

T.V. a.m., the independent Breakfast Television company has its studios and offices a short step from Camden Town Tube Station, about a quarter of a mile North East of Regents Park. This central position places them at least as favourably as LWT on the South Bank and Thames at Euston.

The buildings themselves are based on an old automobile garage and back on to the Regents Park Canal at the Hawley Locks, a feature made much of by the architects, Terry Farrell Partnership.

The site itself presented some interesting problems for the acoustic consultants, Sandy Brown. The Northern Railway Line passes underneath the building, there is a suburban railway line within 200 feet of the rear of the building, the one-way road outside is constantly busy and just to add to the confusion, one of the Heathrow stacking areas is immediately above.

This acoustic hostility was tackled by completely isolating the studio walls and ceiling from the rest of the building. There are no rigid links between the structural and the acoustic shell of the studio - all conduits have flexible links, and all the air ducting is mounted on shock absorbers. The walls themselves are over 1 metre thick and particular care has been taken on the ductwork design, with very large low velocity input and extract ducts liberally distributed over the lighting hoists.

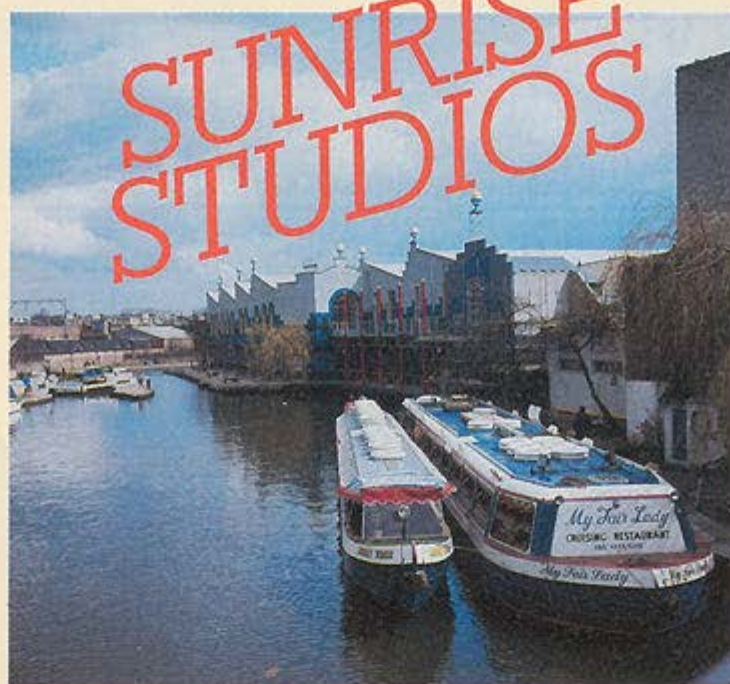
The decoration of the building reflects the programme nature with golden eggs and egg-cups to the roof whilst the interior is a muted collection of blues and greys, contrasting with some small areas of colour on furniture and fittings, which combine to give the building a unique style of its own.

The production and control areas, plus canteen and workshops, are all on the ground floor, and the two studios, one 275m² and one 72m², both back on to a small scenery store and delivery area.

The first floor houses all the editorial and administrative staff, whilst a small area of the office is raised by about 200mm to form a news reading 'studio' set amongst the telephones, typewriters, and computer terminals. In addition, provision is made on the site for camera, power and sound feeds to be used in the front of the building, in the large interior tree-lined atrium that forms a central feature of the building, and even alongside the canal outside.

In providing a complete studio lighting system, Rank Strand put together a package of some of their different fields:- Studio suspension by Telestage, Dimmers and Lighting Control from Strand at Brentford, Luminaires from Strand (Quartz-color) and Contracting from Shepherds Bush. This combination eased if not eliminated the usual formidable task of liaison with different services that a studio demands.

The two main production studios were equipped with 46 and 14 self hoist travels at about 250mm/sec.



'STRAND'S PART IN BREAKFAST TV

by Fred Humphrey B.Sc. M.I.E.E. C.Eng.

The little maintenance that is required on each hoist is simply done by lowering it by means of the control panel and then working on the motor unit, sockets and limit switches at studio floor level.

