INTERNATIONAL PERFORMANCE PRODUCTION

live

inside the brits

'the hardest job I've ever had'

tommy

comes home to london

the risk business

with chris hannam

planning for action

unrolling the PSA's campaigns

on the road

claudio baglioni, going live, one from the heart

stage crews

a raw deal?

on the rig ● Spirits 3 & 4 ● Crown CM-311 ● Frankfurt Pro Light + Sound Preview

March 1996

AVOLITES

lighting the best

CONGRATULATIONS TO BRIT AWARD WINNERS

Oasis

(Best British Group, Album and Video: *LD Mikey Howard is using a Sapphire*)

Supergrass

(Best Newcomers: *LD Ali Bale is using a Pearl*)

Massive Attack

(Best Dance Act: *LD Andy Pole uses a Sapphire*)

Bon Jovi

(Best International Group: *LD David Davidian uses a Diamond*)

Björk

(Best International Female Vocalist: *LD Paul Normandale is using a Pearl*)

Take That

(Best Single: *LD Simon Tutchener uses a Diamond II*)

Michael Jackson

(Best Artist of a Generation: *LD Peter Morse uses a Diamond*)

Alanis Morissette

(Best International Newcomer: *Sapphire used on a recent U.S. tour*)

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AVOLITES

live!

INTERNATIONAL PERFORMANCE PRODUCTION

Tommy in London – see Page 26

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The Brit Awards
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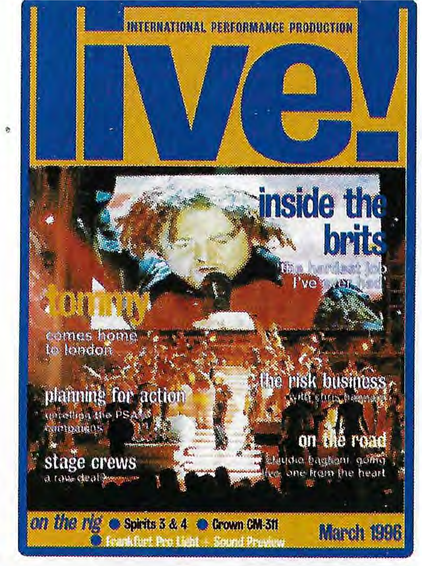
Tommy at the Shaftesbury Theatre

March 1996 Issue 43

Itinerary



NEWS

INDUSTRY NEWS: The LIVE! monthly update on the industry 4
CONTRACTS NEWS: International new business round-up 8

COLUMNS

SHAKING THE TREE: Fiona Harley's live music business insight 6
PSA DIARY: More from this year's PSA Conference 12
ALL ACCESS: Carmen Allestun on the road with the top crews 46
UP THE TRUSS: Stitch up your mates and win a LIVE! Mini MagLite 50

FEATURES

THE BRIT AWARDS: Bigger and better than ever – and LIVE! was there 14
FOOD FOR THOUGHT: A bum deal for local crews? We find out 24
CLAUDIO BAGLIONI Mike Clark reports from this Italian spectacular 28
SAFETY FIRST: Chris Hannam on the latest safety issues 30

THEATRE SPECIAL

GOING LIVE / THEATRE: Mike Lethby at Soundcraft's seminar 20
TOMMY IN LONDON: The Pinball Wizard jets in from Broadway 26

ON THE RIG

PRODUCT NEWS: Frankfurt preview news and new services 38
SPIRIT 3 & 4 REVIEW: Zenon Schoepe on the latest compact desks 42
CROWN CM-311 REVIEW: Simon Honywill wears the headset 44

PROFILES

EAT TO THE BEAT: Award winners expand their operations 34
E/T/C Demo latest 5K Xenon projector 34
HARDWARE FOR XENON: On tour from Britain to India 34

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PRODUCTION SERVICES ASSOCIATION PSA

live! NEWS MARCH 1996

Winchester Fest gets go-ahead

The Winchester Festival has been given the go-ahead for June 28-30 by the local city council after a two-day licence hearing. Martin Elboune, booker for the festival says: "They went into everything in painstaking detail, but we were prepared."

Elbourne was just on the point of confirming acts as LIVE! closed for press: "Obviously we couldn't really do anything until we knew we had the licence."

"The main stage will have a virtually identical booking policy to Glastonbury, with the cream of the current Brits and with the best of the available American bands touring this summer. The second stage, almost certainly sponsored by Melody Maker or NME, will be the best of new bands, and there will be a dance tent."

Promoter Ray Foulkes is booking other stages including world music/jazz and classical events.

Neil Young and the Foo Fighters are both strong possibilities for the Winchester Festival but with Roskilde, St Gallen and possibly a National Music Day Hyde Park event over that last weekend in June, there is already stiff competition for acts. ■ *Fiona Harley*

Anderson quits Concert Sound

PA industry veteran Dave South has taken over from Mick Anderson at PA company Concert Sound, owned by Barry Marshall of Marshall Arts. Marshall says: "Dave is becoming general manager, not managing director, but hopefully he will aspire to being MD by the end of the year." He says there is no acrimony behind the move. "Mick is a close friend and a wonderful man. There was no discord or rows - he left because he's got three children in their teens he feels he needs to give more time to. He's found it more and more demanding over the last couple of years and has wanted to make a change." Marshall adds: "I'm very sad he left us. But we're very privileged to get Dave South." South has come from running Jim Davidson's group of companies. ■ *Fiona Harley*

Schueremans expands

Belgium promoter Herman Schueremans has added another string to his group of companies, with the news that he is employing Peter Verstraelen and his assistant Roal Vergauwen from the Antwerp-based Foundation Agency.

"In his field he has proved to do very well; he will join us at the Werchter offices on April 1," says Schueremans. Verstraelen, a director at Foundation for 10 years says: "On April 1 I will close our booking activities at Foundation. It will still exist, but on a different basis outside of music. I will take with me the bands and festivals I represent. We promote a blues festival ourselves and we'll continue doing that. Joining forces, it makes a bigger company stronger and gives me a better position." Schueremans' portfolio of music partnerships include StageCo, promotion companies On The Rox and Sound and Vision and management wing Schueremans Invest. ■ *Fiona Harley*

Greenwich Millenium win sparks row

A Government leak, which led to Greenwich's successful bid to host the UK's flagship Millenium Exhibition being revealed by the UK press a week before its official announcement, has turned out to head a list of PR headaches for the winning sponsors.

The £700m project – designed by Imagination – to create a spectacular complex on the derelict and polluted Greenwich peninsula site at the southern end of London's Blackwall Tunnel is expected to be backed by a £200m lottery award from the Millenium Commission, chaired by Heritage Secretary Virginia Bottomley. And with London Docklands and the Canary Wharf tower for a backdrop, a spectacle on a scale not seen in the UK for decades is on the cards.

But while supporters of London's bid are in no doubt that Greenwich, whose Observatory marks the international Meridian date line, is both the logical and geographically symbolic choice for the advent of 2000, its closest rival – the Birmingham NEC team – is bitter that the capital appeared to have been ear-marked for the jamboree by the Government even before final bids were considered. A shortlist of four sites – at Greenwich, Stratford, Birmingham and Derby – was selected last July. But four potential operators' final plans were based on Greenwich and Birmingham, the other two sites eventually dropping out of the running.

As the Government's embarassment at the leak was trawled through the press, the Millenium's potential for creating political and commercial controversy seems unrivalled, as rival entrepreneurs vie for a slice of the action.

A lead story in March 3's *Independent On Sunday* newspaper revealed that the site's owners, British Gas plc, stands legitimately to benefit from a £20m grant to clean up the ground's extensive pollution from a Government quango, English Partnerships, whose chairman, Lord Walker, is also a director of British Gas. The campaign group Friends Of The Earth, meanwhile, argue that the now-accepted policy of 'the polluter pays' should also apply in this case. However, the polluter in question is technically the now-privatised company's state-owned predecessor. With planning permission to build housing, a business park and shops once the Exhibition is over, and with sales of re-generated land, exhibition leases and the clean-up grant, the deeply-unpopular British Gas – which has been harshly criticised for the size of its executive pay packages – could potentially benefit, completely legally, by up to £100m.

Virginia Bottomley, meanwhile, said in a statement about the event: "The Millenium Exhibition will be the time and the place where the UK shows the world what we can achieve...it can be a powerful catalyst for the UK. This could become a milestone in our national history." A strong regional programme, she adds, forms the basis of a nation-wide strategy in which by the year 2000 each region will "own" a week in the Millenium Exhibition Programme.

Now that Greenwich has been confirmed as the keynote site, the race will be on among contractors to specify and install individual parts of what is expected to be a complex *mélange* of activities, halls, venues and events. Other sites around the country, too, are already competing for "linked' status with the capital's major feature, including an ambitious project to line the length of the Lea Valley from east London to Hertfordshire with pyrotechnics.

● In another twist, commentators with an eye for Biblical history continue to dispute the validity of January 1 2000 as the true date of the Millenium, even though its symbolic power has by now won over most detractors. ■ *Mike Lethby*

Part of the Greenwich Millenium site, currently a disused gasworks

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FAX +44 (0)1322 615636
e-mail 101363.1505.compuserve.com

Millenium Stadium set for Cardiff

The Millennium Commission has announced that it will award £46 million to help finance the construction of the Welsh Rugby Union's £106 million Millennium Stadium at Cardiff Arms Park. Work on the project will commence in the Autumn of this year and it is hoped that the new stadium will be ready to host the opening game and the final of the 1999 Rugby World Cup Tournament.

South Glamorgan County Council Leader Russell Goodway said: "It is the most important thing to happen to Cardiff and Wales for a generation and is a signal of confidence in our future. This will be the only stadium of its kind in Britain and will bring massive benefits to Cardiff and Wales through economic regeneration, job creation, attracting visitors and tourists and playing host to major international sporting events".

The Millennium Stadium will have a capacity of up to 80,000. It is intended as a multi-purpose venue with all-weather facilities including a retractable roof. This new venue will host concerts, shows and exhibitions and will

allow Cardiff to bid for major international sporting events such as the European Cup Final and the Commonwealth Games. ■ *Robyn Pierce*

Development of N/SVQs for the Events Industry

The Occupational Standards and National/Scottish Vocational Qualifications for the Events Industry are currently being technically audited by the National Council for Vocational Qualifications. A meeting of the Events Industry Project Steering Group is to be held on Friday 22 March at the Berkeley Executive Centre in London when an Implementation Action Plan for the introduction and promotion of the Events Industry N/SVQs will be decided.
The Association for Conferences and Events. Tel: +44 (0)1480 457595

Cliff launches *Heathcliff* from a helicopter

Sir Cliff Richard is to launch *Heathcliff*, the musical re-write of *Wuthering Heights*, at Birmingham's new venue The Academy at the National Indoor Arena. Heathcliff opens for three weeks on October 16. Cliff will drop in by helicopter on Thursday March 7 at 10am.
Tel: +44 (0)121 780 4141

Stolen gear

The following is a list of equipment stolen from the Jarvis Felbridge Hotel, London Road, East Grinstead sometime between 7pm on January 29 and 9am on January 30:
1 x Soundcraft Spirit 8 channel mixing desk c/w power supply unit RW1246028677; 1 x Flightcase for above; 1 x Panasonic SV3900 studio DAT recorder c/w remote controller AA1DA01192; 1 x Teac DA-P 20 portable DAT recorder 2812; 1 x Shure portable mixer; 2 x Yamaha MS101 self powered monitor loudspeakers KH001141/1001045; 2 x Canford Audio self powered monitor loudspeakers 32395/32397; 1 x Audio Ltd headphone amplifier unit A0016877/A0016878; 6 x Shure SM58 microphones; 1 x Sennheiser HD25 headphones 04881/06116/21839/33533/60086/97318; 1 x Studiospares cable drum c/w 10 x 10 metre XLR leads; 1 x Studiospares cable drum c/w 20 x 2.5 metre XLR leads; 1 x 4U rackbag

If you have information regarding the whereabouts of this equipment please contact Mike Henson on: +44 (0)1494 438904 or DC Dave Charlton at East Grinstead CID on: +44 (0)1342 321155 Crime No: N41/581/96

Live at the Orange

The atmosphere of a live gig can now be captured by cable TV viewers at home as London's largest cable operator Videotron launches the world's first live interactive music programme, *Live At The Orange*, on its TVinteractive channel. The show will broadcast live every week from The Orange in West Kensington. By using their remote controls, viewers will be able to choose different camera angles, a scrolling gig guide of forthcoming musical events from other top London music venues or a look behind the scenes for an interview with the next band to be featured on the show.

Andrew Curry, head of TVinteractive at Videotron commented: "The standard of unsigned bands around the country is phenomenal and we hope that the programme will provide them with the exposure they deserve to clinch a music deal."

Live at the Orange will broadcast live across Videotron's London cable network to approximately 100,000 cable homes. The show will run between 9pm-11pm every Thursday, starting on February 29 and running until June with a second series planned for the autumn.
Tel: +44 (0)181 244 1544

When in Rome

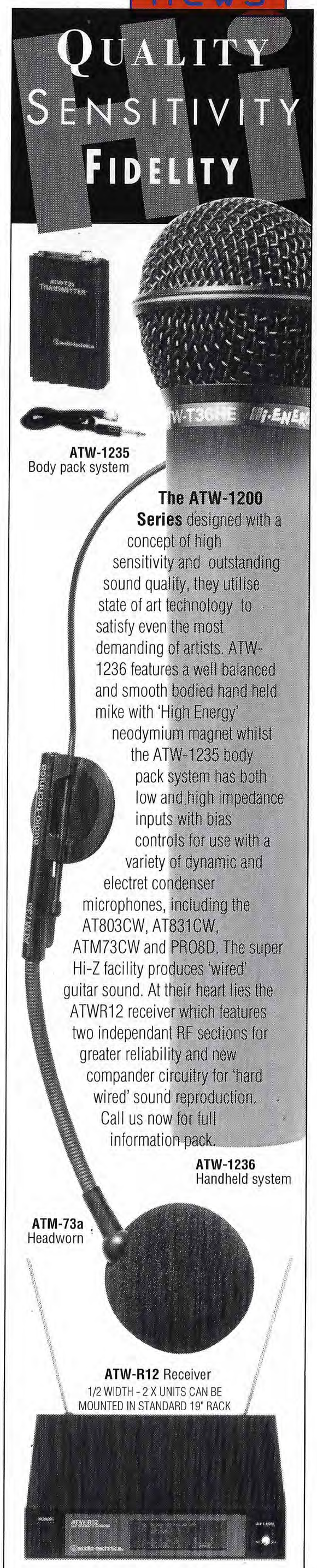
Rome firm Limelite, a lighting rental company operating in the concert, convention and promotion sectors has been appointed as exclusive Italian sub-distributors for the Vari-lite Series 300™ lighting systems. Two members of the Limelite team, Massimiliano Gasbarro and Alessandro Menichelli are currently at Vari-lite Europe's Greenford (UK) HQ on a training course as op and technician. Limelite can be contacted at Via Giovanni Gutenburg, 15-00143 Rome, Italy – Tel 06-5060063 - Fax 06-5060400.

People brief

Chris Gothard has joined Earl's Court Olympia as head of new business developments with a brief to develop sales relationships and create new opportunities for events in the corporate and leisure markets. Wendy Lothian also joins as sales administrator.
Tel: +44 (0)171 370 8181

Jenny Cooney has joined Show Presentation Services to augment its hire and operations desk. Jenny will also strengthen further SPS's audio team. SPS has recently invested £250,000 on the expansion of their audio equipment including d&b audiotechnik E3 and 902 loudspeakers, Soundcraft K3 desks, Trantec S5000 radio microphones and custom designed Canare Star Quad 24 channel multicore systems.
Tel: +44 (0)181 569 9292

John Gordon-Saker has been appointed to the position of managing director at G-Force Communications with effect from April 1. John has held various high-profile positions in the past including managing director of World Business Media and Upstream Presentation, and marketing director of Crown. He is also a past Chairman of the industry trade association International Visual Communications Association.
Tel: +44 (0)171 928 5390



Shows & Events

LIW '96

Leisure Industry Week 1996 is to take place at the NEC, Birmingham, on 24-26 September. The eight key theme areas of the show will remain the same as last year: attractions and amusements; catering; children, management and play; entertainments; fitness; health, beauty and relaxation; leisure facilities management and water recreation.
Tel: +44 (0)171 263 3275

Esparrago Rock '96

The Musical Festival Esparrago Rock is to take place in Granada on March 16. The eighth festival will include two new stages, an exhibition, "18 years of humour", and several peripheral events in the build up to the festival itself.
Tel: 00 34 58 22 02 97

The Television Show

This year's Television Show takes place at The Business Design Centre, Islington, London, N1 from March 13 - 15. Seminars run from 10am - 6pm on Wednesday and Thursday, and from 10am - 5pm on Friday.
Tel: +44 (0)1923 244 555 or fax: +44 (0)1923 247 054

Audio '96

The annual APRS exhibition, Audio '96 will take place on 19-21 June this year at the National Hall, Olympia. The exhibition will once again include the Briefings and Workshop Sessions. For further information contact Philip Vaughan, *APRS Ltd on tel: +44 (0)1734 756216*

ENTECH '96

ENTECH '96 will take place on 23-25 April this year in Sydney, Australia. The exhibition will include 20 hours of seminars conducted by experts in the areas of audio, lighting, AV, rigging and business. For further details contact Danielle Hayes at Connections Publishing on +61 2 876 3530.

