



BIRTH ANNOUNCEMENT

Limehouse: To Southern Television and Channel 4, two infants, the first named Studio One, 600m² with well-developed lungs. The second, named Studio Two, almost 300m². The delivery suite was a Rum and Banana Warehouse and the hospital was the Isle of Dogs. The doctors in attendance were John O'Keefe and Jeremy Wallington, London's Enterprize Zone, Associated Newspapers Limited and others have kindly consented to be Godparents.

Thus is summarised the nascent pangs of London's latest studio complex, Limehouse Studios.

by Fred Humphrey
& Steve Futers

IN 1982, following the publication of the new independent television franchises, a consortium was formed of highly experienced television executives, mostly from the then doomed Southern Television.

The opening of Channel 4, together with the expansion of the video market was revealing a need for a truly independent studio facility. In order to satisfy this requirement, such a complex needed to be large, well equipped, centrally situated and competitively priced. Limehouse is just that, and Strand and Telestage were more than happy to be able to play an extensive part in the venture.

The Studios, based on a concrete framed warehouse originally built in 1952, are situated on one of the large "spits" that comprise the West India Docks. The area, once a thriving part of London's Dockland but sadly allowed to slip into disuse and decay, is now a resurgent collection of new ventures capitalising on the attractive rate concessions of the London Docklands Development Corporation and the proximity to Central London.

The New Billingsgate Fish Market is just opposite the studios and an overground railway is soon to be

built to complete the essential link with the City and the West End. Whilst a few studios in England can boast a waterfront, few of them could take, let alone moor, a 10,000 ton vessel, and the retention of the old dockyard cranes adds to the interest and uniqueness of the area.

The architects, Terry Farrell Partnership, together with Sandy Brown Associates as Mechanical/Electrical consultants, were the same team that worked so effectively at TV-am, and the appearance of the studios, in and out, reflect the greys and blues of the Camden Town Centre, but add new colours and textures to give an interesting difference. As in TV-am, there is a compactness and workmanlike feel to the building. The building work needed some ingenuity to convert the modular nature of the warehouse, with its regular numbered bays, and sloped ground floor (to drain hosed cleaning water) into the two large studio spaces. Each studio area, enclosing all the ventilation ducting, steelwork lighting suspension equipment, is

structurally isolated from the rest of the building, acoustically lined with wood wool, and finished with a new type of polyester flooring. The studio areas are flanked by control rooms and scenery storage, whilst the offices and dressing rooms are all situated in the front of the building.

From the inception, or should I say conception of the project, the need to get the right equipment was paramount in the minds of Jeremy Wallington, Chief Executive and John O'Keefe, Managing Director. For vision, they consulted Link Electronics to put together a package of Link's own 125 studio pedestal cameras, with NEC 82A portable cameras, Grass Valley mixers, a Quantel DP5001 effects package and Sony BVH2000SP VTRs.

The sound package consists of 24 track Otari MTR90-11 tape recorders, supplied by Industrial Tape Applications, and Calrec full studio mixers for each studio. In Studio 1, the well developed lungs comprise the additional feature of variable acoustics, by Philips, using

90 microphones and speakers to vary the reverberation time to suit the different uses demanded of a full production studio.

Now, patient reader, for the best bit. Rank were able with this project to provide suspension equipment by Telestage, Lighting Controls and Luminaires by Strand at Brentford and Quartzcolor in Italy, and Electrical Contracting by Contracts Division based at Shepherds Bush. This reduced the liaison problems of employing different contractors for each activity.

The object of the lighting installation, very much the brain child of Limehouse's Vision Consultant and Lighting Director, Jim Richards, was to provide light sources as close as possible to each other over the floor area so that the minimum amount of rigging and derigging between lighting set-ups is necessary. For this reason dual source lamps were chosen so that a hard or soft light could be obtained from the same luminaire.

The suspensions for the system are self-climbing hoists rated at 150

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