In addition to the hoists, TSA also climbing hoists respectively. The larger studio, used for the daily presentation, has a configuration of 10 rows of 4 hoists, each row being 1.5m apart, with 3 hoists at each end near the cyclorama. The smaller studio, used occasionally as a presentation and interview studio, and for facilities work, has 7 rows of 2 hoists each, again 1.5m apart. The hoists themselves are now rapidly becoming a familiar sight in many studios, as they offer an easily installed and maintained suspension system. They consist of a 2.5m long barrel, with mounted above it a squirrel cage three-phase motor, driving two twin cable pile-up drums through a spiroid gear box. Bottom and top travel limit switches are fitted, together with slackrope and overload sensing pulleys. The cables themselves are anchored at the roof by two simple but effective pivot joints which allow for any small changes in cable tension. Each hoist was fitted with 3x32 Amp sockets wired via a folding cable tray to a terminal box fixed to the roof steel members. The cable tray, which also carries the motor and hoist and control cables, is divided into two compartments: on selected hoists this second compartment carries audio, video and technical mains cables.

The hoists are controlled in each studio by a control panel which enables the hoists to be driven in two independent groups: Up to 10 hoists in each group can be controlled simultaneously and each

supplied and fitted right round each studio, twin cyclorama tracks and floor barrels, giving a cyc height of 5.5m in Studio A and 4.5m in Studio B. To light the cyclorama in Studio A a fixed barrel, positioned 2.35m from



the cyc track, and about 800mm above the top of the track was fixed to the roof support steels. The limited size of Studio B precluded both the feasibility and necessity of a cyclorama lighting barrel; cyc lights are simply rigged on hoists as required.

The lighting control package included 8 racks of MCM closed loop square Law dimmers, installed in a 2nd floor dimmer room alongside Studio A. The lack of any suitable lifts in the building presented no problem for installation, as the Contracts Department were able with some co-operation from the main contractor and an easily detached skylight, to drop, albeit not literally, the racks in an adjacent room using a 30m crane outside.

The complete electrical installation from incoming mains to sockets and control desk was done by the Contracts division. The dimmer provision comprised 190x5K and 2x10K circuits for Studio A and

58x2.5kW and 2x5kW circuits for Studio B. The control desks for each studio were Galaxys: 192 way for Studio A and 96 way for Studio B each with back-up pin patches. Each desk contained the basic format of Memory/Output, channel Control and Playback panels, plus a Group Masters Panel for Studio A.

The pods themselves were neatly incorporated into the vision control desks by Marconi whilst the electronic crates were housed in each control room underneath the monitor stack in front of the operator. This used a 'dead' space in the crowded control room but remained convenient for maintenance. On a recent visit to the Studios, it was interesting to see the Galaxys festooned with extra labels detailing circuit areas; all had acquired the patina of use, if not the stains of spilt coffee.

The luminaire complement initially consisted, for Studio A, of a combination of 70 Quartzcolor Kahoutek dual purpose soft/spotlights providing a saturated rig on the hoists, with 17 Iris 4 cyclorama lights on 4 spring pantographs hung on a barrel roller trolleys from the cyc lighting barrel. Additional 1kW fresnel spotlights were provided for local high-lighting.

For Studio B, the initial kit comprised 14x2.5kW castor spotlights plus 14x2.5kW Antares softlights, with 8 Iris 2 horizontal units for cyc lighting.

The luminaire rig was enhanced considerably later in the project by some 10kW Vegas; 70x2.5kW Castor and 20 additional 1kW Polaris spotlights, plus a total of 40 Pallas 4 cyclorama groundrow units.

The initial requirement for 2 Studios was changed at a fairly late stage when the news area was added to the system. For this Strand were again pleased to be able to deal with the whole problem. TSA constructed a barrel grid attached to the roof, whilst Specials Department designed and built a 60 way changeover rack to allow Studio B Galaxy to control any or all the sockets in the news area, instead of those in Studio B. The Electrical Contracts Division installed the changeover rack and the corresponding sockets.

T.V. a.m.'s policy is to produce about 3 hours live, morning television, consisting of a package of news, features, reports and interviews designed to satisfy short-term viewers before they go to work, and those who have more time to watch, such as those on late shifts or the retired.

Its output is networked all over the British Isles and is divided into seven regions, largely controlled from Camden Town.

The company has experienced some changes in personality and direction even in its infancy, but the studio complex at Camden Town remains a delightfully compact and eminently practical set-up for both live and recorded television.

I am indebted to T.V. a.m. Limited for their assistance and permission to publish this article.