India Live Aid 1996

India Live Aid will take place in the summer on a date yet to be set. The event will be 24 hours of live UK and Asian entertainment from fashion shows, dancers, comedians and live music appearances. Funds raised from the event will support projects in India which are already up and running. Charities such as UNICEF, Oxfam and Action Aid are already actively supporting the event.
For further information contact: India Live Aid 1996 on +44 (0) 181 232 8714.

shaking the tree with Fiona Harley

AGENCY AND PROMOTER NEWS MARCH '96

The eighth **International Live Music Conference** came and went during the first weekend of March as we were going to press, with over 550 participants discussing subjects dear and not so dear to the industry's heart – plus the usual mix of personalities, shouting matches and hard socialising. For a full selection of news and views, see the April issue of *Live!*.

The champagne reception kick-off, on Friday evening, is sponsored as ever by **Robertson Taylor**, but the insurance brokers have not had a happy month. Their offices in Docklands were devastated by the IRA bomb at Canary Wharf. Managing partner **Bob Taylor** says it shook everyone very badly. Also shaking them badly was the discovery that some archive documents, said to deal with such major acts as **David Bowie** and the **Rolling Stones**, 'escaped' from the rubble into the hands of the *News of the World*. After a severe panic attack, lawyers were brought in to prevent the *NOTW* publishing extracts from the aforementioned documents. Shame, really: sure could've been interesting reading...

Robertson Taylor has now moved its offices to 100 yards down the road and is unlikely to move back for 12 months, but explains it's keeping the same address and phone numbers for convenience.

ITB's teaser in its ad in *Music Week* didn't have quite the desired effect. In fact *The Tree* was the first to ask ITB's **Barry Dickins**: what's it all about? In the ad, ITB thanks its 16 Brit Award nominees and five winners – but a line at the bottom says: there are rumours of a Brit winner about to announce an association with ITB. Who could this be? we speculated, but Barry wasn't saying. Does this mean a new agent too, we wonder?

New and old-new acts at ITB include **Mazzy Star**, **Tears For Fears** (well, Roland Olzabel anyway) and **The Customers**, a new act on Neil Young's Vapour Records label.

Dan Silver at VAT says he has bitten the bullet over the "outrageously expensive" hire of the **Royal Albert Hall** in May, as the jewel in **Orbital's** UK tour, "purely for marketing reasons." It's all in aid of highlighting just how different Orbital are from the rest of the dance/rave bands, he says. Silver is also planning a busy extensive European schedule for them from the end of May. VAT has also taken on new bands **Furball** (one-off single out on Abstract in March) and **Cable**...

Talent Factory's **Colin Davie** is routing **Shaggy** through some exotic locations on his tour starting end of April in South Africa, then to India, Bali, Fiji, Jakarta, Papua New Guinea and ending in Guam on May 6. Davie is rooting for another artist he represents, **Layla**, whose record *Find Love* is one of the entries in The Great British Song Contest. Also at Talent Factory, **Shaun Quinn** is back together again with **The Real People**. Originally lured from him, by wonga or something, to ICM-Fair Warning, they contacted him again after Sony dropped them, managers were changing by the week and their agent at ICM/FW/Wasted whatever wasn't showing much interest. Shaun, good man, played hard to get for a while but is back in the saddle. "The fact they stayed together through it all shows they're quite committed," he says. Another interesting fact: one of the band members wrote **Cher's** latest single. Perhaps in time it'll be an ear-biting duet?

Richard Thomas has expanded from his usual band promotion activities into a new field – **live literature readings**. Yes, the erudite (honestly) one is having a series of writers reading from their work and playing some of their favourite records. These eclectic evenings are at **Filthy McNastys** pub in Islington and James Hawes (March 24), Roddy Doyle, James Kelvin, and, all being well, **John Cale** are on the cards to appear. Wonderfully received by press and audiences alike, Thomas is amazed that no-one's done it before and adds, "It's the easiest job I've ever done."

When is Nynex Arena the Apollo? When a tree dweller mishears it down the phone (leaves on the line, naturally). Apologies for any grief at **Damage Management** whose client **Mark Knopfler** will be playing the Manchester Apollo...

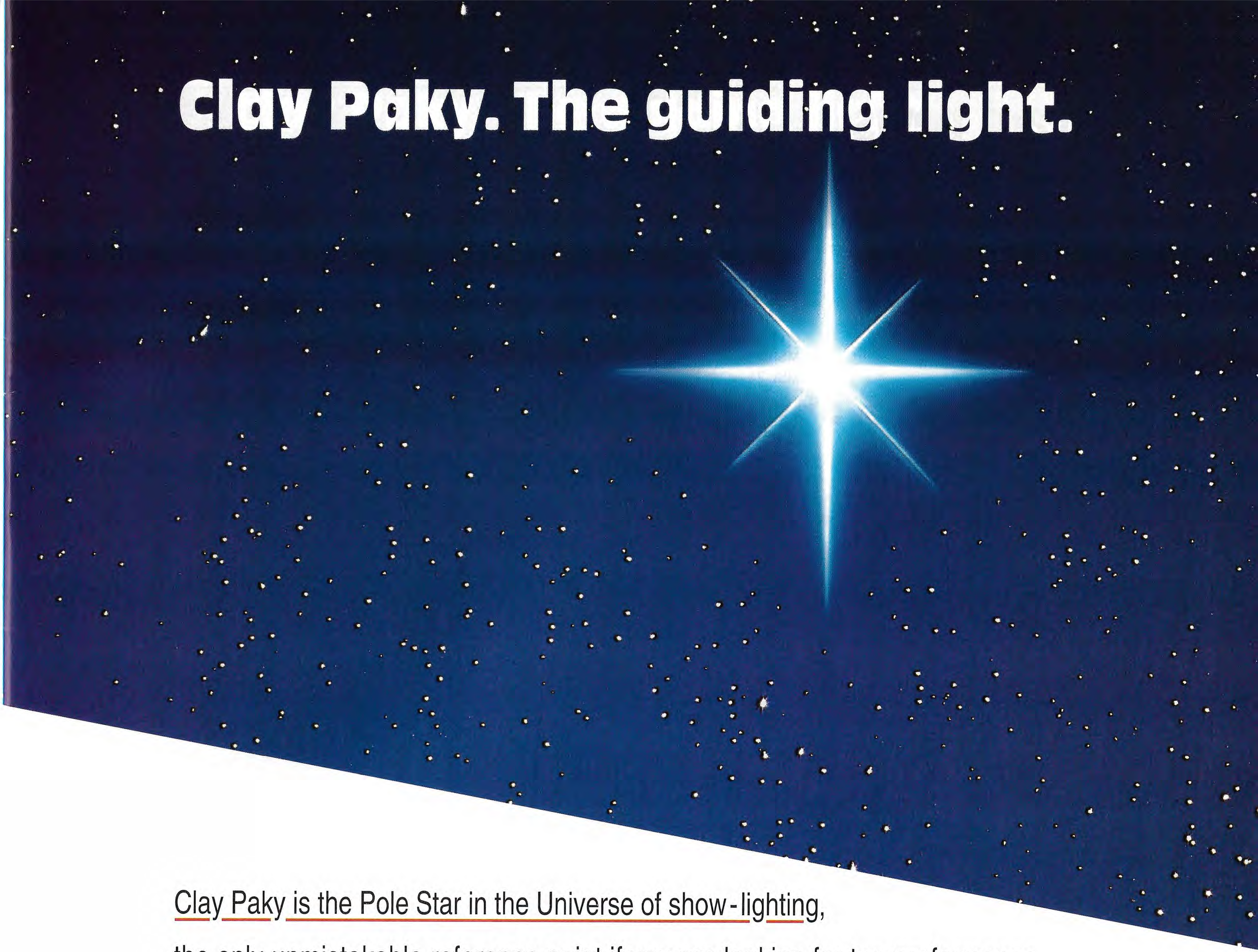
MPI's **Steve Parker** is going back into the deepest bush soon, he says. They'll be building their own camp in a South African nature reserve and will have to carry water with them and build their own toilets and endure other such primitive conditions. Of course he'll be seeing his act **Lucky Dube** about a tour while he's over there.

Pete Elliot at Primary Talent is having a busy start to the year, having taken on four acts since January: English rap darlings **The Brotherhood**, trip-hop royalty **Nightmares On Wax** (playing dance stages at a festival near you), **DJ Crystl**, and Fontana-signings **Lamb**. The band had an idea to press a limited edition single of 3,000 copies and only have it on sale for a week. Strange, then, that they managed to sell nearly 9,000. Apparently Fontana enterprisingly pressed up the extras **without** telling the manager.

Talking of managers, we see **Clive Banks** and **Simple Minds** have parted company – just after a deal was made with Chrysalis, too. Banks is still managing **Babylon Zoo**. At BZ's agency, **LPO Organization**, **Carl L-P** has taken on Sony-signing **Amanda Marshall**. He calls her 'the next Alanis Morissette'. But have we had enough of the first Alanis to have a next? Not yet, judging by her sold-out shows...

The man at **Free Trade Agency**, **Paul Boswell**, has a plethora of tours going out in the next couple of months. In March come **Terrorvision**, **Flaming Lips** start March 11 and **Garbage** on March 19. **High Llamas** are due in April, also **Soul Coughing** and **Cassandra Wilson** tours new album *New Moon Daughter*. **Filter** are special guests to **Smashing Pumpkins** and in May we should be seeing **Butthole Surfers** and **Cowboy Junkies**.

Clay Paky. The guiding light.



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CLAY PAKY

PROFESSIONAL SHOW LIGHTING

Contract news

compiled by Robyn Pierce

Reed to play NIA Birmingham

Lou Reed is to become the second artist to play at The Academy, National Indoor Arena, Birmingham, where he will appear to promote his new album, *Set The Twilight Reeling*, released last month. The gig is part of the *Hookywooky Tour*, Lou's first solo UK tour since 1992.
Tel: +44 (0)121 233 2666

Sound purchase

Band On The Wall, Manchester, has purchased a Soundcraft Venue II FOH desk and a DC2000 recording console for its upstairs studio. The Manchester venue, which specialises in jazz, blues, reggae, soul, African and Latin music, has made several live recordings for CD release in recent years.
Tel: +44 (0)1707 665000

Crest Audio in Blackpool

Blackpool Winter Gardens has installed some of Crest Audio's Professional Series power amplifiers and its NexSys control system throughout the building including the Empress Ballroom. The installation was carried out by The Music Company, who are undertaking a complete refit of the Winter Gardens' sound facilities.
Tel: +44 (0)1273 693513

Martin Guerre contract for Stage Technologies

Stage Technologies has been awarded the contract to supply automation systems for the forthcoming production of *Martin Guerre*, which opens in London in June. Installations will begin this month, including 17 variable Big TOW winches and six new TOW Track units.
Tel: +44 (0)171 354 8800

Simply the best

Sheffield Arena has presented Simply Red with a plaque in recognition of the band's performances to 38,000 people over a period of three days at the Arena in January. Pictured are Sheffield Arena's director of marketing, Robert Vick; Mick Hucknall; director of finance Rebecca Slater and assistant general manager David Vickers.
Tel: +44 (0)114 256 2002

Bowled over

Capital Sound Hire won the contract to supply sound equipment for the opening of the 1996 Cricket World Cup which took place in Calcutta recently. The company provided a front-of-house systems comprising 16 Martin Audio F2 mid/high cabs and 16 bass enclosures, with 12 BSX sub bass boxes. The monitor included two more F2s flown as sidefills.
Tel: +44 (0)1494 535312

ATM in Austria

ATM Fly-Ware has won two installation contracts in Austria, both of which involve installing ATM's AMFS modular flying system, at Vienna's Renaissance Theatre, with sound hire company Sound Art Service. The Rennaisance Theatre's new sound reinforcement system comprises Meyer UPA-1C loudspeakers, MSL-2As and MSW-2 subs. The Sound Art Service contract involved a rigging system for use with the company's Meyer MSL-4 self-powered speakers and UPS-2Cs and MSL-2A units.
Tel: +44 (0)171 485 3749

Bright light at White Light

White Light has added GamColor to its stocks of colour filter in addition to both Lee and Rosco colour filters.
Tel: +44 (0)171 731 3291

Whirlwind UK

Whirlwind Pro Cables UK has become UK distributor for the American made Whirlwind brand of cables, multiwiring systems and connectors in a joint distribution deal set up with Selectron (UK) Ltd. Selectron will continue to handle all the M.I. lines.
Tel: +44 (0)171 252 8400

New distributor for Telex Communications

Telex Communications has appointed Audio Projects Inc Ltd as its UK distributor. Telex is the manufacturer off the RTS™ TW Intercom System, as well as a manufacturer of professional audio, broadcast communications and tape duplication products.
Tel: +44 (0)1474 879446

An Arc move

An Arc Light's Illumination, visual effects projection specialist, has moved its hire and sales department to Reading, where its range of Optikinetics stock will be housed.
Tel: +44 (0)1734 755766

Audio Technica at Croke Park

Audio Technica have won the contract to provide the microphones at the new-look Croke Park, Eire. Croke Park is undergoing a £100m face lift, including four AT 1235s in the first phase of the installation.
Tel: +44 (0)113 277 1441

It's a Blackout

Blackout provided the wall of drapes for last month's production run of *Cirque de Soleil* at the Royal Albert Hall. The production required part of the stage in the Hall to be partitioned off which called for a large drape to screen off the organ and choir.
Tel: +44 (0)181 870 7320

New service office for Gearhouse

Gearhouse Group has established a new service office in Burbank, California, called PSL Inc, which is to carry the full range of concert touring video products that PSL in London has been providing over the last three years. As a result, equipment will not need to be shipped across the Atlantic, and local support can be provided in both Europe and the USA.
PSL. Tel: +44 (0)181 208 7100

Grand Slam move

Grand Slam SCP has moved. The company can now be contacted at C/Camps 1 Fabrés, 10, local 2, Barcelona 08006, Spain.
Tel: 34 (9)3 – 218 21 58

New R&D centre for Yamaha

Yamaha has opened a new R&D centre in West London, redesigned and refurbished by Harris, Grant Associates. Research and development will be undertaken at the new premises for the Electronic Musical Instrument and Professional Audio divisions.
Tel: +44 (0)1908 366700

Caption: Andrew Kemble and Genicho Ito of Yamaha-Kemble Music (UK) Ltd at the opening of the new Yamaha R&D centre, west London

Wharfedale merge

Wharfedale Coaches of Warwickshire has merged with Travel Team of Yeadon, Leeds, to form a new company, Wharfedale Team. Administration will be carried out from new offices in Leeds, while two depots in Leeds and Nuneaton will remain in operation until a new depot is found.
Tel: +44 (0)113 250 7385

Welsh coup for E/T/C

E/T/C have been commisioned by the National Museum and Gallery Cardiff to project onto its white pillared front for the Child's Eye View of the Arts exhibition. The company plans to create effects which will change the pillars into pencils and paintbrushes whilst paintings created by children will scroll behind them. The exhibition takes place from March 4-10.
Tel: +44 (0)181 893 8232

NEXO news

Norwegian distributor Professional Sound System AS has announced the installation of a NEXO system in Oslo night spot, the Zebra Club. The system comprises of a number of PS15, L Sub 1000 enclosures, plus system controllers and is matched with Crown MA 5000VZ amps.

Belgium distributor EML reports that two rental companies have purchased NEXO gear for tours. Stage Unit, based in Putte, have added eighteen PS15s and six LS1000 enclosures plus six PS15 TD controllers to their FOH rig for their tour with Urbanus and Stef Bus. VDB, who have their office in Aalst, have purchased eight PS15 and four PS15 TD controllers in order to update their stage monitoring system for their tour with Alternative Circuit and Deus.
Tel: +44 (0)1932 886007

New from Electro-Voice

Electro-Voice have released the ND 157B, a single-D cardioid dynamic using Meodymiun alloy technology. EV claim that their N/DYM magnets produce four times the power of conventional mic magnets - the theory being that better magnets make for a better mic.
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Wheel with 7 special colours + white	*	*	–
Special light blue filter	–	*	–
Rainbow effect, two-colour beams	*	*	*
Colour temperature correction filters	2	2	2
RGB colour mixing systems	*	–	–
Max. No. of colours	Infinite	113	24
Rotating gobos in dichroic glass	Optional	2	Optional
Rotating M-size metal gobos	4	2	4
Fixed M-size metal gobos	4	4	–
Variable speed indexed two-directional rotation of gobos	*	*	*
10 additional gobos in metal	*	*	*
Fixed prisms	–	1 (5 facets)	1 (4 facets)
Rotating prisms	2 (4 facets, 3D)	4 (4 facets, 3D, wake, image doubling)	–
Frost filters	2	2	1
Iris	increased speed	increased speed	*
Dimmer 0-100% - Stop - High speed strobe	*	*	*
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CLAY PAKY
PROFESSIONAL SHOW LIGHTING

Re-launching an African TV network

by STEVE MOLES

The South African Broadcasting Company is a relatively young television broadcaster. The possibility of cultural pollution so bothered the Apartheid regime that the first tentative steps down the cathode ray tube were only taken in 1976, long after the rest of sub-Saharan Africa. By the time democracy came in '94 the network had grown to three channels, all state-controlled, broadcasting mainly English language and Afrikaans with occasional nods towards the country's broad racial diversity. Almost two years on from the political turn-around the need for SABC to change its content was obvious; equally, the change itself would have to be radical; and the occasion was their 20th anniversary.

