. There is also a lot of stainless steel cladding.

The colour-shock continues in the bigger of the two theatres, the 1700-seat Lyric, which has seats and carpet in the most royal of purple. The careful work of TPC is evident in the auditorium, where no-one is far from the stage - the biggest in England after Covent Garden, with a depth of 17.5m. It has an adjustable proscenium with a capacity for 14m maximum width, 10m maximum height.

True, there's not a vast amount of wing space, but this is a receiving stage - and it still keeps those purple walls. For the first visitors, the Paris Opera Ballet, the stage depth was extended yet further into the scene dock

which the Lyric shares, back-to-back, with the smaller Quay Theatre behind it. Two orchestra lifts allow for the biggest of pit bands - the Hallé played for the Parisians.

The Lyric's seats were designed by the folk who make car seats for Ferrari. They curve around what looks like a vast, purple space-ship, coming in a single row down the encircling balcony walls to give some of the Barbican's comforting, wrap-around effect. The space has been cleverly manipulated: powerful false walls at the sides slope back though the first and second circle, distracting the eye from the back half of the second circle, where 350 seats behind a dividing wall can be dimmed off from sight if a more intimate seating plan is required. The ceiling is a mesh grid, served by bridges for access, which can also be obscured by directional lighting.

At the back of the stalls are three control rooms, or rather lighting, sound and

latecomers' rooms - the third a hasty modification when it was discovered that the original latecomers' viewing area had been concreted over. Those sitting in front of these rooms have the same excellent legroom as the front stalls people, and are not oppressed by the circle above them, which is set higher than usual.

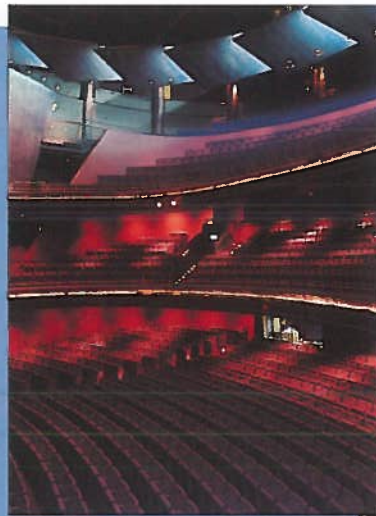
They don't feel that the top of the stage has been cut off, though shows with surtitles may present problems. There are spacious boxes lining the back of the first

circle, with two good rows of seating and a third, unplanned row, with retiring rooms behind. From the circle, a rather gladiatorial vomitory entrance into the back stalls is a visible feature.

You arrive at the Lyric from the Lowry's main entrance, where an open-plan box office taking both telephone and personal bookings looks like a recipe for trouble on busy nights. Between the two theatres on the blind side, the scene dock can serve them both. As befits a touring house, the access is superb, with facility for three semi-trailers to arrive side by side.

*The 1700-seat Lyric Theatre - at the top of the picture you can just see the acoustic curtains which allow for adjustment of the room's acoustics*

*Below, the Ground Floor plan of The Lowry: the Lyric is shown highlighted in purple*



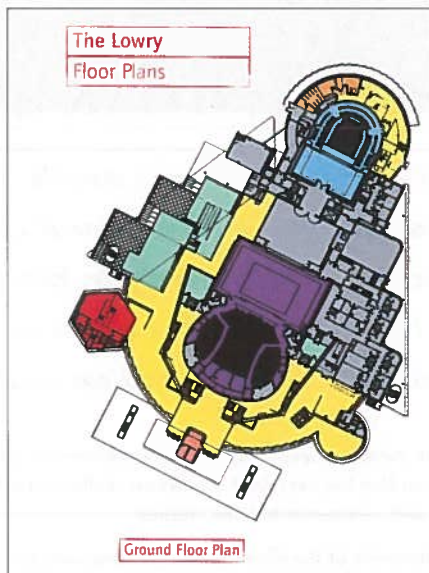
The 400-seater Quays theatre, as violent in its cherry livery as the Lyric in its purple, is at the Lowry's sharp end, approached from an all-glass foyer containing a spacious bar with marvellous views down the canal - and a good sight of another local architectural highlight, the Manchester United ground across the way. U-shaped balconies give it the look of a Swan rather than a Cottesloe, but the

hand of Iain Mackintosh is in evidence in the space's courtyard feel. It can be configured for a standard end-stage, but a set of lifts over the whole auditorium floor make rapid changes of seating possible and it can quickly become thrust, in-the-round or even promenade, with the seats stored below.

The balconies have free-standing seating to accommodate changes in configuration, with some of the trademark Royal Exchange 'high chairs' to aid sightlines for those at the back. The walls are covered in a perforated industrial metal cladding from Brodericks, Gantois, which carries right round the 'proscenium' stage area and has all services neatly concealed behind it, along with any necessary sound baffling. Nine huge full moons, set in the ceiling, form the house lights.

The other public areas are a demonstration of Michael Wilford's amazing way with space and colour. Every nook, every wide-open space is a piece of spatial sculpture in itself, and usually marked out in the most primary of colours. Orange carpets, bright green walls, canary yellow ceilings and relieving sheets of stainless steel abound. Even the lavatories, including the unfortunately-named overflow toilets (which can be switched from gents to ladies depending on audience make-up) are in bright colours, based on the funnel designs of the merchant fleets which used the old canal. Only the Lowry galleries themselves, where the master's matchstick men and women scurry across white walls, present a contrasting calm. There's a trendy restaurant, which looks out on a quay where tables can be set in summer, its glass wall giving it the air of the canteen of a municipal swimming bath.

It's a building which invites you to explore, and to find out its riches. Open all day, it's already attracting plenty of visitors from the area and beyond, who come not only for the shows but for the ambience of the whole. Still to come is







THEATRE

a hands-on centre for children and families to do it themselves, Artworks. (At present the finishing touches are still being applied, and the area bears the intriguing sign 'ORKS'. I'd suggest they keep it.)

It's at night that the Lowry really comes into its own. As you approach it down the Quay, past an extremely ugly car park block which will soon, fortunately, be obscured by the big cinema and shop complex going up alongside, you wonder

at the all-metal, gasometer-like Lowry studies centre which points to the sky as a landmark feature of the whole complex (the plan for illuminated signage going round it was sadly abandoned). Equally striking is the half-cylindrical, pierced metal canopy slung over the building's entrance on two giant 'A's of the same pierced metal, looking like a Jodrell Bank telescope and amazingly light for all its size. Through the glass gaps in the gleaming steel walls, you get the best effect of those fauve walls within.

From the Quays bar, and even more from the almost completely glassed-in Compass Room which sits above it (nominally a sprung-floored dance rehearsal room but already appropriated for corporate events), you have to shield your eyes from the setting sun shining directly in on you, but the compensation is to watch the sunset itself, over a now razed area which will before long be studded with flats, shops and returning city life.

Best of all, at the side of the Lowry is a new swing bridge of incredible delicacy, spanning the canal and leading to the site of the Imperial War Museum of the North, a Daniel Liebeskind building which is likely to be a stunner. In the soft evening light, the illuminated bridge and the glowing, breathing Lowry, reflected in the glassy waters of the canal, make a heart-stopping mirrored composition.

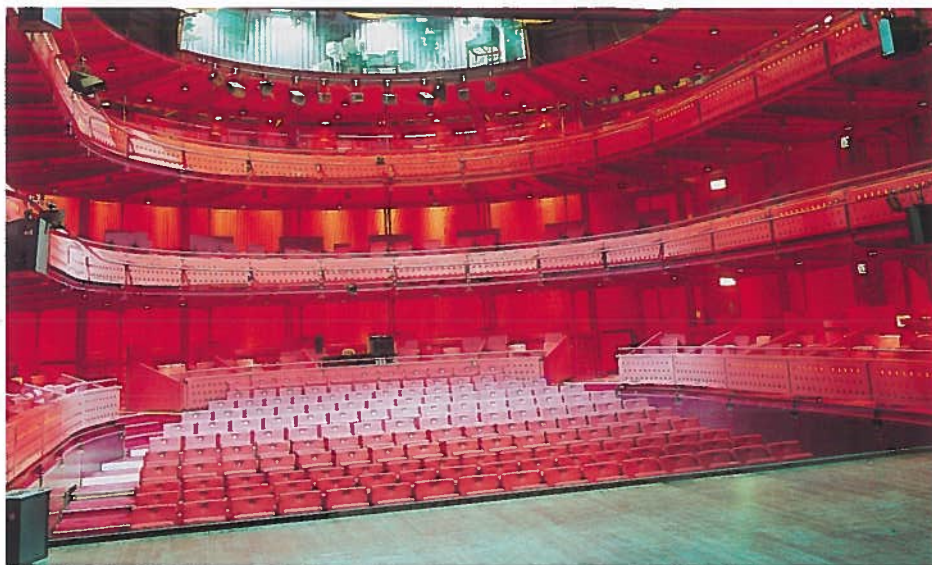
Ian Herbert

### Lighting

The production installation for the Lowry was masterminded by Northern Light, who completed the supply, design and fit-out of the audio, lighting and communications networks in the auditoria. Though the 1,730-seat Lyric Theatre and 466-seat Quays Theatre are different in essence, the installation specifications are similar, the latter essentially a scaled-down version of the former.

The technological infrastructure was brought together over a two-year period, with the lighting specification written by Andy Hayles, and the sound specification by Richard Borkum - both of TPC. Northern Light won the tender to supply and fit a carefully-networked system, with production lighting interfaces to both the working and architectural lighting via DMX and Ethernet data streams and plug-in points, and an equally-sophisticated digital audio highway, wired in Cat 5 cable and conforming to standard protocols such as RS232 and RS485.

In their designs, TPC have made generous tie-line provision, extending to the outer reaches of the



complex. Strand luminaires, control, dimming and network devices were able to meet all the requirements for Northern Light project manager Nigel Love, and the close relationship between the two companies resulted in a number of customised items being produced.

All production lighting in the Lyric is run from a 1024-channel Strand GeniusPro 550i, running Strand's Networker and Tracker software. Communication is via Ethernet, with the facility to plug DMX into the dimmers. A further 510i desk is for back-up, routed through Lanart dual-speed Ethernet hubs, enabling it to talk to Strand's network. The hubs are linked via a fibre-optic backbone to the Quays Theatre. As all the communicating data lines from the facility panels are terminated at the patchbay, a touring desk can be hung off any Internet desk. The National Theatre did precisely this with their touring Strand 530i, overriding the resident 800-channel 530i, which also formed part of the specification for the Quays.

A further advantage of the Strand system is the ease with which the portable SN102 network nodes can be brought into the auditorium production position alongside the VDUs and keyboard for an economical rehearsal set-up. Trigger pulses can be sent to the architectural lighting, supplied and designed by Equation Lighting, via the Strand 550i and patch rack, initiating up to eight presets.

Northern Light's working light system, which interfaces with the production lighting, is driven through AMX touch-screen control, with Northern Light customised software, while all the DMX ports and plug-in points are from Howard Eaton Lighting. Nigel Love says: "The plug-ins show the presence of DMX, and these are patchable. They have also supplied Smart tie-lines; thus if you

*The more intimate Quays Theatre - essentially a scaled-down version of The Lyric*

"In the soft evening light, the illuminated bridge and the glowing, breathing Lowry, reflected in the glassy waters of the canal, make a heart-stopping mirrored composition."



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Above, *The Lyric* - the second largest stage in England after Covent Garden

Right, Nigel Love, Northern Light's project manager, at the Strand 500 Series control desk

connect a touring desk generating DMX, the LED lights will indicate. There are four Strand SN103 network nodes so we can input onto the network four streams of DMX, or extract it." The remaining two SN103s are used to drive DMX to the dimmers, and the inputs/outputs of Northern Light's customised AMX control.

Dimming is all from Strand, in the form of 832 EC90 Supervisor dimmer channels (two per module) while the Quays Theatre is driven from a further 400 LD90 channels, mounted on a curved wall in a dimmer room that also features Strand SN103R rackmount network nodes, developed specially for Northern Light.

As the rigid specification pre-dated the launch of the SL series, classic Strand luminaires were chosen. The Lyric has 10 2.5kW Alto fresnels and PCs, 40 1.2kW Cantata fresnels, 20 1.2kW Cantata PCs, multiples of Alto 11/26 and 14/32 profiles, 10/26 and 14/32 2.5kW Tocatta profiles and 11/26 and 18/32 1.2kW Cantata profiles. Also included in the spec are 32 Freedom Freble fresnels and 22 Freedom Freble pebbles, along



with 56 600W Freedom luminaires (15/32 and 28/58), all from CCT Lighting.

Side slot positions are integrated into the walls of the auditorium with two slots on each side. The front of each of the two tiers houses lighting pipes, sockets and a cable trough system to hide unsightly cables. A further lighting position is located at the sides of the top tier level, providing high side lighting angles that cannot be achieved from the bridges.

The auditorium ceiling has three lighting bridges, two of which are positioned above bands of stainless steel wires that form the decorative ceiling to the theatre. A rear portion of this hinges up to ensure a direct line of sight for followspots and operators in the spot room.

In The Quays Theatre there are a further two 2.5kW Alto fresnels, 20 1.2kW Cantata fresnels and 10 1.2kW Cantata PCs, with 38 mixed-aperture Cantata 1.2kW profiles. Robert Juliat 2.5kW HMI followspots are additionally to be found in the Lyric (Selecon Performer MSRs perform this function in the Quays), while Thomas groundrows provide additional floor lighting in both spaces.

#### Audio

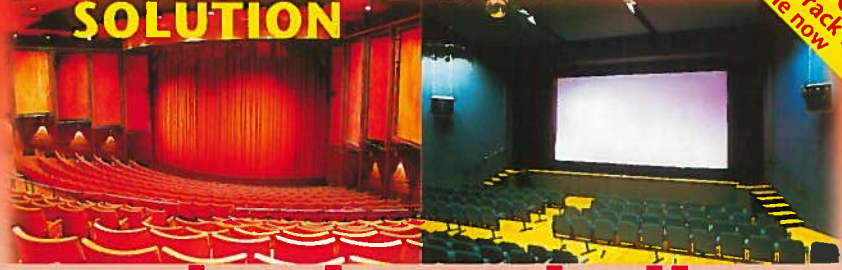
Nigel Love chose to use the TOA DX-0808 8 x 8 digital audio networking device for the flexibility of its routing, mixing, distribution and level control of audio signals, working in conjunction with the DP-0202 processors. In this instance, the matrix routes to a Meyer PA in the Lyric - comprising 10 UPA-1Cs, configured left, centre, right - and a Tannoy-based system in the Quays. Four of the UPA-1Cs are formed into a central cluster, mounted on a motorised hoist for manoeuvrability, with a further three on each proscenium at three levels. Two Meyer USW-1 subwoofers provide the low frequency and 20 UPM-1s provide auditorium infill - eight mounted along the front of the stage - one each side of the first tier for sidefill and a further eight on the second tier providing delay. The infrastructure is in place for the audio surround and delay configuration to be extended at a later date.

Providing foldback and effects are eight Tannoy T12s, fed through three Lab Gruppen 1200C four-channel power amplifiers, and controlled by TX2 dedicated system controllers. The Tannoy system in the Quays comprises eight T12 enclosures, underpinned by a pair of T40 subwoofers, while six Tannoy i8 cabinets provide the foldback and effects.

TPC paid considerable attention to how best to avoid the 'lash up' of speakers hung from scaffold pipes from the tier fronts and the associated spaghetti cabling. Tie-lines are provided along the sides and rear walls at each level of the auditorium, as well as under the balcony fronts. At each point a load-bearing plate with both an NL4 socket and M12 nut has been installed, to which speakers may be attached. Bi-amped loudspeaker lines on NL4 sockets are also positioned on stage, sub stage, pit, fly galleries and proscenium slots. All speaker lines terminate at the loudspeaker patch bay in the sub-stage comms room, with bi-amped lines to stage left and right touring sound locations.

