

Lighting & Sound INTERNATIONAL

August 2001

The Entertainment Technology Monthly

www.plasa.org/news

Final Frontier

- National Space Science Centre, Leicester

West End Boys

- Pet Shop Boys' Closer to Heaven

Fountain Studios

- UK's Largest independent television studios

Street Life

- Roxy Music at Sheffield Arena



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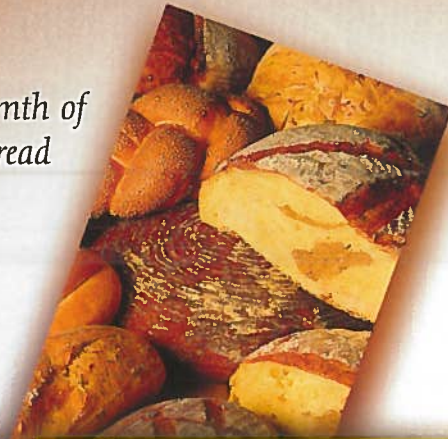
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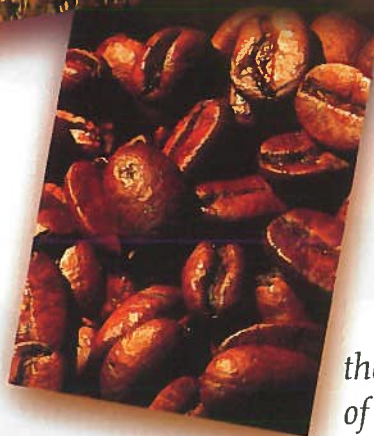
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*features vary by model

Lighting & Sound INTERNATIONAL

August 2001 Volume 16, Issue 8

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Lighting & Sound INTERNATIONAL

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International News Round-Up

log on to www.plasa.org/news for daily news updates

PLASA Show 2001 - 9-12 September, Earls Court 1

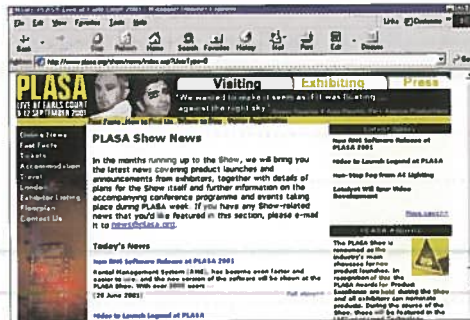
It's hot out there so it can only mean one thing - PLASA 2001 is within sight and if you haven't registered for the event yet, now's the time.

INNOVATION: the focus of PLASA is the exhibition, where over 400 of the industry's leading players will demonstrate to visitors the technical advances and innovations that will shape the future of the industry. The New Technology Gallery on the Top Deck, sponsored by our good selves, natch, showcases products nominated for the PLASA Awards.

KNOWLEDGE: PLASA offers visitors a chance to learn from the knowledge and experience of others. Through its Seminar, Masterclass and Training programmes, PLASA offers a diverse programme with broad appeal across the industry. A new feature this year are the technical courses, workshops and clinics, which will offer visitors practical advice and highlight both health & safety and business issues.

NEWS: PLASA is also the place to catch up with all the latest industry news and provides everyone with an opportunity to find out what's happening in the wider world. There's also a daily online news service recording each day's events.

EVENTS: PLASA is a highly active show. The floor of the exhibition hall is alive with conversation from the moment the doors open until they close at the end of the day. All this is



It's all Online - find everything you need to know at www.plasa.org/show. Alternatively call us on +44 (0)1323 418400 and we'll send you a Show Preview.

fuelled by a range of complementary activities, including a DJ Competition on the Sunday, the PLASA Awards for Product Excellence, the various Feature Areas, and the many events, press launches and on-stand receptions organised by exhibitors.

NETWORKING: PLASA provides the perfect opportunity to build your business by making new contacts. Visitors can take advantage of the many networking opportunities offered on the exhibition floor, plus those available in the more relaxed surroundings of the Platinum Club and the many bars and restaurants at ECI.

AFTER-HOURS: London is the entertainment capital of the world and after the business of the day is over, visitors can take advantage of all that the city has to offer... take in a show, have dinner with colleagues or attend a host of



parties at some of the most famous venues in London.

BACKSTAGE: And when the show is over, there's still a chance to find out more about how the industry works behind the scenes.

Theatrical London offers unique access to some of the capital's best-known theatres and entertainment venues to meet with the creative and technical teams. See our booking form on page 29.

YET MORE KNOWLEDGE: Because we understand the need for relevant, up-to-date information, we at PLASA Media have worked our furry socks off to make the PLASA Show Website the best source for all the information on the event that you could need. The website carries a full listing of all the exhibitors and a unique interactive floorplan designed to help you plan your visit. The site also features a dedicated news section which posts up daily the latest details of product launches and special events planned over the four days of the show.

SEPTEMBER ISSUE: Look out for major pre-show coverage, including highlights of new product launches and awards nominees.

REGISTRATION HOTLINE - +44 (0)870 429 4472



See the Entire Product Range at the PLASA Light & Sound Show, Stand G24 and at LDI Orlando, Booth 1457.

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Australian Lighting Association Proposed

On Thursday 12 July, a preliminary meeting was held at the Sydney Exhibition and Convention Centre, to seek interest in the formation of an Australasian association for all who share an interest in the art, science and technology of light.

With an overwhelmingly positive responses from this, and a follow-up meeting in Melbourne, organisers Andy Ciddor and Cat Strom (Forcer) have decided to press ahead in establishing an Australasian Lighting Industry Association, provisionally entitled ALIA.

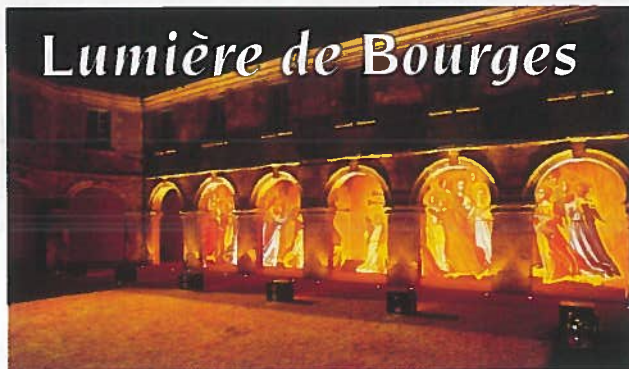
Discussions at the meetings were based around a widely-circulated proposal prepared by Cat Strom, Steve Furzey and Andy Ciddor, the text of which can be found on the preliminary

ALIA website - www.lighting-association.com.

It was agreed that a broadly-based and inclusive lighting industry association is a worthwhile goal. Members of Australia's existing lighting association, the Illuminating Engineering Society (IESANZ), who attended the Sydney meeting, took the proposal to a meeting of their IES Central Executive held in Sydney on the 19-20 July 2001. The provisional ALIA proposal was reviewed and it was felt that there were many areas that could be of mutual benefit to IES and ALIA memberships. A business plan for the implementation of the proposal is currently in preparation. Suggestions, support, comments and criticisms will be gratefully received at the e-mail address below.

mail@lighting-association.com

Lumière de Bourges



The Augustin Cloisters are one of the highlights of Les Nuits Lumière de Bourges - a season of lighting and sound shows run in the historic French town of Bourges during the summer months.

It's a multi-site Son et Lumière show - the audience sees the 90-minute spectacular on foot and stroll about 2km during the show, being guided by a blue line of light. At each of six main buildings or sites, they see and hear a show with dramatic lighting and projected images. The show was designed by Philippe Noir and Christine de Vichet. Lighting design by Pierre Boudeau and Vladimir Lyszczynski, sound by Daniel Deshays and images by Serge Fouillet. The main technical contractor for the event was AEB, with Cyclope providing the large format filmstrip projectors. Electrosonic France was responsible for overall show control and slide projection.

INVITATION

The Chiswick House 'Son et Lumière'

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What the Client said about last years son et lumiere-

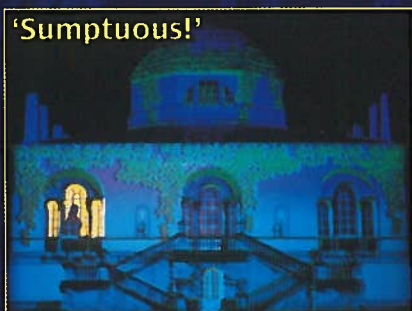
'With responses from the audience such as, "sumptuous.", "innovative.", and "cool.", we could not ask for more.'

Philip Butterworth - Hounslow Community Initiative Partnership

'It was a brilliantly researched and visually stunning event that vividly brought to life the fascinating history of one of the country's most glorious examples of 18th century architecture. We were more than pleased.'

Marion Docherty - Hospitality Manager Chiswick House

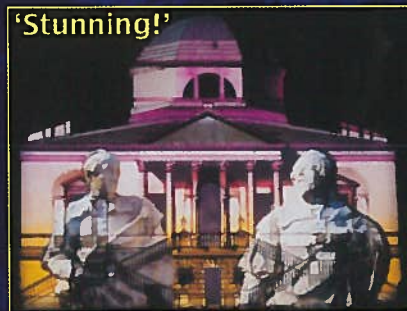
'Sumptuous!'



'Innovative!'

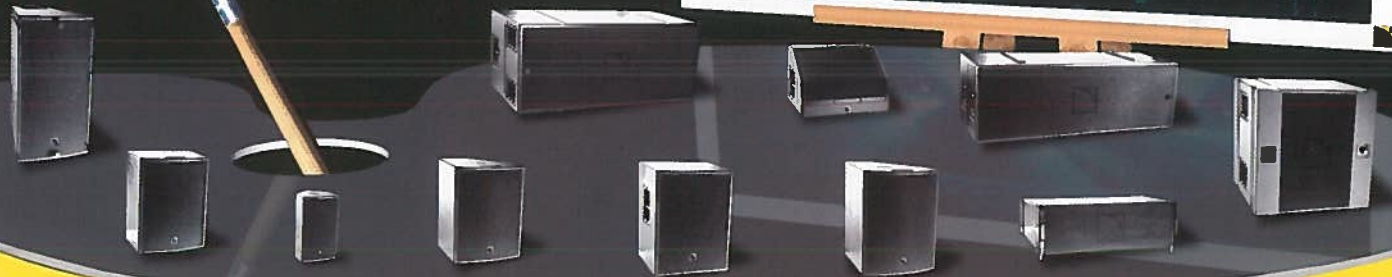


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News Round-Up



Fourth Phase London Reorganises

Just two years ago the PRG Group of lighting companies added Midnight Design and the Spot Co to its UK operation. At the time PRG's stated aim was the consolidation of the two companies with the recently-established UK branch of Production Arts, at the same time forging a working relationship with LSD in Birmingham. Indeed, well known lighting industry executive Alan Thomson was appointed specifically for that task, and was happy to announce last week, "it's a task we've just completed. The final shipment of equipment from the inventory of Production Arts has already been unloaded into our facility here in Croydon."

The integration of these three well-regarded companies into one unit has produced many changes besides the amalgamation of resources and inventory. The combination of experience and know-how has allowed expansion into new markets, not least continuing developments into West End Theatre, steered by Thomson. "But we're all creatures of habit and some changes didn't suit everyone," he admitted ruefully. That's no more strongly evidenced than by the decision of Midnight's founders, Dave Bryant and Mike Townsend, to return to their creative roots and slip the corporate fold. "Both men made a great contribution towards building the company into what it is today," said Thomson. "But increasingly it led them away from their primary talent, the lighting designs that made them famous. As such we have determined to make a distinct change of emphasis."

Fourth Phase London, as the combined elements are now known, will function primarily as an equipment and technical facility. "We now have lighting equipment to satisfy the demands of many markets," said Thomson.

Studiomaster Go Into Receivership

L&SI has received official notification that Studiomaster is in administrative receivership. The Milton Keynes-based company, which was officially registered as Studiomaster Diamond, had recently been experiencing problems with the chain of supplies from its Indian manufacturing plant and had been forced to contact customers advising them that the dispute had left them with no option but to put the company into administrative receivership.

Studiomaster was well known in the industry as a designer and manufacturer of professional audio equipment, a role it had been performing for over two decades, although the current company wasn't incorporated until 1991.

Its first ever products were power amplifiers followed quickly by mixing consoles for live sound. Around this time the first affordable multitrack machines appeared and Studiomaster designed a studio quality desk to meet the needs of amateur recording enthusiasts. In the years since it has pioneered console development, from the Series II, the first mixing console to incorporate MIDI automation, through to the first professional standard compact console, the 6-2-1.

It's not clear what will happen next - calls to the company are continually met by an engaged signal. However, in January this year, the company set up a new company simply called Studiomaster and we understand that it may well resupply products under the Studiomaster brand name sourced from an alternative manufacturer.

Baker Tilly has been appointed administrative receiver - at this stage they are unable to give any information regarding the financial position of the company, though they hope to establish this in the coming months and will then call a creditor's meeting. Any enquiries should be directed to them on +44 (0)1908 687800.

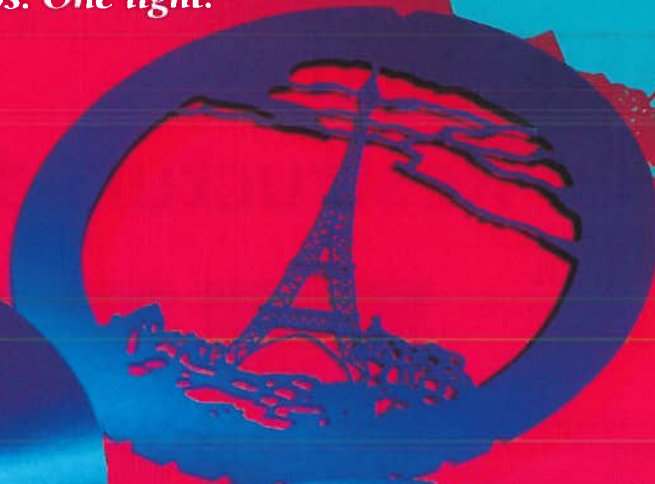
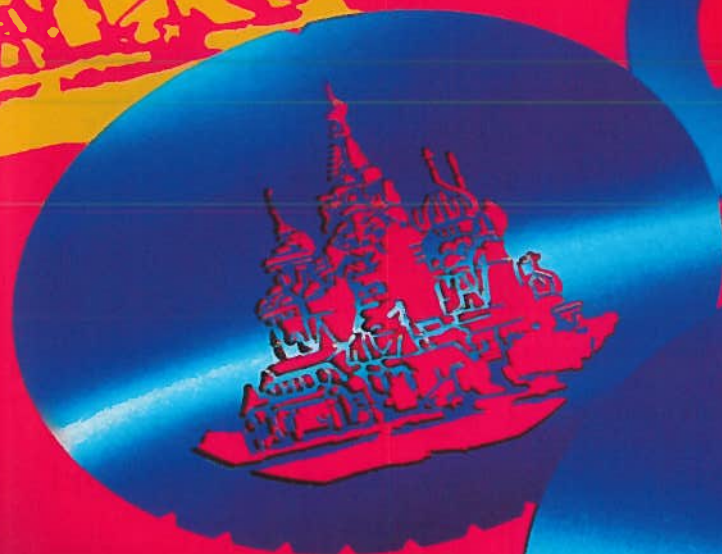
Nexo Lists on Paris Stock Exchange

French speaker manufacturer Nexo SA has made its debut on the Paris Stock Exchange. A minority percentage of its equity was sold, the majority by placement, and 10% by public offering. Both parts of the issue were in great demand, with the public part heavily over-subscribed.

Nexo is one of only a handful of European pro-audio companies to be taken public, a reflection on two decades of growth and solid international sales achievement. Micky Johnson, one of the founding partners of the company, detailed the rationale behind the flotation. "Primarily, the objective was to gain access to the capital markets to finance any large projects which may arise, as well as broadening the base of shareholders in the company. It is important to stress that there will be no change in the day-to-day running of the organisation, and that the board of directors will remain the same. With the valuation of the company's shares, we now have the opportunity to introduce a meaningful stock option plan to retain and motivate our key staff." In 1999, Nexo made its corporate debut on the North American audio scene with the opening of an office in California.

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Association NEWS

PLASA Head Office Restructured

PLASA has announced a significant restructuring of its Eastbourne-based Head Office.

The restructuring applies to the Association's Administration and Membership Services departments, and has been implemented to create a basis for the development of the Association's strategic plans over the next three years.

Matthew Griffiths, PLASA's managing director, explains: "The rationale behind the change was to create a structure which placed an emphasis on business development, and at the same time created a more cohesive umbrella for the Association's administration, Membership Services and Trade Development - the latter being an important Membership Service in itself."

As a result of the restructuring, Norah Phillips, formerly Membership Services Manager, has taken on responsibility for Business Development, with the brief to identify and research potential commercial opportunities for the Association, which can then be developed for the benefit of the PLASA Membership as a whole. PLASA's Membership Services portfolio is now looked after by Jan Shepherd and Helen Kneale, reporting to Shane McGreevy, who takes on the role of General Manager, alongside his current role as Finance Director.



The new PLASA line-up of Shane McGreevy, Norah Phillips, Jan Shepherd, Helen Kneale

As of 14 September, Anna Bartlett, previously Trade Development Manager, is leaving the organisation to pursue her career in other areas. Ongoing work with various aspects of Trade Development will now be divided among the Business Development, Membership Services and the administration departments.

Anna, well known to many PLASA Members, has worked for PLASA for almost 10 years - and for most of that time has been involved with organising funding for UK companies taking part in overseas exhibitions. Matthew Griffiths said: "On behalf of everyone at the PLASA Head Office and the Executive Committee, and on behalf of the entire PLASA Membership, I would like to thank Anna for all her work for the Association and our members over the years. I speak for everyone here in wishing her every success for the future."

Shane McGreevy: shane@plasa.org
 Norah Phillips: norah@plasa.org
 Jan Shepherd: jan@plasa.org
 Helen Kneale: helen@plasa.org

PLASA Show Website is a Record-Breaker!

The PLASA show website has received over 90,000 page requests since its launch in May - compared with less than 30,000 for the same period last year.

The page requests for the month of July alone are expected to total around 75,000, which is around 45,000 more than at the very peak of traffic on the eve of the show in August last year. Figures for August this year are expected to reach even higher.

The success of the site is no doubt down to the fact that it has been designed with the intention of making the information as accessible as possible. New this year is a Fast Facts section intended to give visitors key information about the Show such as dates, opening times and costs. Information on the event, seminar programme and exhibitors is comprehensive and being added to daily. A unique feature is an interactive floorplan which visitors can navigate by using a series of directional arrows and zoom tools.

The site also has a dedicated news section which highlights the many product launches planned for the Show - in fact the offices of L&SI are under siege at the moment with news coming in every hour of the day. The website has been developed in-house by the Media team at the PLASA Head Office, in conjunction with consultant Chris Toulmin.

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Brighton Rocks with Rainmaker



Lighting design and events specialists Rainmaker recently lit an open air stage on Brighton Beach for a Channel Four party event starring dance impresarios Norman Cook AKA Fatboy Slim and Groove Armada, and enjoyed free by approximately 35,000 excited revellers.

The main focus of the stage was a giant Screenco LED screen. This had been rigged to facilitate a C4 broadcast of the Ashes cricket from Edgbaston on the Thursday through Sunday. However, Channel Four then decided it would create a great local buzz of they threw a party on the Friday night, offering an opportunity to groove the summer evening away with the best in contemporary club vibes with local hero - the Fatboy himself! They then decided to broadcast parts of the party a week later on C4's 'Fatboy Slim Night'.

The Fatboy Slim event originally started out just as a just live show, with Rainmaker initially asked by production company Skybridge to supply four Space Cannons to reveal spectacular architectural illuminations on Brighton's famous West Pier at a strategic moment late in the evening. However, a few production meetings down the line, it turned into a filmed event for Channel 4 and became obvious that additional stage lighting would be required as the event gathered pace. Rainmaker's Paul O'Brien produced a dynamic lighting design for the stage. Using the two 10 metre high PA towers featuring a L-Acoustics' V-dosc system supplied by Delta Sound and engineered by Andy Jackson, plus two additional six metre towers, Rainmaker installed a spectacular, highly flexible lighting rig consisting of High End Studio Spot 250s and Martin Mac 300 moving fixtures, plus 24 PAR 64s for extra oomph and four 7kW Xenon Space Cannons, supplied by Essential Lighting.

Also rigged on the roof of the Brighton Centre venue were eight MAC 2000s and four Xenon Super Trouper followspots, plus six Molefey's with scrollers and more PAR 64s for 'Audience Reaction' shots. These were specified by LD Nick Jevons (Super Furry Animals, et al) who was brought in by C4 to oversee general audience/TV lighting. These were hooked in to Rainmaker's Avolites Pearl 2000 console for control, together with the stage system supplied by Rainmaker. As darkness fell, by prior arrangement, the festoon lights on the West Pier were killed. When Fatboy Slim reached the crescendo of his set, the Space Cannons burst into life, beaming stunning effects onto the Pier.

The show was production-managed by Skybridge's Lee Eld and Rainmaker crew included Toby Hoggarth, Dick Stedman and programmer John Harris.

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2001 Tony Awards

It was a remarkable night to top the remarkable season that Broadway's newest smash-hit musical has enjoyed since its acclaimed opening earlier this year.