SABC choose to make a clean break, dissolving even the old channel names: the only recognisable feature would be the continuation of a three channel network. To implement the change, and to communicate its implications for the populace, two hours of prime-time Sunday evening viewing was cleared on all three channels. A live spectacular was planned in the format of a variety show to underline the new homogeneous culture of the nation; three slots during the show would outline the nature and content of the new channels.

In terms of production this was a rare departure for their resources. The stage alone was 185 feet across, with hundreds of performers. Rather than looking for outside help – there is a great drive within the new South Africa to prove to the world that they can do it – SABC turned to its own fledgling domestic rock industry.

Sound Stylists provided an EV Deltamax PA. All flown, the system was broken into four clusters across the width of the enormous venue, a giant aircraft hangar outside Pretoria. The live audience comprised some three thousand international dignitaries headed by President Nelson Mandela himself – so this was not some big rock show demanding high pressure levels. Considering the harsh reflective nature of the building, sound engineer Kevin Winder kept the live sound generally well-controlled; the broadcast material was exactly as it should have been.

Lighting was, naturally with a stage of this size, enormous. Over a megawatt of assorted Pars and Molefays were augmented with 60 Icons and 24 Intellabeams, hung from over 300m of truss. Aside from part of the Icon system which was flown in from the UK, the entire

Nelson Mandela takes the stage with Stevie Wonder

lighting rig was supplied by the aptly-named Lighting Unlimited. Lighting designer Tim Dunn, with a strong pedigree in European and US rock 'n' roll, has been nurturing a relationship between Lighting Unlimited and SABC for three years and was a natural choice to take on the beast. The TV show looked excellent.

SABC now has to service a nation with nine widely-spoken languages: a big task requiring big vision to make it work. If they and the concert industry can maintain the new standards they're setting together, they should pull it off. ■ **live!**

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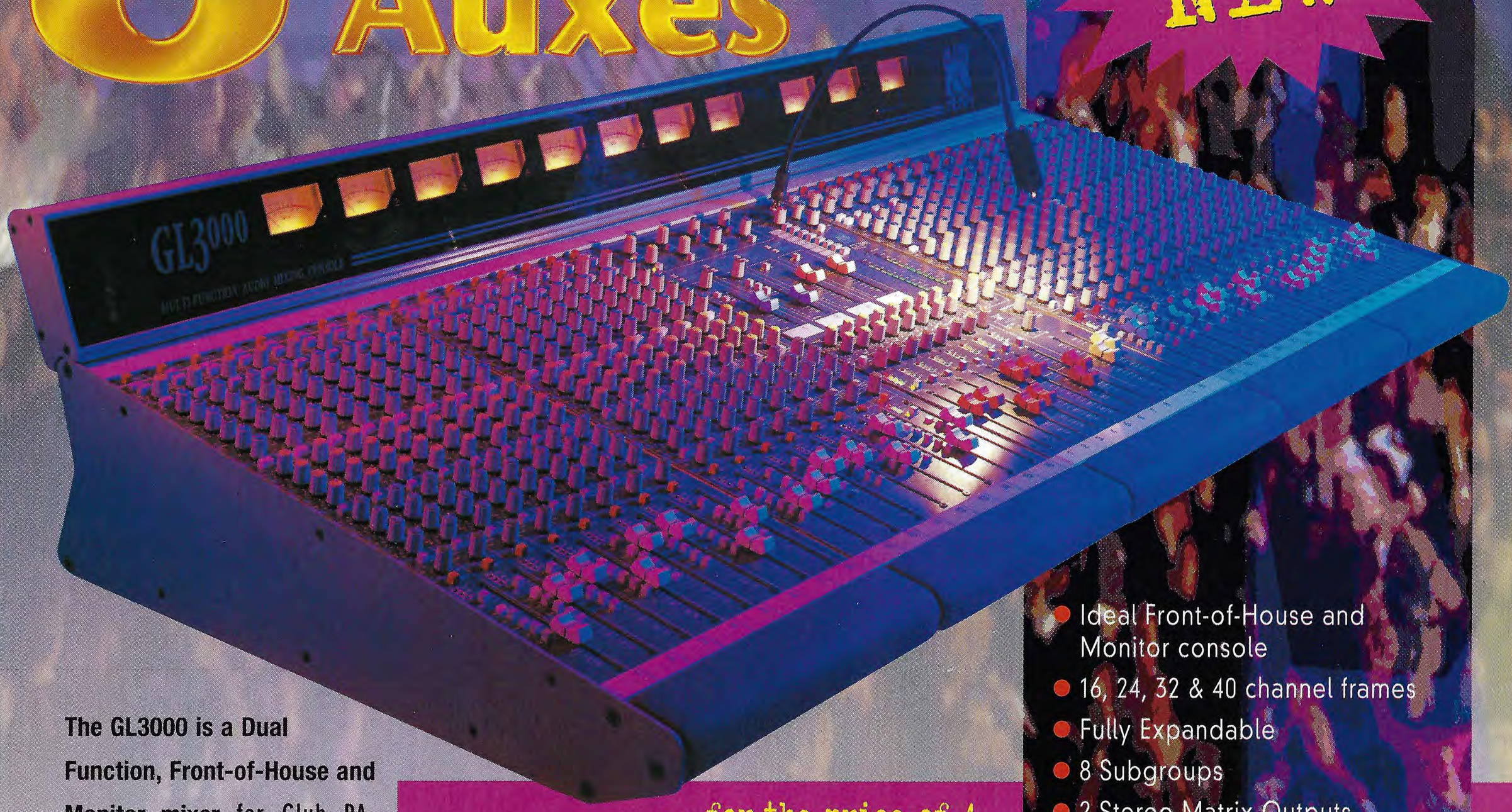

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BULLETIN BOARD

live! UPDATE FROM THE PSA **MARCH 1996**

THE PSA COUNCIL - THE NEW STRUCTURE AND HOW IT WORKS

On last month's Bulletin Board, John Cadbury highlighted the need for the council to find better ways of working. In particular, to ensure that freelancers are able to work at council level despite the obvious problem of not knowing where you're going to be from one month to the next. Not only a disadvantage for the individual concerned, it was also becoming clear that the lack of continuity was starting to limit the council's ability to bring projects to a conclusion.

During the final open session at January's AGM a list was made of issues the membership wanted the council to address in the coming year. There was a total of seventeen different areas, each of which would be capable of occupying its own working party.

So here was the problem. Fourteen council members, meeting once a month, trying to deal with seventeen seperate issues. It obviously wasn't going to work.

Taking the list of seventeen areas as a starting point, we found that each of the headings could be placed into one of four sections. Then each council member elected to concentrate on one section. By the end of the exercise we'd formed four teams which looked like this:

1. HEALTH & SAFETY
Mark Armstrong, Roger Barrett, Alan Jacobi, Tim Norman.

2. TRAINING & NVQ's
Mick Kluczyynski, Mike Lowe, Dave Smith, Mick Upton.

3. FINANCIAL & LEGAL
Peter Hillier, Tony Laurenson, Dougie Souness.

4. MARKETING & MEMBERSHIP
Dave Crump, Kim McCarthy, Dick Tee.

To avoid continuity problems the teams are working in a "buddy" system, communicating with each other directly and setting up their own structure of meetings and sub-committees. So, even if a freelancer is away, and can't attend the monthly council meetings, they will still able to maintain their involvement on a real time basis.

The council want to stress Jon Cadbury's appeal for "The membership to take part in dialogue on the points at issue." It is vital that these sub-committees are driven by the membership. There's no reason why a sub-committee can't be made up of members alone who would then report to a council member, who in turn would integrate the committees' work into the bigger picture. The whole system has the added advantage of allowing the monthly council meetings to be structured as a reporting forum, and the council has more time to deal with larger policy issues and long range planning.

Full details on the four areas the teams are covering are in the March edition of *Backstage*. Alternatively, council members can be contacted directly or via Keith Ferguson.

PSA UPDATE: ISE STRUCTURAL GUIDE

By Roger Barrett.

Following the publication of the new guide by the Institution of Structural Engineers which affects so many PSA members, there was an excellent response to the letter writing campaign undertaken at the PSA seminar. These letters have now gone to the Institution and the Department of the Environment.

In an unprecedented co-operation, the PSA then joined forces with The Event Services Association and The Concert Promoters Association to submit a joint, and unified, industry response to this new guide.

Running to 32 pages, the contents are split between overall criticism in seven different areas, followed by a detailed paragraph-by-paragraph analysis. It concluded that the guide was so poor there was no alternative but to withdraw it.

This industry response has been widely distributed to government departments and local authority organisations. The costs of drawing up and distributing the response have been met by donations from the three main seating companies and the three main stage companies. LSD kindly agreed to assist by producing further copies for wider distribution.

Support has been overwhelming, with every main UK supplier of stages, seating, marquees, hospitality units and other structures, along with promoters and even local authorities, calling for the guide to be withdrawn.

The PSA have now been invited to be represented on a DoE sanctioned group to review this guide and its effects on our industry. The first meeting is due on 20th March.

BRITISH STANDARDS NEWS

PSA members have been hard at work on the revision to the standard which covers temporary electrical supplies and this will soon be available for public consultation. It is likely to have a very short (two months?) consultation period, so it is very important that you make your views known quickly when the draft becomes available. Watch this space. If you want to add your views to the PSA's response to this guide, please register your interest with Keith at the PSA office and you will be contacted as soon as the public draft is available.

The BSI are also drawing up a new British Standard for rigging, and the PSA is seeking formal representation on this committee in addition to the informal input via existing PSA members.

Queries, etc, to Roger Barrett on: 01234 772233.

PRODUCTION SERVICES ASSOCIATION
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STOP PRESS
TRUCKING FORUM - AUSTRIAN RULE CHANGES

Since January 1st this year new rules have been imposed on trucking companies by the Austrian authorities – rules which are confused and inconsistent. Their haphazard implementation is already jepordizing the timely arrival of trucks at venues. Ultimately, increased costs will be passed on to the artist or the promoter.

An emergency forum has been set up and will meet at Westway studios on Thursday March 14th, at 7.00 pm.

All are invited to attend.

ON THE AGENDA...

THURSDAY MARCH 14 PSA Council meeting – Westway Studios, Olaf St. London W11 – 2.30 pm.

THURDSAY MARCH 28 PSA Seminar – National Vocational Qualifications – Westway Studios, Olaf St. London W11 - 2.30 pm.

THURSDAY APRIL 18 – PSA Council meeting. – Venue to be confirmed.

THURSDAY APRIL 25 – PSA Seminar – Health and Safety. Westway Studios, Olaf St. London W11 - 2.30 pm.

Please note that all PSA council meetings are followed by an open and social session. This takes place at wherever the council is meeting and starts at approximately 7.00 pm

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building a better BRITS

This year's Brit Awards had its biggest ever audience, over 11 million, and filled the 23,225 sq m of Earl's Court 1. For production manager Mick Kluczynski it was "the hardest job I've ever done"; for everyone else, it meant a fair few sleepless nights. And then there was Michael Jackson and Jarvisgate... Mike Lethby went along to marvel at the mayhem

Photographs by John Marshall

Live!: What was your brief, and how did it relate to the Brit Awards that you've worked on before?

Mick Kluczynski: "It started in February after last year's Awards at Ally Pally when we realised that we'd out-grown it; we'd filled every available space there. It wasn't so much the size of the audience – 3,500 – as the physical shape of the building. Because it was long and narrow, the terraces with the tables in place meant your end tables were 75m back from the stage, so we needed to *widen* it to bring everybody closer. Here at Earl's Court the back of the terracing was only 50m from the stage.

"We also knew couldn't have got that much more out of Ally Pally because of its geographical location. Whereas at Earl's Court, the whole thing just went 'boom!', and it never stopped. Given that it had to stay in London, it was down to venue availability, but we'd also realised Earl's Court was our only real choice, for various reasons. The location helped enormously – the acts were much more willing to come there. However, we were very squashed on time."

Live!: Is it likely to return there next year?

MK: "Hopefully, yes. The two points there being: how could you go backwards from *that*? And equally, how do you go *forwards*? Well, maybe you don't! Having taken that step into Earl's Court, it's going to be difficult to step out again.

Live!: Are there things you'd do differently next year?

MK: "Oh, lots. Too many to mention. It's not that it's unique, because there's obviously other awards ceremonies – but now it's got its own momentum, you could only make small changes."

Starting at the wrong end

MK: "There were an awful lot of elements that came into play which blow-by-blow would take days to explain. Basically, we ended up at the 'wrong' end of the hall with its unique problems – plus a very tight time limit."

Live!: When did site work start?

MK: "We always knew it was going to be tough, because availability of dates meant we had to slot in between two exhibitions. Last year we had eight build days prior to show day, then two days to strike. This year, with a bigger venue, and at least 50% bigger on all the elements, we only had three days to build, then rehearsals on Sunday and Monday before the show on Monday night, and get-out by Wednesday: the total tenancy was only one week. We were going against the clock, and with so many elements it's a risk. You don't want to have that festival 'gung-ho' element – you're dressing this to a major corporate level to present a show for TV and a live audience."

Earl's Court's triangular site was shaped by the Underground tracks over which it was built, and its complex subterranean engineering, with under-floor pool, still challenges production managers decades later. Kluczynski agreed detailed weight loading with the venue's engineers. Staging worked out fine, but a crane used to erect the towers had to be placed on evenly-balanced floor points to match the support pillars below. "And the pool area is an exclusion zone for forklifts or trucks, so all the scaffolding had to be hand-built from the edge."

He also had to provide a pillar-free roadway alongside the Hard Rock/dressing rooms area so the two mobiles could leave as the show finished, to accomodate Toby Alington's post-production schedule for next day's ITV broadcast. Says Mick: "At the end the show's in the can – great – but the director and the sound boys are on another schedule to get the show out for broadcast within 24 hours.

"We based our working budget on Alexandra Palace, because if we'd itemised every individual thing you could possibly think of to do the show in Earl's Court, it would have just escalated. As it happens, it did anyway! When people saw the space they soon began saying, 'we want more of everything', which knocked-on through the whole production.

"The original design put the audience around three sides of the stage; we were trying to achieve a 'bowl' effect, so we went to the back of the hall to achieve that shape. But the design then evolved through six generations to meet our budget, rather than our dreams." He laughs: "Show me a designer who's ever been given all the money he asked for! With the party on one side, plus the dressing rooms on the other, we filled all 300,000 sq ft of Earl's Court 1's ground floor. The other thing is that it's a very deceptive building

to get a feel for – I've been in and out of there since last summer but even with my experience, until we started building I really couldn't *visualise* what we were gonna do because it's triangular-shaped and has two series of large and small pillars inside. Every time I needed to check even simple details, I had to go back to the drawing and count pillars! The show just kept growing: like that phrase, 'work expands to fill available time', this show kept expanding to fill the available space."

In production

MK: "With that time constraint – which was the major problem this year – the slightest problem escalates. I hope I never have to do it again under those time constraints: 24 more hours would been great; 72 hours would have made it *civilised*."

Live!: Dimension Audio, in particular, were caught at the tail end of this process?

MK: "Derrick got totally shafted...he didn't have the full plot on what Michael Jackson intended to do, because the first faxes only started flowing from his people about his set on the 10th of February. The implications of that knocked us badly: the best thing we did was to get them to rehearse in Earl's Court 2 with the whole stage set, the ramp and the flying pieces, so the directors could go next door and see what they were intending to do.

"From Tuesday they rehearsed all the dancers and actors; we built a dummy stage and set for them on Thursday and then moved all their stuff over to the main stage on Saturday night. Everything just grew from when they arrived, and it wasn't until rehearsals that we realised the extra problems, like their stage extension which meant the PA flying points had to go up and down three times.

"Jackson's organisation wanted flown side-fills – which changed positions four times in one day. Derrick had come in on Friday on a 12-hour call to physically position everything and those placements ended up starting 10 hours into his call. He was totally frustrated: but what can you do? There's the star of the show saying, 'I want that there and that there,' and you don't say no: you just carry on.

"All of the key people coming in on show day were exhausted – including myself. Last year I worked on the stage itself; this year, because of the scale of it, I was on the whole bloody building. And it's such a large building! I'd leave my office and I'd get back there six hours later – having made it around that arena once and across it 20 times, going from one problem to another.

"In the middle of all of this, on the weekend we start the build, a bomb goes off in the City. So we have to take into consideration that – although we're low down on the scale – we are a potential terrorist target, which meant increasing security and reinforcing the perimeter and extra meetings during the build. But the police were very on the case and easy to deal with; and so were Showsec."

Design for TV

Live!: How does the omnipresence of TV and major acts affect your job?

MK: "Even though there's a large live audience, it's primarily a TV show, so you're striking a balance between allowing the TV director to achieve what he wants to shoot and giving value for money for the live audience. The TV programme goes out to over 100 countries with a viewing population of millions, whereas your live audience is 4,000. But their contribution is to the atmosphere – with 400-odd tables all lit up, that TV long shot looks great: larger than life

"Most of the people I employ have rock-'n'roll experience, so we don't have a problem dealing directly with the acts. The acts also have the experience of coming into TV shoots – and, even more importantly, of coming into festivals.

"But the real complexity for us is that the director wants to make each act look as

Live production manager Mick Kluczynski

unique as possible, rather than using using bog-standard risers on stage, with the attendant need to design and build individual sets for certain artists. So you're creating a hybrid, compromised environment – a TV stage which has to be flexible enough for us to do scene changes on a theatrical level. The stage is just the tip of an iceberg: what's behind it is enormous, a space in which they all have to be able to be moved. This is stage manager Colin Rowell's territory: the 'North Circular' one-way system that he invented two years ago for the Brits.