For control, the Lyric is equipped with a Soundcraft K3 (32 mono/four stereo in) console, which feeds the main system, powered by eight Lab Gruppen 1300C power amplifiers and a single Lab Gruppen 1600 and the 1200Cs - via the TOA DSP. These processors provide 20 different types of DSP functions for system signals between the mixer and power amplifiers. The EQ'd sound is routed through the matrix switcher to the main PA, which communicates with the audio data system, and each line within the DSP contains parametric equaliser, graphic equaliser, filter and delay.

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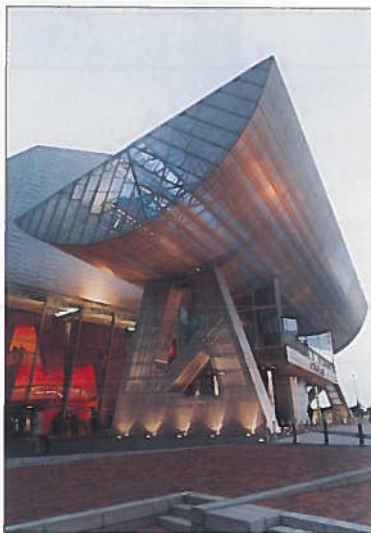
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A laptop can plug in at any point via the data patch panel (everything is patchable - nothing is hardwired) and talk to the TOA DX-0808 matrix switcher and five 2-in/2-out DP-0202 dual processors (offering 10 outputs), allowing the signal to be adjusted infinitely. Northern Light audio specialist, Graham Hendry, set up the basic system EQ to deliver a flat response across the auditorium and enable individual touring companies to programme their own parameters depending on the production's requirements. The DSP devices incorporate a wide range of sophisticated parameter control - essential given the diversity of entertainment and dramatic performance that the Lyric expects to stage. Processing for the playback and the source equipment in the effects rack is supplied mainly via BSS Audio standard kit, such as FCS-960 graphic, FCS-926 Varicurve, DPR-404 four-channel compressor/de-esser and DPR-504 noise gate, augmented by the equally ubiquitous Yamaha SPX 990 and Lexicon PCM80 for processing digital effects.



Mics include a selection of Shure, Sennheiser (including wireless bodypacks), AKG and Crown. Every microphone tie-line comes into the main patchbay, and is either patched through the mixer or into audio tie-line loops, which run from the sound control room to a mixing position in the centre of the stalls, or to the mixing positions at stage left and right. As with the lighting, the main sound desk can be taken from the control room, or a touring desk brought in and sited in any of these positions, and access the main amplifiers and main PA control via the tie-line loops.

To adjust the room's acoustic response to cater for a variety of performances, acoustic curtains are installed above the auditorium: these

can be moved by a series of electric motors to preset positions. Two-channel Sennheiser infra-red listening system for the hearing-impaired, as well as for audio descriptive commentary or language translation if required, also feature.

#### Rigging & Staging

The Lyric's flying system is fairly conventional and consists of 79 single-purchase 500kg counterweighted pipe sets with the grid 23m above stage level. On each side of the stage, positioned between the ends of the truss pipes and the fly galleries, are two trusses running up and down stage - each supported by three 1000kg chain motors which can be tracked on and off stage. This goes some way to solving the problem of how to deal with the tricky question of side masking and lighting positions which change weekly. Another nifty feature is the provision of an overhaul winch for the counterweight system. This winch runs up and downstage and can be attached to any of the sets to assist when hanging awkward loads beneath the counterweights such as those suspended from wire ropes.

The Quays stage is 20m wide with a depth of 10.2m from the edge of the fixed stage to the rear wall. A total of 39 single-purchase 350kg counterweight bar sets are provided, with the fly and loading galleries combined on a single level stage left. The stage grid steelwork, which is nine metres above the stage, extends over the auditorium with two of the counterweight sets diverted to this area.

All the stage engineering equipment is by Telestage Associates (for whom Steeldeck created a removable two-level stage infill when cutbacks on the planned stage lifts left a 10m hole in the stage). Main contractors on the job were Bovis, and the main electrical contractors were ABB Haden (project engineer Lionel Kirkbride), with Dave Vandeppear site supervising for Northern Light.

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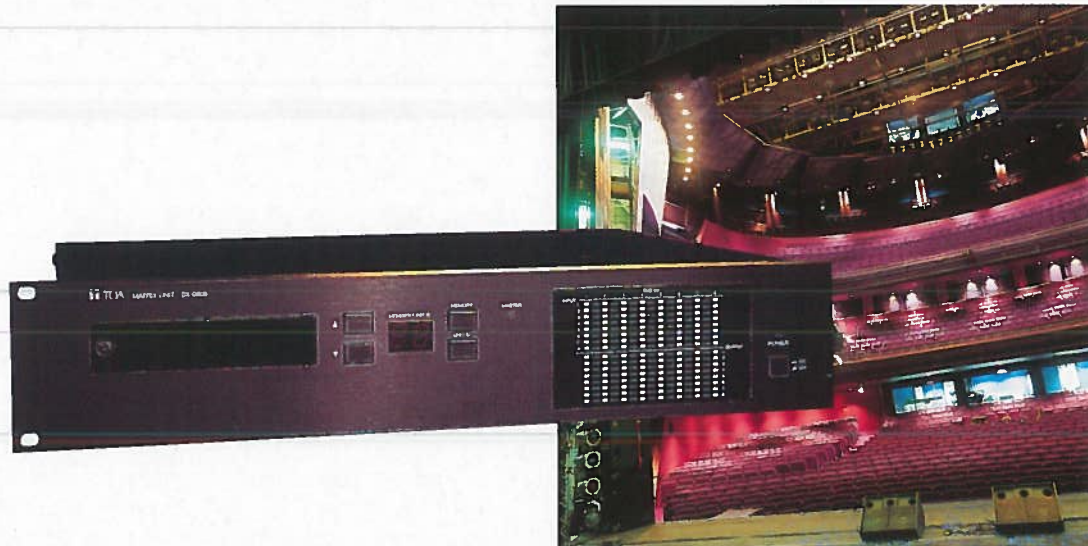
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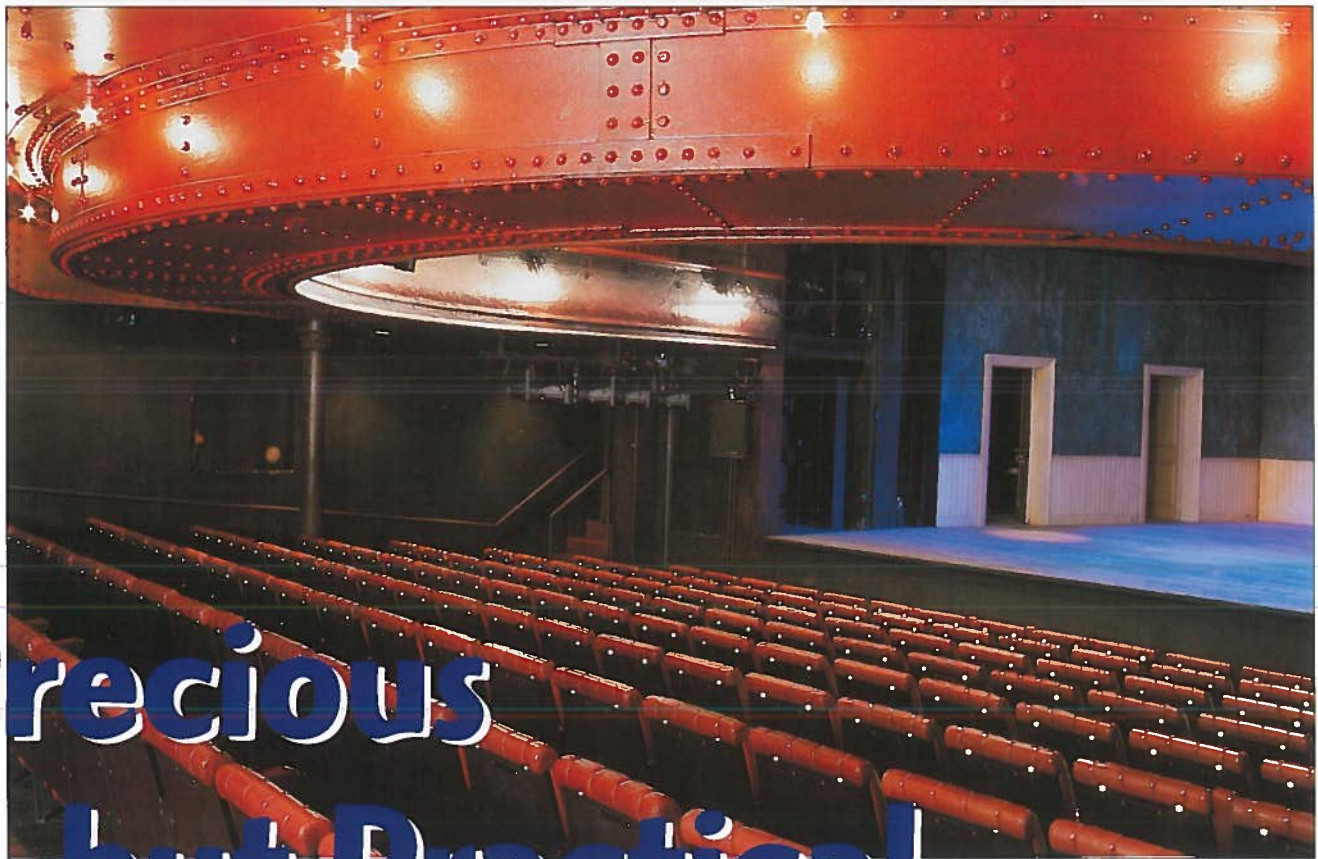


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# Precious but Practical

*A digital recording studio, a taller flytower with new steel grid and super-quiet counterweight flying, a studio theatre with over 300 lighting circuits – there has never been a theatre quite like it.*

*Ian Herbert takes a tour of The Royal Court*

My favourite version of how it all started is that Paul Arditti wanted a new sound studio. He called in Jerry Godden of Theatre Projects Consultants (TPC) to talk about it, but Bo Barton, then the Royal Court's production manager, pointed out that it wasn't much use putting a sound studio into a building that was falling down (built 1888, bomb-blasted in WW2, dodgy ever since) and would probably be condemned pretty soon. This was in October 1994.

Enter TP's Iain Mackintosh, who suggested that the £3million now being talked about for repairs and rescue could be a lot more if it came from the funds of the National Lottery. Not so impossible a dream, either - in those early, heady days, the back of an envelope was an almost acceptable form of application for Lottery money. Iain came up with a short-list of possible architects to conduct a feasibility study, from which Stephen Daldry and the Royal Court team chose Haworth Tompkins, run by a couple of young architects, Steve Tompkins and Graham Haworth, who had never built a theatre before, but whose youth and ideas were a perfect match for those of the Sloane Square mob.

The study was done in six weeks, using the backs of rather a lot of envelopes, and before very long the Arts Council was offering £16m or so towards the project, which by now involved rather more than a sound system and a new fly tower: in fact, a complete refit that was not far short of demolition and rebuilding from scratch. When the final plans were in, the Council added another £2.5million to the kitty. Five years later, with

the help of another £7million in private donations and some useful extra bail-out money from the Lottery, there's about £28million's worth of sparkling new Royal Court sitting at the end of Sloane Square, with quite a lot of it newly-tunnelled into the square itself.

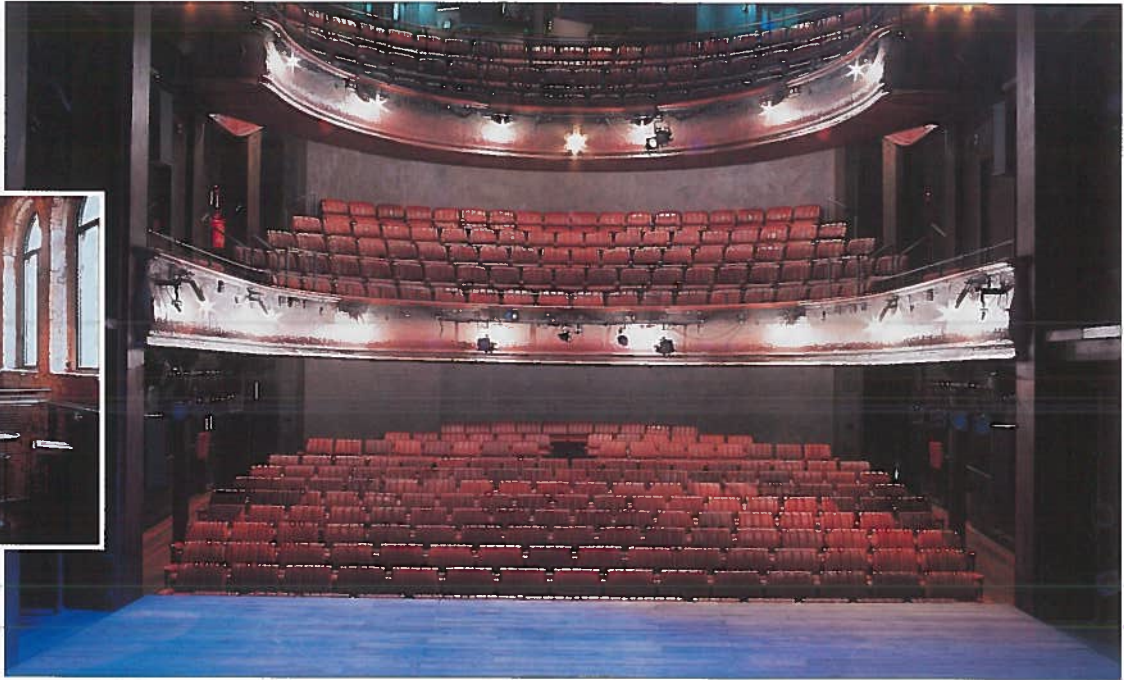
Now that it is finally up and running (when I interviewed Stephen Daldry about it for L&SI's January 1998 issue, he was still talking about an early 1999 opening), the Royal Court comes across as a wonderful mix of the practical and the precious. All those hours of meetings discussing how pigs might fly have brought home the bacon, but those of us who ought to be on a diet might have preferred a little less fat here and there.

Outside, the changes to Walter Emden's 1888 building are subtle enough to escape the notice of the average passer-by. The brickwork has had a good scrub, but you could easily miss the new balcony bar and the extra, airy access to the box office entrance. At night, though, you will get the benefit of an exterior lighting scheme for the façade by no less than Mark Henderson, and possibly be relieved to notice that the Jerwood Foundation, who contributed a life-saving £3m to the rebuild but in exchange wanted their name to precede that of the Court itself, have finally accepted that it should appear in lights, but more suitably small ones. What you may also notice is a set of brightly-illuminated pavement lights in front of the theatre, a clue to the Haworth Tompkins masterstroke: they discovered that although the Court is surrounded by services, with the Underground a none-too-silent partner next door, the land directly in front of the theatre was completely empty of sewers or piping. With this extra space acquired, the cramped building (its footprint is only 8,000sq.ft) gained valuable expansion potential.

It's been used to create an 'undercroft' (a modish architectural word used to make basements more alluring) which accommodates a biggish restaurant and bar, a bookshop area rather larger than the two cupboards it replaces, and lots of space for theatre people and general public to hang out. Fashionably sparse, it features mostly undecorated white walls and an equally sparse nouvelle cuisine menu to match (real ale at the bar, though, you flymen out there). You walk down to it from a smaller bar at stalls entrance level, one of the frequent reminders of how cramped everything was before.







Above right, the view from the stage in the main auditorium  
Inset, one of the fashionably sparse bar areas  
Right, the main grid



"All those hours of meetings discussing how pigs might fly have brought home the bacon, but those of us who ought to be on a diet might have preferred a little less fat here and there."