At the 2001 Tony Awards Ceremony, held on June 3rd at the Radio City Music Hall in New York, *The Producers* (pictured) won all of the awards for which it had been nominated - 12 wins in all, breaking the all-time record for Tony wins by one show.

Adapted from his own film by Mel Brooks, the show won Brooks himself awards for Best Original Score and Best Book of a Musical. It also netted prizes itself (Best Musical), for many of its performers, and for the rest of its creative team: Susan Stroman (Best Choreography, Best Direction of a Musical), Doug Besterman (Best Orchestrations), Robin Wagner (Best Scenic Design), William Ivey Long (Best Costume Design) and Peter Kaczorowski (Best Lighting Design).

Both Wagner and Kaczorowski were runners-up at last year's Tonys for their work on the acclaimed revival of *Kiss Me Kate*, scheduled to make a West End appearance later this year. This year, Wagner beat last year's winner, Bob Crowley (nominated for *The Invention of Love*) as well as Heidi Ettinger (*The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*) and Douglas W Schmidt (the popular revival of *42nd Street*). The other lighting nominees were Jules Fisher and Peggy Eisenhauer for *Jane Eyre*, Paul Gallo for *42nd Street* and Kenneth Posner for *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*.



The Producers' clean sweep meant that a number of other popular musicals went home empty handed, notably the much-hyped new production of *Follies*, the revival of *The Rocky Horror Show*, the technically complex *Jane Eyre*, the troubled *Seussical* and the highly popular musical adaptation of *The Full Monty*. *Jane Eyre* and *Follies* announced their closures quite soon after the awards ceremony; ticket sales at *The Full Monty* seemed unaffected and this production is also expected to appear in London before too long. Only the well-received revival of the Broadway classic *42nd Street* managed to hold its own, winning the Leading Actress in a Musical and Best Musical Revival awards.

Away from the musicals, awards were won by, among others, *Proof* (Best Play, Best Direction of a Play, Best Leading Actress in a Play) and *One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest* (Best Revival of a Play). Special awards were also presented to musical director Paul Gemignani for lifetime achievement, while *Blast!*, seen in London last year, won the special theatrical event category.

Rob Halliday

Crowd Safety is High On Agenda

Proof positive that crowd safety is high on the agenda these days is no better demonstrated than two recent announcements by organisations set up specifically to address these issues.

The ILMC Crowd Safety Panel, created in order to increase the focus on health and safety in connection with music festivals and similar larger outdoor concerts, has agreed its agenda. An awareness campaign aimed at educating festival audiences across Europe about the seemingly innocent (but provenly dangerous) practice of 'crowd surfing' is likely to top its agenda for 2002. Currently there is no pan-European agreement on crowd safety standards and although individual countries have their own guidelines, the CSP hopes to eliminate differences between national practices as far as possible.

Allied to the work of the CPS is that of the recently established UK Crowd Management Association (UKCMA) - the UK's first ever grouping of crowd management companies. In the short space of four months, the association has gained recognition from both the British Standards Institute (BSI) and the Security Industry Training Organisation (SITO).

The work of both organisations is highly topical through recent developments, and their creation was spurred by a number of accidents and deaths at high profile events including Roskilde Festival 2000 in Denmark and other recent crowd tragedies in Australia and South America.

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Fisher Productions has completed its move to new London offices. "The new building is far more spacious than our previous office. As our staff numbers have continued to grow, we really needed a place with room for expansion," says Fisher marketer Gemma Courtenay.



Fisher Relocates

More staff, bigger projects, a developing in-house lighting and staging department and storage of a variety of props had resulted in Fisher outgrowing its previous premises.

The new 40,000sq.ft facility in Garratt Lane, with warehouse and offices above, presented the company with the ideal solution. With a location that is convenient for both central London and international travel, all that was needed to complete the package was an internal refurbishment to include bright, modern office

space with meeting areas and state-of-the-art features. Projects co-ordinated from the new premises have ranged from the South African Airways Product Launch, the Relaunch of Hong Kong for the HK Economic and Trade Office, a party for 300 guests at Highgrove and the Virt-x Launch Traders Party, which involved a live satellite link with Zurich.

The company's new address is 118 Garratt Lane, London, SW18 4DJ. Tel: +44 020 8871 1978.

Letters

Dear Editor,

As a reader of L&SI for over 15 years, I was pleased to see such thorough coverage and overall praise for Lionel Richie's 2001 European tour as featured in Steve Moles' June 2001 article. However, there are a couple of things that need to be clarified. Jeffrey Hornaday was the show director and my role was as show designer. While the two of us collaborated on developing the creative concept, Jeffrey directed the video segments, and the show in general, and I designed the scenery, lighting, and still video imagery.

Jeffrey and I work together on a regular basis. However, Juice Creative (not Juice Corporation) is a division of The George P. Johnson Company, a US-based international event marketing agency, and is in no way owned by Jeffrey Hornaday or his production firm.

Chris Medvitz
Creative Director, Juice Creative

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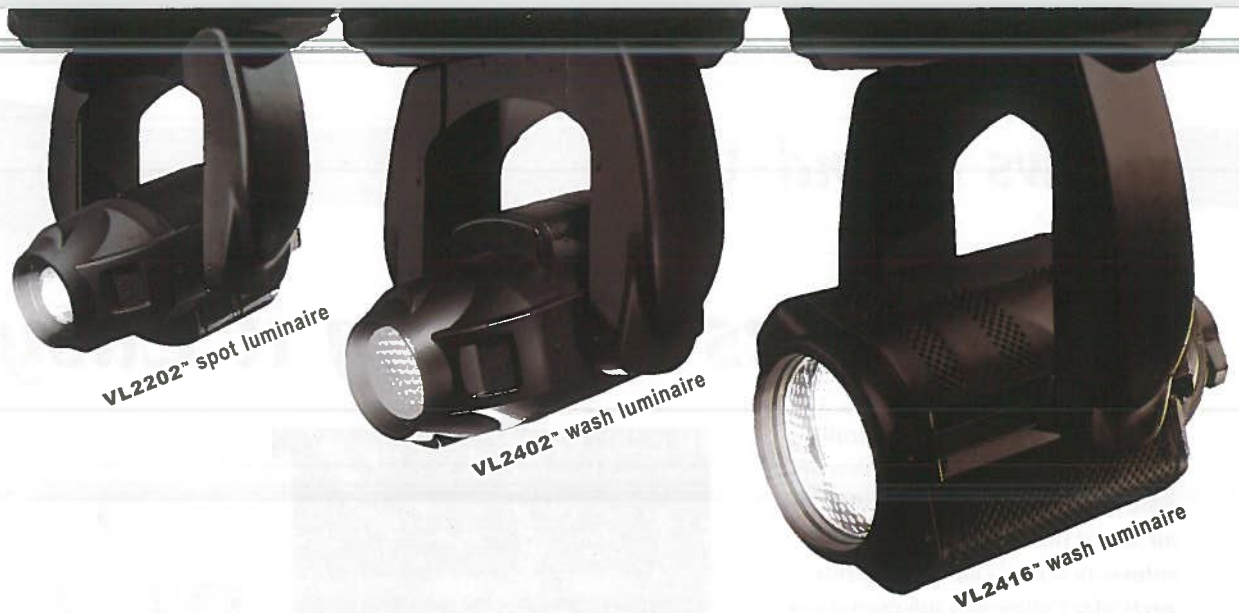
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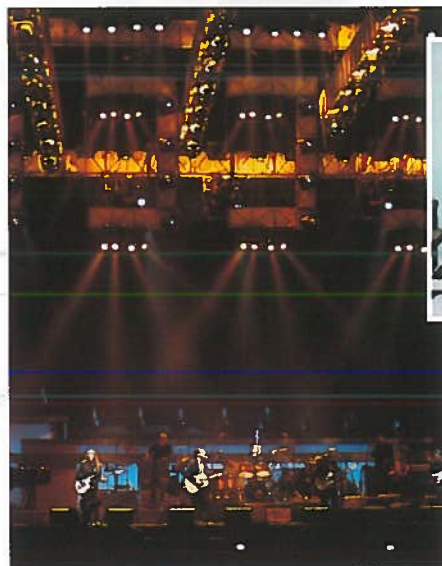
The Eagles - Taking it Easy . . .

For those of you not ornithologically minded, the Audubon Society describes eagles as 'magnificent predators of the air, one of the most exciting birds to witness in action' - but frankly, this particular Californian sub-species was rather dull to witness in action.

Have you ever seen a crocodile in a zoo? It sits there - an armoured monster so highly developed it hasn't evolved for 60 million years - and doesn't move. Something similar was going on in Manchester in late June. The performance, in terms of execution, was without imperfection, apart that is, from the interminable changes. Every time the show approached anything like the critical velocity so essential for momentum, they threw it away with a trip to make-up. The singing was crystal, even if Joe Walsh did look like a man recovering from a severe stroke when he sang, and the playing was note perfect. But it was lifeless. Tough job for the production then?

As video director Kate Ferris said, "this is strictly l'mag presentation." Kate is a veteran of concert video, though her work is infrequently seen in the UK. She regularly directs for Michael Jackson, Gloria Estefan and Cher to name but three, and it was apparent that in terms of demand, this was fairly low key for her. The two screens (four when they play in-the-round), and all other video kit comes from Nocturne in the US. The projectors are probably of most interest, being DLP 10kWs from Digital Projection in Atlanta, which I'm assured are the brightest for their rating, and very straightforward and reliable.

"There's no VT in this show, apart from the credits at the end," said Ferris. "It's something Chris [Lamb, production manager] wanted." Like a movie, it lists everyone on the tour, right down to the truck drivers and caterers. Nice touch.



A surprise for me was finding a Clair Brothers S4 system hanging out in the hall, but house engineer JD Brill had good reason to stick with the 'old and trusted' rather than Clair's new I4 line array. "I have no experience with it," as good a reason as any, but it reminded me of one thing, and this is no detriment to Brill's ability on the night. In my two decades of touring, I spent a lot of time on CBA tours; most of their engineers are superbly trained - they all know S4s inside out. But put them in a festival situation with someone else's PA and problems occur. To me that rigorous adherence to CBA practice and ethics could ultimately prove an evolutionary blind alley. I have yet to talk with a CBA engineer who's really happy touring an I4 rig. Diversity makes for strength.

But it sounded good, though Brill leans a bit heavily on the bright side of mid-upper, which is understandable with the vocal preponderance of the music, but tiring on the ears for an almost



Production manager Chris Lamb (seated) with brother Tim, stage manager for the tour

three-hour show. "I think everyone is listening for the vocals and guitars," he said. Everything else takes second place." And Brill had some problems

catching those voices, microphones being something foisted upon him, rather than chosen. "I'd like them all on 87Cs, but instead we have a mix and some are using Neuman KMS105s."

Mike Prowda shares monitors with Mike Pirch, the two men using AT1 Paragon consoles, splitting the 11 musicians between them, all of whom use one In Ear (Sennheiser) with Clairs' 12Am wedges for all. A bastard arrangement, but fortunately Prowda reports they (the band) like it very quiet on stage, so maybe that makes it manageable.

This is a Steve Cohen design, but operated by long time side-man, and now business partner, Joel Young. Another regular collaborator of Cohen's, Jim Day, designed the set. Based on a Frank Lloyd Wright building, its restrained clean lines give some presence to an otherwise bare stage necessitated by playing in-the-round.

The LSD rig includes lots of Coemar products, including the new CF7 HE X and CF7 WZ washlight, and from High End the X.Spot. For some bizarre reason, the band specifically forbade the use of magentas and mauve, requesting mainly pale blues and ambers. One can only surmise that they've all been staring at those California sunsets for too long. Why pay for someone of Cohen's calibre and then tie one hand behind his back?

Steve Moles

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News Round-Up



People News

Bob Schacherl has joined Vari-Lite as vice-president of sales and marketing. Schacherl will lead the company's worldwide sales and marketing efforts for the new line of Vari*Lite luminaires and consoles. Schacherl joins Vari-Lite with over 20 years' experience in the automated lighting and entertainment marketplace, and a successful track record in building effective worldwide sales organizations. He is a founder and former president of High End Systems, from which he resigned at the start of this year.



Bob Schacherl

Phillip Hart, president of Harman Pro Group International until December 31 last year, has joined Turbosound Ltd as Non Executive Chairman. He replaces Michael O'Flynn, who retired on July 17, but who retains his directorship and shareholding in the Sussex-based loudspeaker company.

joins MCL from FrameSet Products, a company dedicated to the design, build and supply of diverse conference staging products, which he founded over 10 years ago.

Howard Eaton Lighting Ltd (HELL) has announced the appointment of **Nigel Love** to its Sussex-based team. Love worked for several years as chief electrician with the English National Opera, and was head of lighting and later production controller for the Royal Shakespeare Company's operations at the Barbican. More recently, he has worked with Northern Light where, among other projects, he project managed the lighting, sound and comms installations at the Lowry.

Paul Weber has resigned as a director of Entec Sound & Light in order to concentrate on his lighting design and production management work. However, he maintains his connection with the company in a consultative capacity. The Entec lighting division will continue to be run by Noreen O'Riordan and Adam Stevenson whilst the sound division is managed by Dick Hayes and Roy Smith. Dick Collins takes care of administration and accounts.

Australian-based Show Technology has made a major commitment to the rapidly growing area of architectural lighting by appointing **Jonathan Ciddor** as architectural products manager. Ciddor has been involved in the lighting business for over 30 years, the last 15 specializing in taking entertainment lighting to architectural and theming applications. Ciddor is currently working on the permanent location of the Olympic Cauldron at Homebush Bay involving over 20 Clay Paky Golden Scans.

Rebecca Lace has joined LeMark Group as sales office manager, bringing with her experience in both electronic and conventional marketing and sales. She will also head LeMark's continued expansion of custom-printed consumables into the North American and Canadian markets.

Mach Speakers has hired **Heine Olsen** as product manager. Parent company Martin Professional made the decision to reinforce its audio division as a result of steady growth over the past few years. Olsen joins Mach from TC Electronics, and in addition to his skills in marketing, he also has a broad knowledge of digital technologies and their applications. Mach's current and long-time product manager, **Hans Madsen**, will assume the role of business development manager.

David Plail has joined MCL London as head of project management, bringing with him 28 years of industry experience. Plail

Blackout Triple E's **David Edelstein** and ETC's **Mark White** were appointed to the ABTT Council at the AGM held in June at Regent's Park Open Air Theatre, in

News Round-Up



David Edelstein (left) and Mark White - both recently appointed to the ABTT Council

conjunction with a visit to the theatre. The Association of British Theatre Technicians (ABTT) is run by a Council of 11 volunteers and for the next two years David Edelstein, joint managing director, Blackout Triple E, will serve as chairman whilst Mark White, ETC sales manager for UK and Ireland, will act as Honorary Secretary.

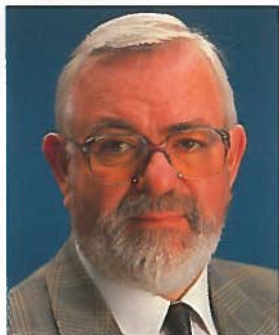
Joining Zero from LMP Lichttechnik is **Franck Tiesing**. He has wide experience of the German lighting market, most recently as sales manager responsible for Zero 88 products at LMP. Responsible for managing the Zero 88 dealer network in Germany, Tiesing will also work closely with users of Zero 88 product to provide ongoing training and technical support. Zero 88 has also appointed **Silvio Scerrl** as Mediterranean market manager. He joins Zero 88 from Nexos Lighting in Malta where he has been responsible for Zero 88 product sales for the past four years. Another new face is **Catherine Thomas**, who joins Zero 88 at its Cwmbran base as a sales coordinator. Joining her is **Bev Jones** who many will already know from her past role as Zero's receptionist.

Adam Hall has announced the promotion of **Carol Frampton** to the position of sales office manager. She has been a key player in the Adam Hall team since 1990 and will already be well known to most of its customers both overseas and in the UK.

Tomcat has recruited two new members to its US sales team. **Trent Stoker** will be handling the South East region and **Mike Regan** will be handling the North East region of the United States. Stoker, previously served as sales rep for a software company, Vignette. Regan, has been in the industry for over 30 years touring

with dozens of bands. Most recently, he ran his own company, Regan Design Associates, travelling all over the world coordinating events and productions.

To strengthen and advise the Board, **Philip Parker**, an experienced quoted company chairman and CEO, has joined Unitek as a non-executive director. Parker has a broad business background in sectors as varied as IT, electronics, training, financial services, security, oil services and consulting.



Derrick Ross

It's now three years since **Derrick Ross** announced his intention to retire as chief executive of ARRI GB. In characteristic style, it wasn't an impulsive decision, nor as it turned out, a quick departure. His on-going state of semi-retirement was only finally made official on 31st May. Ross set up ARRI's UK subsidiary in 1983. Under his leadership, turnover grew from £1m in the first year to its current £30m. ARRI GB now has two successful subsidiaries, a worldwide network of over 40 distributors with operations in the Middle East, Eastern Europe and China, and over 150 employees at its UK head office. The company is about to relocate again to accommodate further expansion.

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Dance Comes Home to England

The audio production for this summer's Homelands England Dance Festival provided several opportunities for collaboration, reports Mike Mann.

Audio suppliers SSE Hire of Birmingham provided Nexo front-of-house and monitor systems for seven out of the nine stages at this year's Homelands, which took place in Mattersley Bowl, near Winchester. However, the company sub-contracted the system design, supply and management of the Space Tent and VIP area to Sussex-based GPA Hire and Forefront Audio. GPA, which acts as the UK rental arm of speaker manufacturer Funktion One, provided the festival's Space Tent and VIP enclosure with Resolution 5 systems, driven by QSC and processed using XTA controllers. "It's been great working with SSE," enthused Forefront's Jim Alexander, "Chris Beale knows our reputation in the dance scene and it's nice not to be involved in a PA war." Beale had also had the opportunity to hear the Funktion One system in action at a New Year dance event in London, while the GPA rig had also seen service at this year's Oxford May Ball.

GPA's Jason Bacon spoke of the synergy between his company and its main supplier. "When you have the manufacturer of a system behind you, it's a big plus. Our gigs are their gigs, and both Tony [Andrews] and John [Newsham] take a real interest in what our clients want from a system."

Jim Alexander of Forefront Audio was responsible for the link between GPA and event organisers Home, and emphasized the company's established track record with dance acts such as Global Underground and Leftfield - though much of the company's work is in the corporate sector. GPA's roots can be traced back to the late 1980s, when the dance industry



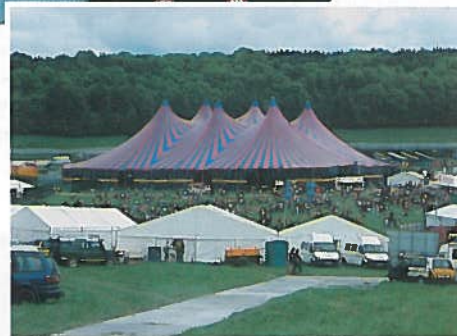
Left, Jason Bacon, Jim Alexander and Pete Howard

Inset, the Homelands Festival

was revelling in a period of spectacular growth. Since then, explained Alexander, the industry has grown up a little. "We're just starting to see DJs with their own engineers, as well as their own rider for equipment. It's a great idea and works really well, especially at festivals - it takes a big weight off our minds to know that there's someone here who knows the artist and understands the limits."

"These days, dance system designs are often far in advance of rock and roll touring kit," contended Bacon. "I believe that this is because we have to spend less time worrying about the set-up on stage, so more time is available for the main system design. It's always a surprise to see how relatively underspecified many tours are. With the Funktion One rig, we have a system that very few other people have, which is great from a competitive point of view."

System engineer and babysitter for the Funktion One-powered stages was Pete Howard, who commented that the British-built



system had exceeded all expectations. "The performance is incredible, compared to what we're used to," he enthused. "The rigging's neat, we can run the EQ virtually flat and the cabinets array seamlessly. This is a 21st century Flashlight!"

Jim Alexander claims that GPA and Forefront have handled the move into bigger events very well: "Our clients - especially at this level - are always listening for the faults. At Homelands, they've not found any. For me, this makes it all worthwhile - it's our Perfect Moment. Did I really say that?"

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Life in a Day

Robbie McGrath makes a great interviewee. For a start, he loves to chat. Moreover, his knowledge and experience of live sound is almost unmatched. Most importantly, however, he's as mad as a biscuit. While much of the modern rock and roll industry is a mere shadow of its former self, the engineer who has mixed Simply Red, the Stones, U2, Thin Lizzy and Mark Knopfler clearly prefers to do things the old-fashioned way. Take his assessment of a typical day . . .

"Last night we played Birmingham NEC after seven days off," he recalls, "we finished the show, I had too much to drink, too much to smoke and woke up



this morning on the bus in Brighton feeling terrible. I only just made it out onto the pavement in time before I started puking violently. Went to bed for an hour, did some shopping, EQ'd the PA around four o'clock, did a line check, had dinner, did the show."

This blasé summary of his life on the road hides a fierce determination to produce very high-quality live sound - which has earned him several awards and a reputation as one of the world's finest engineers. From his first gig with Irish trad rock band Horstlips on the Emerald Isle, McGrath has spent two-and-a-half decades learning and re-learning his trade.

What are your early memories of touring?

"That first gig in Athlone City Hall - a week's wages were £15 - paid in grubby little one-pound notes straight from the box office. I was roadie, engineer, driver - and I booked the hotels, too!"

Since then, which moment will live in your memory forever?