"My other balance is with licensing – who are always looking over my shoulder. I've got to do everything by the book, which often brings me into conflict with the TV company: one, they don't deal with licensing in the way we do and two, someone has to be devil's advocate and have an overview – and unfortunately that's my lot in life!"

Mick on video

The complex video production was co-ordinated by Chris Saunders of Black Pig Productions. ➳ p16

Mike Sutcliffe's rig included Vari*Lites, Icons, Golden Scans – and Martin Pro's new PAL 1200s

p15 **MK:** "Jumbotrons are more or less an essential part of every show I do these days. The arguments are always about availability and budget – and every time you add a screen, you also need the technology to feed it into the core show.

"So we ended up with three Jumbotrons, and the technology to feed them into the OB unit to make them an active part of the overall TV shoot. It's an ever-changing feast because until the director walks into the building and sees the set built, it's difficult to visualise what to do with your cameras. Chris went through hoops because the whole thing kept evolving and changing."

Creative Technology, under project manager Richard Landen, supplied three BDP-7A cameras and cameramen, Grass Valley PPUs, Betacam players, timebase correctors, plus engineers. PSL added monitors, Barcos and a screen for the party and videowall was from ProQuip.

Wrapping up

MK: "I have to say that all the companies involved did get down to it wonderfully. They'll all be saying 'never again', but next year I bet you they'll be queuing up. We all enjoy pushing ourselves to the limit, and if there wasn't that edge, most of us would have lost interest a long time ago.

"The two PR people, Laister Dickson's Bernard Docherty (who handled press) and Brilliant PR's Neil Ferris (TV and radio), were also working to deadlines with 300-odd press people waiting for video clips that have to be in their news the next morning, so the activity as the show progresses gets more active. As we're starting to strike, a lot more people are just starting to work. This is the second year I've worked with them, and they're both priceless – great value. The way I look at it, all their elements are equally important.

"As production manager I'm first in and last out – nothing changes.

"It's the hardest show I've ever done – a brutal week. I have never been so tired or under such stress; but then again, I've never had so much fun. There's not a job in the world that could give me the adrenaline rush when the doors opened.

"But the overview now is that p18

broadcasting the brits

With a higher profile than ever on primetime UK ITV, and overseas networks keen for a slice of the action, TV sound for the cream of live music took a high profile in the production effort.

Toby Alington produced the broadcast audio mix on the night using both Manor mobiles – their newly-refitted SSL truck and the larger Raindirk truck, dividing the show's six live bands between the two – and supervised audio post-production in the hectic hours before the Brits' Tuesday night TV broadcast.

"We had 174 lines coming in – rather a lot," he deadpans. A huge 'patch city' behind the stage handled signal routing to FOH, the two monitor positions, the two mobiles and the broadcast scanner truck, where the final broadcast mix was completed with the addition of presenters' mics, 'walk-ons', VT feeds and other details."

"The 'playpen' [the stage-front pit where fans stood] was the noisy part of the audience; the tables were very quiet – apart from the chink of glass and the rattle of cutlery. We put eight Crown cardioid PZM mics around the main stage, which worked exceedingly well – we got lots of screaming and yelling – plus some ambient mics further back down the auditorium, run through Manor's new API remote mic amps, using the SSL truck's API desk to sub-mix the audience."

A comprehensive comms network linked all production elements, with RTS, Clearcom and others, all meeting in the 'patch city'. "Last year," he adds, "we had a few problems with earthing and hums, so I wanted everything on a central patch point."

The evening, inevitably, saw a few stops and starts as Michael Jackson's and Simply Red's large stage sets were changed and rigged. Equally inevitably – this being mega-star TV where the production team must accommodate last-minute artistic changes in the final hours – rehearsals went right down to the wire.

And, says Alington: "When we first started our get-in the set build was about 12 hours behind schedule, which had a knock-on effect on other things. We couldn't set up until a lot later than expected – with a gig like this everyone knows the show will go on the next day – but it was just a bit more hectic and...er...character-building than we'd expected."

That wasn't the only spanner in the works. "When we got there all the trucks were parking stage right as agreed. The monitor systems and 'patch city' was also supposed to be at stage right – a comfortable 40m cable run. But when we arrived we found they'd been re-allocated to stage left, so we now had a 100m multicore run. Under normal circumstances that would be fine, but with 174 lines that's a lot of multicores! So there was quite a funny meeting in front of the stage with Mick and others; no-one knew quite why the monitors had been moved but we all saw there was no point in arguing – it was a case of shut up and get on with it."

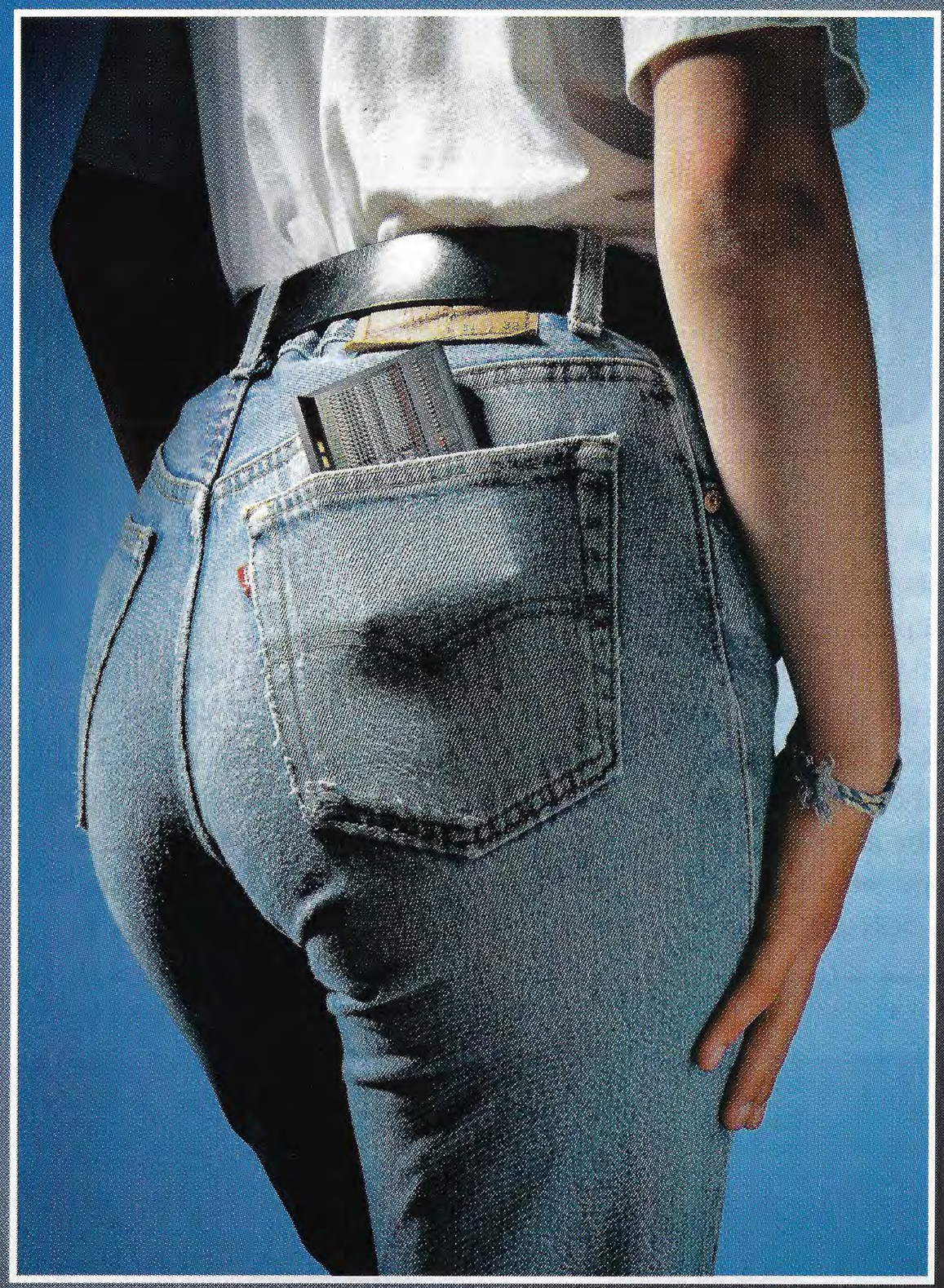
Toby Alington: on air

He adds, with a laugh: "Post-production is always the 'gig from hell' on this kind of thing. We worked it similarly to last year, parking the SSL truck outside Telecine and running lines up to the dubbing suite where we laid the finished mixes into an AMS Audiofile – because every minute you can save is precious. The delivery time for Carlton was originally 5.00 pm, but that got stretched. And while we were editing the show, Michael Jackson's people were editing his ten minutes." While Alington's engineering career has encompassed a mix of classical studio and live broadcast work, he's also acquired a tough 'busking' approach to live music TV that touring engineers would applaud. In particular, he'll never depend on a multitrack recording – justifiably, because some of his live Brits monitor mixes, made in the Manor mobiles, made it [quietly] to air.

Toby has a final anecdote. "Jackson's guys had arrived on Monday, ready for the first soundcheck, and one of them had a Beta tape in one hand and a DAT backing track in the other, asking, 'is there anywhere we can lay this back?' We went in to the scanner and found the DAT wasn't timecoded or frame-locked to the video. So we had to time it manually and use varispeed to make it synch – a fairly lengthy process. This is in amongst the scanner being terribly busy with their own problems. Then they turned up with another DAT and another Beta, because Michael had had a mixing room installed in his hotel, and as fast as we could lay them back to Beta – 20 minutes every time – he was coming up with new mixes! He wanted to do another one 10 minutes before the dress rehearsal, and we had to decline politely, with a nice smile..."

Broadcast audio credits

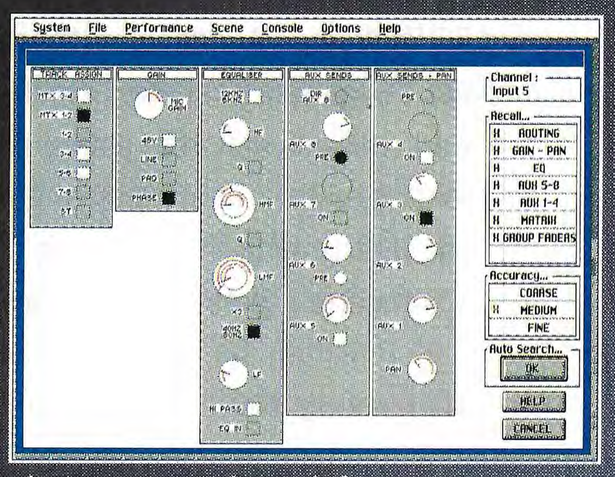
Toby Alington	Nick Berry
Manor Mobiles	Doug Bennett
Telecine	Dave Taylor
	Annie Crofts



501 by Langley

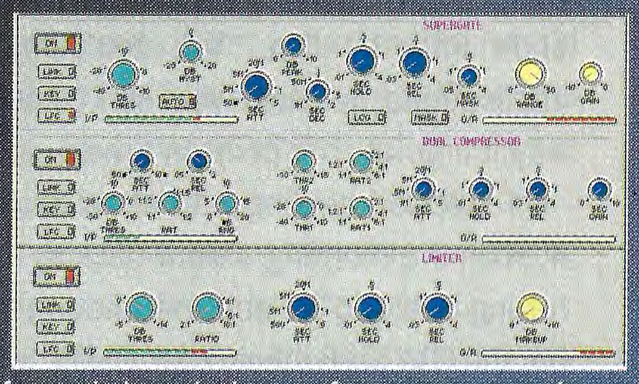
Talking Recall

AMEK 501 allows you to memorize the settings of the console controls and reload them at a later time - for example, when the support act leaves the stage and the headline artist takes it. Auto-scan finds only those controls which need adjusting, and settings are shown onscreen and indicated by AMEK's unique Voice Prompt, which tells you which control to adjust next. Selected functions can be masked, so that you only recall what you need.



AMEK Virtual Dynamics

AMEK VIRTUAL DYNAMICS uses digital control of the fader VCA to provide you with a choice of one from nine gain processing devices per input, represented onscreen by icons of the hardware. Parameters are adjusted with the mouse and settings are saved to and loaded from disk with the performance mix data.

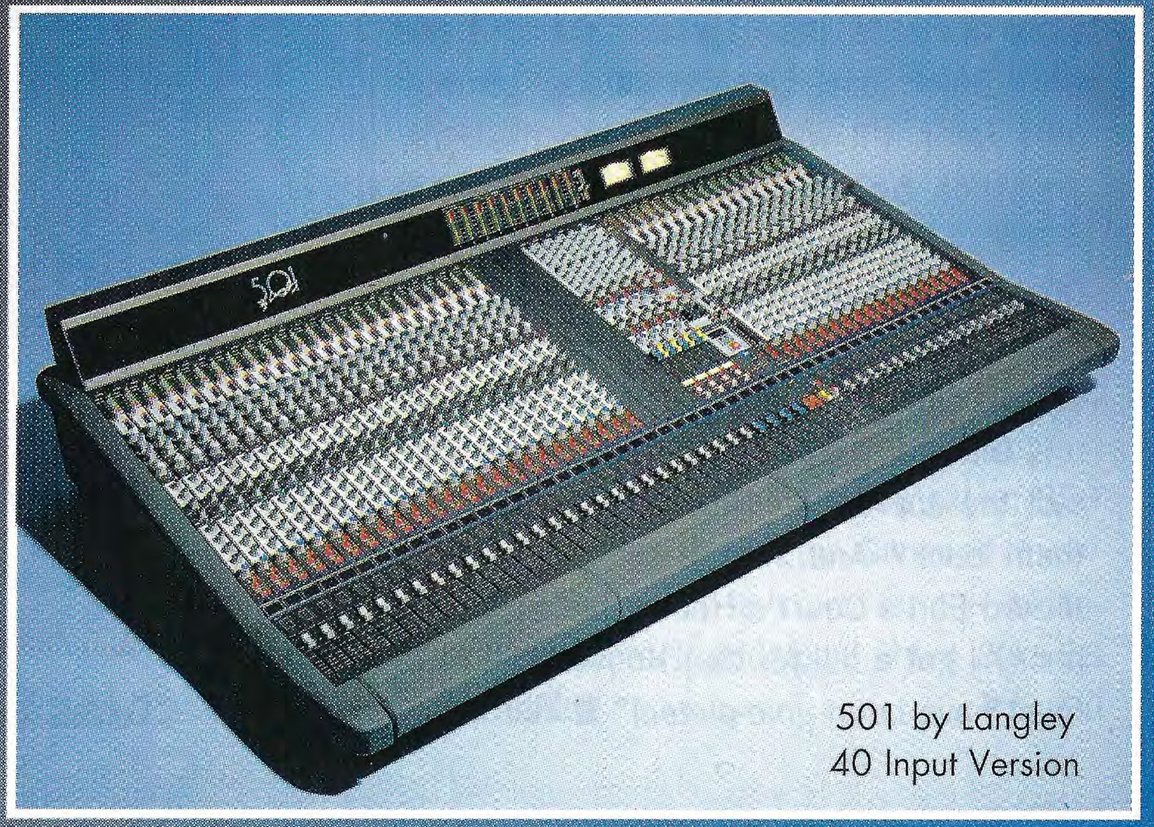


The Computer

SHOWTIME runs on 486-processor based computers; rugged portables such as the IBM Thinkpad are ideal for demanding live performance applications. Portables can also easily be taken back to the hotel room for off-line editing of SHOWTIME mix data.

Just How You Remembered It

501 by LANGLEY is a major step forward in Sound Reinforcement. It creates new possibilities and provides open-ended solutions to the complex problems of modern live performance technology. And the mix will be just how you remembered it.



501 by Langley
40 Input Version

Automated Sound Reinforcement Console

In 1994 AMEK revolutionized sound reinforcement consoles with the introduction of RECALL by LANGLEY, the world's first computer-assisted Front-of-House console. 501 provides similar automated facilities within a scaled-down, lower-cost system.

501's extremely small footprint packs more facilities into less space than most SR consoles allow. The 24 and 40-input frames provide 8 aux busses, 8 audio subgroups, 4 VCA groups with 4 dedicated masters, 4 Mute groups, 2 Stereo returns and 10 x 4 Matrix. Exceptional Eq and audio performance is an AMEK hallmark, and 501 more than meets expectations.

501 can be used as a normal manual console, but the real excitement is AMEK's SHOWTIME computer automation.

AMEK *SHOWTIME* Automation

SHOWTIME is the first computer automation system developed for Front-of-House and Monitor console applications.

Scenes, comprised of fader levels, channel mutes, channel Aux 1 & 2 mutes, Mute groups, VCA group setup and levels and Events such as MIDI triggers are created. Scenes and Events can be edited together into a 256 location Cue List to build up a Performance, which can be stored and loaded - at the touch of a button - when needed.

Head Office, Factory & Sales:
New Islington Mill,
Oldfield Road,
Salford, M5 4SX, U.K.
Tel: 0161 834 6747
Fax: 0161 834 0593

AMEK Germany:
Tel: 06721 2636
Fax: 06721 13537

AMEK Asia, Singapore:
Tel: 65 251 1629
Fax: 65 251 1297

AMEK US Operations, Inc.:
Tel: 818 508 9788
Fax: 818 508 8619

AMEK South America
Tel: 55 21 437 6329

p16 for me, all the horror stories I heard about Earl's Court are wrong. It was a pleasant surprise to work with those people. Steve Bagnall, their Events Manager, was brilliant. When we opened the doors he grinned at me and said, 'You know, I've really enjoyed this'. I said, 'You're sick.'" Both of us were dead on our feet.