If you want to assess the result of a bunch of young architects and young theatre people being given unlimited money to spend, you can get the downside of it by a careful study of the Royal Court's walls. Apart from the white walls in the undercroft, there are nooks lined with a black, textured covering that turns out to be old conveyor belts. There are lots of exposed bricks and old stonework, some of it still harbouring the original dust (or possibly they went out and bought some vintage dust). In the private dining room at the back of the undercroft, the old ladies' loo itself, its origins are clear - legend has it that the walls were further 'distressed' by Steve Tompkins himself.

The vermilion drum wall, marking the back of the auditorium and visible between the stalls entrances, is a very expensive work of art, by one Antoni Malinowski. It looks like a wall badly in need of painting, and there is a story that the craftsmen finishing the stalls doors (beautifully) were very impressed to learn that the bloke working next to them was getting £500 an hour for his more artistic, less craftsmanlike efforts. Backstage, there is a more technical look to the walls, with miles of conduit piping visible. Exposed girders are the fashion, both the functional one supporting the auditorium's circle and the completely non-functional one which dominates the upstairs general office as a point of decoration only.

The sense of unnecessary expenditure reaches a peak in the auditorium, as you sink into your padded leather seat, place your programme in the netting pocket of the seat in front, or read it by the light of the two fibre-optic mini-lights set above the netting. These go out when the curtain goes up, rather negating their usefulness.

It's only on closer inspection that you begin to realise that there's plenty of sense about. Those extravagant leather seats should give four times the life of more conventional seating and each seat has its own air-conditioning below it. The walls of the auditorium are studded (ever so discreetly) with points for every



conceivable service, including transferrable ethernet and DMX; lighting bars abound; the rake, the legroom, the sightlines have all been subtly rethought to give the best possible results, and the inherent flexibility of the whole space (which is bound to be used before long - remember Stephen Daldry's revival of *The Kitchen*?) is simply astonishing.

One central demand for the new theatre was that it could be treated if necessary as a single organism. Andy Hayles of TPC was responsible for much of the thinking here, which has permitted the possibility. Those ubiquitous supply points and lighting bars are not just in the theatres, but in the rehearsal room, the undercroft and all the public areas, so that if (as is more than likely) some megalomaniac director were to want to stage a promenade production taking the audience all over the building, its technical running would present no problems. The main auditorium has not been classed as a proscenium house, so that it has no safety curtain. This makes it easier to access those all-pervading supply sources, and to make full use of the depth of the new stage, one huge lift in 5ft squares, which can go up a couple of feet or down a couple of metres (note the continuing and typically English use of two measurement systems).

Above the stage, the new grid is two metres higher, and served by a mix of manual and hydraulic systems. Under the stage hang working lights, which can go up and down with it. If it does need to go right down, head of lighting Jo Town will have to find new storage space for her stock of new lanterns and kit, but they are all on custom-built trolleys for just such an eventuality. Likewise, the Court's sound kit can be stowed in the theatre's stock of giant flightcases and taken easily on tour.

The lighting control is interchangeable too. In the control room at the back of the main house balcony, (complete with floor-to-ceiling, open-and-shut glass front) there is a Strand 530i board, with a 510 for back-up, but it could swap easily for the 520i in use for the Theatre Upstairs.







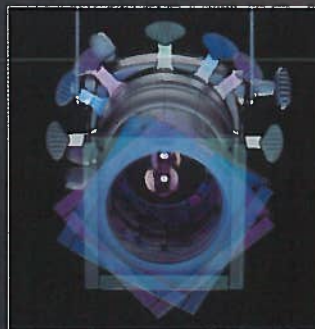
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Right, Jo Town and inset, her favoured Pipe Grid  
Below, head of sound Paul Arditti

Upstairs has 300 lighting circuits, most of them in its raised, airy roof. The pillars which used to limit acting space have gone, and the space can take any seating configuration: for the recent *Fireface*, Ultz put the audience on swivel chairs around a set of industrial dining tables, with the actors moving on and around them. Control can come from anywhere, though there is a balcony which is the preferred spot for lighting, sound and stage management.

One clever feature of the Lottery application was that it did not specify the lighting and sound kit that would go in to the theatre, but earmarked a sum for it. Thus Jo Town and head of sound Paul Arditti were able to buy the latest equipment when it was time to move in. The emphasis is on what can be frequently used: money has gone into cabling and basic lanterns, so that LDs can remain free to hire their favourite moving lights or other specials.

In both public and backstage areas, what you keep noticing are the nooks and crannies carved out by the two Steves for the building's users: the little alcove on the way up to the Theatre Upstairs which looks like a prie-dieu; the upholstered nook above Elyse Dodgson's International department; the vantage-point over the undercroft restaurant. All of these are spots conducive to the quick chat, the spur-of-the-moment conference that is part of a creative organism.

And it's once you start to look at the working environment of the Court that you can appreciate the value of all those hours of consultation between theatre people, theatre consultants and sympathetic architects. At any



time there will be between 50 and 100 people working in this theatre, not just actors rehearsing or performing, but lighting and sound technicians, carpenters, designers, stage management etc. The needs of all of them have been canvassed and provided for in an exercise that has turned a cramped, dilapidated mess into a highly efficient machine for making theatre, which has nonetheless paid necessary attention to the idea that theatre is a creative industry, one where people should be having fun while they work.

As you go round backstage, this sense of purposeful fun is infectious. Jo Town shows off her new lantern stocks with pride, including lots of shining Strand SLs; production management show off their smart office complete with its own daybed and the privacy-giving shutter system common to the DRs proper. Paul Arditti has got his sound studio, which features not only some of the most up-to-date kit you could wish for, but the best view in the whole building, straight down Sloane Square.

They really do seem to have thought of everything: in the stage door is a cat-flap, custom-built for Osborne the theatre cat, a malevolent-looking black mouser brought back from the Duke of York's and now apparently in early retirement, since the occasional rodent has been observed to go unmolested in the new building. He's reclining on a couch in what looks like his own room, just beyond the stage door, as I leave. 'Good-bye, Osborne.' Osborne looks back - definitely in anger.

Rather than parade the Royal Court's impressive vital statistics (all the pertinent facts and figures are available on the Theatre Projects Consultant's website - [www.tpcworld.com](http://www.tpcworld.com)) L&S invited key figures of the project to highlight what they believe to be the outstanding technical detail achievements of the refurbishment.

### Theatre Upstairs Pipe Grid

Despite an all-new Ethernet infrastructure, a distributed scroller power system, digital dimmer racks, new lighting consoles, and over 200 new luminaires; Jo Town, the Royal Court's head of lighting, selected the new Theatre Upstairs grid as her top technical detail.

The Theatre Upstairs now has increased height (1.2metres higher than the old building), which enabled TPC and the LX department to design a new grid. This is formed from a mixture of fixed and removable bars. The fixed bars span the space every two metres, with removable bars of one- and two-metre lengths allowing Jo's staff to set and orientate the grid exactly as a designer wishes. Not only does this enable them to strip the space virtually clear, but it also means that specials can be rigged wherever a lighting designer may choose. Even blue moons can be accommodated!

The removable bars are based around proprietary Aliscaff spring clips which both speed up rigging and clamp the bar safely in place. This flexibility added to the generous circuit layout means that a luminaire need never be further from an outlet than one metre. No cabling spaghetti means neater and quicker rigs.

### Universal Fixing

Paul Arditti, the Royal Court's head of sound, who now enjoys a fully digital sound recording studio (courtesy of the Oxford Sound Company), all new mixing consoles, including a 24-channel Cadac, and an

arsenal of dBb speakers chose a bespoke item that assists rigging in unusual places throughout the Court's performance spaces.

One of the great challenges at the Royal Court is that designers and directors are encouraged to push the boundaries of the space beyond the normally accepted limits in British Theatre. This results in some fairly peculiar rigging problems, as the proscenium arch of the Theatre Downstairs may be ignored and the show staged in the round, as *The Kitchen* was in 1995, or even in the auditorium, as *The Lights* was in 1996. The



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new Universal Fixings designed by the Court's technical staff in conjunction with TPC and Haworth Tompkins Architects provide a means of coping with unusual demands so that rigging speakers, cameras, mics and lights can be carried out quickly and safely without having to get out drills and pepper the auditorium with holes!

The Universal fixing comprises a series of threaded sockets with an escutcheon cover plate to mask the hole. One of a series of eight different spigots can then be fixed in place. These fixings are called 'Universal' as they are fitted in both Theatre spaces and the Rehearsal Room and were installed by the same contractor – Graham Welding Ltd – who also worked on the ROH refurbishment.

### Theatre Upstairs Seating

The Royal Court's head of stage, Martin Riley, discussed his choice long and hard with deputy Dave Skelley. Despite the excellence of the fast performance stage elevator by Delstar, the super fast hydraulic two stage scissor-lift, the new counterweight flying system, and the Bytecraft computerised control system. It is the versatility and robust nature of the Theatre Upstairs seating that has impressed them most thus far.

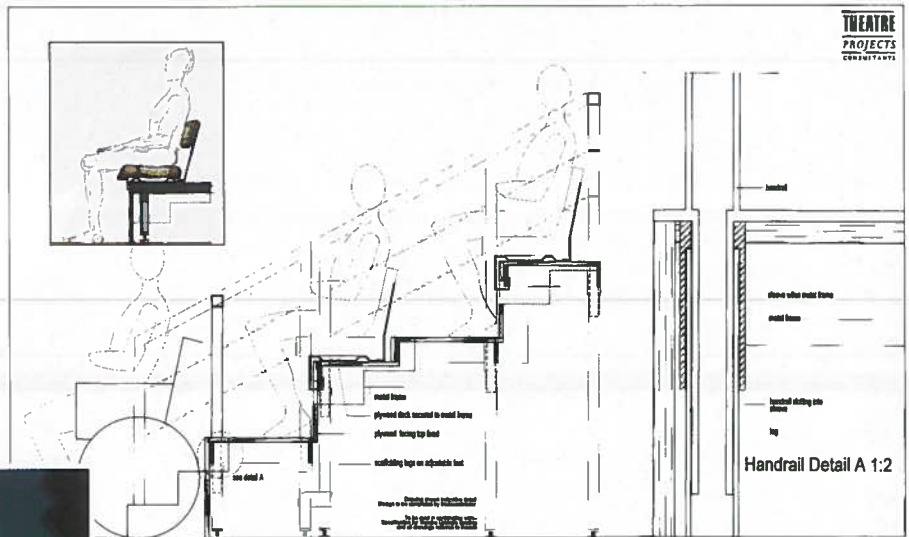


Licensed for 100 people, the Theatre Upstairs productions are arguably even more demanding than those of its bigger sister downstairs. There have been four shows in the space since the reopening in January; one was end-stage, one was traverse, one half-traverse, and the latest seated promenade! The seating was therefore required to meet every blue moon demand whilst conforming to local licensing requirements, and being sturdy enough to weather the odd chippy's hammer.

Iain Mackintosh of TPC, together with the Royal Court and the architects, designed an adaptable rostra-based system with a few cunning wrinkles. Based on custom Steeldeck units, their adjustable legs and modular fascia panels allow for a variety of rakes, and the bench seats are fabricated in such a way that they can be fixed to the floor if the decks aren't required for that particular production. The leather trims to the seats are supposed to evoke memories of old suitcases stored in the attic (exactly where the Theatre Upstairs is located!) and relate to the plusher seats Downstairs – the trims also protect the fabric as all cushions are removable from the bench frames making storage all the easier.

### AMX Working Light System

Stage Electrics installed both the production lighting system and the sound and comms systems at the Court. Project manager Jonathan Porter-Goff was responsible for realising a number of innovations on the project; combined EPAS and paging



Left, head of stage Martin Riley and above a seating section from the Royal Court Theatre Upstairs. Inset, architect Steve Tompkins visualisation of the seating

speakers, removable tier front houselights, and a forest of internally-wired bars that hook into the Universal Fixing system, but it is the Theatre Downstairs working light system of which he is particularly proud. The brief from TPC and The Court's LX department was to create a worklight control system that could function as a series of traditional simple push-button panels at one level, but provide lighting operators access at a higher level to control the overall functionality of the system. The ability to lock out push buttons, record states within the system and to copy across states from the lighting board has already been used extensively.

Stage Electrics researched the possibilities of linking AMX control equipment to Strand Lighting consoles with great success. The main worklight panel in the LX control room features a touchscreen that allows technicians to access the programmable features of the system, and a portable mimic of this enables remote plotting from the stalls, circle or stage.

### Working Relationships

The quality of the design and installations at the Royal Court are testament to the relationships

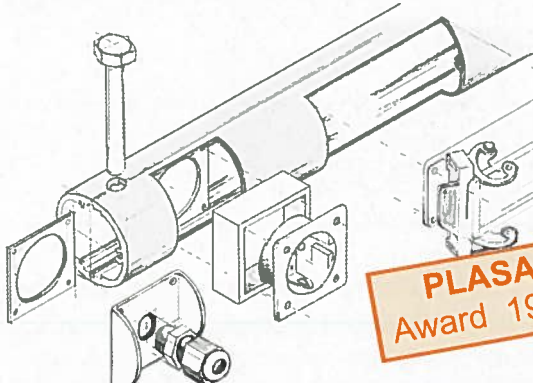
between the theatre staff and the designers, and to the contractors adopting a similarly co-operative spirit when coming on board. Deputy project manager, Simon Harper, was particularly instrumental in maintaining the communication between all parties, encouraging devil's advocacy in all its forms to prevent unnecessary and frivolous use of funds and Eric Lawrence of Haworth Tompkins Architects looked out for the interests of the theatre staff on building-wide issues (such as real ale at the bar!).

This relationship is still enjoyed as the Court's first year continues, and production managers Paul Handley and Sue Bird have taken over Simon's mantle ensuring the great support enjoyed from TPC (Jerry Godden, George Ellerington, Richard Borkum and Andy Hayles) Delstar Engineering (Ken Golding, Gavin Sadler, Doug, Jimmy, Gary, Barry, Gerald and the lads), Stage Electrics (Jonathan, Nick, Jason, Marcus, Nigel, Matt, Andy et al) and the Oxford Sound Company (Andrew Riley, Richard Eliot and Jon Smith) continues. If you get a chance, visit the Court – one day all theatres will be like this!

Participants in Theatrical London will be presented with a rare opportunity to go backstage at the Royal Court. See *stitch-in* booking form this issue.