"Bob Dylan got up and sang 'Like A Rolling Stone' with the Stones in Rio, on the Bridges to Babylon tour - that was pretty momentous. The bad memories tend to get forgotten - I find it easier to view the past with rose-tinted glasses - in fact it's the only way I can keep doing this!"

What are your favourite & least favourite places?

"My favourite place is home, and my least favourite is anywhere on the road! Seriously, though, Le Zenith in Paris is a good-sounding place - but if you want a nightmare venue, go to the Tokyo Dome - it's a baseball field with a roof on it and is a nightmare with all the bells and whistles. You can drop a scaff clamp in there and get a 50Hz response!"

Are you a technophile or a technophobe?

"I'm not sure whether I was happier without all this technology - it's supposed to make things easier, but it can make us more anal than we need to be. Technology could be used to solve all sorts of problems - but on God's Christmas list, sound engineers aren't very high priority! We have to be careful about this - compared to something like heart surgery, for example, any advances that we make are quite small in the scheme of things."

Is there any piece of equipment that you particularly like at the moment?

"The Avalon Designs DI box (actually more of a preamp). If you care about your acoustic instruments, don't leave home without it - it's the American Express of the DI world!"

Any equipment that you dislike?

"Well, there are certain types of speaker that I would never touch - but, to be honest, most PAs are really good to work with these days."

Where do you see yourself in ten years' time?

"Mixing a world tour from a little studio in my attic, via satellite."

If you could fix one thing about the industry, what would it be?

"It would have to be the accountants' attitude towards spending money - and I suppose that's not limited to touring! It really bugs me, how tours can be making more money than ever before, but wages and equipment budgets haven't gone up at all."

A longer version of this interview can be found at www.plasa.org/media/lifers

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Step Forward Mr Average ...

A new study analysing almost 230 audio companies and their directors, offers a rather unique insight into the individuals running today's companies. The research, by Plimsoll, suggests that, in broad terms, there are four distinct types of director.

Mr Average: The study found that the average director in the audio industry is 49 years old and has been in the job for over seven years. The average salary is £25,000 per annum.

Old Hats: the study revealed that despite a 7% yearly turnover of directors, almost 39% have held their position for more than 10 years. Just under one fifth of UK directors in the sound equipment industry are now over 60 years old, and over the next three to five years, as these bastions of the industry reach retirement age, their departure could have a profound effect on the companies they formerly controlled.

Marathon Runners: If the industry is a victim of an ageing set of leaders, there's no evidence to suggest that their companies' performance is flagging. Of the 59 companies where these over 60s work, almost 34% are running successful companies - in comparison to the industry average of 31%.

These companies acquisition prospects because the directors are getting long in the tooth - it's certainly a scenario that predators look for when scanning for prospects. In fact, the study features 32 companies where every board member is over the age of 55.

At the other end of the scale there are the Young Guns. 51 directors are under the age of 35 with 20% of these working at successful companies. 15 of these 'young guns' have been appointed in the last 24 months.

For details of the analysis and to see whether your own company is reviewed, call Plimsoll on +44 (0)1642 257800.



Capital Sound Buys Meyer M3D

Capital Sound Hire has purchased a Meyer Sound M3D line array system from UK distributor Autograph Sales. The order for 24 M3D cabinets represents a break with the company's tradition as an exclusive Martin Audio user. Managing director Keith Davis explains: "Meyer has moved on faster than other manufacturers and we think that this system is superior to any other line array system on the market." Capital's client base covers a wide range of genres, including major rock and stadium venues, but also musical tours and classical events, from the Bolshoi Ballet to the Stereophonics. The first outing for the system was the co-headline tour by Shirley Bassey and Chris De Burgh.

Pictured above are Capital's Keith Davis, Autograph Sales' Roger Harpum and the Capital Sound crew with the new Meyer M3D system.

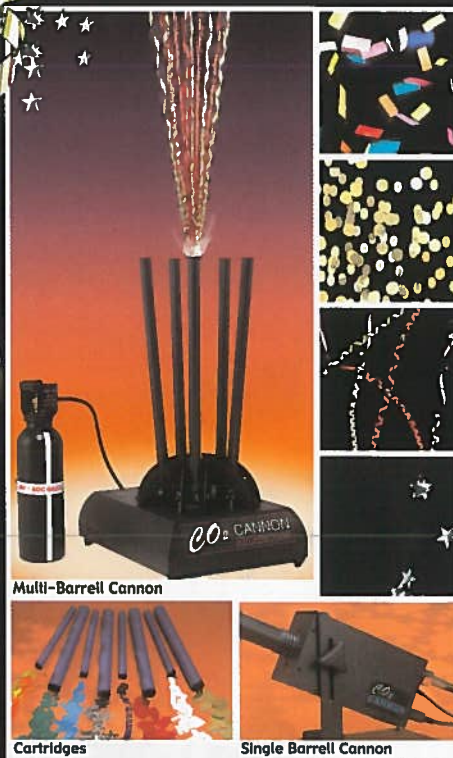
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THEATRICAL LONDON



THEATRICAL LONDON

12th - 14th September 2001

Directly following the PLASA 2001 Exhibition

PLASA has worked in co-operation with some of London's leading entertainment venues to offer an exclusive insight into the workings of some of the city's most famous venues. Delegates will visit the world-renowned Royal Albert Hall for a night at the Proms; the Apollo Victoria Theatre to see the upgraded Starlight Express; Tussaud's Group Studios for an **exclusive** technical tour, and the Donmar Warehouse for a 'Divas at the Donmar' performance. To top it off, step back in time at Shakespeare's Globe Theatre . . .

WEDNESDAY 12TH SEPTEMBER The experience begins with A night at The Proms, The Royal Albert Hall, featuring *Stravinsky: The Rite of Spring*. Pre-show drinks will be served in the foyer. Performance starts at 7.30pm.

THURSDAY 13TH SEPTEMBER This busy day starts with a coach-ride from Earls Court to The Royal Albert Hall for a guided tour of this famous and recently-refurbished venue, before moving on to the Apollo Victoria Theatre for a guided backstage tour of the recently-upgraded Starlight Express. Following lunch, travel by coach to the Tussauds Group Studios for an exclusive tour of the facilities behind the Group's famous visitor attractions,

including moulding techniques, wardrobe and set, lighting and audio design, then on to Madame Tussaud's in Baker Street, with an optional visit to the London Planetarium. After a short break, delegates meet up at the Donmar Warehouse, with a tour and performance of *Divas at The Donmar* featuring Sian Phillips. Drinks served in foyer. Performance starts at 8pm.

FRIDAY 14TH SEPTEMBER As an option for those staying on in London, the tour will re-join at 10.30am for a visit to The Globe Theatre and a chance to see the audio-visual exhibit. Following this, on to the wine-themed Vinopolis attraction for light lunch and farewell.

Please note this programme may be subject to change.

Sponsors include: Autograph Sales, Autograph Sound, Howard Eaton Lighting, Lighting Technology, PLASA, Roscolab and The Tussaud's Group.

COSTS:

Full package from Wednesday 12th - Friday 14th **£250**

Wednesday 12th and Thursday 13th only (excluding Friday 14th) **£225**

prices include coach travel for Thursday 13th September only - participants are responsible for their own hotel accommodation.

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Complete the booking form below (duplicate as necessary for additional places) and return it to:

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Bookings can also be made on-line at www.plasa.org/show/theatricallondon

For further details and queries contact Sheila Bartholomew or Jane Cockburn Tel: +44 (0)1323 418400 E-mail: sheila@plasa.org • jane@plasa.org

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News Round-Up



AC Lighting Completes Move to New Premises



AC Lighting - well-known provider of many and varied items of lighting equipment and accessories to the entertainment industry - recently moved its entire operation to a custom-fitted headquarters just one mile from its previous home on the Western Side of High Wycombe. L&SI was invited to celebrate the official opening of the new premises with members of the AC Lighting team.



The move has been a welcome step forward for the company's 50+ staff which, after 10 years of steady growth, had found themselves bursting out the seams of three separate premises across two industrial areas - with all the inevitable inefficiencies that the situation gave rise to. The meticulously-planned move to the new premises has now given AC Lighting the infrastructure it needs to both operate efficiently at its current size, and to cater for its certain future growth.

Extensive refurbishment of the new premises has increased the available floorspace by over 40% to 37,000sq.ft (3,437sq.m). The construction project, which lasted five months, added two floors of office accommodation, dedicated manufacturing facilities for the production of cables and colour scrolls, a new service centre and substantial warehousing. The building also includes a new demonstration facility with a 6m ceiling height, adjacent training rooms and a reception area.

The extensive warehouse facilities have been fitted with high bay and pallet racking to maximize storage capacity and to offer greater efficiency in handling of materials. Cable drum storage racking has been installed, with capacity for up to 60 large cable drums of up to 800kg each. Spacious goods in, packing and shipping areas have also been provided. For communications, a new IT infrastructure and telephone system has been installed, requiring the installation of 10km of twisted-pair cabling and a high-speed digital link to the company's Northern regional sales office in Leeds.

Marketing director Glyn O'Donoghue gave L&SI a tour of the new premises, beginning with the newly-created and spacious office areas - where several recently-appointed staff members were already ensconced - through to the extensive warehousing which holds around £3m worth of stock, including everything from the smallest

News Round-Up



Facing page, Centauri House in sunny High Wycombe, and a view of the spacious new sales office.

This page: the new demonstration room has a 6m ceiling height and is equipped with a studio truss, power distribution and 36 ways of dimming.

Below, the warehouse and the technical service department.



accessory to sophisticated moving lights and control systems.

The Scroll Express manufacturing area covers 155sq.m and houses three custom-made vacuum benches on which colour filter can quickly and accurately be positioned, cut and assembled into scrolls for any type of colour changer from any manufacturer. The Cable Express manufacturing facility, meanwhile, produces standard and custom-made power and control cables, and pre-wired lighting bars. These can then be terminated with a wide choice of industry standard connectors for any requirement. Using automated cutting and coiling machiners, the company can also supply cut cable to customer specifications.

In the service and repair centre, manned by AC's factory trained technicians, there are facilities for everything from simple, regular maintenance tasks through to major repairs of lighting consoles and moving lights. The tour even stretched down to the building's 'nerve centre', domain of IT and logistics director Mark Tonks, who has overseen the extensive communications and IT installation.

The new headquarters has been named 'Centauri House' - a reference to the distant roots of the company, which was started some time in the early 1970s by David Leggett and Richard Floyd,



as 'Alpha Centauri Lighting', specialising in psychedelic lightshows. Later, expansion into stage lighting, with the emphasis on rental and production, led to work with some of the leading rock acts of the day, including AC/DC, UFO and

Status Quo. The pair later began trading in lighting consumables and accessories, and incorporated AC Lighting in 1982. Today, the company is acknowledged as one of the largest European distributors of professional lighting and associated equipment to the entertainment industry.

MD David Leggett said of the new premises: "This is the culmination of many months of concentrated effort by everyone involved. It gives me enormous satisfaction to move AC Lighting into a location which provides a high quality working environment for a loyal and dedicated workforce, and provides excellent facilities to receive visitors and demonstrate our extensive product range."

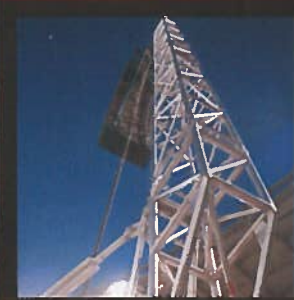
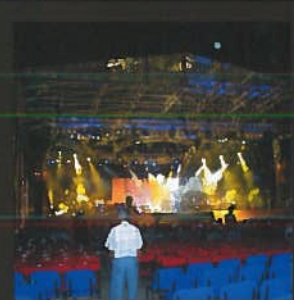
AC Lighting can be contacted at:
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National Football Stadium

David Atkinson Lighting Design has just completed an extensive design for the National Football Museum in Preston on behalf of Land Design Studio.



The museum was split into two areas, the first being 'Finney' - an area which covered the invention of the game, its development over the last 150 years, and what the future is likely to hold for both players and supporters.

Finney was designed with a high proportion of complex graphic panels which were either flat or multi-layered. Atkinson spec'd a light from Commercial Lighting Systems, which utilized twin 36W compact fluorescent lamps. To this he added barndoors and a filter holder to wash the various graphic panels. To add definition and depth to some of the multi-layered panels, he fitted T5 encapsulite tubes to the reverse of the

panels. The exhibits were lit with low voltage profiles, floods and fibre optic sources.

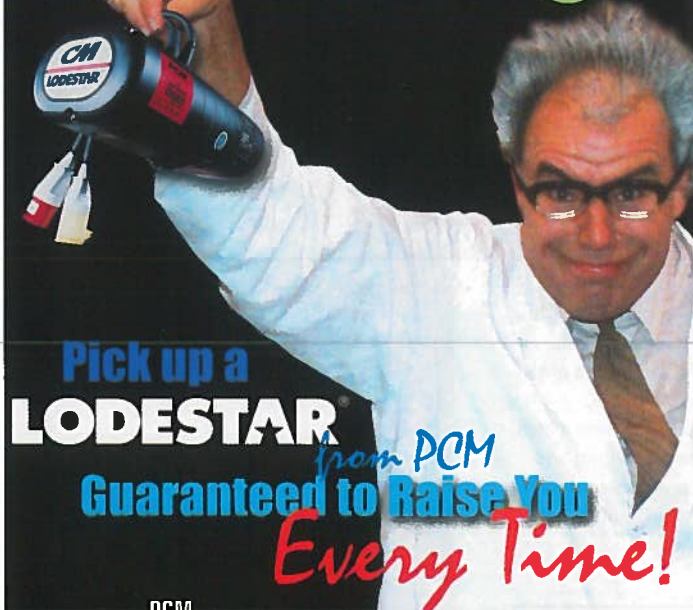
The contrasting second area of the exhibition, 'Shankley' is much more of an interactive space. Ross Hopcraft the designer wanted to create a strong aesthetical lighting feature to the exhibition, which Atkinson achieved using the Targetti FI system. From this, strong ambient washes of green filtered light were projected with accent lighting to the various interactive features. In addition to the FI, Atkinson also added Strand SL architectural (HID) fixtures to project gobo images of netting across the floor and graphics.

Sweet Smell of Success

Nu-Light Systems of Warrington has recently received two awards in recognition of its business potential and product innovation.

The first is the prestigious Warrington & Cheshire Business of the Year 2001 award. The company received the award because it was felt that its product line-up and approach to market, offered great potential for growth. In recognition of its product development, the company also collected the Warrington & Cheshire Research Innovation Award for its work on the newly-released laser animator system. Debbie Clayton, managing director, told L&SI: "We were delighted to receive the Awards, considering the calibre of businesses we were up against. It is important to us as a team for our work to be recognised outside of the industry." Mike Wake, technical director, added: "Receiving the Innovation Award surpassed our expectations, but Business of the Year is amazing, a real team morale booster. It's the first time in 13 years I have ever known Debbie speechless!"

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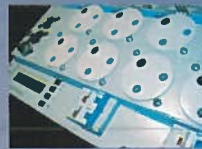
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Yates's Goes Live in Leicester Square

Yates's Wine Lodges' flagship branch has recently opened in London's Leicester Square on the site originally occupied by Capital Radio's Capital Cafe.

The Leicester Square venue represents a radical departure from the traditional Yates's look and feel which, over time, will gradually be phased out in the other sites across the country in favour of the new design. The same goes for the audio requirements which have also changed dramatically since the original concept was rolled out. Audio specialist Perfect Acoustics was called in to manage the project.

Perfect Acoustics' Anthony Leonard explained that the main criteria was that the system had to be versatile in order to handle several different types of musical requirements ranging from quiet background music during the day to DJs and live bands at night. The stage system opted



for to fulfil these varying needs comprises two Nexo PS-15s and two LS-1200 sub bass units driven by a pair of Crown MA-3600VZs. The combination provides a completely plug-and-play set-up for visiting bands, whether they are working from mini-disc with live vocals or completely live (in which case they would need to bring in a mixing console). The rest of the bar area utilises

the ultra-compact PS-8s - 13 in total - and two of the dedicated LS-400 subs driven by five Crown CE 1000s. There is also a Crown IQ USM-810 DSP engine.

"I'm particularly pleased with the PS-8s," commented Anthony Leonard. "It's important to have discreet loudspeakers so they don't intrude visually - the PS-8 is a great solution. The other clever bit about this installation is the USM-810 processing device which is programmed to take the venue through a range of 'moods' as the day progresses. During the day just the PS-8s are turned on to deliver quiet background music. At about 5pm, the system automatically brings in the PS-8 subs to create a fuller sound, and then at 9pm the full system kicks in and the whole place starts jumping. All of this activity is pre-programmed into the USM-810, so the DJ has nothing to do except play his records."



The future plan is to be able to link up all the various Yates's Wine Lodges across the country for live music broadcasts or other shows taking place in Leicester Square.

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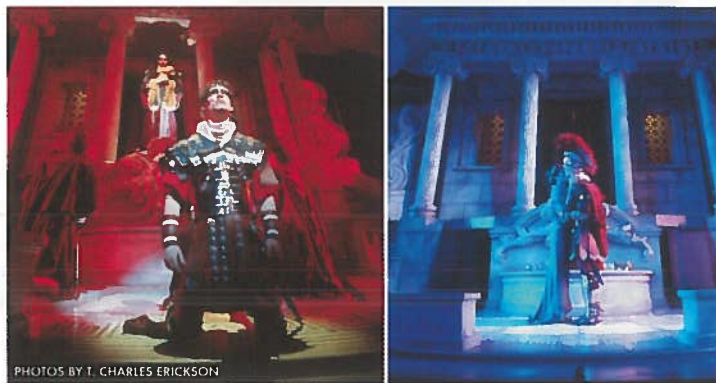


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PHOTOS BY T. CHARLES ERICKSON

28 CXIs signal the impending storm (and Jupiter's arrival) with a gradual shift from bright red to tempestuous greens and blues during Boston's Huntington Theatre's staging of Moliere's *Amphitryon*.



PHOTO BY CAROLINA McNAMARA

Rick Siegel used his 42 CXIs to pre-set 20 different moods for the songs performed on *The Bee Gees: This is Where You Come In*, An A&E Live by Request Special Edition Production. They gave him "many things to play with" and—more importantly—greater control to correct for television. "With the CXIs, we could look at the stage on the television monitor, decide if there was too much chroma or saturation, and make any necessary adjustments."



PHOTO BY NANLY LOCH

The Ballet Conservatory in Texas brought in prima ballerinas from The New York City Ballet and American Ballet Theater, as well as "prima" lighting designer Vince Caglianone from Pelton Marsh Kinsella to elevate its student production of *Giselle*. Caglianone used 16 CXIs and "liked the colour control...a large range of colours. And even with the darker colours, I didn't lose the lighting intensity."



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News Round-Up



51st PCM Motor School

PCM was one of the first companies in this industry to promote the value of training. Since L&S routinely covers news of its well-established Motor Schools, we thought it high time we actually sent someone to take a closer look. Jacqueline Molloy volunteered . . .



I must confess to not having prior intimate knowledge of Columbus McKinnon hoists, but I now feel confident that should I ever have the need to strip and rebuild one, I would not disappoint the training staff from PCM!

29 of us gathered at PCM's premises for the start of the two-day intensive course aimed at unravelling the mysteries of CM Lodestars. The popularity of the course, which has been running since 1993, is such that some attendees had flown in from Dublin and Portugal to take part. A cross-section of the industry was represented, including freelancers and representatives from sound, lighting and rigging companies. It was also good to see a group of students from Welsh College, accompanied by their lighting lecturer, all keen to gain a working knowledge of Lodestar motors, several of which the college owns.

After some much-needed caffeine, we were shepherded into the classroom-style space that was to be our home for the next two days. We got to work in pairs, which was a great way for breaking the ice and getting to know our fellow participants. It was also useful for moral support when trying to recall the exact sequence in which the motor needed to be rebuilt!

It was also reassuring to have the smiling faces of previous participants gazing encouragingly upon

us from the official group photos that lined the walls. The flying ducks and Elvis clock enhanced the décor and made it an oddly comforting space in which to spend two days with hands deep inside the mechanics of Lodestar motors.

PCM managing director John Jones welcomed us to the course and we were soon underway with some theory on basic electricity and how to operate a Lodestar. It was then into the messy area of stripping our hoist whilst identifying each part. PCM's Chris Jolley and Geoff Cromwell talked us through this part and their clear instructions made it possible even for the novices amongst us. I was lucky to be partnered with Paul Young from James Thomas Engineering who devised a method of laying all the components on our bench in an orderly and logical fashion, making the motor relatively easy to reassemble. Each table had a set of around six tools in a zip lock bag, which were all we needed to complete the task at hand. Advice was given along the way on how to properly maintain various components and also how to troubleshoot. This informal style of teaching was ideal for those who had questions to ask and there was plenty of time and encouragement to give feedback and have queries answered.

The backgrounds of group members were varied, with some responsible for equipment maintenance within their organisations, while

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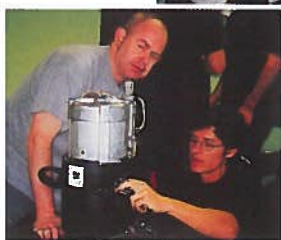
others were hands-on users who wanted further knowledge of the motors for the purpose of troubleshooting. Others worked as project managers or designed installations and were keen to fully understand the capabilities of the CM Lodestars. Chris and Geoff, with vast amounts of experience between them, were able to satisfy queries on a variety of issues concerning the motors, which made for interesting listening and presented an opportunity to pick up new information.

