



Wembley Conference Centre

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My visit to the Wembley Conference Centre and the impressions I gathered were coloured by various factors which call for the most conscientious and careful examination of what I have to report of the place. First, a long drive on the wettest day of the year which produced traffic conditions of the worst kind. Secondly, using the excellent map provided, I found the biggest and emptiest car park in London awaiting me, which gave me the splendid opportunity of using the gears of my car which had been neglected for two hours, and enabled me to try a touch of the Steve McQueens on acres of wet concrete. Thirdly, my fantasies were firmly dashed by a long walk in the rain to the entrance through the evidence of faulty or overstretched drainage and the unlovely objects covered by the terms "Site Plant and Sub-Contractor Accommodation", which nicely established that a good deal of something had yet to be finished. Lastly, it was "Press Day", when everyone talks and drinks and laughs and walks about and gets lost and falls over unfixed carpet and apologises to workmen about walking through their cement or adhesive or incomplete glass doors. There was not a lot of the last problem; all but essential operatives seem to have been banished to the lower regions of the building; I passed quite a few whilst I was seeking the hospitality area, and paused to watch a 20 a side contest involving a Coke can, and I can report that the men were fit and well and that England selectors for the next World Cup could do worse than visit the Get-In area of the Conference Centre on a wet day; a bundle of used notes could get them the star striker of Cementation Building Ltd. and their 40 or so sub-contractors.

Sorry about all that stuff, but atmosphere

is so important to this sort of thing. I was told by the Editor that my brief was to examine the claims of the Centre to be a viable home for live entertainment. I imagine he views Conferences as something different. I sat in the Avon Suite, consumed two excellent cups of hospitality, laid out four sharpened pencils, and a pad, read with intense interest a handout on "Random Matched Designer Birch (which gives the warmth and originality of high quality timber with ease and economy of application)". This happened to be first item in an impressive folder thrust upon me by a large and cheerful young lady. A brief

introduction was given to the day by the managing director of Wembley Stadium Ltd., the clients, who contrived to insert a plea for "no knocking criticism" three times in a speech of a couple of hundred words or so, which made the company feel that there must have been a lot of it about. Then it was split up into parties time, and we all set off with guides, for a sprint about the factual evidence.

The venue provides two interesting spaces, the "Avon" and "Severn" Suites, which can be subdivided by means of steel panels in tracks into five smaller lecture theatres, each with its own little stage and



The main auditorium showing acoustic reflectors and proscenium walls.