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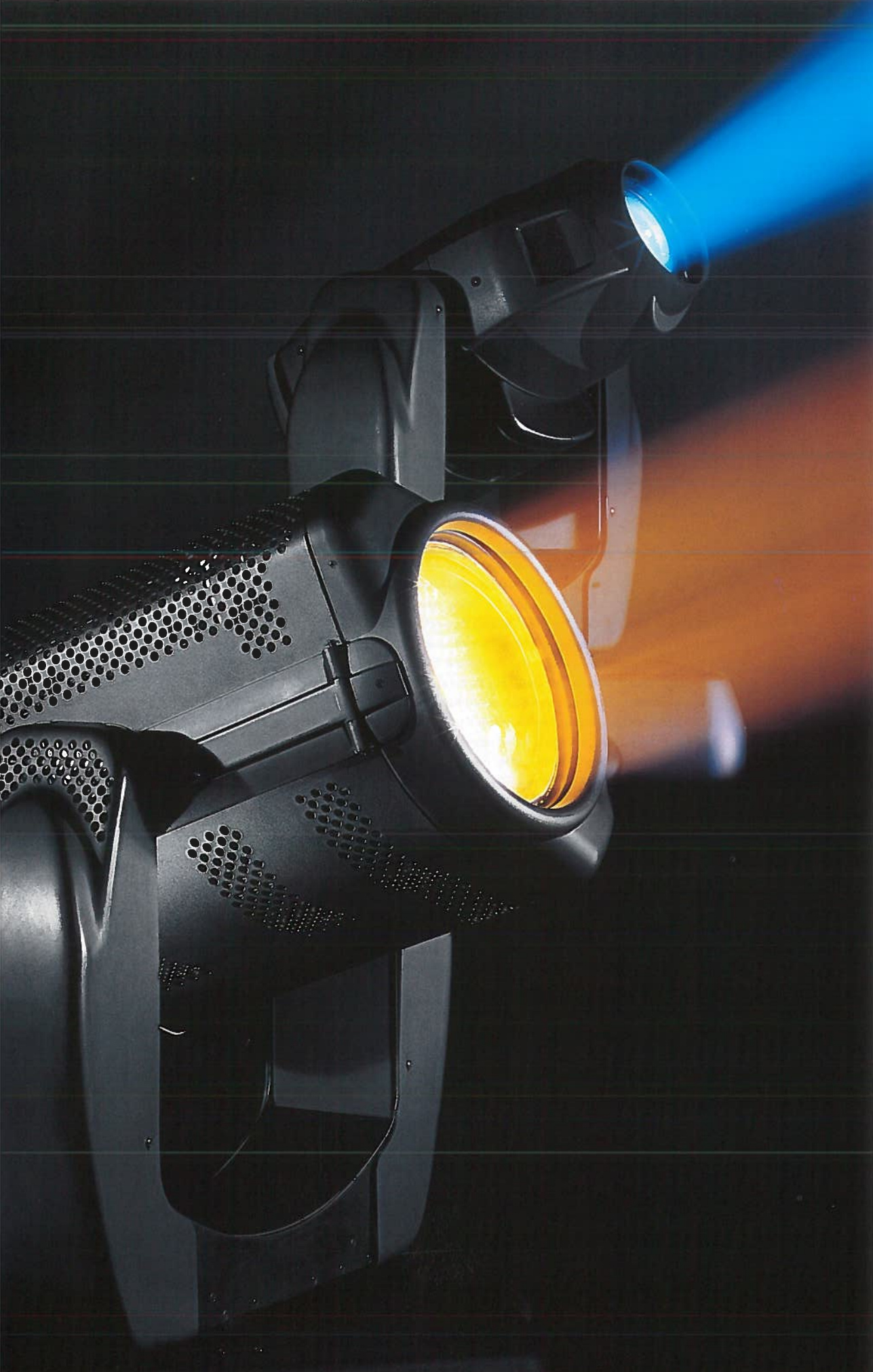
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
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*Tony Gattiker*

# No Comment...

In a month in which the fragility of life is once more and graphically illustrated by a second fatal accident involving an unfortunate rigger who had been working in the roof of Earls Court, and by the disaster at Roskilde, it is good to know that some people at least took last month's column to heart.

**WHILE I CAN'T SAY** that we were deluged with financial contributions, I would like to thank Zero 88, which was the first manufacturer to put its hands in its collective coffers and, on the other side of the fence, to lighting designer Durham Marengi who has donated his author's fee for his article in this issue. Numerous offers of help are promised by others, and there will be an ALD-sponsored seminar at the PLASA Show called Sole Trader, at which people will have an opportunity to air their views on this and other related subjects. I understand also, that the Showlight 2001 organisers are considering what they might be able to do to further the cause next year in Edinburgh.

**THERE IS GOOD NEWS** on the organisational front also - we can anticipate a continuing dialogue between PLASA and ALD to further matters of common interest. Discussions are underway elsewhere to establish a low-cost insurance package, under ALD aegis, that could be an optional part of membership. Shortly, I hope to be able to confirm the name and number of a bank account, that I hope will be designated the Elena Fund, in recognition of the tragic case of the

extraordinary woman who started the campaign, so that people and companies can send in contributions more easily. Most urgently, the ALD needs to register for charitable status, because that will also be tax-beneficial to all concerned.

**I ALSO RECEIVED AN E-MAIL** from Del Trew, late of Cyberdescence, who wrote: "Two years ago I closed down Cyberdescence after 30 years, mainly spent in the corporate lighting and exhibition industries, and with my wife and four-year-old son, moved to New Zealand. We wanted to try something a bit different and, maybe, a little less stressful. We only had six months of our new life before our son, Joss, was diagnosed with Acute Lymphoblastic Leukaemia. The devastating news resulted in our dropping everything and spending five weeks in Wellington Hospital. The whole of 1999 was taken up with constant trips for treatment in hospital, and trying to fill the enormous gap which was starting to appear in his education. In September last year he relapsed and we were thrown back into turmoil. We returned to the UK in January and he has since had what appears to be a successful bone-marrow transplant. Three months on and he is very well."

**SO YOU SEE**, it's happening all the time - I hope that the momentum will be kept up and that no one will lose sight of the exigencies of the freelance existence.

**ON THE FRAGILITY OF LIFE**, a last word on John Jeffcoat, who died last month. John was one of the early lights in the effect lighting business in the UK and was probably the individual that I most have to thank (or otherwise) for my misspent youth and a lifetime of lighting crime. He was a lovable rogue with an easy wit that kept everyone who knew him in stitches. His parodies of some of the characters of those early days are legion and the stuff of legend. What a shame they couldn't have been included in the PLASA archive. JJ was a guy with huge potential that was sadly never quite fulfilled. So, I don't think I can do better than to close this brief valedictory with some words from an email

sent to me by Mike Wood at High End Systems on reading, in L&SI, of John's untimely death: "He's made me laugh with his humour and cry with frustration just about simultaneously." Right on! And I bet he's doing the same up there right now.

**I NEVER THOUGHT TO FIND MYSELF** applauding the awards system that this country still embraces with full vigour, centuries after the feudal system was abandoned, handing out official plaudits like sweeties to the undeserving many. I guess you would say that this is an attitude born of envy, in that no such recognition is ever likely to come my way, and you would probably be right. Having said that, it is nice that finally someone central to our industry has got a national accolade, and no one is more deserving than Mark Fisher, who has certainly done more than any other single individual I can think of to further and landmark a business that nobody outside has ever been able to take that seriously. And understandably.

**ALL OF THIS IS SOMETHING** that our American readers will never understand, and there isn't enough space here to explain. Suffice to say that the absence of such a system over the pond is the root cause of other ghastly inventions such as the Awards dinner . . . However, just to give you guys a laugh, and I know Mark well enough to be sure that he would enjoy the joke, the OBE (Order of the British Empire - what Empire?) that he has been awarded by our esteemed Government, has always been known here, in the vernacular, as the 'Other Buggers' Effort'! As for that middle word, currently featuring in Ally McBeal, courtesy of UK import Tracey Ullman, in this context it's a term of endearment, not as defined in Webster's. And that's a bugger's muddle for a start, so we won't go into that.

**JUST A COUPLE OF TAIL-ENDERS** to close with. The image of 1970s glam rock band Kiss, in full regalia and war paint and extended tongues, firmly not in cheek, on the front pages of several national newspapers last week, really made me each for the proverbial sick-bag. Who in their right minds at Pepsi's ad agency imagines that this ham old group can breathe the kiss of life into that sickly (as in sweet) cola brand? It's a bit like commissioning the disgraced Gary Glitter to dispense Smarties to children. Still, someone might get a tour out of it.

**LASTLY, THE RAGING CONTROVERSY** over patents and the human genome project, reminds us once again of the differing attitudes regarding the rights of man that exist between the US and the UK when it comes to what constitutes intellectual property. It is high time that inter-governmental negotiations began to establish a level playing field so that the rules are the same, at least throughout the Western world, and so that current misunderstandings about what is patentable and what is not, can be eliminated.

"... it is nice that finally someone central to our industry has got a national accolade, and no one is more deserving than Mark Fisher, who has certainly done more than any other single individual . . ."

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# Path of Light

*For 16 days in May, the powerful Scottish highland landscape was transformed into an extraordinary, thought-provoking multi-media experience, which had taken two years to reach completion. Gabe Stewart talks to the technical team behind the project*

**S**ooner or later you're going to realise that there's a difference between knowing the path and walking the path." So Keanu Reeves' character, Neo, is told in the cult action movie *The Matrix*.

Like the film, nva organisation's *The Path* marries high-tech effects with deep spiritual significance. Having been personally guided along *The Path* on a sunny scorcher a week before the show opened, and having walked *The Path* solo on its last night, I can testify that there is indeed a difference between knowing *The Path* and walking it.

So, what was *The Path*? Alongside flowing burns and fantastical rock formations, artist Angus Farquhar, lighting designer Dave Bryant and soundscape designer Gus Ferguson confronted audiences with a series of emotional responses to a two-hour walk along a track rising 1,500ft in the stunning landscape at Glen Lyon, Scotland.

Bryant, one of Britain's most innovative lighting designers, has for over 25 years designed light sculptures and installations in over 30 countries. His company, Midnight Design, specialises in projects requiring unique prototypes. Bryant and Ferguson have worked closely with artist Angus Farquhar for many years. Ferguson now runs One Over Infinity, a digital recording facility producing unique soundtracks. He's used live playing across a number of instrumental combinations linked with Akai sampling and sound processing with Audiologic and Protocols; and his use of musicians has ranged from full orchestras to manipulation of abstract sound and dialogue.

*The Path*'s three-mile route ascended one side of the breathtaking Glen Lyon and descended the other. The audience proceed at their own individual pace, deciding their own level of involvement, from building a cairn to sipping spring water from a chalice. En route, they stop to marvel at the first view of *The Path* - a lace of light weaving through the blackness; a Tibetan nun chanting mantras whilst being dwarfed by an entire mountain lit in momentary magnificence, or any one of many major theatrical moments using some seriously scary lighting effects and evocative soundscapes, amplifying the resonance of the landscape.

The team had used a dozen different transportation methods (from horsepower to earth-movers) to lug 10 generators around the site, measuring 3.5km by 1.5km. A crew of 25 manhandled up to four miles of heavy-duty cable through the hills, not to mention 30 miles of other cable. The festoon lighting for the path alone used 400,000 lightbulbs. "We had an issue with the mains run from the generators - there were 14 of us, one every 20 metres of this cable, walking across the hill with it." Talk about pulling together. Luckily for the crew, Bryant is of the school of lighting designers that doesn't move his equipment once he's rigged it.

Of the show, Bryant says: "It's spiritual without being religious. There are lots of faiths associated with this type of landscape and culture. I'm a creative person, and for me to be able to light sympathetically in this environment I have to totally understand what we're driving at. We're not doing Jean Michel Jarre . . . there's a level of appropriateness in what we're doing.

Bryant has lit some big environments in his time, including London's Canary Wharf, but out here he finds a little light goes a long way. "Here, I'm throwing 60kW (a fraction of a rock and roll stage rig's 300kW) at that mountain and it's bright," he says. Bryant used a combination of 10 Studio Due City Colors, 12 MiniCities and five Arena Visions for the bolder washes, along with MBI outdoor floodlights and a large number of outdoor Pars. At the other end of the scale, some less glamorous garden lamps (from B&Q) made their own impact on the whole. Control was split between four desks: two 48-way Sirius consoles from Zero 88, an Avolites Pearl and a 120-channel Jands Event.

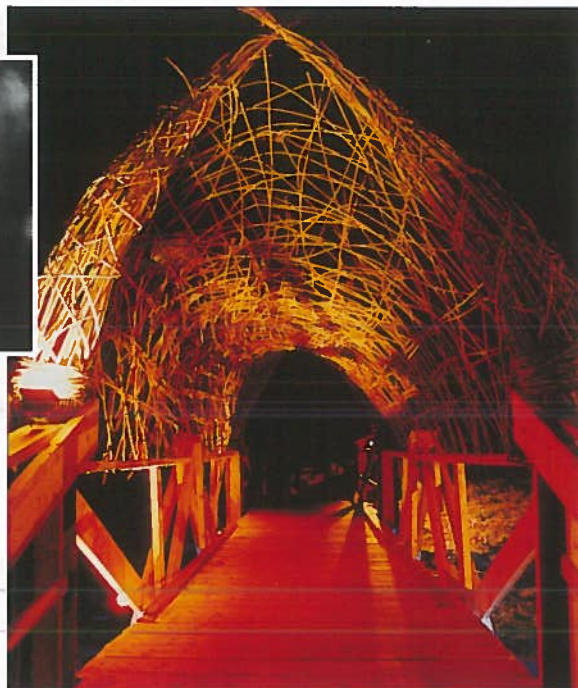
Bryant continues: "It's absolutely essential people see where they're going, so the shrouded path highlights any trip hazards, but as we get higher and higher up the hill, we make those lights dimmer, so we're in a very dark level at the top. That's when the theatricality and magic starts to creep in." One major theatrical moment was when 15 otherworldly spirits revealed themselves on an ancient battlefield. These wire mesh figures, when filled with water spray become absolutely solid droplets of water: when backlit, they look absolutely stunning.

The split stone, or Praying Hands of Mary, was another magical place. "There's lots of culture, folklore and legend surrounding this extraordinary rock. When the moon comes up, the shadows of this rock reach right down into the valley, so we introduced some elements of that into the show." Surrounding the stone with copper baskets full of fires emphasised its ceremonial power, deepened by live melancholic Uilleann pipe playing. Special effects, such as a



The two main pictures show the stunning transformation of Glen Lyon

Right, Angus Farquhar, artistic director of nva



photos: Alan McAteer

fireball fizzing down a wire, only became clear from a different perspective, on the other hill.

Bryant acknowledges that Ferguson's sound equipment was much more susceptible to the vagaries of the weather. "With lights, you turn them on, they warm up and dry themselves out. But Gus had his work cut out coming up with solutions to keep moisture and humidity out of his equipment." As it turned out, Ferguson overcompensated, which paid its own dividends. Apart from the odd generator problem, the system ran so smoothly, he had time to record all the musicians for a CD of the event.

Described as musical director, Ferguson himself prefers the term 'soundscape designer' - not least because most of the installations are sound effects rather than music. The Path presented him with two main challenges. "First, the sheer logistics. You get used to walking into a situation, saying, OK here's the system, where do I plug in? Here it was a case of well, see that bit 300 yards away, that's where you plug in. You pre-plan, but until all systems are set up, you don't know how much spillage you'll get from one area to the next. Light cuts through wind, but when it comes to sound, wind can be an ally or a foe."

Ferguson continues: "The other challenge was to very subtly underline what was already there, working in harmony with it. It's tempting to be egotistical and impose yourself on the landscape. It's a question of being a little bit more restrained. Less is more - the way a good film soundtrack underlines the emotional content of a scene without being obtrusive."

For the two main performance-based systems, Ferguson (quite sensibly) used active speakers, from German manufacturer K&S (and highly praised by Ferguson, incidentally), while many of the localised effects were simply from personal CD players run through small active multi-media speakers from Videologic. Subtlety helped his budget. "I could easily have spent 10 times as much money, but with the same result. We could have been so rock and roll, fired huge systems all over the place. It would have been one big mangled audio spaghetti which would have worked against the whole show." As it turned out, some of the smaller systems worked better in certain environments, such as the thin, subtle sound which emerged from a sheep-skull covered sheiling. "It was just a sound we sculpted from a piece of synth. We set the speakers up round a steep gully. When you walked down the back of it, the natural reverb from the mountain was absolutely astonishing. So for the CD we'll be using the natural reverb

from that to enhance the chanting nun's vocals rather than using a Lexicon. We spent a lot of time recording and messing around with the speakers in different directions to use the landscape as a natural echo chamber or reverb' plate. The first time we heard that sound of the mountain itself we sat there for an hour and a half and just went 'wow!'"

The Quivering Rock was a massive natural boulder enhanced visually and aurally to imply it was plugging the earth. "It's very much Gus's response to the landscape," said Bryant. The soundscape was a boulder rolling slowed way down, plus some vocal ingenuity from Ferguson's sound effects partner Russ McDonald. "I'd gone through lots of volcano footage trying to get the right volcano vent sound, and we kept describing to each other how it sounded. Then you think, well, if I can describe it with my mouth, why not record it and see how it comes back. There's no given rules for this sort of thing - if it sounds right, you do it."