"You have the satisfaction of the doors opening and knowing you're ready; of a show well done; and getting the load-out complete with minimal damage limitation and all the invoices paid." He grins: "It was also the first time I realised I'd played promoter. When the doors opened I realised, hold on, you're not ready to go backstage, you're not ready to go to the dinner, you're checking the terracing or checking that's someone's got rid of the Hoover."

About Jarvisgate

"When all that stuff went down with Jarvis Cocker I wasn't aware of what was going on on stage, I was just dealing with the problems that followed it. My immediate thought was, 'dammit, we've almost made a magic show into the can.' You don't realise the implications because you don't know which way it'll go at that point in time.

"I stopped dealing with show problems at 4.30 in the morning. I went back to the hotel, having been up for about 48 hours, switched on the TV and there was GMTV with their reports on the Brits. I realised at 6 am that we had 350 press in the building watching the show. The Brits has always been surrounded by some kind of controversy, and it's not going to go away while it's got this new Britpop generation that's determined to be vociferous and rebellious. Unless it's broken irreparably the show rolls on. And I've never been in a situation where it has been broken irreparably. The show went on, the TV broadcast worked well and the ratings went through the roof.

"So I just got up and went back to the hall. It's become a tradition for me – I get back home in time for the start of the Brits broadcast, and I'm asleep 15 minutes later. I'll watch the video next day and then be sorting out invoices for a month – and searching for missing kit that disappeared in the load-out."

On which note, Mick adds a special plea: "Would any service companies who've got bits that don't belong to them please contact the appropriate departments and give them back? And...would the person who nicked Earl's Court's Hoover please give it back? I got a bill for that Hoover today – it must have been *gold-plated*!" ■ live!

brits audio

Dimension Audio's Derrick Zieba was once again picked for the hot seat behind the FOH desk – a task that was to prove unexpectedly tough.

"The brief," he explains, "was the same as previous years, to provide a sound system suitable for a seated audience and for broadcast. Surprisingly for a show of this size, the budget is fairly limited, so we weren't able to provide FOH and monitor boards for each artist which would have been ideal.

"We provided a L/C/R flown PA, with left and right flown stacks of Floodlight and a centre cluster of Flashlight – plus ground-stacked TSW121 bass bins. We had UPA1s as front fills for the pit audience, between the monitors on the stage front monitor shelf, and some Deltamaxes underhung from the balcony.

Wing and a Prayer?

At a glance it seems an absurdly simple task to suspend a cluster of cabinets high above an audience and performers. However, the job of putting a precisely aimed loudspeaker array into the air in venue after venue, night after night on a busy tour is probably the most nerve-wracking and time consuming task facing any crew.

With no second chance - the prime safety-critical element of a flown array is the flying system. Not without reason is the d&b 402/F2 Flying System the most intensely designed element of mechanical engineering in the d&b armoury. Engineered to be ergonomic, failsafe and simple to deploy, it consigns to the dustbin of history all those scary flying systems based on DIY metal-bashing and ad-hoc rigging.

The d&b Flying System - loads better than a wing and a prayer

d&b audiotechnik AG, Locks Mill, Brewery Lane, Nailsworth, Stroud,

TV producer Andy Ward

"Control was two PM4000s and a PM3000 FOH, and three monitor boards - two Midas XL3s and a Soundcraft SM16."

Zieba outlines the time-warped schedule. "It was never going to be easy, because we started with one day less than last year to get things set up – exacerbated by it being a new venue and the fact that the staging was about three times as large as last year.

"The problems for us began because there seemed to be a lack of communications between the designers and some of the people who were building parts of the set – we couldn't find out exactly who or why – which led to our fit-up starting at 8 am on Friday; and all we could achieve that day was to fly our centre cluster. When we returned on Saturday morning, we found that changes in the set design and staging meant that cluster was now in the wrong place for Michael Jackson's set; we had to put it up on new points. We continued to battle with the location of our stereo stacks and sidefills with new drawings of Jackson's staging, causing us more delays; the bottom line was that on arriving at 6 am on Sunday, prepared to go into the only full day of soundchecks – two hours per band – at 8.30 there still wasn't a complete stage for us to lay out monitors and mics.

"We then had to rush around to get mics and monitors into position for Simply Red who were the first band to rehearse, with no time for proper system EQ or line checks. So we were fire-fighting our way through Sunday, just about getting the artists' requirements in place. We consolidated our position ready for Bowie's rehearsal on Monday morning, without the chance to install or check all of the other broadcast-related facilities. And as a final sting in the tale, at 20 minutes to doors open, we found that of our seven hand-held radio mics, whose frequencies had been carefully scheduled to match what the broadcasters and press reception were using, all but three of our frequencies were swamped by external interference,which we believe came from other media who'd come in to do ad-hoc interviews with artists and VIPs. As a result while audience were entering, we had to do what tests we could in order to blind-swap the three working hand-helds into every artists' set.

"And a big thank-you to AKG who initially provided three hand-held radios for Simply Red on channel 69, which turned out to be the only ones that remained working and which we used for everything.

"In the event, apart from a few delays on changeovers, the show went extremely well. But I think there are some lessons which must be learned for next year. Not the least of which is that between Friday morning and Monday morning I managed a total of four hours' sleep!" ■ live!

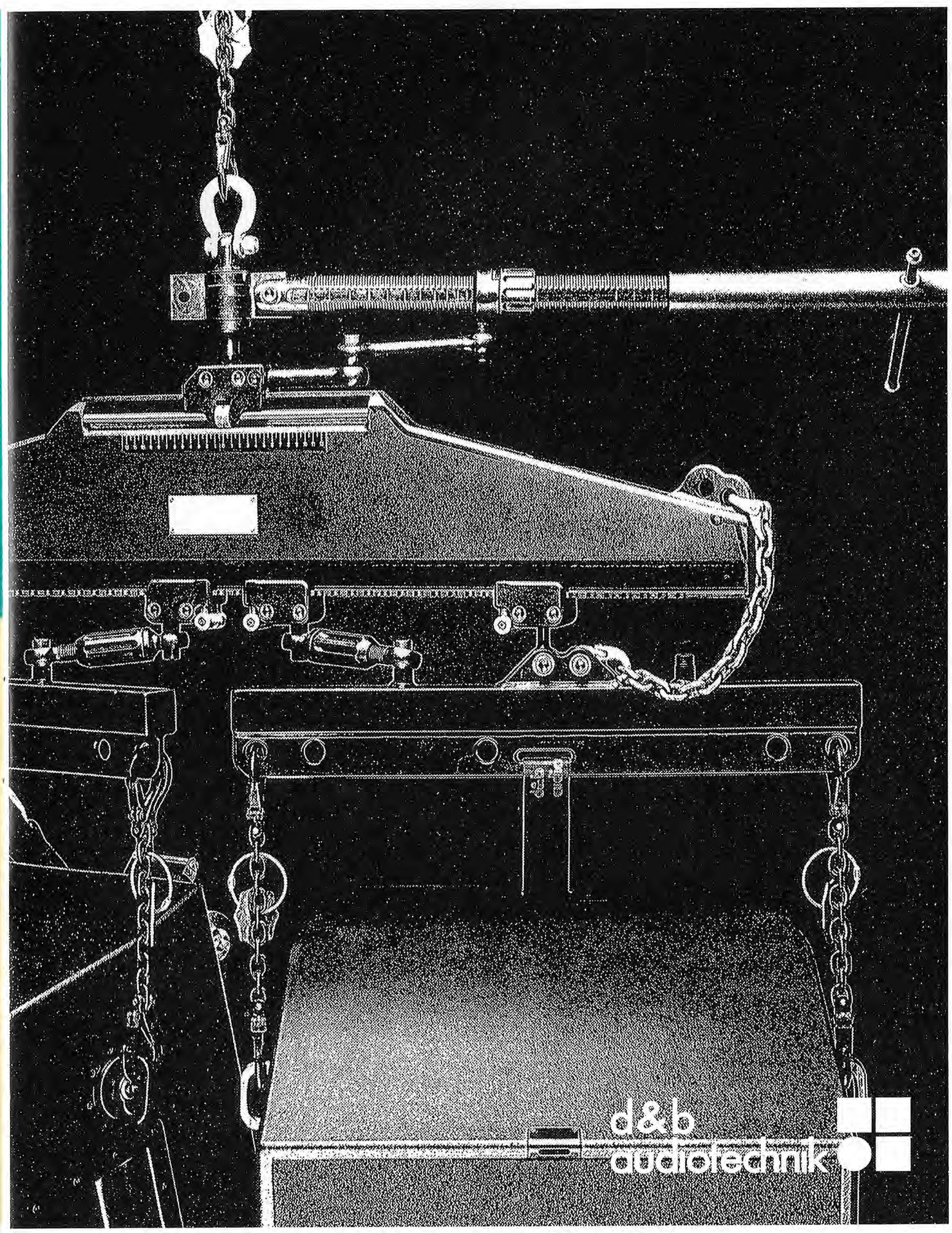
Audio credits

Derrick Zieba; Max Bisgrove (FOH with DZ, also mixed Simply Red); John Roden and Chris; Trimby (Monitors); Jeff Eaton (Firefighting)

System

Entec Accord wedges; Floodlight sidefills; BSS amplification; LMS700 controllers; Varicurve EQ with Remotes; BSS delays; Processing including Summit tube compressor/limiters and Drawmer noise gates; BSS graphic EQs for montiors; Garwood in-ear radios; Sennheiser lavaliers for the broadcaster presenters; additional Shure Beta 58 hand-helds.

➳ p20



Gloucestershire GL6 0JQ Tel: 01453 835884, Facsimile: 01453 834193

brits lighting

p19

Entec brought in the massive intelligent stage and arena lighting system, designed by Mike Sutcliffe. "After that," says Paul Weber, "various bands came in with their extra requirements – which made it very complicated to run because it changed all the time; there were large amounts of extras, especially Michael Jackson's, who brought a large team including two lighting designers – Patrick Woodroffe and a 'close-up LD'.

Midnight Design, meanwhile, lit the after-show party.

Adds Weber: "We only had two days to install and programme before rehearsals and worked 24 hours a day fom Friday onwards; we'd have been very grateful for an extra day."

The rig featured 41 Vari*Lite VL2Cs, 72 VL5s, 42 LSD Icons, 14 of the new Martin PAL 1200s, 20 Golden Scan HPEs, 68 Martin Robocolor 400s, 5 Supertroupers and 3 Panis – as well as Jackson's extras.

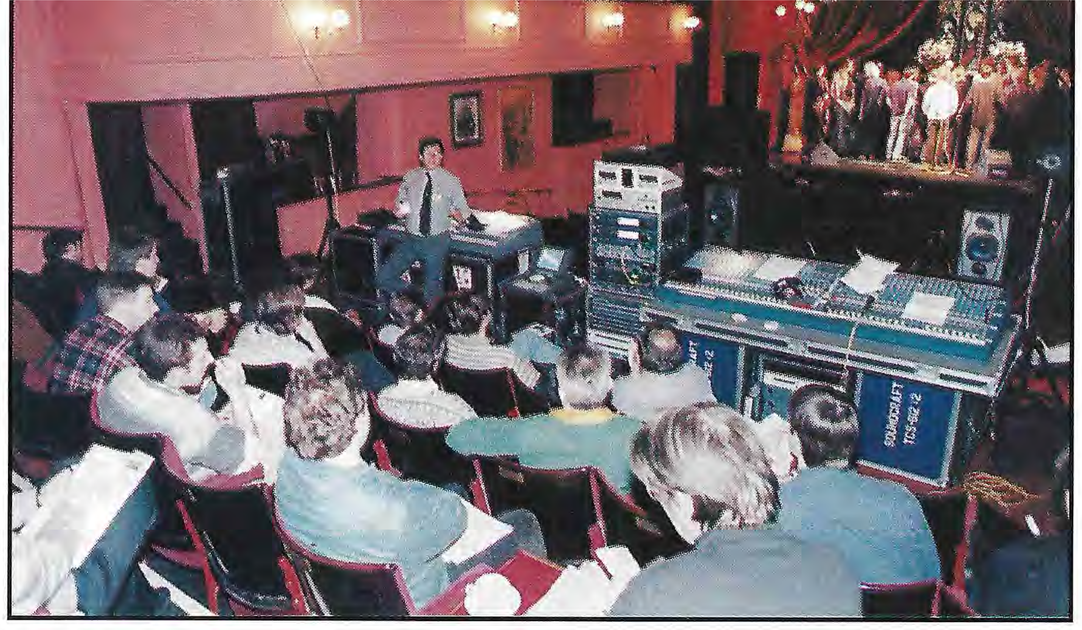
He says the PAL 1200s proved very efficient. "Two advantages they have," he said, "are that they're very bright, which is very popular nowadays; the other is the framing system, which we used onstage during David Bowie's set – it works very well."

Operators' credits

Pat Marks: Converntionals and Robocolors; Andy Watson: Var*Lites; Mark Risk: Jackson's Vari*Lites; Bill Peachment: scans; John Barnes: PAL1200s; Mark Cunniffe: Icons. "Paul Weber called the show and Sooty sat there!"

1996 BRIT AWARDS: MAIN CREDITS

Executive producer: *Lisa Anderson (BPI)*
TV production: *Initial Film & TV*
Executive producer: *Malcolm Gerrie*
TV producer: *Andy Ward*
TV director: *David Mallet*
Assistant director: *Ian Patrick*
TV production manager: *Annie Crofts*
Live production manager: *Mick Kluczynski (MJK)*
Designer: *Bill Laslett*
Stage manager: *Colin Rowell*
Assistant stage manager: *Rik Benbow*
PA & Stage sound: *Dimension Audio*
FOH engineers: *Derrick Zieba, Jeff Eaton*
Monitor engineers: *Chris Trimby*
Earl's Court events manager: *Steve Bagnall*
Broadcast sound producer: *Toby Alington*
Broadcast sound facilities: *Manor Mobiles*
Lighting: *Entec Lighting*
Lighting director: *Mike Sutcliffe*
Assistant lighting director: *Paul Weber*
Vari*Lite operator: *Andy Watson*
Icon operator: *Mark Cunniffe*
Video co-ordination: *Chris Saunders/Black Pig Productions*
Video equipment: *Creative Technology, PSL*
Jumbotrons: *Screenco*
Rigging: *Unusual Rigging*
Staging & set construction: *Tim Norman/Ollie Watts (ESS)*
Additional drawings: *Peter Griffiths*
Stage crew: *Hercules*
Changing rooms, make-up & wardrobe structures: *De Boer Structures*
Backstage furnishings: *GLD*
Security: *Showsec*
Drapes: *Blackout*
Set dressing: *Blackfriars*
Backstage Catering: *Eat Your Hearts Out*
PR: *Laister Dickson (Press), Brilliant! PR (TV & Radio)*
Graphic design: *John Marshall*
Main sponsor: *Britannia Music*



going live

Soundcraft's first theatre sound training course

The rôle of the theatre sound engineer/designer/operator embraces an arcane art that traditionally is less well-acknowledged (and even more under-funded) than their touring counterparts. The budgetary divide between provincial theatres and the big-city houses is sharp, too, yet the powerful lure of the theatre remains, even though formal training is scarce – and who can afford to give up a day job or take up residential courses?

Following the sucess of its six-year-old *Going Live* series of sound reinforcement training courses, Soundcraft decided to dedicate a two-day course to theatre sound, in the characterful environs of London's Players Theatre in February.

Going Live tries to provide a quick insight into working techniques; its special attraction is an informal blend of practical instruction and anecdotal wisdom – useful if you're a professional theatre sound technician with a zero budget and equipment well past its use-by date.

The most successful feature of previous courses continued – the use of highly-respected guest lecturers and tutors, drawn from the front ranks of theatre sound production. The £125 course centred on practical aspects of theatre sound, with emphasis on equipment operation and hands-on sessions with live musicians and actors.

Sessions centred on both operational and technical matters, covering such diverse topics as the console and console automation; loudspeaker types and placement; power and safety; outboard; microphones and mic placement techniques; using radio mics; effects sources and processing and miking actors and musicians.

The second day was rounded-off by a half-hour talk from Dimension Audio's Derrick Zieba, fresh from his Brits brain-burner. He used examples from his disparate career to illustrate that it's not just about the gear you've got, but the importance of using experience and imagination to get a better result whatever the task and whatever the situation.

Although Soundcraft faced its familiar problem of teaching people many different levels of experience, a common theme among people I spoke to afterwards was relief at finding other theatre sound technicians faced similar problems and difficulties to their own.

The organisers also recognise that packing such a humungous amount of information into two days leads to sensory and memory overload for even the keenest humans. So everyone now receives a comprehensive set of well-written Course Notes – an invaluable summary of the key tutorial points – to browse over afterwards.