After we had completely stripped our hoists we were issued with wiring diagrams before the task of reassembling was attempted. Fortunately, there had been an excellent lunch to see us through the arduous task of getting everything back in its place. It was interesting to note that it had all seemed so straightforward in the morning, but now, several hours later, those parts that had looked familiar, drew a blank. None of the teams managed the task in 15 minutes, but everyone had a working hoist within a couple of hours.

At the end of day one, we were rewarded with a great night out, courtesy of PCM. We attended a dinner with a difference at Broli Cymraeg Trust, a circus and aerial training school in Mostyn, North Wales. After a great meal and entertainment, we were given the floor to try out various circus equipment. Surprising how popular tightropes can be!

The last morning of the course was dedicated to troubleshooting and each team was greeted with

yet another hoist on their table - this time faulty ones. With the aid of maintenance manuals and guidance from Geoff and Chris, we spent several hours fault-finding until we felt pretty comfortable with our diagnostic abilities. The final part of the course was presented by Paul Young from John Thomas Engineering who gave a demonstration and talk on the safe use and handling of ground support truss systems; his presentation worked well within the overall content of the two days.



PCM delivers around nine motor schools a year which are free to anyone who wishes to participate. John Jones is passionate about training and views it as an important issue within the industry. The

company's five-day rigging schools, held in association with other like-minded companies, are also popular and are held once a year in February.

By the end of the two days I felt that the Motor School had achieved its main objectives - providing a comprehensive overview of the CM Lodestar hoist and teaching us about operational theory, design philosophy, safety aspects, internal workings and methods for trouble-shooting. What made the course so successful was the friendly and informal way in which the information was passed on. The relaxed atmosphere and excellent hospitality provided by PCM made for a thoroughly enjoyable and informative experience.

<http://www.askpcm.com>

Facing page: the assembled members of PCM's 51st Motor School

This page, top: Lighting lecturer Elenor Higgins (left) with students from Welsh College

Inset: Pat Dillon and Rodrigo Ribeiro, from Ireland and Portugal respectively, check out a problem

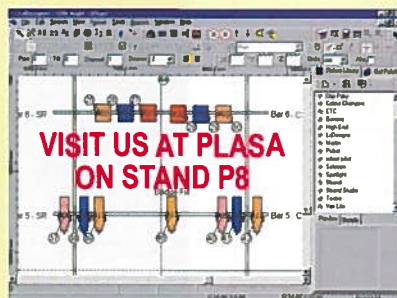
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Virtual Way Forward ...

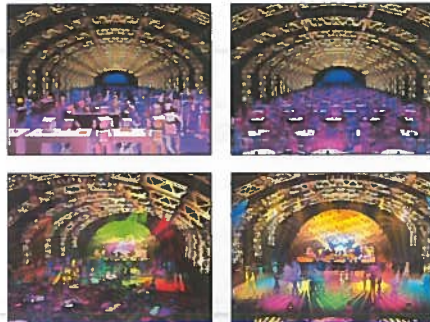
With the development of CAD drawing packages over recent years, it's now possible for professional lighting designers to make a living designing in the virtual world.

Using WYSIWYG by Cast Lighting of Canada or the Martin Show Designer from Denmark, designers can create artistic lighting images and present them either as stills or as an animated movie providing an accurate photo-realistic rendition of environmental and show designs.

Since he's been one of its higher profile users, we invited LD Durham Marengi, to explain why he's so keen on the virtual route ...

Over the past month I've been commissioned to create virtual designs with WYSIWYG for a temporary exhibition and event environment and a major car launch reveal, the intention in each case to provide a graphic presentation of what will eventually become reality.

Historically, artistic impressions have been used to provide the client with a pictorial representation of a concept, in some cases this



led to disappointment or even refusal of payment when they realised the event looked nothing like the art work originally sold. Recent technology has seen CAD draughtsmen using architectural lighting programmes to illuminate their 3D models which provide reasonably realistic lighting treatments, but no knowledge of how to physically achieve them.

It is now possible for lighting professionals to illuminate these CAD models with accurate 'virtual' luminaires which behave realistically in terms of photometrics, colour and shadow.

Aside from the realism of images rendered using this virtual lighting rig, an equipment specification for the project is created by default, enabling the cost and time parameters to be established. The programme created to demonstrate the virtual design is then connected to the realised system greatly decreasing programming time in the real environment. Should the cost of the proposed system be greater than the budget, the rig can be reduced and the resulting effect re-rendered. This gives us the opportunity to inspire our client to find the extra finance for the original design and is a most effective business tool.

Once packaged as a fly-through movie or slide show presentation, the resulting artwork illustrates to even the most unimaginative client what he might expect to see in reality. If you are interested and have the time, check out Stage Electric's virtual lighting studio in Waterloo. Learning CAD drawing is made simple with WYSIWYG and can also produce fine lighting drawings and associated equipment and accessory lists. Do not be intimidated by the art: grasp it wholeheartedly, for it is the future and can open up a whole new world of Virtual Lighting Design.

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JHS Event 2001

The JHS Event has become something of an industry fixture. Held at the company's Garforth premises, on the outskirts of Leeds, it has quickly become part of the music business calendar, attended by significant numbers of representatives of both the retail trade and music press.



The company's huge, purpose-built office and warehousing complex spreads over a four-acre site and ensures that the company, now the largest family-owned independent musical merchandise distributor in the UK, has an effective base for demonstrating the product lines from its extensive catalogue. And I do mean extensive - for the catalogue carries some of the music industry's biggest names, including the innovative roundback guitar range from Ovation, for whom JHS are sole UK and Eire distributors and the famous Danelectro guitars and amps, back in the music world with a vengeance.

An early decision taken by John Hornby Skewes to carry self-branded merchandise continues to this day too, and JHS also has international distribution for its comprehensive signature Encore and Vintage acoustic and electric guitar and bass range, Antoni stringed instruments, Kinsman cases and Odyssey brass and woodwind instruments. In fact, browsing through this year's JHS catalogue range reveals over 3000 products under some 50 brand names, with a customer base covering more than 30 different countries.

The Event is a 3D version of the catalogue, adding a social layer to the serious business of business. Arrayed across the site are exhibition marquees, a refreshment marquee, a guest exhibitor area - featuring British Piano Manufacturing, Music Exchange (Manchester) and Kemble Ltd - and a sound stage featuring

performances by Kevin Brown (The Living Proof - Ovation) and Pat Park of Danelectro. One of the signature elements of the event - though it did nearly acquaint me with my lunch - is a helicopter ride across the surrounding areas.

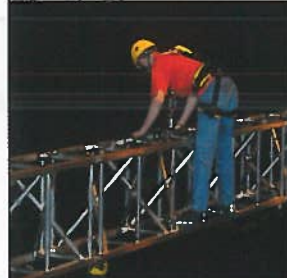
A key new feature this year was the dedicated pro audio demo theatre where the full line-up of HK Audio sound reinforcements systems (including the HX active systems, LUCAS, ELIAS and ACTOR, and the most recent addition to the range, the powerful 3.6kW PROJECTOR) were being regularly taken through their paces. Andreas Mayerl and Christian Stumpp of HK Audio flew in from Germany to lend support. Other pro audio products on show included The Scanner radio system, the Get Yourself Connected series of cabling and Kustom PA systems and cabinets. Also present was MAD Manufacturing, a guest exhibitor, who provided the full lighting rig for the demo theatre.

Events like this certainly ain't cheap - and as JHS also offers accommodation to those travelling any distance, the three day outing represents a substantial investment. But it was clearly worth it, and it's no coincidence that there are order forms in every visitor pack and that the canny Mr Skewes even lines up a finance company to advise on interest free options. If the weather was a little mixed, attendance wasn't and IHS can count another successful event to its name.

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New Spin on Special Effects

Moiré and Goboram II are the two latest products from Wybron designed to help lighting designers create new moving effects with gobos.

Moiré is Wybron's first dual gobo rotator, enabling the user to rotate and change two B-sized glass or metal gobos.

Controlled by a simple toggle switch, the two gobos are operated independently and can be rotated together, in opposite directions or with one static and the other moving. Goboram II, meanwhile, is a combined gobo changer, indexer and rotator in one, giving designers the ability to change and rotate up to three gobos, all in a single unit. Both Moiré and Goboram II are specifically designed to fit the effects slot on the ETC Source Four or the Shakespeare 600 ellipsoidal.

Wybron +1 719 548 9774



Flashlight Mark 11

Turbosound's legendary Flashlight system, which dominated concert touring throughout the 1990s, has undergone a significant upgrade to the high and mid-high frequencies.

The Turbosound R&D team, led by Philippe Robineau, worked with a focus group of leading sound engineers and audio production companies, who quickly identified the need for a new HF driver and a new top plate and recone for the 6.5" mid/high driver, to create a significant gain in SPL while simultaneously reducing distortion. Based on the same HF diaphragm, Turbosound also worked on a larger magnet assembly, with good results. Flashlight Mk 2 offers the same dispersion characteristics as the Mk 1 but the throw of the box has improved due to the highly-sensitive units employed. This has given much greater SPL and headroom from each box. This is matched with the warm and powerful bass of the TFS-780L, which by being horn-loaded has a good front-to-back dispersion. The system debuted on the BRIT Awards and has been beta tested extensively by production company Britannia Row Productions.

Turbosound +44 (0)1403 711447

MTFX Party Cannon

The MTFX Party Cannon is a single-shot cannon which fires both confetti and streamers into the air using a built-in compressed air cylinder.

The pre-loaded Party Cannon is available in four sizes: 200mm - suitable for smaller indoor venues as they fire the confetti and streamers to a distance of up to 4 metres. 300mm - ideal for larger venues as they fire the contents up to a distance of 10 metres. 500mm - aimed at large venues/events as they shoot confetti and streamers to a distance of up to 20 metres. 800mm - need to be reserved for football matches and arenas as they fire confetti and streamers to an amazing 40 metres!

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JustiFire Launched by Millbank

Millbank JustiFire is a new single-channel, four-zone PA/VA system from Federal Signal. The new system is designed specifically as the integral element of a BS5839 part 8 compliant (European BS EN 60849) emergency voice alarm system for small to medium-sized offices and industrial facilities.

The utilization of a Windows-based configuration programme provides ease-of-use and a simple graphical interface enables Millbank JustiFire to be set-up to meet the requirements of individual installations. It provides a standard solution for the majority of installation requirements and accelerates the process of system design and maintenance.

Millbank (UK) +44 1625 666600

Tannoy Extends Install Speakers

Tannoy has launched two new in-wall speakers, along with the new i7 Contour full-range installation loudspeaker.

The in-wall products integrate the company's highly-regarded cabinet-based speaker technology into a flush-mountable format. The powerful m2iw is a two-way system with a 165mm (6.5") long-throw mid/bass driver, 25mm (1") soft dome HF unit and onboard crossover. The high-performance S8iw features a Tannoy 200mm (8") Dual Concentric constant directivity driver with an integral crossover network.

The new i7 Contour is designed for high quality music and speech reinforcement in applications where wide, yet controlled, coverage is required. The i7 uses four 4" bass drivers and a single dome HF driver.

Tannoy (UK) +44 1236 420199

Stonewood Trio

Stonewood Audio Ltd has launched three new products to complement its existing Professional Intercom Range.



The SA-WBPI (pictured) is a multi-channel full duplex wireless belt pack system; its frequencies are programmable via PC, it has 16 selectable channels, is fully EMC and ETS 300-422 approved, and powered by batteries to give eight hours' use. The second

new product is a Professional Intercom System for Off Shore/Marine use. The unit has been engineered so that all switches, level controls, connectors and cases are IP67 rated. To complement the SA-OSBPI, two more products rated to IP66 are now available - a full duplex loudspeaker outstation and a loudspeaker station with a Xenon beacon.

Finally, Stonewood has introduced CD-quality Armoured Cable Stereo Headphones, primarily designed for the CD listening market in music stores and superstores

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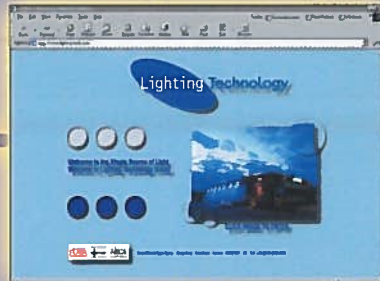
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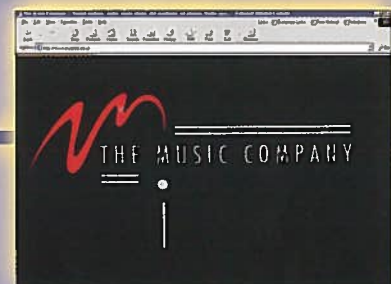
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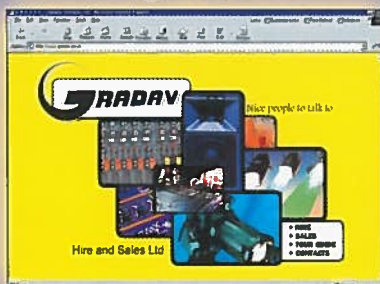
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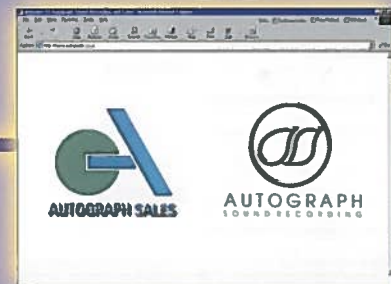
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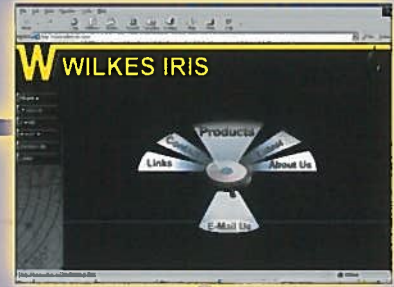
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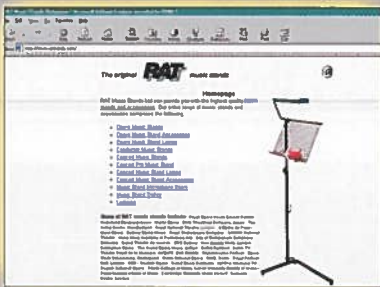
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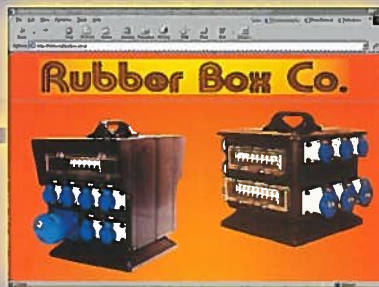
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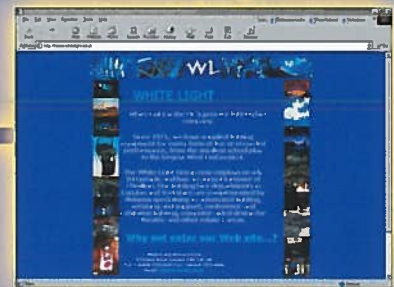
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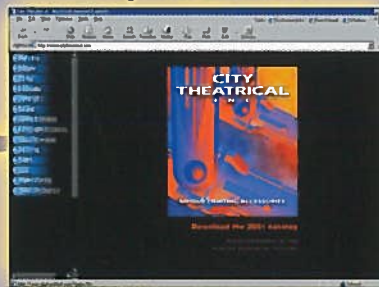
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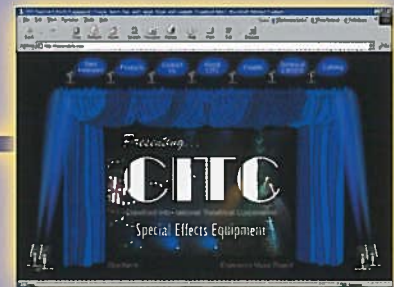
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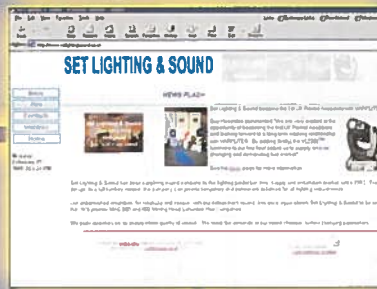
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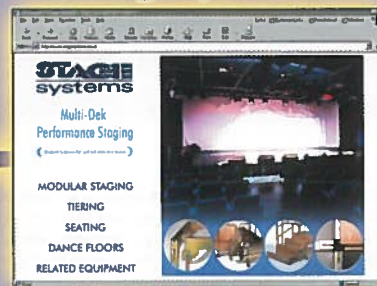
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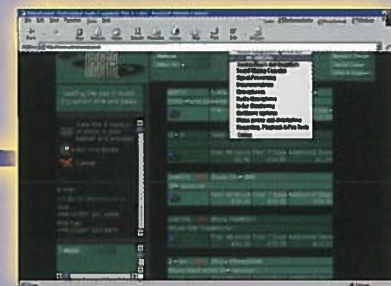
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The Final Frontier

The National Space Centre in Leicester is the UK's only attraction dedicated to space science and astronomy.

Steve Moles finds out more about this Landmark Millennium Project

"Our radio listeners are going to ask. So will I on their behalf. What has Leicester to do with Space? Why is the National Space Centre here?" The representative from BBC Radio 1 had a fair point: if he hadn't beaten me to it, I'd have asked the same question.

Leicester doesn't immediately spring to mind when you're out there looking at the heavens. The answer, however, was both revealing and compelling - that is, if you're really into space, as opposed to Klingon mumbo-jumbo. "Leicester University has a long association with space," said Professor Wells, head of Physics at the self-same University. "We've had an experiment in space every year since 1967." Somewhere in the deep recesses of my brain, I recalled an animated, gee-whizz seventies TV show hosted by a balding James Burke and occasionally visited by some boffin types from Leicester. While that might not be the most persuasive argument for the location, when I thought about it, where else would you put a National Space Centre? Britain's space programme has, to say the least, been muted.

So Leicester it is, and frankly it's as good a place as any; geographically it's easily accessible, and the University connection does have some rationale behind it.

As I was to discover later, the National Space Centre (NSC) is one of 15 centres around the country, primarily funded by the Millennium

Commission (MC), designed to re-ignite the allure of science for the population at large. "Science and technology has always been part of the UK's wealth," said Michael O'Connor, himself a physicist, and director of the MC. "The Glasgow Science Centre opens later this month, The International Centre for Life in Newcastle is already open," and he went on to list others around the UK.

What's different about NSC, and presumably the other science centres mentioned, compared to the more notorious MC-funded projects of last year, appears to be the educational focus. "Yes, this will be a fun day out," said the programmes director Alex Barnett, "but it will also be educational. Schools can arrange to have a 'closed' experience. We have our own team of educators, and we have already developed a mix of programmes for different age groups."

I bore this statement in mind as I explored the centre, and I can tell you the following. While there's plenty of PLASA-type technology and expertise employed here, there is not the same desperate air of compunction to amuse and entertain, as in, say, the Dome. Don't misunderstand, this place isn't dull and dusty, there is some mind-boggling stuff here, but it's self-evidently didactic. The finest example of this is unfortunately the one that almost totally eschews the technology we're interested by. However, it's so good it should be a compulsory visit for all the companies within PLASA, most especially the larger ones, so it's not to be overlooked.

"Of course the children love it," I was told by my charming lady guide, and sure enough all about me excited youngsters in headsets and white suits were earnestly going about their tasks, totally absorbed. "But we get companies coming here to use this training facility as well," she continued. "In fact, I must tell you about one recent organisation that visited, a FTSE 250 Company no



less." Discretion prevented her from revealing exactly who. "Of course, the programme is modified for adults, but essentially it's the same as the children's, just more intense.

"They came in led by the organisation's chief exec' and his financial director; we briefed them in the morning about the exercise and then set them to it. Two hours in, it became obvious things were going catastrophically wrong. So badly, in fact, that we had to stop the exercise." By now you're probably wondering what on earth was going on? What could be 'so catastrophic' that it had to be stopped, and how could children be allowed to run such a dangerous programme, even if in a scaled down form?

It's a Space Shuttle mission simulator, a coup for the NSC as it's the only one licensed outside North America (where, incidentally, there are around 40). The Challenger Learning Centre is a direct outcome from the infamous Challenger launch disaster. Readers will recall the deaths of the entire crew when the solid fuel booster exploded, which was made all the more poignant by the presence of a member of the public, a schoolteacher, as part of the crew. The justification for her participation in the mission was a move by NASA to rekindle the spark of space exploration in the minds of America's youth. As such, in the aftermath of the crash they developed this programme primarily for the schools market, but also as an excellent business training facility.

It is an intense piece of kit, I commend it to you all; a fully-functioning Mission Control

problem was communication, basically no one was talking to each other - the financial director led the Shuttle crew, the chief exec' led Mission Control. When we debriefed them, we repeatedly got this comment from the not-quite-so-senior management present in the team. 'It's like this at work, they never tell us anything, and we constantly have to deal with disasters because of it'. A salutary lesson, in the way of the City it sounds like a recipe for a six-figure bonus and two years' gardening leave for the CEO.