Musically, Ferguson was wary of being too tartan twee. "When we talked about using bagpipes we didn't want to present a shortbread tin label, which is why we went for the Uilleann pipes instead." A subtle backing of two drones went with the pipes, the result of an investigation into so-called power-places which draw potency from ley lines. "We sampled up the drone from the pipes, turned it into an oscillating wave, and got the same two oscillating sounds going in and out of sync with each other. The idea was to create this undulating sort of throb. The sound, if you could describe it, of a ley line or a magnetic field."

But his favourite of all 15 systems was the Singing Bowl Orchestra, where the rims of a dozen hand-beaten metal bowls chime in a similar way as wine glasses. As a result, Ferguson is planning a Nepalese trip in November to find the perfect acoustics for a series of singing bowl CD releases.

As the audience trudged down, three stations of hidden speakers recounted folklore reminiscences of people who lived all their lives in the glen. The very last sound you take off the mountain is a sample of the purifying ceremony which Buddhists performed on their original arrival at the hill.

Previous projects may well have used 10 times as many systems or lights, but Ferguson reckons that within the lighting and sound community, The Path is entirely unique. "The general feeling from anybody who came to see the show was that they'd experienced an absolute one-off. They wouldn't see the like of it again."

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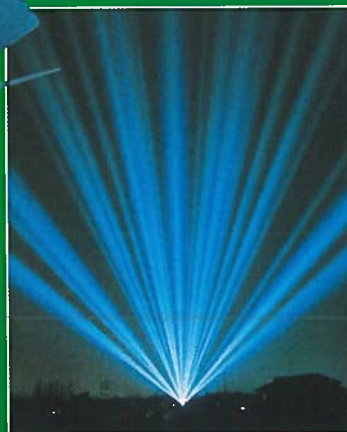


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# Ian Herbert, Asleep in the Stalls...

**A**fter the all too speedy departure of the good-looking, mature and highly enjoyable *Lautrec*, a new batch of musical lambs has presented itself for the West End slaughter-board which is also known as the critics.

**YOU WONDER** why producers do it, really. There's little chance of a new musical getting a serious response nowadays, partly because the critics don't seem to know much about them or their target audience, and partly because they have been distracted by their own hit-or-flop

hype. A surprising amount of critical reaction now is of the almost self-fulfilling 'I'll give it a month' variety, while the amount of real critical analysis is far outweighed by a scramble to find the most eye-catching put-down. You guys out there on the rigging probably know more than the critics about the musical's audience - more than I do, too. I found the whole money-dripping ambience of *The King*

and *I*, for instance, far too overcooked for my tastes - Nicholas de Jongh likened Brian Thompson's sets to an upmarket Indian restaurant and you could see what he meant.

**BUT THE AUSTRALIAN** team behind the show knew what they were doing, which was to assure the punters that they were getting their moneys-worth. I did like the way Thompson built his scenery out into the Palladium, which meant that the boxes could be used to hold the royal audience for the Uncle Tom ballet. Nigel Levings had more than enough lights to cope with this extended acting area, and went along with the

opulent design criteria in some showy but effective lighting states. And I was impressed by Paul Groothuis's sound coverage, which gave the principals a good balance with John Owen Edwards' big pit band, for once carrying the proper complement of strings for Rodgers' lush melodies. You can't blame Paul for the way every singer seemed to be taking part in a three tenors 'I can sing louder than you' contest.

**KING AND I IS CRITIC-PROOF** anyway, and the critics can hum its tunes as well as anyone else with a bathroom. The difficulties increase when a new show arrives. The English album of *Notre Dame* has been in the charts for a while, but you can't expect our lads (whose musical range doesn't go far past Gershwin, apart from an unnatural obsession with the clever, but often, melody-bypassed Stephen Sondheim) to know that, or to have heard it. In consequence, they weren't prepared for what is in essence a rock concert with a lot of concept staging behind it. There's no way anyone can understand what's going on in this show in terms of plot, unless they've been drip-fed the novel from birth. There's no way any of its principals are going to waste good singing time by any pretence at acting. It's not that kind of show.

**NEVERTHELESS**, I don't think it's much of a rock concert either. I have had the pleasure of hearing the show's English album, Celine Dion and all, and it is done no service by many of the same singers on stage. More important for us, it's done extremely bad service by the sound designer - Manu Guiot. I sat very close, it's true, to the stalls stage left speaker cluster, so that all the sound fed directly into my right ear, wherever the on-stage singing might be. But there seemed to be no sophistication at all about the sound distribution from what was a very expensive installation (see *L&S* last issue). Worse still, every knob on the mixing desk seemed to be set at full, so that rather than complementing each other, singers and soundtrack competed over which could do the most damage to the eardrums.

Small wonder that 'my head hurts' was a more commonplace reaction than 'what a score'. Since the show had beaten down the resistance of the Musicians Union to a live band and supplied the original recording-studio soundtrack, there is even less excuse for this aural butchery. In the circumstances, it was probably a big mistake to mollify the MU by letting a splendid sextet play some quite beautiful David Firman arrangements of the showtunes in the Dominion foyer. It gave even those who didn't know the original score an idea of the musical delights they were missing under the sound-barrage inside.

**LD ALAIN LORTIE**, too, who has long worked with director Gilles Maheu and fellow-Quebecker Robert Lepage on their more avant-garde productions, seems to have lost all sense of restraint in his use of 'the biggest moving light rig in the West End'. Battering audiences' eyesockets is no cleverer than bursting their eardrums. It's true Lortie was only delivering what Christian Rätz's grandiose and totally inappropriate sets deserved (the show opens with a number glorifying 'the Age of the Cathedrals' against a wall that suggested they had been built by the Pharaohs), but the less-is-more techniques Lortie has so successfully used with *Carbon 14* and Lepage went completely out of the window.

**THE SURPRISE ENTRY** among the big musicals was *La Cava*, for which the omens were not at all auspicious: widow of film producer adapts her novel about eighth-century Spain, LA Actors' Gang composer famed for Batboy supplies songs, Victoria Palace is hired. But wait - who are these local lads riding to the rescue? It's the Maddie team of Stephen Keeling, Shaun McKenna and director Steven Dexter, plus clever choreographer Mitch Sebastian and master arranger John Cameron. I don't know how much input the Maddie folk had, but this show has some fine music and intelligent lyrics, a complex, morally interesting plot and a total production-team confidence that may be misplaced but could carry it to greatness. Even the critics found they could for once do more than sneer.

**GRAND BUT APPROPRIATE** sets come from Francis O'Connor, brilliantly seizing the chance to decorate a big musical and supplying a final coup de théâtre which ranks with the unleashing of John Napier's junk-barricades in *Les Mis*. Chris Ellis continues to demonstrate his enjoyment of lighting musicals with some really operatic big bright moments and some dramatic chiaroscuro, from what I took to be pretty conventional kit. And Clement Rawling has supplied a sound system that can cope with high-class singers and give them room to breathe against a terrific orchestral score. Apart from its silly title, which is actually Spanish for harlot, *La Cava* has a lot going for it. Cross your fingers . . .

"Every knob on the mixing desk seemed to be set at full, so that rather than complementing each other, singers and soundtrack competed over which could do the most damage to the eardrums."

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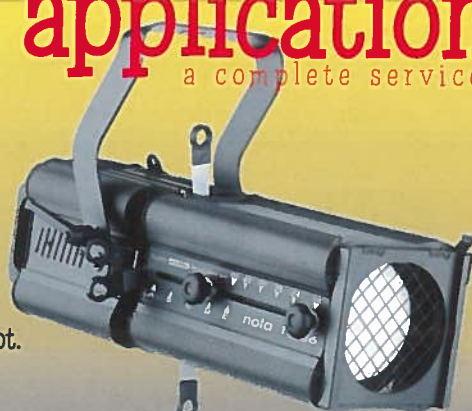
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TOURING

# Supernatural

**Is it me, or has Carlos Santana got abnormally short arms? He spends so much time down the bottom end of the fret board you begin to wonder if it's a genetic pre-disposition? I'm being facetious, of course, but just how does he maintain those rounded tones when the notes he produces are so high up the scale? That's some trademark he's got there. Smooth, pardon the pun, is right; he's been making music in this way for four decades. Then and now, it's delicious to listen to.**

"Every show has been absolutely rammed," commented Remmi Decht, a member of the lighting crew. It's a statement that will come as no surprise to those who recognise a demand-led market, stimulated no doubt by the award of nine Grammys earlier this year. Wall-to-wall arenas for this tour then, but in Holland they know a thing or two about music. While other European nations normally confine Santana to theatres, it would seem the Ahoy is a regular stop for Carlos and the band. Cynics could be forgiven for thinking that may be something to do with the sickly-sweet fog of good hashish that suffused the hall this evening, but there's more to it than that. Straight or high, it's damned good guitar playing.

It's easy to imagine how a Santana lighting show might be. Look at an album cover, not least the latest, *Supernatural*, and you visualise something leaning toward the mystical, metaphysical, spiritual, and above all colourful. Santana is an opportunity to indulge in the slightly garish palette that characterises Eastern and South American religious iconography. Designer Stan Elleflot is a perfect candidate to realise this potential. He has been with the band seven years and prior to that was a resident LD at the Fillmore in San Francisco.

It was Elleflot's desire to return to his home city of Seattle that led him to Santana. He needed a band to work for that would provide the income support for his change from 'in house' to 'on tour'. Considering where he worked it could have been many bands, but wisely he's chosen one that, if the past is anything to go by, will tour and tour for years. In keeping with the band's well-rooted origins, few will be startled to learn that prior to Elleflot's arrival, most Santana light shows were strictly traditional - plenty of Pars, a scattering of profiles and some lavish backdrops. Not much has changed, this is a simple design, but very effective.

"Before we introduced video and moving lights it was all about getting a light on the soloist," said Elleflot. "Carlos has always been very keen on that." Not as simple as it sounds - there are 10 band members, and when Elleflot says 'soloist' he's referring to the tiniest of flourishes, a phrase here, a handful of notes there. As each musician embellishes the melody, Elleflot follows with a few seconds of subtle fade-in, and then, like a zephyr, it's gone. But that's the elegance of Santana, blink and you miss it.

"He also likes the backdrop well-lit when it's exposed, and he likes light on the audience. He really works off them; it's where he gets his energy. In his performance he is trying to make a statement, to make contact with his audience," which he demonstrably achieved throughout this show. Truth is, Elleflot could probably leave his four-cell Moles on the audience at 50% fade all the time, "But I do try to restrain myself." Which is amusing coming from a man as self-evidently laid-back as Elleflot.

The arrival of video and moving lights has not had as big a stylistic influence as you might imagine. The video is restricted to playback: PSL USA has

provided a pair of projectors, truss-mounted, that put image onto a 7m diameter screen (fabricated by LSD in Birmingham, LSD being the lighting supply company of choice). Steve Falconer controls the VT, mostly images that we might characterise as animated versions of album covers, though there is some beguiling footage of Latino girls and boys.

"We started with LSD Icons four or five years ago, and I've since used Morpheus a fair bit. But I like the Icons, not so much for the lamp, which is fine, but because the board is so easy to use." Elleflot revealed that he is a competent and comfortable Icon operator, but not the fastest when it comes to programming. This tour had just one technical day at the first venue - no real rehearsal at all. "So I pulled in Alastair Bramall-Watson who's proved to be perfect. We just programmed in a general vibe for each song, and he and I worked at developing one song a day," something they continued to do throughout the actual show, when sitting behind them it was quite evident from the wild hand gestures that they were discussing ideas. "The desk is so easy to busk with, and Alastair instinctively does just the sort of things I would do."

That's not to say Elleflot doesn't have any direct lighting input. He uses an Avolites Rolacue Pearl for the 120 Pars, dozen Source Four Profiles and 50-odd Chroma-Q colour scrollers, and like Watson, makes up cues on the fly during the show. But Watson was obviously beginning to learn the musical detail, particularly with Chester the keyboard player, where Elleflot was content to let the Icons do the work instead of the ETCs. "When I ran the Icon console myself, I used to do the pick-ups with the Icons, but many of them are so small that it's faster and tidier to do it with the conventionals." Which is exactly as happened, Bramall-Watson taking the big solos, Elleflot the passing nuances.



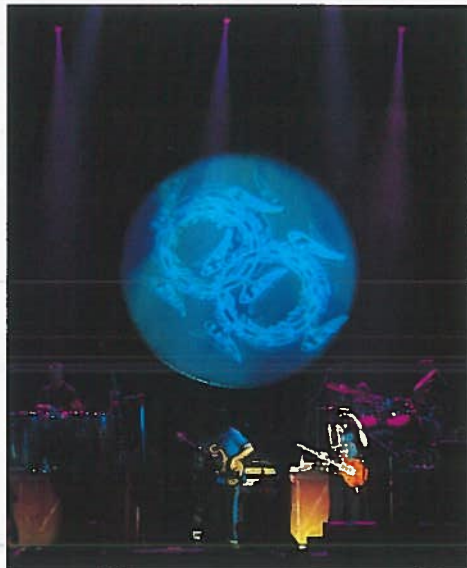


Randy Piotroski has, like Elleflot, been working for Carlos for some years. As he is a former long-term employee of Showco, it's no surprise to find their Prism system at work on this tour. "But I do use other systems, and there are plenty of good ones out there these days," he admitted graciously. Piotroski's other regulars are Linda Ronstadt and a band called the Big Bad Voodoo Daddies, who are selling big time in the States.

Piotroski has eschewed the usual Showco Harrison console for a Midas XL4: usual reasons - "Mic pre-amps, and the EQ," but he is a big fan of the new Showco/Harrison all-digital console, which he'd recently used for a 20-band, one-day festival, "took me two minutes between acts to prepare. Shame there's only four consoles in existence and they're so expensive." No doubt time will heal that wound.

The big thing for Piotroski in a Santana show is dynamics. "Carlos likes to cover all the parts as best he can," meaning everything that was put into the recording in the studio, he wants to hear in the live arena. One reason why Brian Montgomery on monitors was unable to fit everything stage-wise onto his Heritage 3000, and needed another 16 channels of XL3 stretch. "I've got six channels of playback, going to every single mix on the stage, just so they can listen to stuff Carlos wants them to learn."

There's obviously nothing routine when it comes to Santana tours. What forces the changes, and accentuates the on-stage dynamics, is virtuosity: "There are changes, like when Chester (keys) takes over the bass because the bass player is off playing something else," continued Piotroski. "But that doesn't happen too often." Whereas the stylistic changes, mid-song, can be quite acute. "The biggest thing is that the music is drum-oriented - three of the 10 band members play variously, drums, congas and timbales, all with assorted percussion toys. And to keep that in perspective with the rest of what's happening is a key challenge. Generally, ambient



level on stage is around 101dbA," which wasn't a help to Piotroski in the Ahoy, a notoriously boomy room at the best of times, and most of the stage level comes from those self-same drums and percs. "Mic-wise I just have a couple of 414s for overheads, everything else on the kit is close-mic'd. Mainly Shure's B98, B52, B91 and a 98, with the hyper' cartridge for the Ride cymbal. I use a pair of studio mics, KSM 32s, on Carlos's Boogie (his main amp) front and back to enable me to bring his sound out, or take it back if I need to, and a 414 on his other amp. Most of the other stuff is D1'd, except all the other percs, which are on B98s. They all work well in this application, and there aren't many effects layered on top. A bit of reverb' for the vocals from a Lexicon 224, which I use split for the two vocalists, a TC Electronics M5000 doing the same for the toms and percussion, PCM80 on the snare, and another for guitars - just to thicken when Carlos is using acoustic, you understand. There is just one echo cue, and I only use DDL (digital delay) on the vocals in halls where I need to," certainly not the Ahoy.