Soundcraft takes an unambiguous stance about its sponsorship of *Going Live* – without their input, the venue hire costs and logistics of providing desks, a PA, a band and all the rest would make course fees enormous. But while all the desks on hand are Soundcraft's, including, here, the new K3 Theatre, there's virtually no sales talk. ■ **live!**

Tel: Soundcraft (0)1707 665000

Mike Lethby

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3 YEAR WARRANTY

Prices from £350 +VAT

The Mynah Plus 8-2-1 Mixer

The Ideal Entry Level Mixer

The baby of the range, the 8-2-1 Plus nevertheless boasts the same technical specification as those models at the very top of the range. Features include balanced mic and line inputs, insert points, three band EQ, solo, balanced outputs, phantom power, stereo aux returns and other features too numerous to mention. Rock solid build quality backed by a 3 year guarantee make the Mynah Plus 8-2-1 an unbeatable mixer.

Also available: **Mynah Plus 12-2-1, same spec as the 8-2-1 but with 12 mic and line channels, and still 19" rack mountable.**

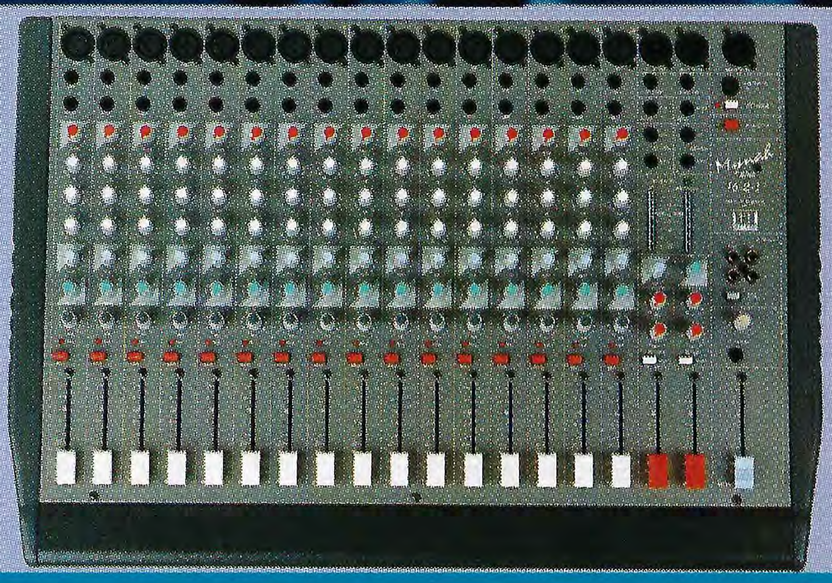
The Mynah Plus Si 12-2-1 Mixer

Perfect for applications with a wide range of input sources, the Si 12-2-1 has facility for: 8 mic inputs, 12 line inputs and almost unique to a mixer of this type switchable RIAA equalization to allow the use of turntables with magnetic cartridges.

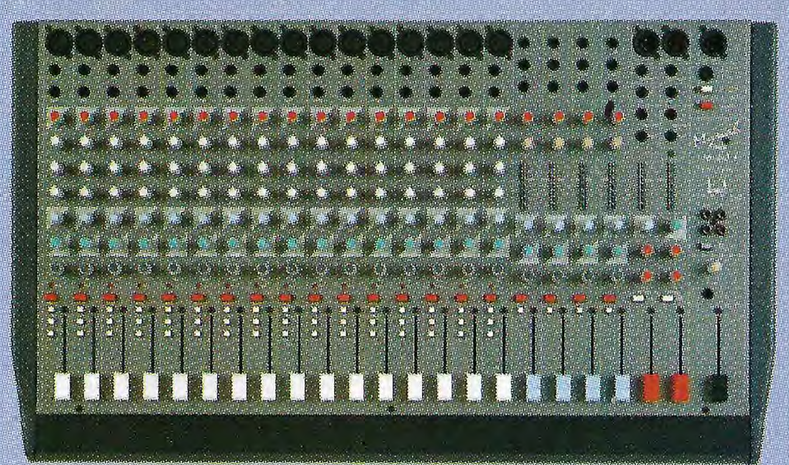
The Mynah Plus 16 Channel Mixer

Mynah Plus 16-2-1

Boasting all of the same facilities and audio quality as the 8-2-1 and 12-2-1 but in an attractive free-standing format. Ideal for recording, sound installation and the gigging musician.



The Mynah Plus 16-4-3



In addition to all the input features of the 16-2-1, the 16-4-3 has four full function sub groups. These sub groups can be used for single fader control of multiple inputs, four or eight track recording and zoned outputs to name but a few applications. An extremely versatile mixer!

NEW The Mynah Plus 16-4-3 + HUSH

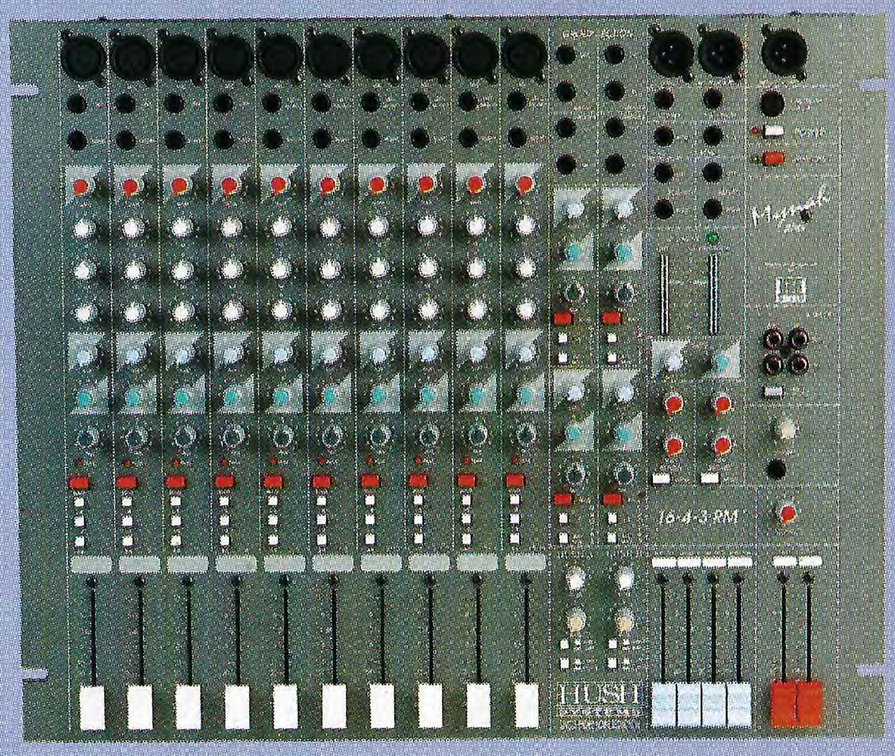
A World First

The Mynah Plus 16-4-3+ Hush is the first budget priced mixer to incorporate the renowned **HUSH** noise reduction system. Built into the mixer are two independent **HUSH** circuits which can be used to clean up noisy input or output signals, and even gate channels when no signal is present.

Other features include:

- 10 mic inputs
- 16 line inputs
- 4 sub groups
- 19" rack mount
- Up to 24 inputs at mixdown
- Up to nine different output mixes

HUSH SYSTEMS



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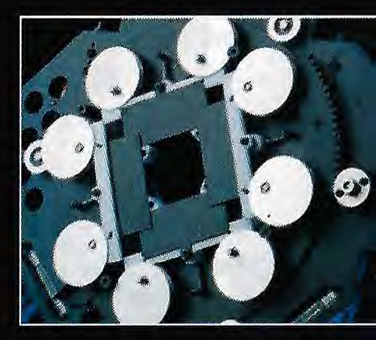
The PAL 1200

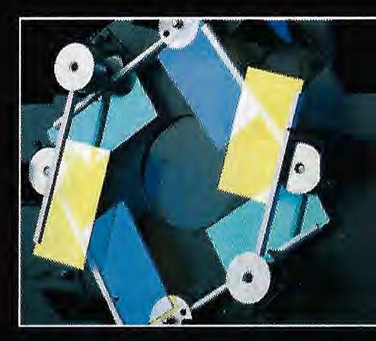
G l o b a l N e t w o r k

Lights with passports

The PAL 1200, Martin Professional's most sophisticated product yet, which adds a totally new dimension to remotely controlled attributes - precision remote framing* - now offers the most sophisticated, professional global rental package ever.

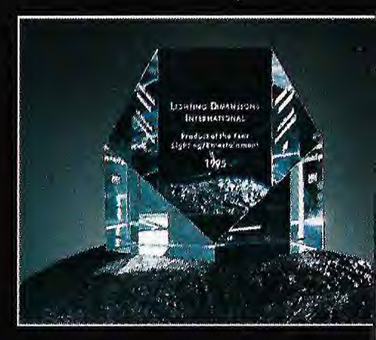


The PAL 1200 Global Network ties together the world's most professional rental houses, with Martin's global distribution network, and the formidable PAL 1200, in a package offering total support and availability wherever you are touring in the world. The glue which binds all this together is the financial muscle of the Martin Group, which has created along with its Global Rental Partners a wet support package which is irresistible:



In its total security to the lighting designer - Martin guarantee that across the globe there will be a pool of over 1000 PAL's on permanent stand-by, which means at least 50 PAL's to fall back on in every country in which you may be performing;

And in value-for-money - Martin approved rental houses will be able to offer deals which will blow the others away.



The PAL 1200 - voted 'best new lighting product' at LDI 95

** Patents pending*

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stage crews: a raw deal?

At the 1996 PSA Conference, the question of who should feed local stage crews was raised by Stage Miracles' Steve Jones. The fact that this apparently minor issue generated a short but heated debate shows how a subject can fester when it's not put up for common discussion. Many present felt stage crew catering should be absorbed into production costs from the word go. So what do those affected think? Louise Stickland conducted a straw poll to find out

So often the unsung heroes of the event production industry, take away the stage crew and much of the time the show simply wouldn't go on – at least, not within the ever-decreasing time schedules of the '90s. Regrettably, though, there are still elements within the industry who regard stage crews as the lowest common denominator and afford them little respect, while Britain limps slowly and painfully behind many of its European counterparts for payment levels. In some EEC countries, it's not unusual to find a stage crew earning more than the touring crew.

At January's PSA conference, the historical issue of local crews not (or at least not always) being fed was raised by **Steve Jones** from **Stage Miracles**. As the argument unfolded, it swiftly became clear that there's no consensus on who should take responsibility for what. **Andy Zweck** defended Allied's track record on the issue, to catcalls of dissent from the floor. Both he and Gary Glitter manager **Jef Hanlon** assured the conference that if the item was built into production costs from the outset of tour budgeting, there should be no problem. Their verdict: it's up to the production manager (or tour manager) to deal with it.

Stage Miracles' Les Clifford points out that while he doesn't expect stage hands to be fed breakfast for a five-hour callout when they can break at lunch-time, he strongly advocates feeding for those who stop on throughout the day and have no chance of a break until after the get-out.

This, in turn, raises the issue of who pays. Should it be the promoter, the production or the crewing company? Clifford maintains that this is something that should be addressed in the future and added into touring budgets at the outset.

Rik Benbow runs the **Hercules** crew which originated at the then-Town and Country Club in Kentish Town (now **The Forum**). Recently assistant stage manager on the **Brits**, he comments that although crews are fed on larger events, such as the latter, this is still the exception rather than the rule. He recalls occasions where the crew haven't been allowed so much as a cup of tea and were excluded from catering areas.

Steve Haines has been crewing for eight years between numerous tours as a backline tech. He doesn't feel that stage crew catering should be made into an issue, and says that touring caterers have a hard enough job feeding their own team. He has also seen caterers getting harassed to feed local crew: "Definitely not on," he comments. While acknowledging that 'stop on' crew often *are* provided with meals, Haines feels that if someone wants breakfast, then it's up to the individual to head for the nearest café half an hour before load in.

He feels there are more burning issues facing stage crews than who feeds them, citing wages and the quality and experience of personnel as primary factors. He finds the number of "unprofessional" people being hired for crews alarming, notes that wages have stagnated over the last five years, and observes that one has to work a very long day (get in, stop-on, followspot operation and get out) to make it financially worthwhile at all.

Slouch has worked as a local stage hand since 1979, mainly for **John Curd's** crew, and is also an experienced touring crew member who now runs his own production company, **Millsea Production Services**. He, too, feels that being fed on site isn't the most important issue facing local crew, but thinks stop-ons should be catered for as a matter of course. Slouch adds that attitudes to stage crew have shifted considerably since the early days when one was expected "Not to think, just to hump" – and not to offer an opinion even when you knew a better way of doing something. Touring crews nowadays are far more likely nowadays to see local crew as professional and seek their advice.

Rik Benbow and Les Clifford, too, both make the point that the local crew are often imbibed with far greater knowledge of a particular venue than touring crew.

Graham Shaw started crewing for Stage Miracles (before they were thus christened) eighteen years ago, and now has his own company, **Showstars**. He believes that stage crew still lack esteem, although Showstars do a lot of work for **Harvey Goldsmith** and, he says, are generally well looked-after. "Familiarity helps; building up a relationship with a promoter and with touring personnel." On the subject of feeding crews, he cites the example of extra riggers being hired in for the day on a one-off basis at a venue like Wembley Stadium, who would automatically be fed, whereas stage hands working on the same basis invariably would not. And while feeling that working conditions have improved dramatically since he first started, he concedes that stage crew wages have not improved at all of late.

Steve Haines adds that at working level, there could be more mutual regard shown for each other by both local and touring crews. He feels the potential for that relationship to develop is often jeopardised by nothing more than apathy.

The conclusions, then, seem to be that (a) all crews should be fed during all-day working; (b) the cost should be built-into tour budgets from the outset and (c) ultimately it's a cost which will have to be borne by the promoter – and thus the audience. ■ live!

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tommy comes home

Des McAnuff's recreation of Pete Townshend's *Tommy* has arrived in London after its spectacular international success. Louise Stickland and Mike Lethby saw an early preview of the Pinball Wizard's vibrant homecoming

Tommy, the album, the world's first so-called 'rock opera' became a huge hit for The Who back in 1969, who last performed it live at the New York Grand Metropolitan Opera House (the venue's first ever "pop" show) a year later.

In 1975, film director Ken Russell turned Pete Townshend's funny-weird-melancholic piece into a lurid psychodrama and between then and the late '80s a sprinkling of *Tommys* culminated in 1993's opening of Des McAnuff's Broadway production at the St James Theatre in New York. A revitalised revision of the original with new ideas and a high-technology production, it remains one of the most artistically and commercially successful shows to open there in years.

It was McAnuff, artistic director of the renowned La Jolla Playhouse in California, who approached Townshend with the idea of recreating Tommy for the stage.

And when the show opened on Broadway, the *New York Times'* theatre critic Frank Rich (the man who can allegedly make or break a show with one touch of his word processor) opined: "Tommy is at long last the authentic rock musical that has eluded Broadway for two generations – an entertainment juggernaut that lifts the audience right out of its seats." A reported $6 million was spent on bringing *Tommy* back to life – and it shows, in the sheer quality and subtlety of the ideas and their execution. An array of automated and conventional lighting, multi-projector visual effects, imaginative staging and props convey the atmosphere and storyline. Finally, to create the accompanying sonic drama, the producers brought in sound designer Steve Canyon Kennedy, a Broadway veteran whose credits include *Evita*, *Cats* and *Phantom of the Opera*.

The visual acceleration of *Tommy* is *scary*. In its dizzy two-and-a-half hours, encapsulating a 25-year time warp from 1941, the audience is transported to such disparate locations as POW camps, courtrooms, suburban interiors, amusement arcades, clinics, doctors' surgeries and rock gigs. Apart from that, there's exposure to the social frustrations and expectations of post-war reconstruction and optimism.

Most importantly of all, one is drawn into 'Tommy's world', a bizarre, trauma-ridden labyrinth of thoughts, ideas and experiences from which the normal world is completely alienated. Tommy goes into deaf, dumb and blind shock after seeing his real father, missing-presumed-dead in World War II, return at the end of the war and shoot his mother's lover.

The child is systematically hauled between various medical specialists, faith-healers and religious nutters by his guilt-obsessed parents on a mission to return him to 'normal', come hell or high water. In the meantime, he is sexually abused by his uncle, beaten up and tortured by his cousin, and ridiculed by a society that marginalises those who are different. The four walls of Tommy's distorted dream-like world are his only solace. Eventually he responds to a pinball machine – and so the helpless, unwanted, deaf, dumb and blind kid begins his ascendancy to empowerment, triumph and adoration as the Pinball Wizard...only to discover that the vestiges of stardom present their own set of stifling constrictions.

This fast-moving story might touch on the implausible, but it's still a highly symbolic psychological minefield.

Apart from the music sounding somewhat dated, the absence of social workers in the plot is the real clue that it is a '60s rather than a '90s construction. However, the stage production of *Tommy* is very much a product of contemporary technology and methods.

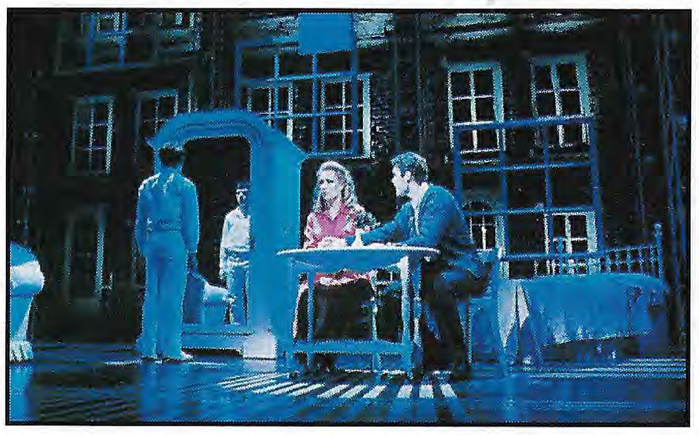
Frenetic

Scenery and lighting are crucial in propelling the action through its furious pace. Hardly a minute passes without a set piece rolling on or off stage or flying in or out, all of which are achieved with an authentic aesthetic fluidity.