In the wider realms of the NSC are the main Visitor attractions. The most noticeable part is the 42 metre tall

Rocket Tower, a voluptuous, translucent skinned, vertical maggot housing two actual rockets, a NASA Thor Able launch vehicle (a little Saturn V) and the UK's very own nuclear missile, Blue Streak. Unusual Rigging got the chance to juggle these two monsters into place - the Thor being the taller at 25m, and Blue Streak being 5 metres shorter - each weighing in un-laden at around four tons. "The biggest problem was the absence of the fuel load," explained Unusual's project leader, Robin Elias. "Although Blue Streak is some 86 tons lighter without fuel, the rocket's structure is inherently less rigid." The rockets were inserted before the tower was completed, particularly the application of the ETFE pillows that form the walls, but architects Nicholas Grimshaw & Partners have allowed for changes to be made, by the inclusion of a large removable side section to the tower, a section large enough to add or remove rockets.

The main building beside the Tower is formed around a central hub, mainly an area for parties and families to congregate. The hub

leads off to five areas, Exploring the Universe, The Planets, Orbiting Earth, Space Now and the Temporary Exhibition Area, the latter a space, as the name suggests, for flexible expositions, emphasizing one of the main drives of the NSC - to keep as up-to-date as possible.

Without going into detail on the main areas, the various sections are 'see and do' environments, with some simple, and some very thought-provoking displays. Some are basically fun, like the touch-screen displays of Leicester Municipal buses being satellite-tracked in real time on street map overlays, though there was genuine purpose here, as

the GPS system subordinated the City's traffic light system to ensure timetable adherence by the buses. Others were more informative, the infra-red plots of the world's oceans being fascinating, so too the colour-keyed weather maps.



Electrosonic have the greatest input to the main exhibition areas, at least technologically speaking. "There are about 50 exhibits which we're involved with," explained Simon George from Electrosonic. "The NSC is different from a lot of places we've been involved in recently. A lot of what we do comes from the designers, and often they like a large central piece as

a focus. In contrast Hailey Sharp (the design consultants for the NSC, lead designer Vikky Johnson), concentrated on lots of little things - it's not necessarily technically challenging, but there is a lot of content."

Electrosonic use their ESLINX show control system for much of the technology, starting and synchronising audio, video and sometimes subordinating the lighting. "The video content, and audio for that matter, was put together by Centre Screen," added Chris Ostler, who project managed the installation for Electrosonic, "all of which comes from our central MPEG2 video server."

Discreet is the word, but not cheap: the video playback is mainly front projection, via NEC MT840 projectors tucked neatly away in the ceiling, while in the areas that use rear projection, where the viewers tend to be up close and personal, Barco series 7 CRT projectors are used to avoid the obvious pixelation you'd see from LCD type machines. Parts of the exhibition are passive, they 'run' all day, whilst others are triggered by IR proximity detectors, which in turn trigger the ESLINX system. Of the 50 exhibits, most comprise a computer (PIII), a projector, touch screen or CRT monitor, and usually a pair of speakers. Simple when viewed as stand-alone systems, but quite complex when it comes to hooking them all together.

Being a fairly open-plan site, parts of the audio, especially information, are broadcast from highly directional parabolic reflector devices from US manufacturer Soundtube, which coerce the listener into the correct orientation to then view what would otherwise be a slightly non-descript video image.

Lighting was generally low-key, Jonathan Howard of DHA designing and installing the system with Rowena Preiss and Des



Above, the 42m tall Rocket Tower with above right, Robin Elias, project leader at Unusual Rigging, working on its installation

centre, and a separate Shuttle environment, replicated in several physically homogeneous areas, so that all the tasks of a full four-day mission can be conducted simultaneously in a two- to three-hour simulation.

Sponsored by BT, the Challenger Learning Centre opened six months before the rest of the NSC and is already proving a busy money-spinner. As for the FTSE Company and their crash and burn scenario? "The

Right, the Orbiting Earth feature and below, the Expanding Universe display

O'Donovan. "We used mainly ETC Source Four profiles and Selecon Fresnels, 30 of each, and over 450 Par36 12V lamps, with all dimming by Lutron, though a lot is set levels." That may not sound a great deal for 3,446sq.m of exhibition space, but Howard knew exactly why. "Hailey Sharp had very strong ideas about the content. Even back in February last year when we first became involved in the project, they had detailed drawings. And they haven't really changed much between then and now."

Howard's observations on Hailey Sharp appeared well made - it was true of all the exhibitions I viewed (and I would like to point out that with this being a Press preview, many exhibits were incomplete). Not only was there a great deal of content, but little of it was superficial and everything appeared to have purpose and connection.

At the centre of the building is a planetarium-style lecture room, The Space Theatre, a classic dome-roofed room with raked seating for approx 150 people. The 58ft diameter dome is itself interesting, in that it's 28% perforated, not that you'd notice, the holes are so small, but big enough to allow the air-conditioning to work through it. The reason for this not inexpensive a/c system is the sheer volume of kit which designer and NSC technical director George Barrett has crammed in around the dome's perimeter: 58 separate speakers provide a nominal 4kW surround-sound PA system, plus there's a bunch of Electrohome video projectors, and some 30 different lighting and effects machines. Oh, and a multi-colour laser.

While Electrosonic cover all the audio in the main exhibition areas, it fell to The Music Company (TMC) to deal specifically with this area. "It's the control and front end that's important here," explained TMC's Martin Tarpay. "It's a surround system for the main presentation, hence the large number of speakers around the dome, but we also had to allow for the room to be used for lecture-type presentations, with speakers (talkers, not moving coil devices) down at the front, which raised considerations of gain before feedback."

The main design for the system was overseen by TMC's Paul Smith who alluded to the more troublesome aspects of a dome rigged system. "Because of the nature of the listening area, the speakers needed to be fitted external to the dome and positioned with pinpoint accuracy, immediately adjacent to the dome surface for the surround effects. Add to this the need for the speakers to be accessed for service and you



are presented with a tricky problem." TMC developed a 'rail' system that follows the exact curve of the dome which allows the speakers to be lowered for access, and ensures they return to their exact original position.

"Weight was also a factor for both rail system and speakers," continued Smith. "There is a need to reduce stress on the dome structure, as such the basic elements of the four way speaker system are Bose Panaray LT product as Mid-Hi (9702s), with our own 115 bass enclosure, with Funktion One Sub Bass (FZ18), variously in five flown positions."

TMC used a Peavey Media Matrix to control the audio system, giving the necessary multiple zone control to modify the character and output to the required form of presentation. "They (the NSC) needed something flexible," continued Tarpay. "Something that an in-house technician could control easily to switch from one presentation type to another, but also something sophisticated enough to interface with the Spitz show system (via RS232) and complement the video projections accurately and effectively."

It would be fatuous to try and describe the presentation we were given. 'Big' it was called, a full-on AV sequence that grapples manfully with the task of conveying just how large the known Universe is. 20 minutes long, and filled with images and sounds taken from the Hubble and

"At the centre of the building is a planetarium-style lecture room, The Space Theatre, a classic dome-roofed room with raked seating for approx 150 people. The 58ft diameter dome is itself interesting, in that it's 28% perforated, not that you'd notice, the holes are so small, but big enough to allow the air-conditioning to work through it. The reason for this not inexpensive a/c system is the sheer volume of kit which designer and NSC technical director George Barrett has crammed in."



The Gravity Well area

other telescopes, satellites and computer-generated images, it's a tribute to the expertise and sheer creative sweat of Barrett and the software (ATM4) of Spitz Inc with which he modelled and controls it.

Imagine this: to produce an image covering 60 degree horizontally, and 200 degrees vertically requires three projectors (known collectively as the Electric Sky System) and a file size of roughly 2 Gigabytes per scene, "the edge-blending software, Pano Maker, can sometimes take all day to crunch a scene," revealed Barrett's assistant. Barrett himself was a rather reluctant star of his own achievements, though he did reveal that the content and make-up of 'Big' was "essentially all my own." Not quite Stanley Kubrick, but for 20 minutes worth he wasn't far off.

The NSC was co-founded by Leicester City Council and the University in the mid nineties, their bid for MC funding being agreed - as a Landmark Millennium Project - in the summer of '97. Total funding amounts to £52m, £26m from the MC, the rest match funded from a wide variety of sponsors led by the City, BT,



The University and the East Midlands Development Agency. Beyond the concept itself, the founding sponsors are hoping the NSC will encourage the aggregation of further technology-based projects around the Abbey Meadows location. (Abbey Meadows is an inner city brown-field site, a former sewage works and waste tip, so there's hope that NSC will ultimately lead to a flourishing 'Science Park'). That may well be, there is already justification for such development through the establishment of the CATSAT satellite research centre, part of a joint venture with the University of New Hampshire; a programme with links to other international space programmes, as well as the actual control centre for the CATSAT satellite.

Further to this, and in perhaps the most diverting moment of the day, a lady from the anti-nuclear lobby chose to berate the official Press Briefing panel on the lack of content about the potential mis-use of space, particularly for weapons. Although arguably she was wildly out of context - this was after all ostensibly a Press Day to promote the venue to school-age children - she had a point.

It would have been easy to dismiss her tirade as inappropriate, neither the time nor the place, and indeed most members of the media there present, visibly switched off as soon as her intent became clear. But in fairness to Chas Bishop (the

Chief Exec' of the NSC, and Press Panel Chairman) he took her point seriously, as opposed to batting her off with a bunch of New Speak.

Mike O'Connor also took her complaints on board in parts of his response. Whether a section dealing with space weapons appears in the future, I don't know, but I wouldn't be surprised. After all, they need scientists too. And what has this last point to do with PLASA? Well if I'm not mistaken, wasn't the control system for the original Telescan moving mirror head a derivative of an Israeli-developed missile launch system?

photos: Jim Cartwright/Steve Moles



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Phil Ward.

... Audio File

It's a merry-go-round, it really is. The intense activity in the mixing console business of the past few months demonstrates several things, including dynamism and vision. But at first sight, progress is harder to make out.

"The new line-up would suggest a synergy between broadcasting and sound reinforcement, which would undoubtedly be a wise move. TV and internet coverage of audience-attended events is on an inexorable rise."

THE MOST SIGNIFICANT swap is Amek for Allen & Heath at Harman - via Studer, a company that Harman says is still on the market. So, one mixer company is replaced by another. But beneath this deft act of plate-spinning is a strategy that reveals what everybody is essentially trying to do: to match technology expertise with market requirements.

IT WAS NEVER spoken out loud, but there was clearly a

conflict between Mark Terry's desire to "re-focus all of our brands on what each core brand represents," and the co-existence of both Allen & Heath and Soundcraft - plus, therefore, Spirit - under one roof. Obviously the soul-searching at Allen & Heath led to a management buyout. Amek comes in with a great deal more studio technology than either Allen & Heath or Soundcraft, and builds a bridge towards Studer's broadcast expertise. Broadcast is where Studer is at, now: Regensdorf stopped making multitrack analogue tape machines three years ago. The new line-up would suggest a synergy between broadcasting and sound reinforcement, which

would undoubtedly be a wise move. Television and internet coverage of audience-attended events is on an inexorable rise. However, the new 'sub-groups' announced by Harman consist of Recording & Broadcast on the one hand, and Sound Reinforcement on the other.

THE SYNERGY, then, must be in the newly formed Pro Electronics Group, which Studer, Amek and Soundcraft comprise. Its head, John Carpanini, has Adrian Curtis and Bruno Hochstrasse in key positions to make it work. So, as long as the broadcast dimension remains stable, it should. By sheer coincidence, the venture capitalist company that has backed Allen & Heath's £9million buyout - 3i - is the very same 3i that helped Turbosound disengage from Harman in 1998, and the one that has supported Philip Hart's recent appointment as non-executive chairman of Turbosound. From Harman, that is. Like I said, a merry-go-round.

STIMULATING MARKETING INITIATIVES, No. 1: reports reach me of the delivery of a crate of Red Bull, the energising soft drink, to a well-known entertainment technology magazine by way of a promotional 'gift'. A thousand gold stars to the industry wag who said, "That's the first time I've seen a red bull waved at a rag."

WORTHY OF NOTE are John Pellowe's comments at Pavarotti's Picnic In The Park last month. Pellowe has been Pavarotti's FOH engineer for well over a decade, and has been hugely instrumental in defining and perfecting the art of sound reinforcement for classical music and opera. Regular readers of this column will know my feelings about those who fail to approve of such an art, let alone appreciate it. So I'll just let Mr Pellowe speak. "There are certain advantages to doing classical music in big arenas. You're dealing with lower sound levels than pop and rock, and the lower your level, the more control you've got - especially in a nasty acoustic

environment, and believe me we've been in a few of those. Our sound designer Thorny is a great one for adapting the space itself before you even put a PA system in. Quite a lot of his work is specifying drapes and eyebrows for the venue. Eyebrows, especially - because they hang down in front of the PA system and stop energy getting up into the roof area. Adding material at strategic places can have dramatic improvements.

"A SIMPLE, heavy eyebrow in front of the main loudspeaker cluster can transform a room. Maybe 20ft in front, about four layers of really thick fabric, just cutting off the top of the speakers sufficiently to stop the energy going up. It's unbelievable."

WE'VE HAD techno-pop, pure pop and power pop. We've had house, garage and trance - and a lot more besides. Now, I think, it's time for a generic moniker for 21stC popular music, and I'd like to nominate 'Vicarious Pop'. For the dance subsidiaries of this, I suggest, simply, 'Offset'. The significant thing that current pop and dance music styles have in common is the relationship between the people that create them and the people that perform them. It's now well known that in so-called 'manufactured' pop music there are teams of backroom songwriters and producers who supply material to the groomed performers who grab all the limelight.

BUT THE SAME IS TRUE of dance music, wherein hugely famous DJs perform music generated by backroom songwriters and producers too. It's just that one is credible and the other isn't. This is odd, because it's the process of having someone else create the music performed by the Popstars, and all the others, that attracts all the criticism. The fact that Paul Oakenfold performs other people's music leaves the same eyebrows horizontal.

I'D LIKE TO SEE the tribute band market expand to include DJs, so you'd have the surreal spectacle of someone dressed in a loud shirt playing exactly the same records as Fatboy Slim. And why not tribute orchestras? If you can't get the LSO, book El Esso - 43 assorted MU members dressed in penguin suits! It's a far cry from the singer-songwriters of the 1970s and the artist-producers of the 1980s. But it's actually a move full circle back to the days of Tin Pan Alley, when jobbing writers peddled their songs to an industry dedicated to promoting charismatic singers who were expected just to sing. Where that leaves the health of the music industry I'll let you decide, but there's no shortage of demand for sound reinforcement out there.

WHICH LEAVES JUST one question. Does a U2 tribute band play 'sham rock'?

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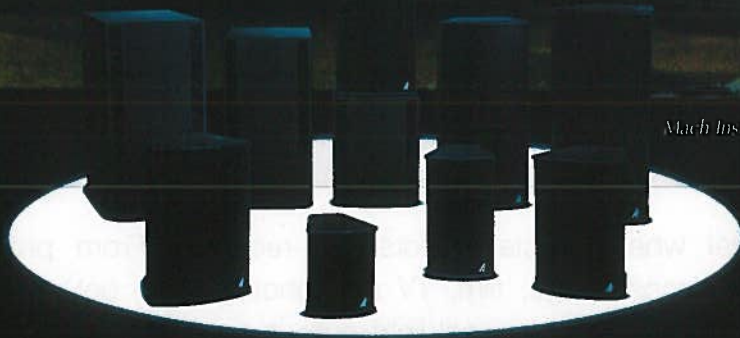
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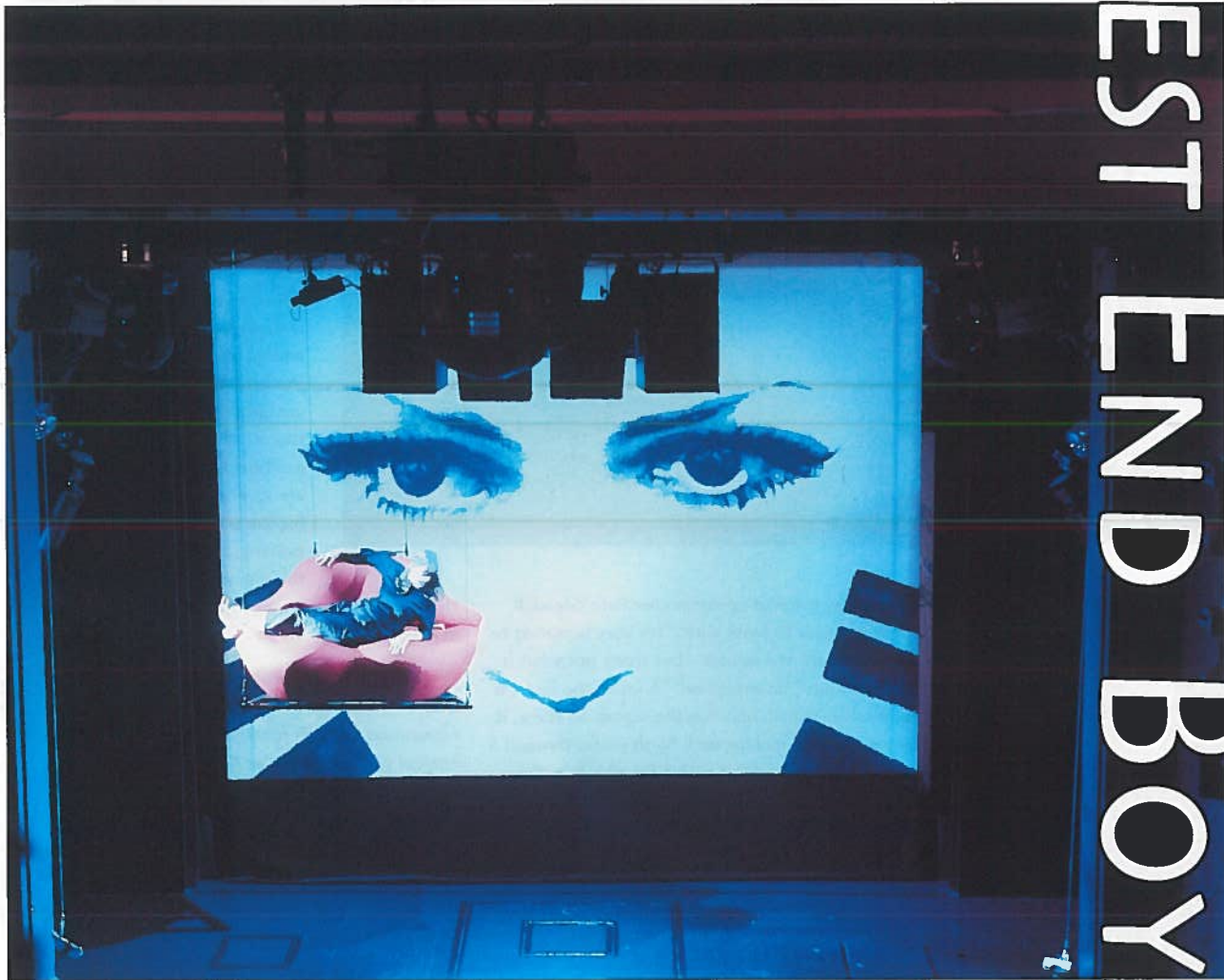
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Mike Mann takes a look at the piece of musical heaven created by eighties pop duo The Pet Shop Boys

WEST END BOYS



"This is not a run-of-the-mill show!" asserted lighting designer Mark Henderson - and he's not the only one who thinks so. Critics have treated *Closer To Heaven*, which has been penned by Jonathan Harvey with music and lyrics by Neil Tennant and Chris Lowe, with bemusement, while audience numbers at the tiny Arts Theatre vary from week to week.

The story, which is set in the hedonistic world of the London gay club scene, is a rather soppy tragedy about the adventures (and misadventures) of a young man coming to terms with his sexuality. Spiked with drugs, booze and the characters' shocking lack of what Granny would have called 'moral fibre', this gives Harvey and director Gemma Bodinetz a multitude of opportunities for graphic sex scenes (both gay and straight) and provides a believable backdrop for the Pet Shop Boys' pounding eighties-style synth-pop. The leading role of Billie Tricks is filled by Frances Barber - a 'serious' actress who is clearly relishing being a part of such camp nonsense. Newcomer Stacey Roca (fresh from the Webber Douglas Academy) strikes a fine balance between the innocent and the worldly, and audiences may (just) remember leading man Paul Keating for his role as Tommy in the eponymous *Who* musical.

The stage, however, belongs to the ensemble - and, because of the sexual politics of the plot, to the men. Whether clad in nothing but bejewelled thongs, or an exhaustive variety of bondage outfits, the choreography of Peter Darling is as camp

and kitsch as the theme demands. Set and costume design is by Es Devlin, whose previous work includes designs for Scottish Opera, the RSC at Stratford and the widely-acclaimed *Betrayal* at the National. Free from the usual constraints of subtlety, her wardrobe choices are a glittering parody of eighties and nineties club fashion - including several outfits that are in constant danger of having someone's eye out!

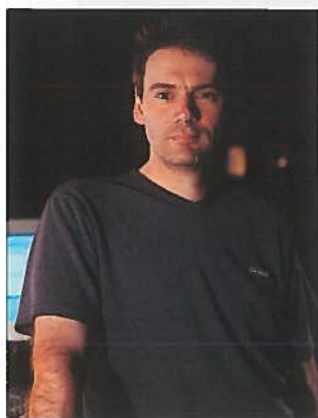
The sets, which include a flown box masquerading as the club owner's backstage office (complete with glaring fluorescent lighting) are simple enough to make sense of the Arts' tiny proscenium, while the show is almost stolen by an in-bed duet - where the 'bedroom' has been tipped through 90 degrees to give us a bird's-eye view of the action. Considering the financial restrictions of the production, Terry Murphy Scenery must have done the deal to end all deals in furnishing the show with such a full set.