Now Carlos does have a reputation for being a demanding task master - I have it on good authority that a predecessor of Montgomery's, on monitors, had his self respect totally demolished just a few years ago 'because it doesn't sound like it did last night' . . . Mr Santana neglecting to take into account the three and half thousand miles of Atlantic Ocean they had crossed, and the inherent differences of the venues. But Piotroski appears to have him tamed. "Carlos does come out during sound checks, and he likes to listen to every instrument. But he does understand the limitations of various halls; if I tell him a room is very boomy as it is here, then he'll take that on board." That being so, Santana need have no qualms; Piotroski kept a lid on the power, and as such produced a well-defined, well-separated sound from a busy mix. I'm not surprised he's Ronstadt's engineer of choice.

As has already been mentioned, Brian Montgomery has some unusual things to do down in monitor world. But playback apart, his job falls into two well-defined areas - Carlos, and the rest of the band. "I provide a total of 19 mixes, and four sub-mixes, which I feed to Chester, who has his own little Mackie mixer. He takes my stuff and mixes whatever of his own he wants with it."

The wedges, and there's lots of them, are all Showco SRMs, apart from the keys and drums, who also have 600 cabinets for some big, low-end feel. "The SRMs have a 12" driver in them, a choice of wedge entirely down to Carlos," explained Montgomery. So the truth is all those wedges are for him really? "Well kind of. The two lead vocalists both have Shure's in-ear system, though one of them only uses a single plug (all Futuresonics), and all the percussionists are on in-ears too. The wedges all carry a very full mix, and that is mainly for Carlos." Which is why the stage is not only littered with wedges, but has a pair of flown side-fills each side as well, giving Montgomery multiple source coverage, and thus enabling him to maintain relatively moderate stage levels.

Like Piotroski out front, Montgomery does little effect work on the stage sound, mainly reverb, Yamaha SPX 990s for the two vocalists, and a PCM70 for drums when he needs it. As for that over-stretched Heritage? "This is the second time I've used the new Midas board and it's just great. Easy to get around, I just wish it had more channels. Apart from the playback stuff on the Stretch I'm still using a further seven channels for the band, and Carlos has someone guesting on stage with him almost every night which soaks up the rest."

On the night, Piotroski made good work of ameliorating the worst effects of the room, only once did the low-end really lift off, and that a rumbling passage from the organ. Both vocalists came over strong, bright and clear, even Carlos's own passing contributions clearly discernible in the mix full of guitars and drums. All in all, very enjoyable. Be warned though, this music can be quite indulgent; if you're a recent convert, won over by the success of Supernatural, you may find your attention waning in the second hour. But persevere, the patient listener will be amply rewarded.

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CONNECTING THE WORLD



# Visual Artist



Barratt - the original and notorious guitarist with Pink Floyd. Barratt asked Peter to light the band. He was paid £25 a night for his efforts and used an eclectic assortment of doctored pieces of kit for the shows. He excelled at the chance to produce special effects. In the midst of the acid-era, liquid and oil projections were all the rage. However, Peter felt they'd been over-exposed and, consequently, become clichéd, particularly in California. He continually strove to produce new, more ambitious and increasingly outrageous lighting effects.

He worked a great deal with colour. A favourite was the high-speed, twin disk, colour strobe that induced hallucinatory faux colours which appeared from deep within the viewer's head. Try moving? Forget it, you just fall over. The disks also had another life as effective Frisbees, as they regularly escaped, describing a graceful arc from the projector gates: the toys, back then, were barely controlled.

By this time, Wynne Willson was touring regularly with Pink Floyd, steaming up and down the M1 in a transit van. Venues in the mid-sixties had no permanent lighting rigs at all. Routinely, gigs were performed with the house-lights on. So, it was a complete anomaly for a band to turn up with its own lighting kit and teams of blackout material and undergo

complex negotiations to get the house-lights killed for the show. Peter's 1000W incandescent Tutor 2 projectors, having never been seen outside the classroom, had a massive impact despite their low luminance.

By 1968, he was the lighting designer for a number of the mavericks of the day on both sides of the Atlantic including Yes, The Nice, The Move, The Jimi Hendrix Experience as well as Pink Floyd. During his years with Floyd his obsession for incorporating mirrors as lighting devices began. He remembers a "seriously wild" show in The Roundhouse in 1968 when he lit the entire performance using long focal length lenses with gobo projections and suspended mirrors. The mirrors were mounted to give infinite focus and were moved manually! They could also be strummed to produce lisajous patterns and rapid scanning effects.

However, he also had his mind on other things and during 1968 he went on the first of his infamous walkabouts - to a monastery in Algeria to chill out. He returned some time later and enjoyed a period of occupational therapy as a roofer and joiner in his native Derbyshire Dales.

But he was soon back and in 1970, as the psychedelic era gave way to disco, he founded The Light Machine Company. In addition to its own products, he was approached by companies such as Optikinetics and Rank Strand to design 'moving wallpaper' disco effects, containing prism devices with which he'd first experimented almost a decade earlier. A diversion into Xenon lamps in 1980 produced the highly collimated beams of rock band Rainbow's 'steerable' xenon eyes.



**N**owadays, Wynne Willson sits in his airy Kentish Town studio with a relaxed aura - charismatic, philosophical, approachable. This den of innovation overlooks the spear of railway lines heading North from Euston and Kings Cross, but it is the rail maintenance yard below, with its giant rail-going cranes, coming and going that fascinates the nomad within.

He admits to being a "sucker for the roar of the crowd". The studio is packed with contraptions in various stages of development, being worked on along the lines of 25 ideas yielding five prototypes, of which maybe one will become a real client project. Books, drawings, computers, lighting paraphernalia, not to mention a full set of lovingly-maintained metal-working machinery and well-preserved hand tools create an eerie sense of calm amidst the creative frenzy. It's easy to imagine him sitting there contemplating, and dreaming up his next idiosyncratic lighting contrivance.

So where does his unusual meld of science and art come from? His lighting career kicked off in 1962 at his local repertory theatre in Buxton, Derbyshire. When the season finished, he headed to London and ended up working in the West End on a variety of shows, continuing through 1964. This epoch concluded in 1965 with Peter, at the young and tender age of 17, as first electrician and board operator for the original production of *Oliver!* at The New Theatre (now the Albery). He remembers the board, which worked via large dials and Thyatron valve dimmers, with great fondness. It was during this period that his renowned penchant for adapting, moulding and customising equipment for specific and unusual applications was spawned.

At that time he was living in a flat in Cambridge Circus where one of the other tenants happened to be Syd

*Peter Wynne Willson is the inventor of countless weird and wonderful lighting and optical effects and remains one of the genuine 'nice' guys in this 'me' society. He's not misplaced his altruistic sixties values and simply put, he is still one of the industry's most colourful characters. Louise Stickland gets under his skin . . .*





Facing page, Peter Wynne Willson and his liquid and oil projections for Pink Floyd. The Daleks are seen below.

Left, a Pancan rig for Carrie, and right, the Razorhead hook up for Red Bull



head of his time, as usual, by the end of the seventies, Peter decided that theatre should be ripe for moving mirrors with inbuilt colour change - more for their beam repositioning capabilities than as effects lighting. He designed the Pancan system, which could be retrofitted to theatre luminaires or PAR cans, winning the ABTT hook-clamp award in 1981. This was the genesis of the current genre of repositioning mirror lighting systems. It became very popular in discos, eventually selling worldwide by the thousand. Peter had his first mass production item on his hands. He quickly realised that his enjoyment stopped at the prototype stage. His "I hate it when it gets real" philosophy endures to this day, where his current ideas are licensed to others beyond the design stage.

Later, feeling theatre was not taking enough notice, director Terry Hands was persuaded to use a large centre-stage Pancan rig in Stratford, a first for the Royal Shakespeare Theatre, for the infamous production of *Carrie*. Now on a roll, *Quasimodo* followed suit at the Edinburgh Festival. The production was lit completely with moving lights.

In 1986, after deciding manufacturing was not for him, or perhaps vice versa, Peter teamed up with the redoubtable Tony Gottelier to form WWG. Tony, who had been one of Peter's original customers at Light Machine Co, had been re-infected in 1981 with the Wynne Willson imagineering virus while collaborating with him on the lighting design for Camden Palace which featured a large Pancan system.

Gottelier's skills as a designer of lighting schemes, and Peter's as imagineer seemed to be the perfect match, giving the partnership an edge years before Disney made the genre its own. Despite their chalk-and-cheese characters, WWG still thrives and survives.

Wynne Willson's Caterpillar kinetic light creatures uncurled themselves in 1988. Their interaction with the Gargoyles in *Quasimodo* stole the show every night! They continue to enthral, under the distributive aegis of Lighting Technology, and have even been spotted wormed into the Millennium Dome.

The small aperture, patented, twin axis, global moving-mirror device was finally tamed in 1994 and licensed to Coemar (as the NAT TM). Also in 1994 Pink Floyd asked Peter to recreate his effects from 30 years earlier for their Division

Bell stadium tour. The 6kW liquid projections were a major challenge, even with the assistance of 22kW of air conditioning, but it was the colour strobe (or 'Daleks' as they were known) that became the first toy to rebel and attack its master.

A successful Frisbee-and-shatter, by a fast-spinning one meter diameter composite glass disk after a minus 14°C chill test, has left dichroic glass still embedded and glinting in the walls and ceiling of WWG's London Studio six years on. The toys had now acquired teeth, but they completed the tour without further breakage!

The periscope genie popped out of the bottle again three years later, in the guise of the "NAT on steroids", as U2 lighting director Bruce Ramus described it, when six giant 45cm diameter versions powered by 7kW xenon searchlights, and appropriately called RazorHeads, lit up U2's Popmart tour.

Willie Williams, U2's show designer, and Bruce Ramus had come to the studio to look at some giant multi-axis caterpillar prototypes for the forthcoming world tour. Bruce, thumbing through a scrap book, spied a photograph of a 7kW xenon large-bore, double-mirror mock-up for a moving searchlight. The rest is history - the complex units were built in four months flat, Peter lost a stone in weight during the gruelling

first two weeks of the tour and Gottelier remains unamused to this day.

As part of the subsequent and very necessary detox process, a 10kW Super RazorHead and generator were taken by 'Ginger' Willson to Austria for a white knuckle, daredevil performance, where they were slung beneath a civilian helicopter and flown in close formation with the Austrian Army at the Red Bull-sponsored, Wiener Neustadt International Airshow, directed by Tom Donnellan.

The last 18 months has seen Peter as active as ever, with the Chromascope convolving colour fader; a Dalek and RazorHead hybrid as part of a rope trick for Paul Frielander's *Dark Matter* at the New York Hall of Science; liquid projection (with some new tricks) for Roger Waters' current sell-out American tour; a clever visual pun with Anna Hill's *Bronze Sonata* at the ICA (featuring sculpture, Beethoven's Cello Sonatas and a bronze, standing, wave tank); and the development of *Fantôme*, a double-mirror automated luminaire based on a Juliat zoom-profile, for the Royal Opera House.

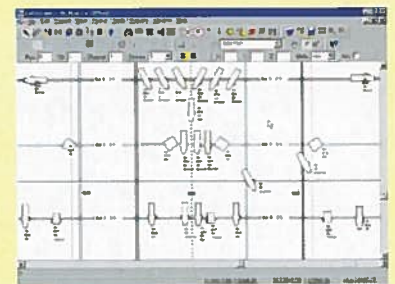
Now it seems that the wheel has turned again as we are tiring of flashing, wiggling lights, and the mood-enhancing ambience of projection is ruling once again. As for the future - well, there is plenty more hidden away, and with top secret development projects for two of the industry's best-known manufacturers, there is no shortage of stimulus! But most importantly, it is refreshing to find that Peter Wynne Willson retains all his essential energy, spirit and sense of adventure in light - long after many of his contemporaries have swallowed the bitter pill of cynicism.



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# Night with the Stars

*Ruth Rossington visits the recently refurbished Open Air Theatre in Regent's Park*

The Open Air Theatre in Regent's Park is often referred to as London's 'secret garden' and you'll understand why the moment you visit. Seemingly a million miles away from the bustle of the nearby A40, this enchanting venue, with its sweeping backdrop of trees and other-worldly feel, provides the perfect setting for Shakespeare. Which is why, since the early 60s, it has been the home of the New Shakespeare Company, though its history dates back much further, for the plays of the Bard have been performed every season since the Theatre was founded by Sydney Carroll and Robert Atkins in 1932.

But this year's season will be different - not because of the line-up of productions on offer: *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Pirates of Penzance*, *Alice, An Adventure in Wonderland* and *Much Ado About Nothing* have all been performed at the Open Air Theatre before - but because the venue has been the subject of a major upgrade, the starting point of which can be traced back to 1973 when David Conville, founder of the New Shakespeare Company, submitted plans for the provision of a new amphitheatre and associated works (at an estimated cost of £39,6001). He got his wish and a new auditorium was built, its seating capacity of 1,187 making it one of the largest theatres in London - larger, for instance, than the Barbican or the National's Olivier Theatre. Unfortunately, Conville's money ran out before the bar and public areas could be completed which

led, in the years that followed, to a makeshift settlement of 'temporary' buildings and garden sheds added ad hoc as the need for more space arose. By anybody's standards the facilities were pretty rudimentary.

By the late 90s, the situation hadn't improved. Picnicking audiences enjoyed a view of rubbish bins and parked cars; moving scenery backstage still involved negotiating an obstacle course of roots and muddy tracks; cables snaked around trees and under rubber mats; lighting was rigged on ugly 'scaff' towers and references to 'magical summer evenings at London's most beautiful theatre' provoked derisive laughter from staff who crossed their fingers for each licensing inspection and dealt daily with ancient drainage, creaking technical facilities and chronic shortage of space.

Faced with the need for drastic action, but without the wherewithal to fund it, the New Shakespeare Company submitted an 'Advance Notice' to the Arts Council signifying its intention to apply for capital funding. The application, for £2.5million, was rejected almost a year after its submission, but a revised bid of £1.5million was later accepted. Following the '98 season, work began in earnest, but it was not until October '99 that the bulldozers were finally able to move in and demolish all the temporary structures on the site. Last month, following one of the wettest Aprils on record (which considerably bogged down progress), the

Theatre reopened for its summer season and the outside world had its first chance to assess the scope of the renovations.

That they got to do so on a production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was entirely appropriate, since this was the play Sydney Carroll chose to launch the venue in 1932. And in its new setting it looked stunning, the credit for which must go to Haworth Tompkins Architects, recently praised for their work on the Royal Court, who together with Andy Hayles of Theatre Projects Consultants (TPC) and the on-site technical team - resident lighting designer Jason Taylor, chief sparks Stuart Saunders, sound designer Simon Whitehorn and head of sound Angela McCluney - have steered through an upgrade which is totally sympathetic to the unique nature of the venue.

It has been as all-encompassing as it was possible to be, given the curtailment of the company's original bid. The picnic lawn and bar areas have been expanded, there are now improved facilities and access for the disabled, and all the technical, backstage and catering facilities have been modernised, bringing the venue into line with current Health & Safety requirements. The grant has also allowed for a small amount of architectural landscaping and planting to add to the natural beauty of the theatre. Originally it had been envisaged that the seating would be upgraded, a new box office would be installed and better sound and control facilities would be possible, but the funding wouldn't stretch this far, so these ambitions have now been parcelled into a notional phase two, which will begin when the money is in the bank.





As is the way of these things, much of the essential expenditure has been on unglamorous and often invisible items such as drainage and service trenches, not to mention technical infrastructure. Fundamental to all of this has been the installation of new lighting and power circuits throughout, which have stabilised what was previously a somewhat erratic supply. Above ground it has manifested itself in a new technical walkway which now curves round the back of the auditorium, providing a useful platform from which to hang both lighting and sound equipment and punctuated by five new lighting towers. Beneath these sit new control rooms for both lighting and sound, though these are not as extensive as originally intended. There's also a neat innovation front of stage in the form of four truss towers, built by Prolyte, which can be 'plugged' into a series of 10 concrete bases as needs dictate. Based around Prolyte's S-Tower system, these offer unique load and wind-bearing capabilities.