Associate designer David Gallo emphasises that backstage activity is extremely frenetic throughout the show, but that even in the small confines of the Shaftesbury, they now have the well-oiled mechanics needed to make *Tommy* work on a practical level down to a fine art. (He jokes that this operation was so slick and polished during the Broadway run that he'd contemplated installing a perspex loading bay door and selling tickets to watch the backstage spectacle.)

Deck-based scenery is moved via six tracks in the stage. Many of the set pieces also contain lights, and several of them spin – spinning being a recurring image throughout the show. Most of the floor and flying scenery is moved by an Edge and Bratton computer-controlled system that, according to Gallo, is "fast, accurate, flexible and easy to programme."

There are certain parts of the show where the visual bombardment is so complicated and overwhelming that only computer control could ensure the accuracy of the scripted scenery moves. He cites the 'Heathfield Scramble' scene as one of those moments – when Tommy 'loses it'



and his whole world tilts into a confused mesh of sensory distortion.

But Gallo (like others on the core design, lighting and audio team who have re-created the show around the world) is cautious about letting technology take too much of the credit for staging *Tommy*. While he is the first to acknowledge that realising the show's imaginative complexity needs high technology, he views it very much as a tool that shouldn't detract from the importance of the ideas.

This issue is also taken up by Associate Lighting Designer David Grill, who stresses: "People tend to walk into this show, see all the computers, gizmos and gadgets and just talk about that aspect. We *have* achieved a better production here through the use of technology, but it is the show that drives the technology, completely and at all times."

Psycho semantics

Colour psychology plays an important role in the chromatic narrative. And the show's very nature – essentially a rock 'n' roll production in a theatre environment – sweeps away some of the more conventional benchmarks for lighting.

When Tommy is at his most traumatised, reds and yellows abound. The clinical world of one specialist is embodied in dark blue and steel blue; the life and vitality of an amusement arcade inhabited by Teddy Boys and their gals vibrate in bold, brassy primaries; while the Acid Queen's mysterious and foreboding weirdness is personified in purple and lavender.

The show is operated from an ETC Obsession, which spits out MIDI information via Richard Bleasdale's SAM (Serial and MIDI) software that triggers the Artisan console.

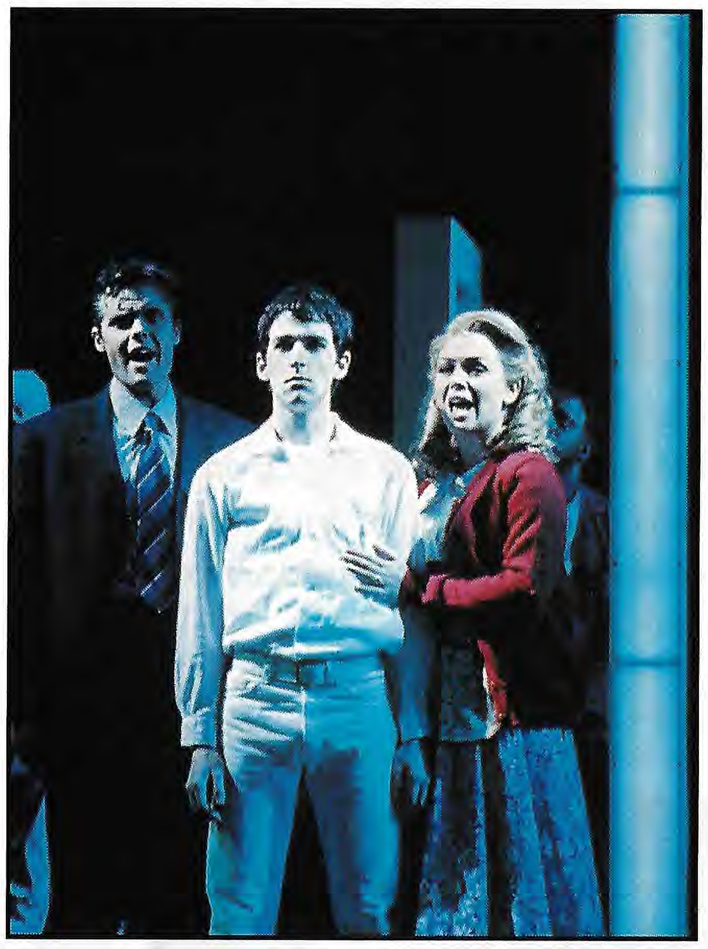
The lighting instruments most fundamental to the show are Source Four's, Source Four PARs, ARRI 2Ks and 17 Vari*Lite VL2Cs. Grill enthuses that the Vari*Lites can do the work of 300-odd specials – and pays tribute to the efficiency of the new Source Four unit, which has enabled the lighting department to trim the 400-odd focusing units used on the Broadway production down to the 200 specified in London.

Projection is also pivotal to the show's visual impact, providing a key element in giving the audience a sense of place, as well as clues about what is going on inside Tommy's turbulent mind. The projections were created by Wendall Harrington, who says she found the experience of trying to get inside the head of "someone who is disturbed rather interesting." Many of the images were created on computer, with Harrington exploring how much of an element of terror she could produce "without frightening people too much!"

Creative Technology's equipment inventory on the show includes 54 Kodak Ektapro 300 watt slide projectors, back-projecting on to the 18 screens which form the stage backdrop and 50 Barco video monitors either side of stage and on one of the cross stage trusses. These are fed at various points from five black and white video cameras on-stage and three laser disk players.

Front of house, two more Ektapros beam images onto one of the flying windows; plus there are three hybrid Pani projectors with ETC image scrollers, the latter controlled via a PIGI system. A Dataton Trax system runs the slides and triggers the PIGI computer, as well as the computer controlling the video projection. Thus operator Paul Vershbow can operate all three media with one hit of the spacebar.

Talking to David Gallo, David Grill and Associate Sound Designer Jon Weston confirms how deeply *Tommy* has become an important part of their lives over the last three years. Although all three are also engaged on other projects, *Tommy* retains a special place in their affections. They talk about the positive, collaborative nature of the show and the ease and fluidity of inter-departmental dialogue that makes each successive staging easier than the last, the support they have enjoyed from Pete Townshend – and the energy, power and endurance of the show. ■ **live!**



The sound of Tommy

The audio system was designed for London by John Weston and supplied by Autograph Sales. Sound operator David Ogilvy says the audio production follows the company's previous experiences in New York and Germany. "We brought in the Cadac disk from Germany and could almost have run the show from that, although in fact we've made a lot of changes since."

The sound has to strike a balance between the dynamics necessary to convey the power of Townshend's music and vocal clarity - not to mention the sensibilities of the Shaftesbury's neighbours.

One of the Cadac J-Type's frame is fitted with 30 automated faders for vocal mics and all sound effects - off a Mini Disk player via a Yamaha DMP-9 - are controlled by the Cadac's PRMs, allowing the operator to insert time cross-fades and route them to anywhere on the system. 26 Sennheiser SK50 radios, with MK 102 mics, are used in every show, while the band comprises drums, three keyboards, bass, french horns and two guitarists.

The PA uses Meyer UPA-1s (pros arch); EAW JF-80 under-balconies and front fills; Meyer sub bass; Renkus-Heinz foldback speakers on stage and Meyer UPMs for surround sound. Most amplification is Crest 7001s, with Macrotechs for the surround system. The acoustically dry room is tackled with an armoury of processing, says Ogilvy: "In the racks are lots of Varicurves, lots of Valvotronics Gain Ryder compressors, a Lexicon 300, some SPX990s, Klark Teknik equalisers and BSS TCS804 delay units."

CREDITS

Music & Lyrics: *Pete Townshend*
Director: *Des McAnuff* **Designer:** *John Arnone*
Costumes: *David Woolard*
Lighting Designer: *Chris Parry*
Projections designed by: *Wendall Harrington*
Video Designers: *Batwin & Robin Productions Inc*
Sound Design: *Steve Canyon Kennedy*
Flying: *Foy* **Special Effects:** *Gregory Meeh*
Orchestrations: *Steve Margoshes*
Musical Director: *Colin Welford*
Technical Supervision: *Ted Irwin, Gene O'Donovan* **Associate Designer:** *David Gallo*
Associate Lighting Designer: *David Grill*
Associate Sound Designer: *Jon Weston*
Projection Programmer: *Paul Vershbow*
Vari*Lite Programmer: *Victor Fable*
Assistant LD: *Martin Chisnell*
Vari*Lite Technician: *Mark Ninnim*
Production Electrician: *Simon Needle*
Automation operator: *Paul Flint*
Sound Operators: *David Ogilvy, Jem Kitchen, Matt Dando*
Lights supplied by: *White Light/Vari*Lite*
Sound equipment supplied by: *Autograph*
Projection equipment supplied by: *Creative Technlogy* **Pyrotechnics:** *Pyro Vision Ltd*
Scenery built by: *Edge & Bratton, Scenery & Display Ltd* **Rigging:** *Vertigo Rigging*

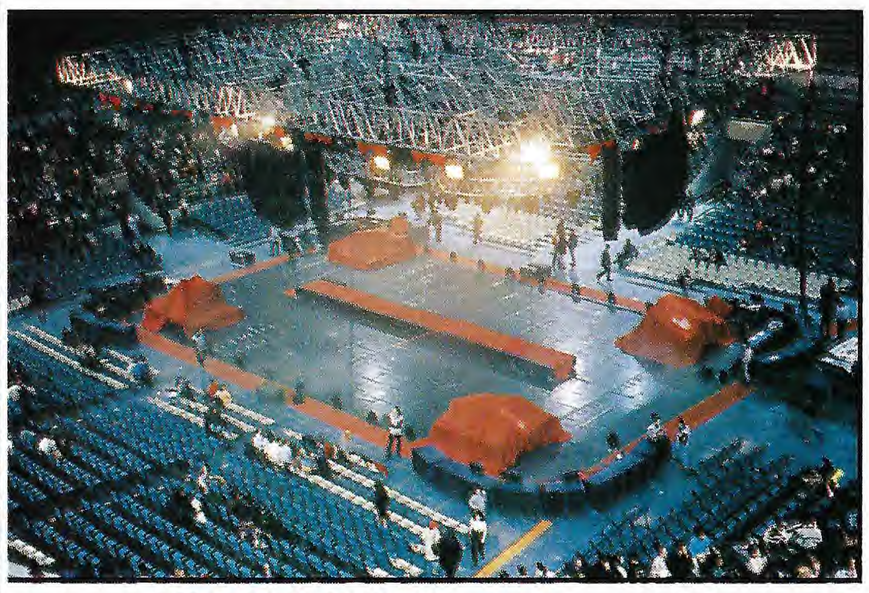
Claudio Baglioni: unusual gigging

Italian singer/songwriter Claudio Baglioni is no newcomer to unusual shows, which in the course of his 25-year-old career have included a floating stage in Venice, a solo concert at Verona's Arena, a show with the LSO and another with a military band at Rome Opera, but with his '96 Inono sono qui tour, a 3-month trek round indoor sports venues, he's hit the headlines again

Claudio Baglioni

With a seated-only crowd and no stage or crowd control barriers, Baglioni and 16 dancers, mime artists and acrobats perform "in the round" in a 45x85ft area in the centre of the venues, Claudio singing on a 45ft-long conveyer belt and his 8 musicians in pairs on mini-stages on wheels moved about during the show.

Promoter Roberto De Luca said: "This is the largest tour by an Italian artist we've done since starting 10 years ago: Claudio wanted to have closer contact with his audience and although the decision to fly almost all the hardware obviously affected the choice of venues, nearly every date sold out in advance, including four nights in Rome and three in Milan, both 10-12,000-seaters."



The set under wraps

Theatrical Director and Lighting Designer Pepi Morgia is one of Italy's key figures in this field with a 25-year career not only in rock, but as LD, DP, director, producer and set designer in endless film, theatre and TV projects. "The idea was to use the hardware in a moderate, theatrical manner with lots of white, pastels and hardly any gobos. I even eliminated the Supertroupers' colourchangers to avoid excess colour."

Lighting director Eneas MacKintosh, controlling conventional lighting and VL5s, and calling the Supertroupers, said: "Claudio is the first Italian artiste to use the Vari*Lite 300 series system (32 VL5s and 24 VL6s) in Italy – the other Compulite Animator desks are manned by Emiliano Morgia for the VL6s and 24 Cyberlights." Although the Vari*Lites used on the tour were rented direct from Vari-Lite Europe in London, Rome firm Limelite, who supplied the rest of the lighting, announced during the tour their appointment as exclusive Vari*lite distributors for Italy.

Choreographer Gianni Santucci's dancers' scenes include one in which Claudio 'drowns' under a huge sea drape pulled by the dancers: he then miraculously reappears under a 'sky' filled with stars picked out by UV filters. Dancers' props include MagLites and mini-lasers, bounced off two mirror balls and costumes including cars, complete with headlamps, radiators, brake lights and number-plates. In another scene, carpets were carried on stage and unrolled to reveal a girl inside, each with a brightly coloured tulle dress the same colour as the carpet. Mirror-covered panels were brought on in triangular 'slices' and assembled to form an 18ft diameter platform at the middle of the belt, on which a bolero danced. As well as this mirror platform, 24 floor-mounted VL6s were also bounced off the mirror-covered underside of the dimmer cabin up in the rig, their beams accentuated by JEM FX6500 fog machines. Sartoretto Staging supplied the two Leyher trussing 'roofs' for the rigs, lifted by a total of 16 two-tonne hoists in two systems and rigged by Unusual Rigging.

Nuovo Service owner/designer Willie Gubellini explained their Turbosound Flashlight had to cope with the poor acoustics of this kind of venue. "The sub-woofer boxes, normally stacked at least three-up, had to be laid end-to-end, so I opted for settling 12 on each corner of the set. We use a 50k main system in 4 clusters, one on each side of the rectangular rig and a 16k system behind the top row of seats for special "surround effects" (cars, sea and planes) courtesy of FOH engineer Maurizio Maggi."

'Ciccio' Delazzari, production manager along with Massimo Ferrante said, "Apart from the odd security problem when Claudio walked round the edge of the set (even tempting providence by singing and playing on top of the sub-woofers), a complicated and unusual show is running very smoothly."

Mike Clark

The show

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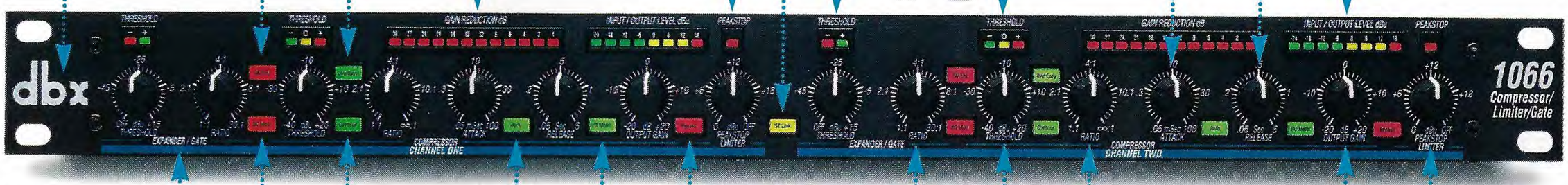

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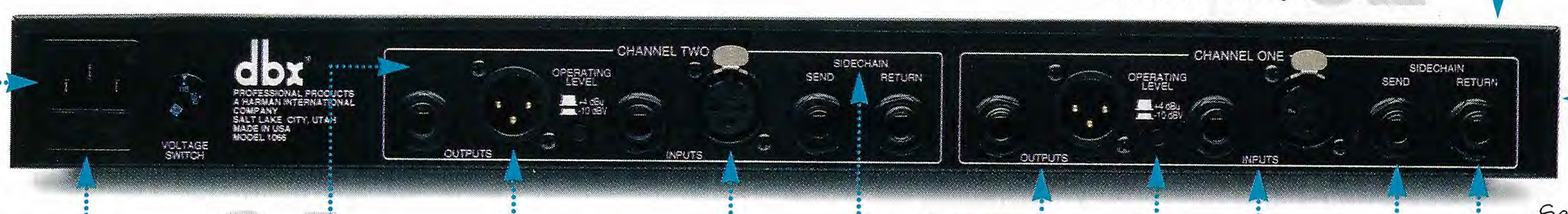