Musically, the show is almost completely electronic. In fact, the only acoustic instruments on show are crash and ride cymbals over the otherwise digital drumkit. MD Christopher Nightingale, assistant James McKeon and percussionist Steve Vinter rotate their roles, since the show only requires two live musicians per night.

The sound designer for the production was Simon Baker of Autograph Sound, who found that the unnatural 1980s sounds



Baker revealed, "this way, the choreography is not spoiled by adding mics at a late stage, and the actors have become completely comfortable with them." And adept at positioning them, too; there are several lightning changes for the small cast during the evening, and Baker's team have their hands full making sure



The Cadac E-Type dominates the sound control set-up. Inset, in a supporting role is the Mackie D8B

Above, No 1 operator Borneo Brown

Facing page, the main box set with Francis Barber as Billie Tricks

(photos Mike Mann/Alastair Muir)

created by the PSB's programmer Pete Gleadall were not easy to work with. "It's very tempting to try to smooth the sounds - but that's not what is needed here," he explained. "A lot of the music is aggressive - which matches the scenes on stage. It just seems odd making such harsh noises through a Cadac desk and a Meyer PA!" Despite this, there was no move to cheapen the system to produce a less 'hi-fi' sound. "The brief from Really Useful Group was that it should sound very real - for example, we have no vocals on tape, though it would have been easy to do that."

Baker's other problem was one of continuity. "This was the first time that the Pet Shop Boys had had to work on a production that runs for two-and-a-half hours - they are accustomed to finishing a piece of work in three-and-a-half minutes," he said. "In the end, we all learned a lot from each other, and no-one had any 'out-of-pram' moments!"

The electronic 'band' (much of which comes from Akai S6000 samplers, Roland V-Drums and a Mac-based Logic Audio package) is fed through a Mackie d8b digital console before being mixed with the 18 vocal channels and effects on a Cadac E-Type - a stock item at Autograph. "Because of the show's limited budget, the sound design was put together using standard stock items," recalled Baker, "which is not to say that we've compromised - in fact, even with an unlimited amount of money, I can't say that we'd have done anything differently." Clearly, Autograph believes that off-beat musicals like *Closer To Heaven* deserve a fair hearing; the company is listed as a sponsor in the programme.

Radio mics are standard West End issue; DPA 4065 booms attached to Sennheiser SK50 packs, with a Sennheiser handheld for Frances Barber's scenes as a nightclub hostess. "The cast have been wearing the mics since their fourth week in rehearsal - long before we had a sound system,"

that the cast's exuberant routines do not result in any drop-outs.

Processing is rather heavier than the average theatre production - with the emphasis firmly on compression. This is used both as a subtle dynamic control (with Valvotronic Gain Riders on vocal groups) and also as effects ("It's very, very difficult to make a Cadac sound distorted without resorting to an outboard unit - we did try!"). One unusual occupant of the processing rack is the Empirical Labs' Destressor, which was employed at the PSB's suggestion on the lead vocal channels.

Mark Henderson's lighting rig (supplied by White Light and The Moving Light Co) is one of the brightest that the diminutive Arts Theatre has ever seen, despite Henderson's concerted effort to scale down the size and quantity of fixtures. Apart from the ubiquitous ETC Source Four PARs, there are a mere 27 Martin units (15 MAC 300s, 11 MAC 250s and a lone MAC 500) and half a dozen moving mirror trackspots suffice to light the stage - and, for most of the nightclub scenes, a large part of the auditorium as well. Effects come in the form of Dataflash strobes (used for some particularly cheesy chases), UV floods and smoke (I've asked Mike who) by the bucketload.

Henderson explained that it was not only space restrictions that affected his choice of kit. "There is also a very limited amount of power available at the theatre - and the budget did not run to providing an uprated supply." Luckily, however, there was enough money in the pot to allow Vertigo rigging to supplement the Arts Theatre's traditional hemp lines with some temporary steel counterweights.

"This is a big musical in a small space," explained Henderson, "and new musicals are always difficult - especially if the writer's still alive!" This, he clarified, is not intended as a criticism - but the presence of both the writer and the composers in

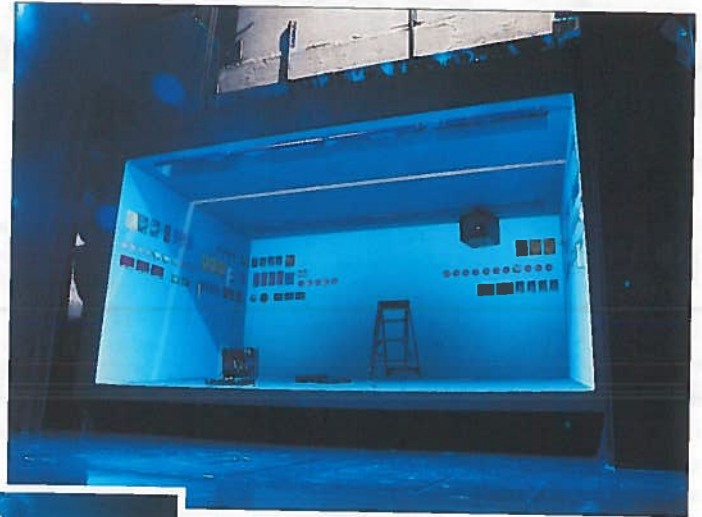
the auditorium meant that production time was hectic. "We're all exhausted," admitted Henderson, "it's been a long stint - late night notes sessions until 2 in the morning - followed by early starts. In this situation, the creative forum is very much open - the plot and the music can literally be re-written as you go along."

Specifying a largely moving-light rig enabled Henderson and programmer Stuart Porter to take major changes to the piece in their stride. The extreme dynamics of the story caused some concern, though, according to Henderson. "There are several big numbers which are followed immediately by small dialogue scenes - it's very difficult to manage the transition neatly on a small stage. Also, the opening scene is a big musical number - which everyone agrees is always something of a risk."

The musical period of the story was a welcome change for the LD: "It's not very often that you get contemporary music to work with - and I found myself revisiting the 1980s techno feel whenever I heard it," he said. "In the nightclub scenes, the music is very sharp and aggressive - very enveloping and in-your-face, and I wanted to put that into the look as well. I've used a lot of strobing and sweeping moving lights - not a thing you get to do with Rodgers and Hammerstein!"

Unusually, the production uses no followspots. This decision was made partly because of the extremely limited balcony space in the 350-seater auditorium, but there are also valid artistic reasons - most of the downstage action is set in nightclub lighting, where plain front light would have looked most out-of-place. Instead, the only MAC

Processing is rather heavier than the average theatre production - with the emphasis firmly on compression.



500 on the kit list was mounted in the centre of the auditorium and acts as a spot for the most important pickups. Thanks to the MAC's sensitivity and the relatively short throw to the stage, this can be operated live if necessary (though with such a small proscenium, actors are very rarely more than an inch or two from their marks).

Closer To Heaven is the first production from Company On Stage - the subsidiary of Really Useful Group that has been set up specifically

to produce non-Lloyd-Webber shows. In choosing this as their premiere, the company has shown an admirable sense of adventure - this is about as far from conventional West End fodder as one could get. The intimate and modern feel to the venue perfectly complements the piece, and should ensure busy houses every night. Providing, of course, that the production is fully promoted. As a simple punter (and one who sees a lot of advertising in London and beyond for established West End favourites), it seems incredible to me that *Closer To Heaven* has been so undersold. Having focused largely on the gay market at the start of its run, very little general promotional material was available until recently. While successful productions clearly have the funding to support saturation-level advertising campaigns, it would seem sensible for groups such as RUG to subsidize the promotion of their smaller shows. I, for one, am happy to do my bit - so if you are attending the PLASA show this month, I urge you to keep one evening free for Billie Tricks and her boys. But whatever you do, don't bring Granny. 

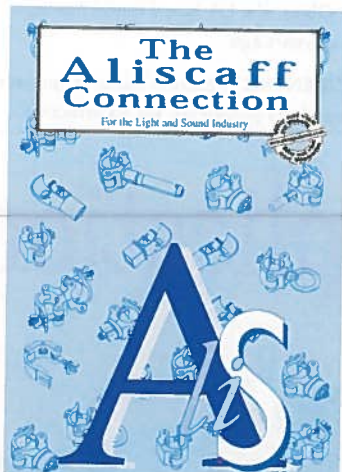


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Tony Cottler

No Comment...

OK, so it's the silly season when journalists tend to make up stories in the absence of any real news. But I promise you that I didn't make this one up. Especially so, as it's brought my pigeons home to roost in view of things I had said in a previous edition of this column. (Note to Ed. Please stop me making wild judgements about people's future actions on my perception of their personalities, it's a woman thing, so consequently I am useless at it.)

"Apparently, sales of concert tickets in the States are down by 15% this year and 'it's the economy, stupid', that's getting the blame. Mind you, Madonna concerts still sell out in minutes..."

business through the courts at a cost so high that Bob, and the other founders, were forced to dilute their shareholdings to a slim minority slice, which no longer reflects their roles as the originators? Isn't it the same company with whom they were eventually forced to settle for another fat chunk of money? You betcha! And doesn't Schacherl still retain shares in High End Systems? Yes, he does. (Accurate at the time of writing, see below.)

TO BE FAIR, I am sure that Bob's 'retirement', a few month's ago, was far from being the

friendly picture that was painted in the press hand-out at the time, but nevertheless, how must it feel to be working for the old adversary? You could ask: if you want to stay in the industry and in Texas, where else is there to go? Mind you, it's a great PR coup for Vari-Lite, and Schacherl will bring to the table an in-depth knowledge of the art of selling, rather than renting, moving lights.

WITH A POSSIBLE ETC/High End deal still very much in the offing, I guess it may not matter too much longer if he sells, but who knows what will happen? It's not yet a done deal. I prefer to think that Fred Foster's intentions are entirely honourable and that he will want to ensure that those involved get a fair shake - after all he is going to need most of them afterwards, and motivation will be a consideration. I doubt, however, that he is too encouraged by Schacherl's strange tactics. Perhaps he could have waited just a couple more weeks to find out what was actually going to be in the envelope?

THE WHETHER OR NOT of the ETC deal may well be known by the time this column is published, so if it turns out that I have got any of it wrong, including the aforementioned judgemental bits, then I apologise in advance.

A SMALL FEATHERED MESSENGER has dropped a message in my ever open shell-like, that officers of Westsun are, in the City and Wall Street jargon, 'considering strategic options to return value to shareholders'. In plain-speak, some, or all of the business, could be up for grabs. Westsun is the full service rental provider with multiple depots in both Canada, where it was founded, and the USA. It is probably best known in Europe as the Corporation that bought Obies, the LA-based rental house, a couple of years ago.

COINCIDENTALLY, there is currently pressure from Broadway producers, for an effective

union-shop alternative to Fourth Phase, which owns just about everything else there, to be established in New York City. So, Westsun NY could be an attractive proposition for an opportunist with sufficient funding. I hear that Bandit Lites may be in the frame, though this was denied hotly by all concerned as we went to press. Whatever happens, I hope it doesn't lead to a bloody price war - rental rates are at rock bottom, both in New York and London.

I WAS IN ATHENS RECENTLY, en route for the coast, (yes, very nice, thank you very much), and our brief time there coincided with the annual Vangelis concert, one of those yearly extravaganzas that projection specialist ETC Audiovisual do so well. This year there was a bit of a pall hanging over the performance, however, because the Greek press had decided to brew up a scandal over the ticket prices and the consequent profits being made by the promoter and the performer. A storm in a glass of Ouzo, you might think.

YET, WHEN WE GOT HOME the press were also busy with stories about the possibility of next year's Stones 40th anniversary tour being cancelled because fans were no longer prepared to pay average ticket prices of £60 for a stadium concert. Apparently, sales of concert tickets in the States are down by 15% this year and 'it's the economy, stupid', that's getting the blame. Mind you, Madonna concerts still sell out in minutes, albeit some in smaller-scale venues. Strangely, the Credit Card Research Group reported spending on 'entertainment' up by 22.3% in the UK. Not on concert tickets, presumably. If the Stones don't tour again for any other reason than advanced age, it will certainly have an adverse effect on the entire business.

AS A DEMONSTRATION of how truly polymorphic this column is, I shall now move on to disco. The unfortunate occurrences in connection with recreational pharmaceuticals, including a small number of very unfortunate deaths connected with the use of Ecstasy, have led police to propose that, not only should they infiltrate the dance clubs, as they already do, but also increase their presence, and charge the operators for the privilege.

I DO HOPE BEDA will resist this strenuously. I can't think of anything more likely to drive the dance business underground. There is already some evidence that the present 'search and destroy' policy is causing punters to take an entire night's 'candy' prior to leaving home for the night, as if that weren't dodgy enough. The two cultures are interconnected, and kids will do what kids do - live dangerously. It is a fantasy to imagine that a police presence will do anything other than exacerbate matters.

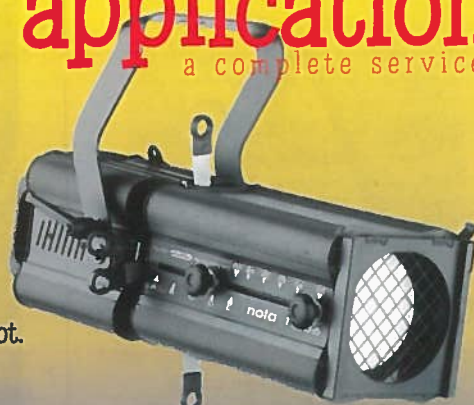
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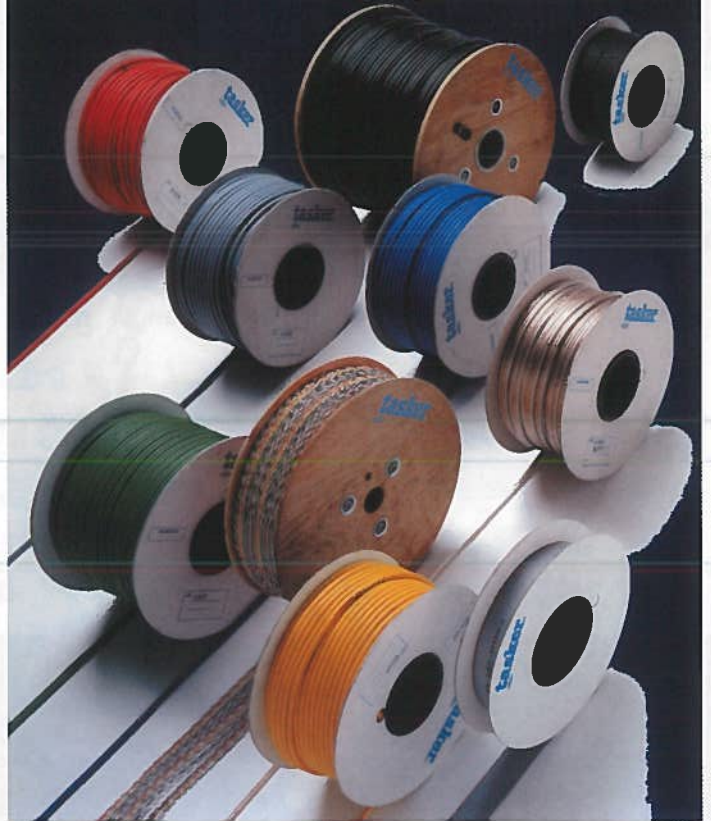
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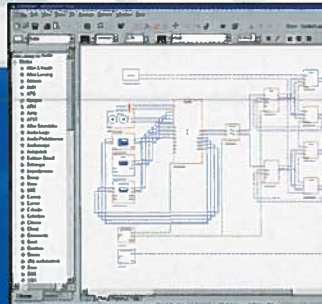
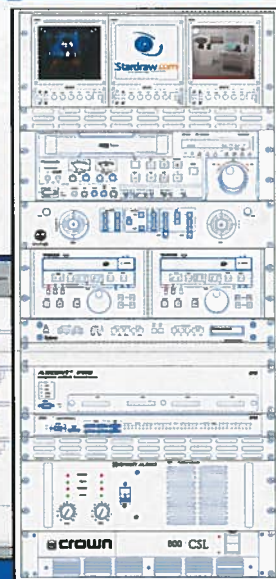
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L&S visits the UK's largest independent television studio facility which provides services to the main broadcast networks, as well as international clients and independent producers



FOUNTAIN STUDIOS

Chris Cooper, Fountain Studios' chief engineer talks about the place with a fondness and affection similar to that of proud parents expanding about their kids. He knows the building intimately, having arrived at the Wembley facility in 1988 when it was owned by Limehouse Studios.

When Limehouse went into receivership in 1992, Cooper was initially asked by the receivers to stay on as caretaker until a new buyer could be found. The studio was then acquired and taken over by Fountain, who at the time were operating out of a much smaller studio in New Malden, Surrey. Fountain also asked him to stay on, and when their incumbent technical director departed a few years later, Cooper took over as chief.

Studio manager Anthony Edwards was 'home-grown'; recruited in 1993 when Fountain took over, he's worked his way up through the ranks. Together, they head up the energetic technical team spearheading Fountain's operation.

Fountain has two identical 6,500sq.ft studios. A unique feature of the building is that the studios are divided by a massive motorised, soundproofed door which, if required, lifts to combine the two into one capacious space of 13,000sq.ft. It's the largest purpose-built TV studio facility in the UK - and possibly in Europe.

Two things immediately strike the visitor - there's an unmistakable buzz about the place and secondly, it's very friendly. With the trooping of stars and celebrities through its portals an everyday routine, Fountain retains a grass roots accessibility. The essence of any

creative and collaborative space is that it should be relaxed and open - something Fountain appears to have taken on board and striven to cultivate.

The studio is one of the busiest and most dynamic top-end independent television studios in the country. Cooper explains enthusiastically that the aim is to cater for all types of show - from drama to current affairs, quiz shows to sitcoms, soaps to large light entertainment (LE) and music shows. They currently have a regular slot hosting the National Lottery Winning Lines show - which utilizes the large studio - and are stacked out with a plethora of other shows and series' for a wide variety of production companies and producers.

Fountain was also used for the first series of *Who Wants to be a Millionaire* - again their full space won them the contract as it did for *An Audience with Ricky Martin* for LWT. Recent quiz shows recorded there include the last series of *Greed* with Jerry Springer whilst currently, the sitcom *'Kumars at no 42'* for Hat Trick Productions, is in residence.

Versatility is the order of the day, an element directly reflected in Fountain's technical facilities. "We definitely don't want to tie ourselves down to only working in one way," states Cooper. Any equipment the studio has invested in must be changeable and reconfigurable for different shows and uses, and the entire technical infrastructure has been constructed to do this as quickly and efficiently as possible. They could have a regular show like the Lottery in every Saturday, and on Tuesday and Thursday, have something totally different.

Since 1993, the shows have steadily grown in size and technical demands. Cooper explains that eight years ago, most shows featured four or five cameras, whereas now most use between 8 and 10.

The other big change has been in the use of moving lights - a rare phenomenon eight years ago, and when they did make an appearance, it was primarily as special effects in music shows. Now moving lights are de rigueur for most LE shows - anything from a dozen up to over 100 for the larger productions. With this comes the requirement for specific moving light desks and operators.

Fountain has no in-house moving lights for obvious reasons - they want to be able to provide exactly the fixtures requested by individual lighting directors. They've also been wary of investing in a fast-moving market where fixtures go in and out of fashion quicker than alcopops! Instead, Fountain deals with all the major moving light rental houses including Richard Martin Lighting, ELP and Vari-Lite, renting in to spec.

There's a good stock of generic TV lights - the versatile Giano hard/soft combination light sources, 5Ks, pups, blondes and redheads. An electric winch system runs across the ceilings throughout the two studio spaces, giving access and roof rigging points everywhere they are needed.

Fountain has just undertaken a major new refit of the studio's dimming system, which now features a Comulite CompuDIM 2000



dimmer installation. This was supplied and fitted by Compulite's UK distributor, Stagetec. Fountain were very particular about their dimmer requirements - with flexibility to the fore as usual. They wanted high-spec, modular digital technology.

The new dimming systems are virtually identical for both studios, each consisting of 360 channels of 5kW and 12 channels of 10kW CompuDIM 2000 modules. Lighting in each studio is controlled from the existing Strand Galaxy consoles via D54 to DMX converters and Compulite SP-4D rackmount controllers. The SP-4D controllers enable the dimmers and the whole studio complex to be controlled via Ethernet, as well as providing detailed status-reporting information from the dimmers to the control rooms.



Above, the Compulite Sparktop console and right, CompuDIM dimmers

The CompuDIM's status reporting capability was fundamental to the choice of dimmers. A main requirement at the studios is to be able to connect a moving light to any outlet in the building and switch this to hard (as opposed to dimmed) power. Compulite added this customised feature to their 2 x 5kW modules for Fountain - as a bypass circuit breaker.

Cooper explains that they were also determined to ensure that the new installation offers future-proof technology, capable of providing high quality lighting for many years to come. With this in mind, Stagetec specified a complete DMX and Ethernet distribution system which now permeates the whole studio complex. This was installed by Fountain staff and terminated by Stagetec, who also routed all the necessary data cables and ran mains feeds to the new dimmers.