Although the above implies that the team concentrated on infrastructure, it had elected early on that spend on infrastructure would not exceed the essentials and that the remainder of the budget would go on new equipment.

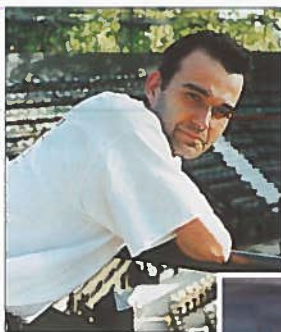
For the audio team of Whitehorn and McCluney, this was a chance to completely rewrite the sound specification. To help them in this, they called in The Sound Company who immediately put Richard Eliot in the chair as project manager. Together they devised a system that would not only deal with the excesses of the English weather, but one which would address the unique needs of the venue.

The spec itself embraces a core of d&b speakers (C6s, E3s, E18 subs) powered by dedicated d&b amps, and has a 40-channel Yamaha 02R desk in control. The C6s are positioned three either side of stage in a nominal pros position, though this being the great outdoors, there is no real proscenium arch. Although the C6s are, on occasion, used for vocal reinforcement, they are there principally for the spot effects and the music sequences. Backstage, a pair of d&b E18 subs, used both to support the C6s and provide spot effects in their own right, are neatly tucked in the bushes.

Front of stage, there are currently four d&b E3s, though the intention is that this number will rise to eight for the *Pirates of Penzance*. Positioned on the lighting towers either side of stage are another pair of E3s, principally acting as delays and providing vocal reinforcement. At the back of the audience, hanging from the technical walkway, are 16 of Canford Audio's BP400s - tiny speakers



Left, Andy Hayles of TPC on one of the five rear lighting towers. Below, Stuart Saunders and inset, Angela McCluney. Bottom, *Midsummer Night's Dream*



which act as secondary delays and provide vocal reinforcement for the rear-most rows of the audience. Finally, a pair of Tannoy speakers are used for rear spot effects.

For the most part, the boxes have been hung in sheltered positions,

but as added protection against the weather, Simon Johnston and the team at d&b UK customised the speakers. Handles have been removed so that pools of water cannot collect in the handle bases, metalwork has been made from stainless steel and the cones have been doped with a water-protection coating.

The unpredictability of the space meant some acoustic treatment was necessary, so acoustic baffles have been interwoven in the wooden fencing at the rear of the auditorium, which in itself also acts as a

reflector. However, little could be done to address the fact that the Park is on a flightpath, and performances are routinely punctuated by the drone of planes or helicopters, not to mention ambient noise from around the Park.

The money has also bought a host of other kit and alongside the 02R is an Akai sampler, two PCs (one running G-type software, the other running Soundweb control software), a pair of BSS

Soundwebs configured as a 16 x 16 digital matrix, two Minidisc machines and a CD player. There's also a fair supply of Shure and Audio Technica mics. (The desk, sound rack, computers and Soundwebs were supplied by Marquee Audio).

Oxford Sound also refurbished the two-zone paging system (based around DNH speakers) which splits across the front-of-house and back-of-house areas. Facilities for the hard-of-hearing are provided using a short-range FM transmitter fed with show relay. FM had to be used as the seating structure is not suitable for conventional Induction Loop technology, and infra-red doesn't work too well in open spaces.

For the provision of lighting equipment, Taylor and Saunders turned to White Light's projects team for advice, having enjoyed a successful collaboration earlier in the year at the new Soho Theatre. The equipment subsequently specified was based on Taylor's experience of many years and was designed to cope with both the rep' system the theatre runs, with a minimal changeover time between shows, and with the vagaries of Britain's summer weather, which isn't always friendly to lighting equipment rigged outdoors.


As a result, White Light supplied the theatre with a new core rig of Strand SL profile spotlights, including five 5°, 30 10°, eight 19° and 16 23/50° zoom units. The new rig also features 70 Thomas Par 64s, eight floor Pars and worklights to attach to branches around the site. The Regent's Park team also wanted to add colour scrollers to the rig - and 10 of Wybron's weatherproof Aquaram scrollers met their requirements perfectly.



Control for the new rig is from Avolites' ART2000 48-way dimmer racks controlled by a new ETC Expression 3x lighting console, which runs through the theatre's existing ETC Reflexion



back-up unit. White Light also provided flightcasing to protect the equipment when not in use and mains distribution to make it all work!

Whilst the sound team has to contend with low-flying aeroplanes and the rumble of traffic, the lighting team is dogged by aviators of another kind - pigeons - whose appetite for sitting on barn doors knows no bounds. Perhaps they're partial to the Bard too.



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**W**ell, I did issue a warning last month that it's tennis time again.

As I write, Wimbledon is in full swing and if you're lucky enough to be involved it takes over every waking hour. For those of you that haven't got the bound

version of these articles, I'll risk repeating a description of how it all works.

**UNTIL ABOUT FIVE YEARS AGO**, the TV circus assembled itself in a more or less random way in a field which soon became a forest of cables, OB trucks, caterer's tents, generators - you name it. The so-called studios were mainly in portacabins that were stacked five-high if my memory serves me right. Some, usefully, had windows overlooking the lesser courts.

**RECENTLY 'THE CLUB'** built a pretty ambitious media centre (actually, very ambitious, given that it's only used for two weeks each year) which comprises perhaps

20 four-wallers all with a view and a complete floor beneath providing rooms for broadcasters to use as control rooms, edit suites and so on. If we put aside for one minute the attention that was given to the provision of power, cable runs,

loading bays and the like, it all works pretty well. If the reported costs of the TV rights, £60million for America and another £60million for Europe are correct, then I guess the broadcasters deserve a roof over their heads, although I believe the rental of the facilities is extra.

**ANYHOW, FROM AN ITINERANT LIGHTING DIRECTOR'S POINT OF VIEW**, to move into a space with power and a basic pipe grid gets you off to a good start. The military-type gentleman who runs the TV facilities with a rod of iron says I use more power than the rest combined. An intended slur which I take as a compliment, if he did but know it. His job of trying to discipline a small army of broadcasters from around the world is a tough one. If he could, he would have us all on parade every morning and tell us to get our hair cut. As it is, we must follow the old adage - 'If it moves salute it, if it doesn't paint it' (green in this case). Some of the salutes are a bit dubious, I've noticed.

**SO, IS ALL SWEETNESS AND LIGHT AT WIMBLEDON?** Well, not quite. When the media centre was built, the BBC had a major hand in the design, and as I've said, with pretty good results. But in spite of several lively debates with the eminent lighting men involved (hereafter referred to as the guilty parties) after four years of struggle I still cannot forgive them for the vertical glass in the windows. 'I misheard - you didn't say 'vertical' did you Watty?' Yep, I kid you not, it's vertical.

**NOW IN SPITE OF BILL GATES**, Dolly the sheep and rocket science, angle of incidence still equals angle of reflection - more's the pity. Stand in front of a sheet of glass when it's darker outside than in and it becomes a mirror. I think it was Pinter who once wrote "It must be right, it's down here in black and white." The club insists

on point six of ND (so as not to distract the players) so night falls on television at least two hours ahead of time. We use more flags than the trooping of the colour and a lot more blackwrap in a vain attempt to hide the more obvious eggcrates on the soft lights. We also persuade the crew to wear dark clothes but, like marriage, it's all a triumph of hope over experience.

**WHY I GO ON ABOUT THIS YEAR AFTER YEAR** I'm not sure. Sheer frustration I suppose - you get the same problem with shop windows of course, but a poster saying 'Sale Starts on Thursday' usually does the trick. For producers straight out of university and accountants, I should point out that there's no particular significance in the day of the sale, just in case you were wondering.

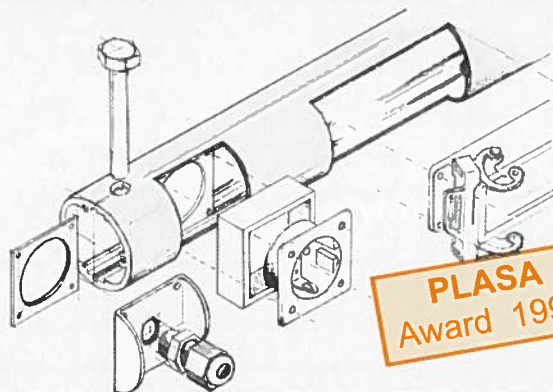
**SO WHAT OTHER FACTORS DIRECTLY INFLUENCE** the quality of the pictures emanating from this high profile event? Well, the possession of the appropriate pass - without one you're dead. Actually you need two, one for you and one for your car. Wimbledon is in a leafy suburb and a bit of a leg, as they say, from the station. Anyway, your car boot contains all the life support systems essential to lighting designers - gel, gaffer, gobo holders and a poster saying 'Sale Starts on Thursday', so the car needs to be nearby.

**THIS YEAR, ARRANGEMENTS ON THE PARKING** front have been a dismal failure. We were allocated a space about a mile away across a golf course (it's two miles by road). This is bad enough in daylight, weaving around bunkers and trying not to knock up divots on the greens, but at night it's another story entirely. Come 11.30pm it's an alien place; all you want is a gentle ride home punctuated only by the flashes of speed cameras, not an orienteering exercise in the dark. Totally lost after 40 minutes of hacking about in the rough, gaffer Malcolm and I found our biggest handicap looming up in the shape of a six-foot fence. We made it over the top - just - landing in a lonely suburban street where our luck changed as a taxi hove into view. I'm getting too old for all this.

**WHAT HAS THIS TO DO WITH LIGHTING**, you may well ask? I'm sure the Editor will. Well, as my Wiltshire correspondent would say, it does illustrate the glamorous life we all lead. It also serves to remind me that real night lighting is not strong blue backlight and atmospheric pools of light behind trees in wisps of mist, but just plain dark in which you walk in to trees, brambles, abandoned cars - you name it.

"Now in spite of Bill Gates, Dolly the sheep and rocket science, angle of incidence still equals angle of reflection - more's the pity. Stand in front of a sheet of glass when it's darker outside than in and it becomes a mirror."

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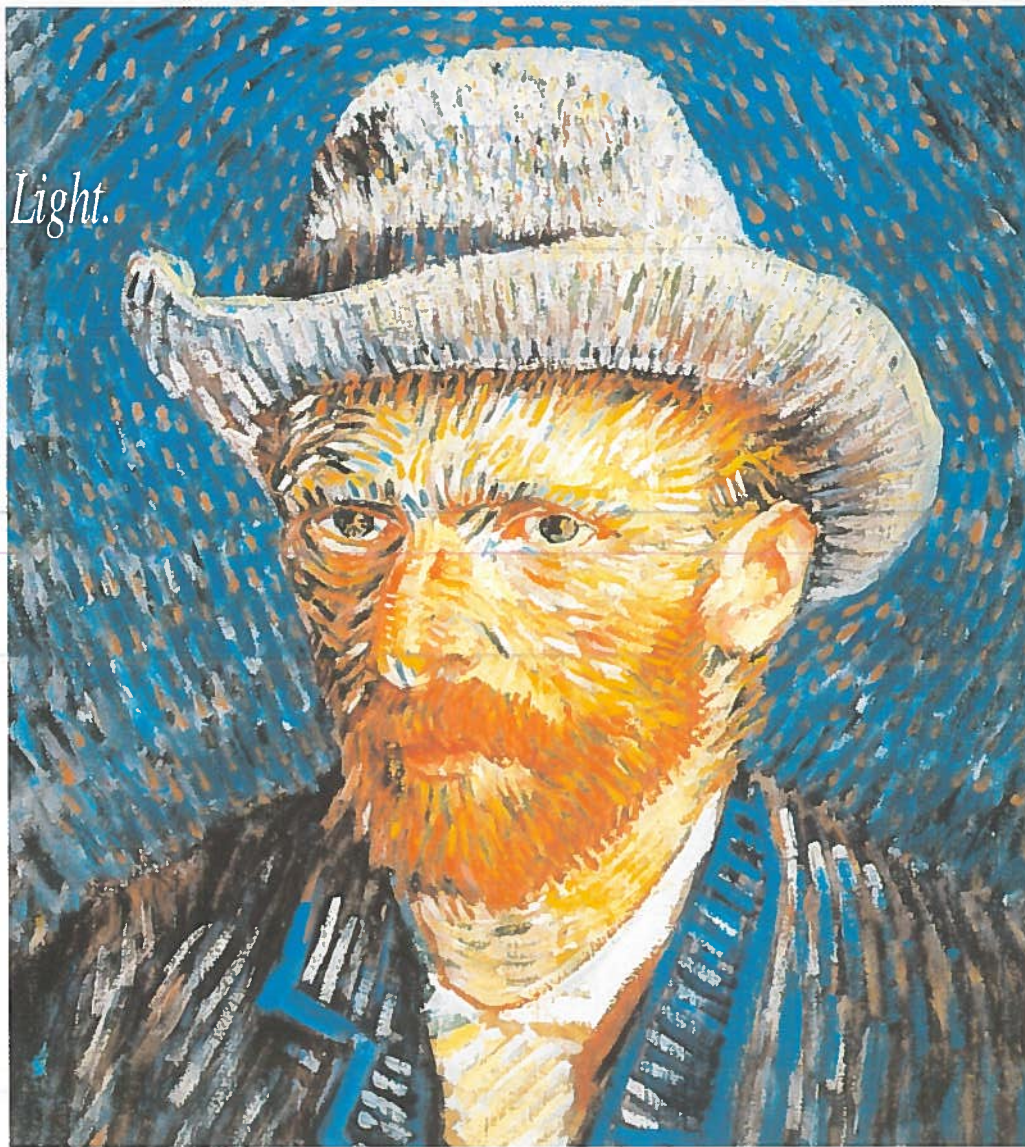
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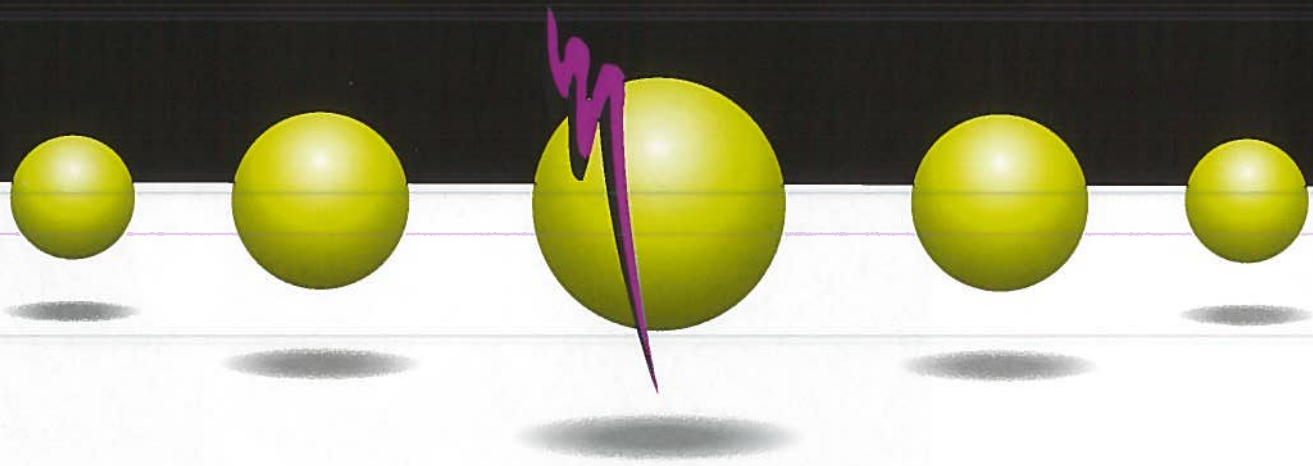
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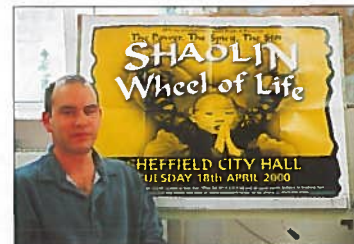




Photos: Richard Haughton

# Wheel of Life

**Who'd have thought that a tour by a group of Kung Fu practitioners would provide a model by which languishing production managers – run aground on the sandy banks of a shrinking music market – might re-float themselves? Steve Moles finds out**



Producer Steve Nolan

I kid you not, there's a concept here that warrants attention from every idling PM in the business. But I'm running ahead. Who are the Shaolin Monks and what is the Wheel of Life about? I don't mean to be pedantic (and with due reference to a colleague of mine on another journal) but, 'the West' is not familiar with the Shaolin Monks because of Bruce Lee Kung Fu movies: Lee might have touched on their significance, but rather it was the TV series starring David Carradine that informed the mass market. You remember - young oriental novice mentored by mystical tubby man with Ping-Pong balls for eyes?