Compulite DMX splitters are permanently fixed in the control rooms with portable units available for use on the rig. Compulite E-Mix Ethernet nodes are also installed in the control rooms with portable nodes available on the rig. The Netserver software runs on a PC in the control room, enabling the entire system to be configured via Ethernet, including system status indication and system-wide software upgrades.

Fountain also required the control system and dimmers to be flexible enough to serve either as two stand-alone systems - potentially with a different show in each studio - or as one large unified system with all dimmers - over 800 channels - and DMX/Ethernet outlets controlled from one console. Using Netserver software, this can be achieved in seconds.

A Compulite SparkTOP console complements the dimming system, and functions as a roving desk used for programming on the studio floor or in other locations around the building which are used for filming. A portable flightcased CompuDIM 2000 rack provides additional mobile dimming as required. Naturally, the installation was carried out in an extremely tight window, due to Fountain's busy schedule, executed in two intense bursts of activity with minimal disruption to the studio's ongoing work.

Lighting for each studio is run from its own Strand Galaxy console. Cooper is adamant that there's absolutely nothing on the market



to beat this maverick lighting desk when it comes to TV studio operation. No longer manufactured, second-hand and refurbished Galaxys are like gold dust! Fountain's originally came from Limehouse's Canary Wharf facility, and both have been kept current with all available upgrades over the years.

So what's so cool about the Galaxy? "Channel controls for one," says Cooper, eyeing the desk fondly. The modular construction of the Galaxy is very flexible. It allows FX panels or channel controllers to be inserted at different points in the desk - so the console operator can programme using one section of the desk, while the lighting director can be making adjustments and creating looks on another section - which can then be stored by the console op. "Most desks today are geared towards moving lights," observes Cooper "which is fine, but it doesn't satisfy our requirements. Absolutely nothing comes close to the Galaxy for us."

Sound-wise, for control, Fountain has two Calrec S series broadcast consoles which are virtually identical, again picked for their flexibility. The desk is not directly geared to music recording, but they can still do it. Fountain hosts plenty of shows with live bands individually mic'd up, and the desk has plenty of capacity for mono mic channels and VT play-ins. However, any live music mixes are done in addition to the standard multi-tracked stereo TV mix. This keeps all the options open for those involved in the post-show mixdown/dub.

For live bands performing on the studio floor, they provide a conventional monitor mix with on-stage console, engineer and wedges. For live audience shows, separate PAs are provided for artists/performers/presenters and for the audience itself - to keep the audio entities separate and reduce spillage.

Part of the sound console is usually allocated and operated as a 'grams' desk - the terms refers back to the days when spot effects were played in from gramophone records! Technology has advanced a bit since then, via quarter inch tape on to hard disk recorders, which are now the most common storage medium for 'grams' sources. The 'grams' desk normally provides any high level sources like stings, bumpers into and out of commercials, and background music beds on quiz shows.

Specific effects for quiz shows - such as bells, buzzers and whistles - are all generated from a hard disk player. Usually there's an operator dedicated to spot effects who has all the special effects equipment to hand at their end of the desk. Some shows (Cooper is diplomatically unspecific) still use a 'canned' audience. Here the spot effects operator uses a keyboard to access all manner of audience reactions from boos, hisses and applause to countless types and degrees of laughter which can be skilfully manipulated to sound authentic.

TV studio sound operation tends to work with groups and group levels more than a conventional sound recording situation. For a quiz show, all the contestant's mics might be grouped together so they can be removed when the presenter is speaking - to avoid catching coughing, sniffing or other undesirable noises.

VT has a separate group on the sound desk. The amount of VT play-ins varies greatly, sometimes a single one, sometimes four or five - all with up to four tracks. When doing live shows - by which they mean 'live' to a national or global audience - not just those in the studio, they will often run two VT machines playing identical material. This allows a seamless change should any glitches arise with the first source.

The desks feature a good selection of onboard effects, and Fountain has a stock of standard outboard effects - gates, compressors, reverb units, etc. Any specially-requested items they will hire in, and if they're asked for frequently enough, they will be bought and added to the inventory.



Andy Stone (left) and Mick Cocker of Stagetec (right) with studio manager Anthony Edwards (centre, left) and chief engineer Chris Cooper

The same is true for effects and other source machinery - like DATs, CDs, hard disk players. This technology is currently evolving at such a pace it's hard to keep up. "We keep a keen eye on the market for what's coming out, but we're usually slightly circumspect about being first in the queue for investing in new technology," explained Cooper.

Fountain has eight studio cameras: Sony BVP 570s for lightweight cameras (a hand-held look is popular with music shows) and BVP 500s for full studio grade cameras, although the 570s can be converted into studio/rostra cameras if needed. Specialist lenses are hired in to suit. They also have a selection of mini-cams and discreet (no operator) cameras and the requisite support facilities to deal with them. "They have their uses," admits Cooper, slightly reticently, "but there's no substitute for quality." He quickly puts this in the context of Fountain, which is a high-end studio used by those with reasonable budgets. He's careful not to be disrespectful to the many film and programme makers working on shoestring budgets, who can get creative and innovative results with whatever lower-end technology is available to them.

Camera operators are all freelancers - again giving individual directors complete freedom to bring in their team, but they do have camera assistants on the Fountain staff who rig and prep the kit for incoming productions. Vision mixers also tend to be freelance, booked by the production company. There are eight permanent staff in Cooper's department, and between them they cover all technical aspects for the studios.

The vision-mixing elements at Fountain went digital five years ago, prompted by the growing demand for widescreen shows - now a standard format. The vision mixers are Sony 7250s - ideal for studio work, which generally have less of an appetite for channels than OBs. Again, flexibility is the key; the vision mixing set-up is fully configurable for individual operators - all of whom have different styles and operating needs.

Technically, going digital made a huge difference in terms of the robustness of signal. Once the sources are set up they are a lot easier to re-route and much more forgiving when it comes to processing, timing and matching. "You can change it almost infinitely, and digital signals just sort themselves out," says Cooper.

It's obvious that both Cooper and Edwards have a real passion for the television business. Cooper started, like so many, with the BBC - which proved an invaluable training ground - before moving into the commercial facilities. He's seen a lot of changes and advances flow under the bridge. The obvious question is does Fountain have something unique that's contributed to its success as a production facility?

Cooper feels that it's a fusion of personnel, inter-departmental teamwork and technology that combines to offer good facilities and service in a fiercely-competitive marketplace - to which regular clients keep returning and new ones are constantly appearing. Sometimes 'the BBC' comes out in him, or perhaps loyalty and stoicism are more prevalent in TV production than other performance areas?

The bottom line for Cooper and Edwards is that "The people factor is imperative. It's about attitude. Everyone working here is passionate about their work."

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Ian Herbert, Asleep in the Stalls...

The year-long festival Japan 2001 has included a number of opportunities to get to grips with the curious mix of Japan's theatre, where tradition and kitsch sit uncomfortably close in the work of even the great masters. It is a theatre that over the last century has warmly embraced that of the West, from Shakespeare to Lloyd Webber, and visiting British companies and directors find a welcome in venues from the Tokyo Globe to the ultra-modern playhouses of the big musical producers.

"In May, we got the unconscious modern equivalent of Kanadehon Hamlet. A mis-guided Japanese producer decided to fuse elements of Kabuki and Noh with bleeding chunks of Shakespeare."

A DELIGHTFUL example of the marriage of East and West came in an early visit from the Kiyama company, who brought their *Kanadehon Hamlet* to BAC in March. Harue Tsutsumi's comedy is based on the first known performance of *Hamlet* in Japan, and shows a Kabuki producer down on his luck, coming to terms with the totally different production style of Western theatre, by which he

hopes to retrieve his fortunes. The main hall of BAC was completely taken over by Mitsuru Ishi's rich set, and a largely Japanese audience hugely enjoyed the broad humour of the piece.

AT DRURY LANE in May, we got the unconscious modern equivalent of *Kanadehon Hamlet*. A misguided Japanese producer decided to fuse elements of Kabuki and Noh with bleeding chunks of Shakespeare, recited by a rather bewildered Peter Bayliss, in *Amaterasu, the Sun*

Goddess. Some stunning costumes from Tomio Mohri and some remarkable traditional Taiko drumming from Miyuki Ikeda failed to save this farrago from well-deserved ridicule.

THERE HAVE BEEN times when even the renowned Yukio Ninagawa has come perilously close to the same cross-cultural trap. His 1994 'techno' *Peer Gynt* seemed to be pursuing the downhill path started by an over-elaborate *Tempest* the year before, causing doubts about the mastery which had overwhelmed British audiences in his *Macbeth* and *Medea*. There had been some questions earlier, when his Edinburgh production of Yukio Mishima's *Sotoba Komachi* played without surtitles, in a flurry of camellia blossom and to much mystification.

THE RETURN OF THIS PIECE, in a double bill with Mishima's harsher *Yorobashi*, to the Barbican this summer renewed one's faith in this remarkable director. Surtitles helped the London audience to grasp the fairy-tale beauty of the first piece as well as the despairing savagery of the second, and above all to see something of the tradition of Noh being brought to bear on modern themes. The lighting of Tamotsu Harada provided much of the impetus for the several astonishing coups de théâtre that punctuated the evening.

THOSE LOOKING for the roots of this experience had the opportunity to see Kabuki in all its purity when Nakamura Ganjiro III, Japan's most celebrated exponent, brought his company to Sadler's Wells. Even here, purity is a relative term: Chikamatsu Monzaemon wrote his masterpiece, *Sonezaki Shinju*, in 1703 as a Bunraku puppet play, and adapted it for Kabuki in 1719; the version seen in London dates from 1953, when Ganjiro first played the role of Ohatsu, a role which he will hand on to his son next year after 2,000 performances over almost half a century.

FOR DESIGN NUTS, the most fascinating event in Japan 2001 was the appearance in July of a few modest screens and plinths in the Lyttelton's circle

foyer. Here, the 13-strong Society of Japanese Theatre Designers were exhibiting their work. Called *Beyond Time and Space* - I take it as a compliment to the SBTD's recent shows - their presentation concentrated on designs for Western playwrights: Ninagawa's *King Lear*, in which Nigel Hawthorne took to the heath, was there in Yukio Horio's clean wooden model, and Mr Horio also showed a composite set for *A Streetcar Named Desire* in which you could see four different scenes, each with its own *Blanche du Bois*. Kazue Hatano also showed two models, the first a grassy country scene for Glen Walford's *Measure for Measure* which looked more appropriate to *As You Like It* or *The Winter's Tale*. For *Ghosts*, Ms Hatano supplied a huge glass-walled set down which water poured for most of the play. This was presented simply by a transparency on a light-box, housed in a flight-case.

TSUYOSHI ISHI produced a big, semi-industrial set for a version of *Hamlet* called *That's a Question!* enacted in a large modern hospital. Projections on the mirrored back wall showed scene changes, behind a huge scaffolding erection of steel and glass. Toru Shimakawa was even more industrial in his set for a rock-opera version of the same play, whose large playing area was composed of giant semiconductors piled geometrically around a printed circuit board serving as forestage. Steel featured again in Jiro Shima's cool *Macbeth* set, in the banquet table and chairs, as well as the floor and walls. His set for *Three Sisters*, also featured, made typically Japanese use of stark Russian birches and wooden furniture in formal arrangements to create the atmosphere of the play's four very different acts.

WATER WAS A FEATURE both in Jun Matsuno's island set for *The Tempest*, where a giant piece of driftwood floated on a mirrored stage and was reflected in another mirror above; and rather more surprisingly in Shigeaki Tsuchiya's sombre *Romeo and Juliet*, apparently set in Venice rather than Verona, where 'a boat brings a young girl down towards her young lover. Then the red moon shines over their life and eventual death.' A strong image at the centre of Rumi Matsui's design for *The Merchant of Venice* echoed Rob Howell's 1999 design for the NT *Money*. Her stage resembles a gold coin.

THE SHOW WAS ENLIVENED by a few very striking and beautifully-made costumes, such as Takahide Goda's glittering lace gown for *Macbeth* and Kimiko Naeda's diaphanous, richly embellished cloaks for a ballet version of *Twelfth Night*. At the centre of the exhibit, simply and ingeniously lit, is a small shrine. Here a flame-red 'holy tree' of cloth floats in a faint stream of stage smoke above a small wooden Buddha on a bed of smooth stones, leaving the spectator to contemplate a world beyond theatrecraft. Like the whole exhibit, it conveys a sense of elemental simplicity that is very Japanese.

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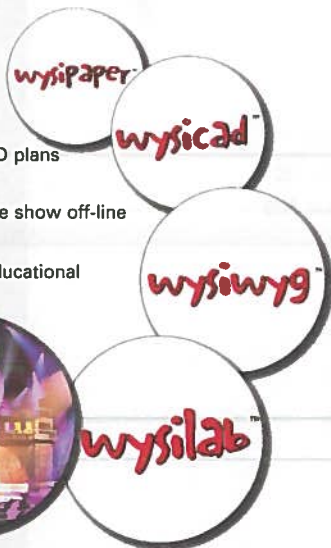
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Street Life

Steve Moles shares a night with Roxy Music at Sheffield Arena

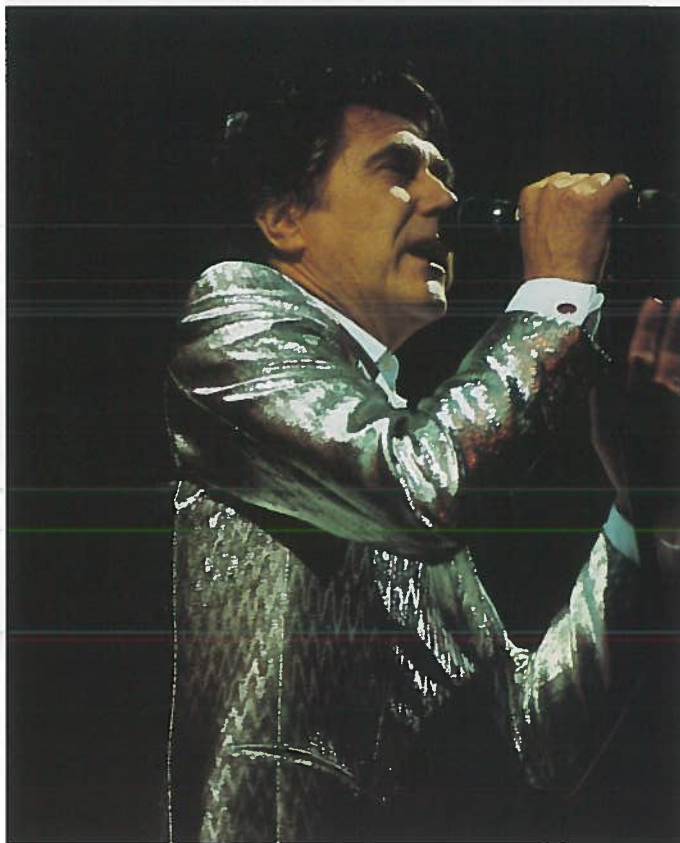
Dripping in decadence, the slightly louche style that has always been Brian Ferry's touchstone was here in spades. He's a very clever man, and when it comes to setting a tone he has an acute eye. Defining decadence as the last outburst of a corpulent society grown rotten in its own wealth, Roxy Music would be the perfect band to play at the final orgy of self-destruction. While standing amidst the heaving atmosphere of sweaty bodies, they rise above it. It's a very potent image, just one reason why their entire audience were on their feet from the opening chords to the finale, while the Eagles' (see news this issue) sat in hushed reverence until the last few songs, and only when roused from their torpor by the prospect of it all ending, rose and tried to enjoy themselves.

Lighting & Set

This is a design by Liz Berry, with considerable input from Mr Ferry. "Both wanted it to look theatrical," said show operator Richard Gorrod, "but also versatile, that's why there are moving trusses, to give a more industrial look if needed. Ferry loves it." 'Theatrical' is perhaps not the best word: it's a theatre-like setting and multiple drapes frame what is a very wide stage. The result is a slight *trompe l'oeil*: what the eye sees is the familiar wrapping of a stage half that width, and with great depth, made more acute by the projection of video onto a silver-coated gauze at the extreme upstage line. But more of that later.

'Intimate' is probably the better adjective - we may be witnessing an arena show, but most of the audience are sucked into another setting. Of course, in the final analysis this doesn't work for everybody - I tested it by sitting in vacant seats around the room and once past the front-of-house position, about 60 metres out, it was lost. To be fair this would work best in a slightly smaller hall, the new-ish Nottingham National Ice Arena would be about right, while the Newcastle Arena, though of comparable capacity, would not. It's the width that matters - Newcastle is too long and acutely lacks width. I don't wish to labour the point about the vagaries of arena design - the skill here is the ability to temporarily transform them, to transcend the environment.

At first glance the set, beyond drapes, is minimal: the band play on low risers or the floor, yet the scene is cluttered. Further examination reveals four vertical lighting towers, draped in black and well disguised. A large painted cloth - a detailed facsimile of tree foliage - occupies perhaps 20% of the upstage right corner, while stage left, deep scalloped drapes and tasselled ropes fill a similar area in the upper reaches. Each side at stage level stands a bare-limbed tree - branches sharply tapered, they resemble the palmate form of a Fallow Deer antler. It's this flatness that makes them take light so well, while their slightness of form means they can be lost to the eye in the absence of light. Add 11 musicians and the stage becomes very busy.



The lighting, from Vari-Lite, is predominantly automated - VL5s and 5Bs, and 38 of the new VL6Cs. Steam lighting comprised just a dozen Pars, a few sets of ACLs, and some Lowell Omni photofloods strategically tucked about the stage. But it's the 6Cs that are raising all the fuss at the moment - a slightly envious Joel Young, operating on the Eagles stated: "This could be the light to save Vari-Lite." That's over-egging the pudding a little - Vari-Lite don't so much need a light to save them, more they need to be saved from themselves - an issue they appear to be addressing more rationally these past 12 months.

But the 6C is certainly worthy of the attention; the 700W MSR is bright, "as bright as a VL2C," claimed Gorrod, "though that's a purely subjective appraisal." While you're restricted to 11 colour slots, the lack of colour mixing is compensated for by a very quick-change device - snappy is not the word - and the 3:1 zoom is excellent.

Control is from a Vari-Lite Virtuoso. I wrote a considerable amount about some of the features of this desk on Eurovision (see L&S June 2001), but Gorrod - one of the first operators to use it - had more to add. "It makes lamp movement very smooth - I've never seen a VL6 run so smoothly. I'm running VL protocol, no different from an Artisan, but I believe it's the constant feedback of cue data to the desk that makes it so noticeable. You could put in a 20-second pan, even under DMX control, and see a perfect slow sweep."

That said, Berry had inserted four VLMBs to her design, a six-inch mirrorball mounted to a VL yoke. Interestingly this derivative of the VLM - a simple rotating two-sided mirror on the same yoke type - was originally conceived by Gorrod. He maybe an operator, but don't overlook his other skills. Despite the fine control of the Virtuoso, it could not prevent the inherent judder of the mirrorballs, a small detail, but one with a big impact on the stage when used, and they were used several times, which ultimately spoiled an otherwise perfect execution.

Berry chose a wide and varied palette - deep saturated hues coupled with whites from tungsten or arc - or lighter shades, like the soiled look she gave to 'My Only Love' where pale pastel green was mixed with several variants of smoky pink. I can pay Berry no higher compliment than to say what I saw





Roxy Music at Sheffield Arena. Inset, Levi Tecofski - the man in charge of audio out front.

ROXY FACTOIDS

Hoist control for the truss moves was from Ibox, a new unit built by Outboard Electronics. Cheap and easy to use, operator Richard Flannagan liked it very much. It has an option to run motors to time, rather than Hall Effect counters; hopefully Outboard will explain all at PLASA.

The stage concept came from talks between Liz Berry, Brian Ferry, Anthony Price (costume designer) and Nick DeVillie (album cover design). The concept is Venetian, lots of lush drapes and candelabras. Ferry, apparently, is a big fan of the movie *Tales of Hoffman*; many of his specific ideas for the stage are references to that source.

Set design was by Norman Coates - a theatre designer recommended by Peter Laker of Prompt Side (who made all the drapery.) Coates modelled the set perfectly, even finding the requisite material to represent the effect of the silvered projection gauze at 1:50th scale.

Amazingly, this is Tecofski's first tour of the UK arena circuit, and he's no fresh-faced young engineer, having mixed for Placebo, Bowie, Smashing Pumpkins and My Bloody Valentine in the past.

here was as rich and varied as anything Roy Bennett has done, and by that I do not mean to infer she has in anyway borrowed from his colouring book. A bloody shame she won't be able to do similarly for Robbie Williams in the broad daylight of his summer outdoor shows.

Sound

Now here's a name from the past: ML Executives, formerly an offshoot of The Who empire, was a PA company that old lags like me used to tour with in the late seventies and early eighties. Although it continued to trade through to the end of that decade, it was taken over by one Gary Marks almost 10 years ago to the day. So this tour is a great coup for Mr Marks, even more so when you add the icing to the cake - ML are simultaneously servicing the Mark Knopfler tour, so happy 10th anniversary ML Mark II.