That, in essence, is why the Abbot of the Shaolin agreed to this presentation - he felt it was an opportunity to convey the Buddhist ways to the world. The Shaolins tentatively dipped their toe in the water in late April, with just a two-week run: before the fortnight was over, bookings had been extended and the Wheel of Life continued through to the end of June. "We're then taking the show to Europe," said production manager Steve Nolan, "and we're already contemplating a return to the UK in the run-up to Christmas." Wheel of Life the next Riverdance, anyone? Well, before all you budding impresarios head off to China, you'll save yourself a lot of heartache if you read on and discover just what

makes this show work, and more importantly, how the whole thing came about.

Like all good stories there are always sub-texts: sometimes the hidden is more fascinating than the superficial, indeed sometimes what's fascinating is so far outside the storyline that we might miss it altogether. Wheel of Life is a prime example of this, and one that has great resonance for the production industry as a whole.

"It started back in early '98. I received a call from my friend Zhuan G Yubao," began Elizabeth Gardiner. "He'd just seen the Monks perform a martial arts demonstration in China and was impressed enough to want to bring them to the UK." Mr Zhuan (I should point out that's his second name, but the Chinese convention is to use it as the 'familiar'), has a background in the oil business out in the Far East, and his friend and correspondent back in England, Elizabeth Gardiner, was in banking. A more unlikely pair to produce a theatrical presentation of Kung Fu is hard to imagine.

Now some readers may recall L&SI covered a Shaolin Monks show back in '96. That was in essence one of their demonstration shows where the audience were treated to men breaking iron bars over their heads, and balancing their bodies

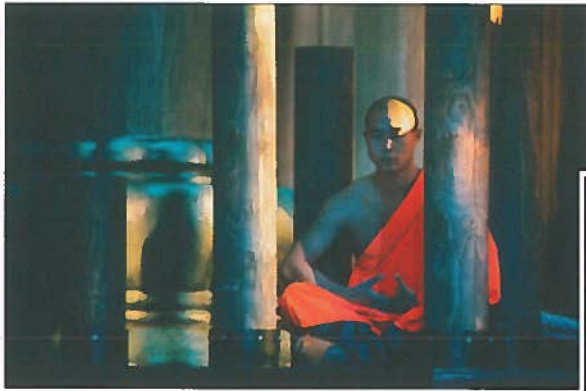
on the points of spears, but little in the way of a story. The performers were pupils from a Shaolin school; the Monks here, in Wheel of Life, are the real thing.

So how did a banker get the show on the road? "Well, I asked people for recommendations: who would be a good producer for the show?" A very practical approach that led Alan Pope at the Royal Albert Hall to put Gardiner in touch with Steve Nolan of Chromatic Productions. "Steve recognised straight away that if this venture was to be successful it needed something more than just a display of martial arts. He proposed the idea of a scripted show. In fact, we owe the whole thing to him," explained Gardiner.

It's at this juncture where the story differs from the norm, and where production managers everywhere might consider Nolan's actions. He brought in Micha Bergese to direct, Mark Fisher to design a set, Patrick Woodroffe to light it, and Darshan Singh Bhuller to choreograph. "The final key was getting Pete Wilson and Denis Arnold at AAA on board to promote it," Nolan added. Now that's a pretty high-powered team in anyone's book, and fair enough, Nolan is well-connected. But the essential point is this: normally, when a production manager like Nolan is







approached, the production to be managed is already developed. Here, Nolan was presented with a blank canvas and determined that he was perfectly capable of filling it himself.

Of course, filling that canvas was no small undertaking: Nolan spent two years working on the project, taking an idea and turning it into a reality. And in so doing created work for himself and many other people besides.

Mark Fisher designed the set, Chris French at Stone Monkey in Bristol being the lucky fellow to bring it all together. The company built the set late last year, for a preview show at the Gielgud Theatre, a time when many other set builders were up to their necks in the Dome. This made a taxing proposition for Stone Monkey. Much of their work is in steel, and Fisher's set pieces required an entirely new material for them to work with. "Most of it was GRP (glass-reinforced product)," Fisher explained. "There are four main set pieces. Four columns a metre in diameter and six metres high, made to look like solid oak with carved bronze bases. These were the trickiest because we had to adapt the tops, making them telescopic to give varying perspectives."

The pillars are used in various positions, to represent the Monastery interior, or the Emperor's Palace. French and his team had just 21 days to build the set from confirmation of order; fortunately, the adaptation to telescopic function came after that initial rush to build the set for the preview. Other scenic elements were less taxing. "For the logs, set end-up . . ." the monks do these training routines balancing on top of them " . . . we elected to use the real thing. They're mounted

on heavy transport bases that give stability and enable them to be brought onstage quickly." The other elements are more decorative, to embellish the oriental atmosphere - a throne on a riser, huge statues of Lions, and giant urns to be filled with smouldering joss sticks.

Patrick Woodroffe's lighting has a dual role in this piece. Naturally there's a heavy emphasis on 'theatre' in the physical shape of the design - lots of side booms; but that doesn't exclude him from drawing on his rock and roll influences for a bit of sparkle here and there. The rig content is a reflection of this duality, 46 Vari\* Lites (VLPS being the lighting contractor) of which 15 are VL6Bs, the remainder being 5s and 5As, but there's also 80 odd Pars, a pair of Lycian followspots, and eight Diversitronic strobes, no less!

Richard Gorrod is the incumbent operator for the tour, using a Wholehog II, which he programmed with Woodroffe during rehearsals. Some of the show is MIDI-controlled, sequences like the thunder and lighting scenes for example, the sound effects samples perfectly triggering the strobes in total sync, but there's plenty to keep Gorrod busy and there's no denying that the lighting motion adds to the sense of drama.

Just how you approach audio for a presentation that comprises basically mime and combat practice, with a little ritual thrown in, would, on the face of it, seem obvious. Did designer Simon Honywill decide to put a big stereo in the room? "Well, the thing is, it's entirely Barrington Pheloung's music," he of

Inspector Morse fame, "and the sound design has to take that on board big-time. Instead

of a flat, high quality playback system, I've gone for surround sound to create a strong atmosphere."

RG Jones is the supplier of choice for Honywill: "I've chosen Arc cabinets from L'Acoustics. I use 16, eight a side for the conventional left/right system, with four SP218s for subs. The surround system is a dozen NTD 108s, a small full-range cabinet containing an 8" and a 1" horn, and there are four SP115s spread around for subs."

Front-of-house, two Akai S5000 samplers run in sync from G Type software (one a back-up) which in turn are MIDI'd to the Yamaha 02R. A mixer? Yes, there are microphones used in the show. "There are radio mics on the three musicians, and flat mics for picking up sounds from the stage. The delay for the system is set in the XTA DP226s, which are already there for system management. We're using the Sony Freedom system, six receivers all in a rack 1U high. It seems to be working well - when you set up at a new venue the first channel analyses the local environment for background RF and then selects the best frequency for all six channels. As for the mic' capsules, we've put them on their wrists."

Now that the show has emerged from its initial birth pangs, and looks set for some commercial success, the production team have had a chance to cast an objective eye upon their progeny. "When we go and see it now, it's like the school boys have taken over the Common Room," said Woodroffe. "We're all looking around for the grown up and there isn't one, only us."

Bemused he may be, but not intoxicated: "We supported Steve in every way, being friends meant we always did that much more. Although we all took a part of the risk it's always been his thing." That 'thing' is a recipe built on one vital ingredient, as Woodroffe explained. "That combination of talent and experience must be very attractive to investors. The fact that we all have track records means a lot. But, you have to start with something that already looks wonderful, whether that's a group of bald men in lovely robes who move so gracefully, or a line of dancers. You have to pay attention to what's on stage."

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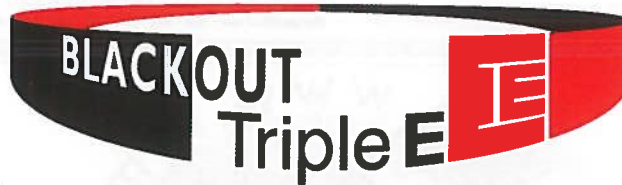
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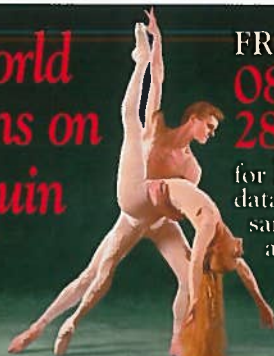
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Playlight Hire Ltd are suppliers of lighting and sound equipment to the conference, theatre and television markets. We have branches in Manchester and London and are currently looking to recruit full and part-time **warehouse technicians** with a good technical knowledge of sound, moving lights, mains distribution and dimming.

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### Please address correspondence to:

The Personnel Manager, Playlight Hire Ltd  
860 Coronation Road, Park Royal, London, NW10 7PS



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General duties include preparation of rental video equipment ranging from basic rentals to major systems for large projects. Appropriate training will be given and the post can be considered a good foundation and background to onsite show work.

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For further details, please send CV to:  
Miss Deon Fowler, Stageworks Worldwide Productions  
525 Ocean Boulevard, Blackpool FY4 1EZ  
email: deon.fowler@stageworkswwp.com  
www.stageworkswwp.com

Closing date for applications 28th July 2000

## tower:showrental

### HIRE MANAGER

The successful applicant would need to be fully experienced in the management of a busy hire facility, especially in the areas of:- lighting, rigging, control and staging. The ability to oversee the preparation and regular maintenance of equipment would also be required.

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#### Field Service Engineer

Location: London/South East • Salary £15k • Job Ref: 506/1

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Location: Worcestershire • Salary: £30-35k • Job Ref: 101/2

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#### Key Accounts Manager (x2)

Location: Field Based • Salary: 20-25K, OTE £35k • Job Ref: 073/1

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We are seeking an experienced Warehouse Manager to be responsible for our large inventory of stock, which covers lighting, sound, data, and video equipment. The position requires good management skills, all round knowledge of equipment and the ability to organise and work under pressure with a flexible attitude.

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For further information please see our website at [www.futurist.co.uk](http://www.futurist.co.uk)



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Joining a department of dedicated professionals, the Technical Show Managers will be expected to fully participate in providing technical back-up to assist colleagues in providing a first class service to all Hall users. Training in other technical disciplines will be provided where necessary to suitable applicants.

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**Kirsten Martin on 020 7 584 8392**

Closing date for receipt of application forms is Friday 21st July 2000



# In Profile...

## L&SI Talks to the Industry Trend-setters

**S**imon Baker, 27 years of age, is the new kid on the block at Autograph Sound - though his career has included a three-year spell as a sound supervisor at the Royal National Theatre, and a period as a freelancer following his graduation from Guildhall School of Music and Drama in 1992. His impressive list of credits for the RNT includes *Closer*, *King Lear* and *Othello*, as well as designs for

productions staged at the Almeida, Lyric, Old Vic and Royal Court theatres.

As an experienced post-production editor, Baker was enlisted to produce effects for BBC2's *King Lear*, while his musical talents have led him to work for SC4, Scottish Film and a variety of eminent musical composers. These days, his time is divided between some of the theatre world's

best-known auditoria and Autograph's newly-rebuilt recording studio, where effects and music programming is carried out for both UK and international productions.

Given his breadth of experience, I asked him which type of work he liked best: "I prefer to be in the auditorium, rather than in the studio," he replied. "Even though I used to dread production periods as an operator, as a designer I love the atmosphere - especially if it's a small creative team and the whole thing isn't too drawn out," he added.

Despite being a part of the UK's foremost theatre sound design group, Baker is not content to rest on his laurels. "I want to see the day when sound design is recognised as an integral part of the creative process," he

explained, adding that even after the high-profile work of the likes of Andrew Bruce, the sound fraternity still has to fight for a poster credit. "I don't want to be seen as an assistant electrician who also does sound - but the change can only happen if we maintain and improve the quality of work that we all do."

Baker's pet hate is noise - from air-conditioning and lighting fans. "It's amazing - people have spent years taking the last click and hum out of complex audio systems, yet the ambient noise level on stage has gone sky-high. If you had a moving truck that made a noise, it would get fixed - so why should sound designers have to over-amplify voices just to make them audible?"

As a young sound designer, Simon Baker is part of a generation of industry professionals who are shaping the future of theatre. Where does he see the business heading? "I think that there will be more and more audio people merging into the video field - and then into mixed media design. If I was leaving college now, I'd be very tempted to go into video." Baker already has experience in the video and computer field; at the National he was responsible for the memorable Internet scene in the production of *Closer* that was staged at the Cottesloe. "This was the best moment of my career at the time," he recalled. "I'd been working on the scene since its inception. Achieving a simulation of an Internet chat room on a limited budget (by projecting PC-generated images onto an upstage flat) was really great - and it was lovely to repeat it every night."



Despite his keen interest in the visuals, Baker is highly motivated by the potential for increased accuracy and impact in the live sound domain, and is fascinated by the opportunity to explore audio modelling at Autograph. "The idea of using a 'miniature theatre' to pre-configure a TiMax or

LCS-based system is a great one," he enthused, adding that this would reduce the burden on the limited time available for sound during technical rehearsals.

Baker claims that when it comes to running a show, he is one of a dying breed. "There is a generation of people who left college after I did who are very happy to automate much more than I would be comfortable with, and who use multilayer assignable control surfaces," he conceded. "It's not second nature to me - even though, like most audio people, I use the latest technology in a studio environment." Baker cites his favourite piece of audio hardware as the industry-standard Akai sampler - "whichever version we're on now. I don't know how I could have done most of the work I do without it."

After his first 12 months at Autograph, how is the new boy settling in? "It's a very creative place to work - especially given the type of work that we specialise in. On a musical, as a sound person you are 'on' all the time - because of the nature of the show you have a much higher profile." Baker added that while this is good when things are going well, when they fall apart it's not so hot! So will the lure of video images lead him up a different career path in the future? Baker thinks not. After all, as he points out, the audience rarely goes away singing the set. ■

Lighting & Sound ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY

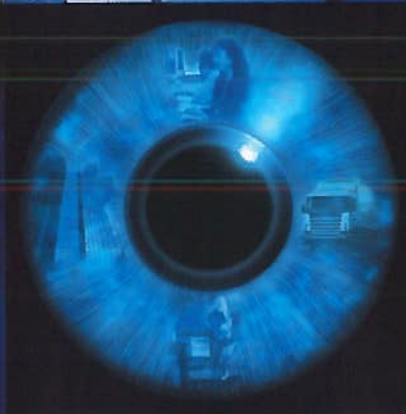
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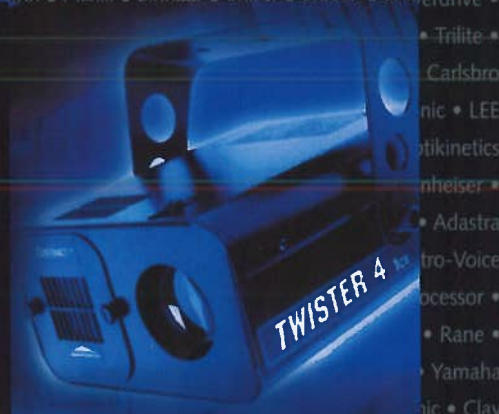


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