The system ML provide is an L-Acoustics V-dosc. So much in demand is V-dosc right now that none of the UK cartel could provide the boxes ML needed, and so this system came from Swedish supplier Stockholm Audio. How long this frenzy for the French-built line array will run is anyone's guess, but it's certainly interesting to see the way the PA cross-rental market has been opened up by this particular passion. What with Renkus-Heinz doing similarly on the Continent, it wouldn't surprise me to see a big change in the character of the rental market, one where certain vendors concentrated on being purely "plant hire" specialists, renting out the PA systems and maybe a system tech' to go with it, while others retrench into providing all the control technology and technicians. But that's a debate for the third bottle of claret at an Awards dinner.

Levi Tecofski is the man in charge out front - his two Midas desks (XL4 and Heritage 3000) arranged in what the lighting crew refer to as the Stealth Fighter configuration. If you think about it you can see why - more than 70 inputs means two desks, and the fact that he really needs both consoles facing roughly towards stage indicates the wide dynamic variations he has to rein in across all 70 channels. This was show six in the tour, and although Tecofski has worked for Ferry on solo tours in the past, he was still grappling with the multiple demands of the full Roxy Music song list.



"They've gone for authenticity," said Tecofski, a cheery Kiwi with a tweedy, professorial look that belies his natural enthusiasm for his chosen trade. "There's a lot of old instruments up there, a VCS3 synth', Farfisa Organ - probably one of the only ones left working - and a Selena; there's also a ton of samples." The samples are of similar vintage to the instruments (how about a Mellotron played with a Mallet Cap?), giving Tecofski an inexhaustible source of wildly varying signal strengths all night. "It's a nightmare. I'm working on it for most sound-checks, and I'm limited by tools. With no soft switching on the Heritage I'm really stuck," but that, like the Swedish V-dosc, is again a reflection of how busy the touring industry is right now - ML couldn't find a second XL4 for hire anywhere.

"The whole show is about separation," continued Tecofski. "There's a lot of textures in there and I'm still learning to hear what's being played." He shouldn't lose any sleep, even things like the violin mentioned earlier, were clearly discernable even if not as prominent in the mix as it should have been. Tecofski could have opted for a much leaner mix and made his life easier, instead he went for it, the full Brahma, and in the 90 minutes I listened, he never lost touch with any of it.

Examination of the rack side found one tool not encountered before - a TL Audio C1 - yet another valve compressor, which Tecofski uses on Ferry's voice after slight modification from a BSS 901. "I'm in two minds about the TL at the moment, I've had to set it at minimum threshold, and with more compression than I'd like, because it doesn't appear sensitive. It's sounding OK, and it is quieter than a TLA100, but I don't understand why I have to set it that way?" Ferry's vocal is captured by an Audio Technica 4054; there are, in fact, a lot of AT mics on stage, thanks to product endorsement, but even so the 4054 appears a good choice - it certainly gives plenty of body to his voice, especially his characteristic higher registers.

Tecofski also uses Neve 9098s on both Phil Manzanera's guitars and Andy MacKay's sax. Effects are quite limited, much of what's required coming straight off stage with just a PCM71 on Ferry's voice, and a TC M5000 "for some weird reverb on the keys, phasing on 'Out of the Blue', and a bit of Chorus on Brian occasionally."

Steve May runs monitors: "I started with all L-Acoustics 115 wedges," he informed, "but was able to borrow a Shure in-ear system and since rehearsals, have gradually persuaded all but Brian and the keyboard player to switch to them." No doubt a good 'lend' by Mick Shepherd at Hand Held Audio, as they're now all rented for the tour. "Mick was also very helpful in other ways, including recommending an AKG 747 lectern mic for use on the saxophone." May explained that part of his remit had been to find the lightest radio pack and mic combo for MacKay's horn: "and the 747 is great. Picks up perfectly from the Bell, and also gives tone from picking up along the body of the mic." MacKay, it should be noted, runs lots of effects through the mic, before it ever reaches either board operator.

"Because Brian moves around a lot, I have side-fills as well. Arcs with 216s for low-end, off XTA crossovers,



just sounds a lot nicer than the analogue ones from L-Acoustics." A fan of XTA, May also uses the SIDD units on the 'ear' system: "They have a very fast attack - it sees the peak before it carries, and it's fast enough that you can hardly hear the compression come in."

Video

Supplied by XL Video UK, this is a quite subtle and unusual presentation. The aforementioned silver gauze sits right up-stage and is projected upon from a pair of Barco ELMs in the house from about 60 metres. "That distance is fairly critical because we mask to the irregular shape of the projection surface," said director Chris Keating. "You can gate electronically," I was informed by system tech' Jon Shrimpton, "but we're using an analogue device. It gives a much softer edge," (analogue in this case being carefully-applied gaffer tape on the lens cowling).

There is one other element to Shrimpton's role that warrants attention. Because of front projection and the general look of the show, dowsing the projectors between numbers to negate the grey luminescence they continue to project, is essential. But the projector's dower is a snap effect. It lacks subtlety, something that the manufacturers might want to address - a quiet pair of mechanised barn-doors on the front would do.

Keating, meanwhile, who operates from the house mix position, is having a ball in the director's chair. Not that this man requires more than the ability to wake up in the morning to get himself excited. "I wasn't convinced about being FOH. It's very unusual, but because of the nature of the show, there's no other place to be." There are no side screens, and never once does Keating put a live image on the silver gauze. "Brian Ferry briefed me to retain a sense of mystery, of the band that is. And to give it a quality of time, the era of the band."

Ever self-effacing, Keating underplays his role. "I do a lot of easy effects to create what Brian wants. I have my Warhol'esque effect, and my David Lynch effect. I'm a big fan of his - films like Eraserhead." The key to the Lynch effect is black and white, "but I don't like the effect created from bleeding out the colour in the Magic DaVE, it's too clean." Instead he loops the live camera image through a little 6" B&W monitor with a minicam sitting in front of it, which suitably reduces quality to a grainy seventies look that's entirely within the shabby insouciance of the band's presentational parameters. "The point is, Brian didn't want to blow the band's anonymity with large faithfully-rendered IMAG stuff, so I have these effects; but I'm still looking for ways to reduce the polish."

Although Liz Berry has put followspots on trusses just in front of stage, the light levels on any part of stage can vary wildly, and intentionally so. "It means I'm riding the Chrominance all the time," hence Keating's out front position, "because my background is in cameras, I'm using that to adjust effects, and camera cutting at the same time." There are three cameras, plus three mini-cams on stage, so Keating has plenty of source material to modify and then use to reinforce what's being done on stage.

All in all, it's very exciting. Roxy Music are about style, content and presentation. And the bottom line winner is energy.



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Second Take...

John Watt's view from beside the camera

Now it seems kind of basic to me that if you are selling a lamp, luminaire or fixture - whichever you prefer - you ought to give at least an estimate of the light output of the thing. Car manufacturers have to publish provable figures on speed and consumption and there's a list of ingredients

on everything from peanut butter to Branston pickle (yes, I'm a gourmet too!), so why not on lights?

IT HAPPENED AT

Showlight: on one product, not only were the figures not mentioned, but at question time it looked more than likely that they weren't known. Now a colourful leaflet has dropped through my letterbox extolling the virtues of a new range of state-of-the-art, high-brightness, high-efficiency, lighting fixtures. Well, they may

well be great and just what the doctor ordered, but "high brightness", as Count Basie said, "it don't mean a thing". High brightness to me is the sort of output you get from a 12kW HMI, or from the sun at noon in the south of France. Call me a cynic, but I bet we are in a different league here - and bet is all I can do if the spec' doesn't tell me.

PROMOTIONAL LITERATURE is a strange beast. I also recently read about a fixture that makes me feel pretty inadequate as it produces 16.7million colours. I wonder who counted them? Not me

missus, life is often complicated enough with three colours in the groundrow, and anyway I would never remember the numbers.

MAYBE WYBRON'S COLOR CALCULATOR is a bit more my mark, being a disk calculator type device (it's too much to hope it's made of cardboard, and mine hasn't arrived yet, Mr Goldberg). Used with their CXI color-mixing color changer, it says you can create every color in your mind's eye, and then some. I must say I warm to this approach much more and so will forgive them all the missing 'u's in the word 'colour' - like the man said, we are two nations divided by a common language.

PERHAPS MY AGE IS SHOWING AGAIN on this colour thing, as I cut my teeth when we had about 10 discernible shades of grey to play with, or eight if you didn't count black at the bottom and white at the top. For those first few years before colour, I absolutely knew that when it arrived the status of the lighting designer in television would rocket! How wrong can you get? Well, I was so wrong that I imagined we would create such an interest in the public by exposing them to a diet of gloriously-composed, subtly-coloured pictures that they would form queues around the Tate. Wrong again. Now they are weaned on 16million tones - often all in the same production. Added together these make white, which is exactly the emotional response achieved. Here endeth this month's lesson.

AND NOW WE WILL SING hymn number one hundred and frightened to death, "He saw the coming of a job, praise the Lord." Being a lighting designer is a solitary occupation and it's not that easy to get an insight in to how others operate, so the opportunity to 'stand in' is not to be sneezed at - even if it does get up your nose to play understudy. A chance to watch others at work is

better still if you are subbing for the best in the business - viewed in the right light it can almost be a masterclass. Such a job appeared for me the other week, so off I toddled to Elstree to reacquaint myself with a studio where we did the first series of 'Drop the Dead Donkey' - 'we' being me and Keith Reed (He's not still doing Crossroads is he? Doesn't he know I'm in charge of the escape committee? I'm thinking of smuggling myself in disguised as a wooden actor).

LESSON ONE, they used to have monopolies (Elstree, not Crossroads), now the newer fellows seem content to hang a few trusses and work from them. How they make fine adjustments I just don't know, but the results prove me wrong again. It's heartening to see little evidence of low levels and enough 'wallop' to leave the cast in no doubt that they are still in show business. Most of the keys were Source Fours, so Fred's clean beams are appreciated in television even if the theatre finds them almost too clean and introduces some form of 'character filter' - no pleasing some people! You will have to guess the lighting designer and the production, as the production manager just happened to mention he had heard that I write a column!

I'M NOT READY for the final Kamikaze flight yet (oh, you hadn't noticed?) and there are still a few dates available in the autumn. I may not be the best in the business, but at least I'm a novelty!

I WATCHED 'A TOUCH OF FROST' LAST NIGHT with every intention of using it for some copy. Two hours later the credits rolled through and I realised I hadn't noticed the pictures once, which means dear reader, that it was pretty damn good. I know from my grapevine that David Jason and DOP Peter Jackson are well nigh inseparable and doesn't it pay off? Just under-stated but perfect photography consistently for two hours at a stretch. To think I used to work for Yorkshire television before I was lured by the bright lights of Camden Town! Wrong again, I wonder?

BY THE TIME YOU READ THIS Earls Court will be bracing itself for the annual visit of that still slightly odd-ball group, the lighting fraternity, to PLASA 2001. I wonder what delights await us? A seventeen million colour device? A real travelling moving light? A console that is really intuitive to operate? A quiet moving light - or at last a discharge lamp that dims all the way to zero? For me, I would be happy to stick with all the same old stuff, but somehow get a better understanding of how to use it by some of the networks. You see, I remain an optimist!

I wonder what delights await us? A 17million colour device? A real travelling moving light? A console that is really intuitive to operate? A quiet moving light - or at last a discharge lamp that dims all the way to zero?

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- Experience of inventory control practices including computerised inventory control systems
- Understanding of safe working practices in a warehouse environment

Applications, including a CV, in writing by **Friday 31st August 2001** to:

Guy Forrester, Operations Manager
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has the following 3 positions available
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TECHNICIAN - Ref 2

The job will involve:

- Working with a team of technicians servicing and maintaining a wide variety of lighting equipment, within the Followspots and Effects Department
- The candidate should be methodical and keen to learn within the warehouse environment and have some skills repairing and maintaining Electro-mechanical equipment

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The job will involve:

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- Repair work on other mechanical systems on our automated lighting fixtures
- The work involves a high degree of mechanical skills as well as electronic ability. Candidates should be qualified with an OND/HND level of qualification in mechatronics or similar disciplines



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To source and develop new business for this PLASA award winning company. The company manufactures and sells unique audio and video distribution systems and supplies full projects from small conference venues to stadiums. They have developed a range of distribution systems capable of solving many installation system problems and were recognised by PLASA last year winning best product in this category. The successful candidate must have a track record in AV sales and preferably system sales. Must be a self-starter as this is the company's first sales appointment. To apply for this position, e-mail or call Ian Kirby quoting job ref: TP:AVS165

National Sales Manager Salary: £25-35K + bonuses

Leading UK lighting distributor are looking for an experienced lighting field sales professional to join and lead their sales team. Clients include major rental houses and theatres, architectural lighting projects and installation companies! Candidates would be expected to have a good track record in sales into these or similar markets. To apply for this position e-mail or call Ian Kirby, quoting job ref: LS073

System Support Manager Location: Midlands, Salary: £20-25K

Field-based, working from home, you will be experienced with lighting, audio and video products, and manage and undertake preventative maintenance visits, assist with service calls, first line repairs, diagnostics and re-programming. To apply for this position, e-mail or call Julie Kirby, quoting job ref: TP506/1

Moving Light Senior Technician/ Department Supervisor Location: London Salary: £21-25K + benefits

A successful established rental company requires a Senior Technician to prepare and service desks, dimmers, automated luminaries, Kino Flo and colour changers amongst various other items in a busy and varied department. The Senior Technician will supervise the department to ensure that the equipment supplied is of the highest standard. Previous experience as a supervisor/HOD in a rental house/residential venue would be a distinct advantage. Mainly London-based but with some onsite visits. The ideal candidate should be prepared to work in a flexible environment with occasional unsociable hours. To apply for this position, e-mail or call Julie Kirby, quoting job ref: TP013

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Field Service Engineer x 2 Locations: London/SE & Midlands Salary: £15-20K

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Bench Service Engineer Location: London, Salary: £15-20K

An established company based in London is looking for an experienced engineer to work on a wide range of lighting, audio and AV products. You will analyse, repair and prep the products (customers and stock items), with the responsibility for maintaining bench stock; deal with customer queries and have the ability to identify parts. Occasional site visits, assisting Field Service Engineers. To apply for this position, e-mail or call Julie Kirby, quoting job ref: TP506/3

Technical Manager Location: London Salary: £15K basic + commission

This expanding Hire Department requires a manager to co-ordinate and develop all aspects of their rental business. Clients include private and corporate users of professional sound and lighting equipment. The company requires a 'Hands-on' flexible person with a good technical background in lighting and sound. You will have a rental or production background with excellent administration skills. Do you have a clean driving licence to 7.5 Tonnes? To apply for this position, e-mail or call Julie Kirby, quoting job ref: TM243/1

Sales Administrator Location: Northampton Salary: £15K basic + commission

A successful lighting distributor is seeking a sales administrator with excellent customer care skills. The successful candidate will be handling all aspects of incoming sales to the company. A professional approach and a 'can do' attitude are essential. To apply for this position, e-mail or call Ian Kirby, quoting job ref: LS073/1

Late Night Entertainment Sector

Managers x 2 Location: Kent Coast, Salary: £16-19K

This young established company with good operational systems in place currently has 10 sites running and a nightclub opening in October, with more to follow. They require a manager to assist with all stock areas, providing excellent back up and support with running a successful venue. You will be BII or equivalent with good training methods in place. Salary depends on your experience and 'what you can bring in to the party'. Benefit schemes are being looking into at the moment. To apply for this position, e-mail or call Julie Kirby, quoting job ref: B1757

Bar/Hotel/Restaurant Manager Location: West Sussex Salary: Negotiable

This established company in South England is looking for an experienced manager to run a large premise. Accommodation included. Part of a couple would be acceptable. Are you looking for a challenging position? If so, this could be the one. To apply for this position, e-mail or call Julie Kirby, quoting job ref: B503/2

Hotel and Bar Manager Location: Sussex area Salary: Negotiable

Experienced manager required, preferably with catering/hotel background. Do you have what it takes to continue the success of this venue? To apply for this position, e-mail or call Julie Kirby, quoting job ref: B503/1

Promotion Manager Location: London, Salary: £TBA

Previous highly-acclaimed garage venue has just been refurbished to cater for a mainstream audience. The club is seeking an experienced promotions professional. Do you have what it takes? To apply for this position, e-mail or call Julie Kirby, quoting job ref: B899

Bar Manager Location: Midlands, Salary: £20-25K

This independent club operator is adding a late-night feeder bar to its operations. The successful candidate will provide new blood to the successful team, attracting over 21 clientele. Required skills: good leadership, enthusiasm, strong personality, the ability to deal with awkward clients, the ability to build relationships with door staff, good FOH experience, section 77 licensing experience. To apply for this position, e-mail or call Julie Kirby, quoting job ref: B870

Manager, Location: Sheffield Salary: £20K basic + OTE TBA

This rock music bar, restaurant and nightclub in the centre of Sheffield is looking for a previously experienced manager to cover all the normal duties expected of a nightclub manager, to include recruitment of staff, discipline, wet stock and liaison with promotion staff. You will show maturity when dealing with customers and staff alike, and have knowledge and experience of Health & Safety regulations, Section 77 and PEL. Are you within local travelling distance? If so, and you wish to apply for this position, e-mail or call Julie Kirby, quoting job ref: Sheffield 1663

Assistant Manager Location: Midlands, Salary: £14K basic

This family-run business with three nightclubs and a wine bar requires a candidate to provide assistance to the venue manager. Previous experience two years minimum. Responsible to the GM, providing day to day assistance. To apply for this position, e-mail or call Julie Kirby, quoting job ref: 1725

All applicants should send a CV, along with a hand-written covering letter, explaining why you would suit the position, along with latest salary package information.

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In Profile...

L&SI Talks to the Industry Trend-setters

Fourth Phase's reorganization (full story page 6) will see Midnight Design founders, Dave Bryant and Mike Townsend, slip the corporate fold and return to their creative roots. It seemed timely then to talk to Bryant about the early days of Midnight Design, his

enthusiasm for a career that remains undimmed in 20 years, and his plans for the future.

"We've always had an interest in bringing new life into the industry," says Dave Bryant when talking of the origins of his former company (Midnight Design) and its ethos. "I know the industry can support

people at all levels," - a statement he qualified by pointing out it's not just about design: "The lighting industry needs people to plug things in, unload the truck, put it up. They all require some degree of ability." You quickly recognise that his humanity is totally genuine.

Bryant's enthusiasm appears to stem from a life-long devotion to lighting as an art form: it started with theatre, but quickly grew to embrace lighting at all levels. "I was lucky - my teacher made me aware that a new Theatre Design 'A' Level had been introduced. It was a happy coincidence, the school was reasonably progressive and gave me a lot of support." He's too modest to admit that out of only three students in the UK who sat the new exam, he passed with an A grade and quickly moved onto a Diploma in Technical Theatre Arts at Rose Bruford College.

Bryant progressed naturally to provincial theatre, first in York and then to Bristol, but it was when he joined the National Youth Theatre as lighting director that he began to lay the foundation stones of his future business. "People often come up to me and say, 'you taught me at the NYT'. It



was one of the nicest things about putting Midnight together, we broke the mould of the secretive LD." That might sound a bit of a non sequitur, but you begin to get a measure of his meaning as he unfolds his concept of lighting as a broad, all-embracing church.

"When Mike Townsend and I first put the company together, we set ourselves some definite rules. We were not just electricians - in the sense that in those days the electricians who worked in the West End were in a mindset where their jobs were so tightly delineated it was positively claustrophobic - we were Show People. By that I mean we have a collective responsibility to make the show happen. There's no room for people being precious about their work. Most importantly, we wanted to break the moulds of corporate, rock and roll and theatre. We saw very clearly that the potential for cross-over between all three was immense."

It's as well to remember that back then, in the early eighties, the concept of taking a piece of rock and roll equipment into a West End theatre was virtually unheard of, "but we saw that some of the practical advances being made in rock and roll - trussing, small modular dimmers - could work equally well anywhere." There were other advantages: "We found this approach a very powerful marketing tool - our corporate clients liked the fact that we did things for Michael Jackson, and vice versa."

That may all sound quite obvious now, but try this for size. "We also took the Rave industry very

seriously. Many people thought it was a bit dodgy, still do. But it was a money industry, cash rich. We used that money to invest in all kinds of kit, to build the company." And like the youngsters from his days at the NYT, relations with the important characters from the Rave industry have proved to be a worthwhile people investment. "Many of them went on to become the special event organisers of today. They took their skills and applied them to another type of work. Diversity is so important. Even at a basic level, you mustn't restrict yourself to working within the confines of the industry. I tell everyone who works with me - 'don't be limited'. Use a candle if it's the right thing to light the job. And at a broader, business level, that attitude means you can move, if one sector is restricting you, you can turn to another."

Which at the time was a prescient comment, in the light of Bryant's recent move back into the world of freelance design. "We've agreed to form a relationship with former members of the Midnight team. Called Spirit Design Ltd, we will not be an equipment rental house, but will focus on our core talent - design. The freedom this gives is two-fold; one, we're no longer restricted to using the lights we used to stock - I can use whatever I like. Secondly, I now have the freedom to look anywhere in the world for the kind of work I want to do. Not that I didn't have that at Midnight/PRG - but I did have an obligation to go into the London office a couple of days a week."

Bryant is not only passionate about his return to unfettered design; he remains a man not to be ignored when it comes to the tools of his trade and has a final word for all the lamp builders out there: "I expect great changes within the moving light industry over the next couple of years. They have a big problem because there's too many of them out there with great big factories locked into having to produce great quantities of lights. These are lamps that will be obsolete in a couple of years. I don't see how it can be sustained and I expect a reduction in the number of big producers." ■

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