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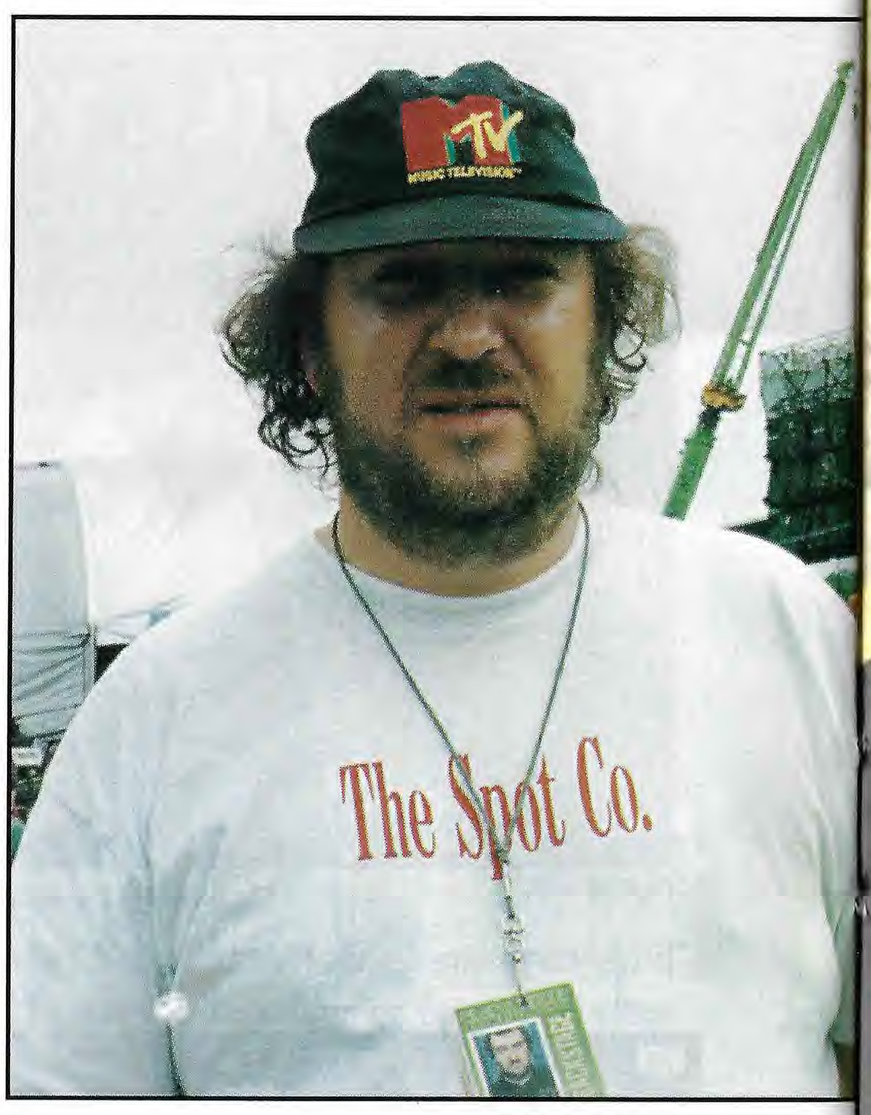
playing it safe



Risk assessment is the phrase of the moment. For last year's Wet Wet Wet dates tour manager Dougie Souness compiled the definitive risk assessment document to secure local authorities' agreement to the staging proposals. **Chris Hannam**, who has extensive experience of outdoor events and festivals, talked to Fiona Harley about the education process

Chris Hannam's slow Somerset tones and casual dress code conceal a passion, even zeal, for ensuring crew, artist and audience safety. "The reason why our business has a good safety record is because there *are* no records," he says. But times are changing.

At a recent Production Services Association conference, health and safety issues were raised and, as Hannam says: "A lot of people just don't know what their responsibilities are." The Management of Health and Safety Regulations 1992 builds directly onto the current Health and Safety at Work Act (HASAWA), which has been in place since 1974.

The main provisions of HASAWA set out the degree of responsibility employers have for ensuring the safety of workers and of the general public, with regard to buildings, work activities, the use of dangerous substances and so on, and for taking the relevant safety precautions, "so far as is reasonably practicable."

So far as is reasonably practicable are words which echo through all the main provisions, and this is, broadly, what was clarified in the Management of Health and Safety Regulations 1992. It is these regulations which Hannam feels are not sufficiently understood or followed-through in every sector of the production industry.

The two main focuses are: (1) Proving your employees are suitably qualified and trained. (2) That everyone who is an employer (or self-employed) and is responsible for others' safety – whether a production manager or a supply company – *must* undertake a risk assessment. If you employ, or are responsible for, more than five people, you have to keep records, notes – written evidence of your processes – otherwise, should things go wrong, you are likely to have two immediate problems: you could be liable for prosecution (there is no maximum fine or prison term) and you're likely to find your insurers won't cover you.

A summary of the regulations highlights the main points. Regulation 3 says: Employers and the self-employed are required to assess the risks to the health and safety of workers and others who may be affected by their undertaking. If an employer employs more than five people, the arrangements must be recorded. The assessment must be reviewed. Regulation 6 states: Employers must appoint competent person(s) to assist them with the management of health and safety. Regulation 8: Employers must provide relevant and comprehensible information to their employees on the risks, the preventative measures and the procedures. Ignorance of other people's practise is no excuse either; Regulation 9 says: employees and self-employed people working together must co-operate on health and safety and co-ordinate their activities and share information. Regulation 14 says employers must provide training to new recruits or to employees exposed to new risks and to employees who are transferred to or introduced to new equipment and systems and must take account of workers' capabilities.

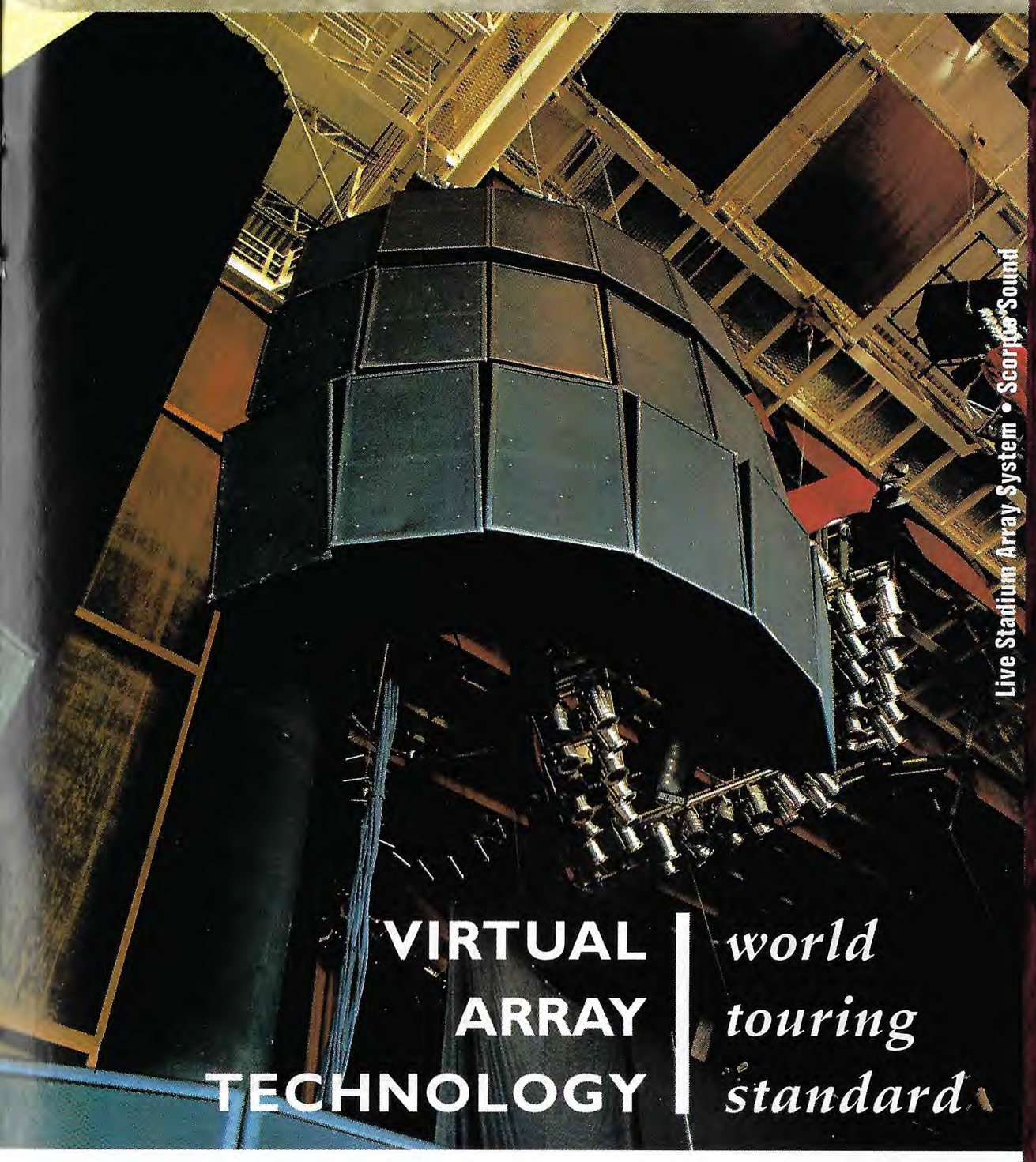
Risk assessment is one of four stages in creating safe working systems and adequate health and safety standards. Hazard assessment is identifying that which has potential to cause harm. Risk assessment involves assessing and classifying the risks arising from the hazard. Risk *control* means deciding on suitable measures to eliminate or control the risk. Implementing and maintaining control measures are concerned with putting controls and standards into place, and also on-going monitoring to ensure their effectiveness. Risk *assessment* records must show that you have looked at the likelihood that harm will occur and its severity – i.e. the worst possible outcome. The guidelines say that ideally, one should set out to eliminate risk entirely; however, this is not always possible, so there are times when it needs to be decided which risks are acceptable and which are totally *un*acceptable.

Risk assessments tend to fall into two main types: Quantitative – which can produce an objective 'probability estimate', based on known risk information, and Qualitative – which are subjective and based on personal judgements, backed by generalised risk data. Risk assessment must also take account of the number of people that may be exposed to a particular risk. The level of risk can be defined by the hazard severity *x* the likelihood of occurrence *x* the number of people exposed. Four classes of risk are outlined: acceptable, minor, medium and high.

As Hannam points out: "There's nothing in the regulations to say you must wear a hard hat, for instance, but you have to do a risk assessment ➤➤ *p32*

"I have a responsibility to every single person in that audience, to deliver the best sound they can possibly get."

Monty Lee Wilkes, FOH Engineer for Live
Talks about the mix, the music and the right equipment.



Monty has been focused on engineering and mixing since the day his father brought him along to an all-night recording session, let him sleep in and miss an algebra test the next day, and a week later dragged him into the high school principal's office *to tell the principal off* for refusing to credit Monty for a make-up test. His mastery of both the basics and the fine points of the craft has earned him the FOH spot with Live – and universal applause for the sound of the band's sold-out summer '95 tour.

LEARNING THE CRAFT. I think the school of hard knocks is the best school you can go to. That's where you get real world experience. Hooking up with bands when they're young is good. Working for a sound company is a really good way to grow both technically and emotionally. Being a system tech teaches you how to troubleshoot, how to fix things fast when the pressure's on. Those sink or swim situations go a long way to seasoning you, teaching you how to keep your head when all those around you are losing theirs.

CHOOSING A LOUDSPEAKER SYSTEM. I look for well-defined midrange. Tight low end with a lot of impact – I like low end a lot. Consistency and coverage: how it sounds going from a gymnasium to a theater. How it roads, how it loads, how it stacks, how it flies. The Stadium Array System's midrange sounds so good, I'd wind up taking out far less frequencies on my room EQ than I would with other rigs. What this leads to is better definition everywhere – more intelligible vocals, guitar solos that tend to stand out quite nicely without tearing your face off. It doesn't have to be just screaming over the top loud to have impact and definition.

DELIVERING. The object is not just to have a pile of speakers roaring away. The object is to make sure that sound gets to every seat, because the ticket buyers pay all of our salaries. When Live first hired me, we went into rooms as small as 600 seats. By the end we were playing rooms as large as 30,000 seats. I go to every section, I listen in just about every seat. I have a responsibility to every single person in that audience, to deliver the best sound they can possibly get. With the KF853's, we found ourselves getting crystal clear vocals all the way up to the last row in the last balcony. Outdoors, Hershey Stadium, for example, we nailed every single seat – all the way up to the far corners of the bleachers. It was excellent.

BACK TO BASICS. I'm very fortunate – I have pretty much 100% creative freedom with Live. We use a lot of effects. It's nice to have a lot of things in small quantities. I don't want the effects to be overbearing. They are there to embellish, to help you paint your picture, not to be the show. It's fun sometimes to get rid of all your effects. Right in the middle of production rehearsals, the band decided to do a show at the Chameleon, a little tiny club in Lancaster, Pennsylvania that they kind of cut their teeth in. I walked away from my 96 channels of all kinds of crap to a 16 channel board, one delay and one reverb, and said "Game on. Let's go, boys." It's nice to have all the toys in the world, particularly when there's a problem you need to fix. But that's not what makes or breaks a mix.

For a complete transcript of our talk with Monty Lee Wilkes, and for more information on Virtual Array® Technology and the Stadium Array Series, contact EAW today.

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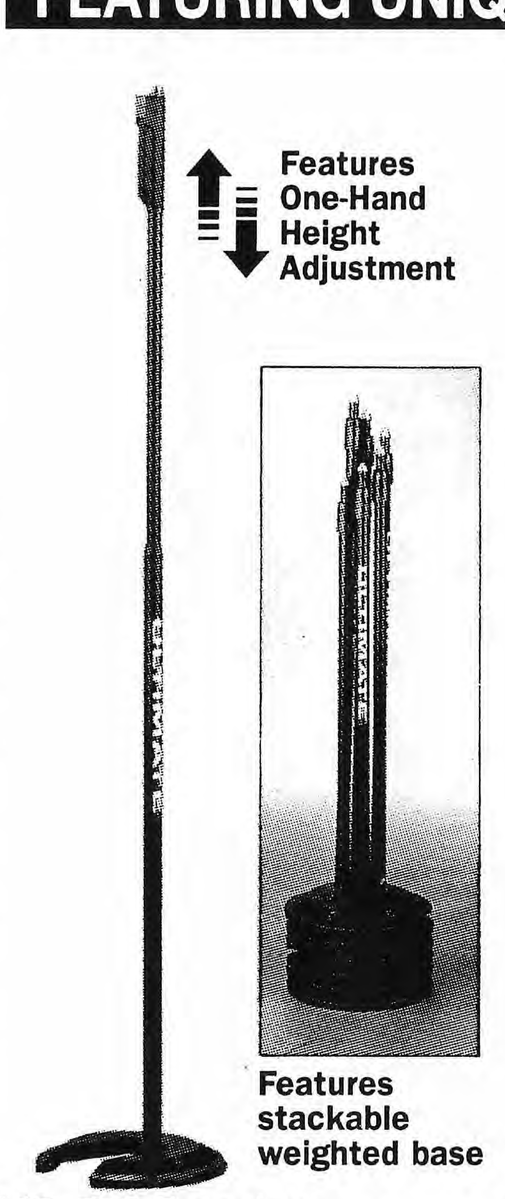


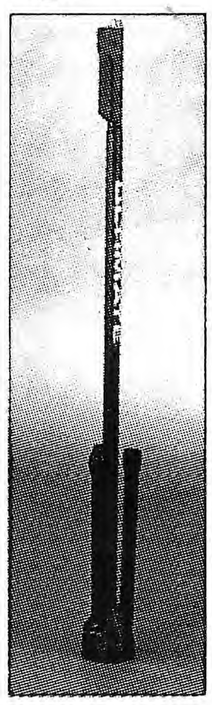
Features One-Hand Height Adjustment

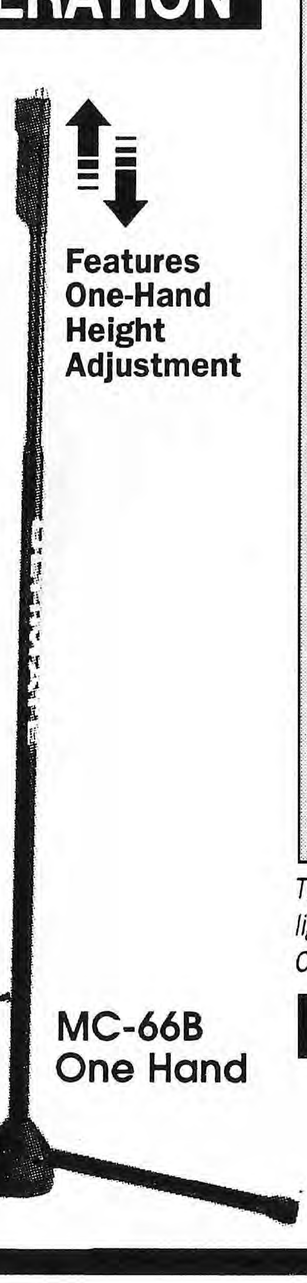
Features stackable weighted base

MC-77B Freedom

MC-07B Liberty

Compact foldaway legs





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p30 to show whether it would be safer." The next stage is risk control which should be done with reference to HSE Guidance and Codes of Practice, Industry Best Practice and Information, British and GEN. standards – and, of course, personal experience. This could include provision of suitable work equipment, training, qualifications and certification, supervision, structural calculations, protective clothing, warning signs and by creating protection zones.

Next comes actually ensuring the controls identified are put in place – with monitoring to ensure their continuance. Examples might be the up-to-date certification of all equipment and the keeping of accident books.

Then we come to the assessment of employee qualifications and suitability. Hannam says: "Employers have to ensure that their employees are competent to do their specific job. When you engage new staff you should check their references, look at their CVs, question their previous experience, have formal/informal interviews and check their physical fitness. If there is a qualification for a job – they should have it. You should be able to prove you've properly checked them out."

The National Vocational Qualifications system being brought in by the Government and slowly covering all sectors of industry and business, are also, obviously, relevant. It may soon be the case that to prove suitability, an employee will have to possess the relevant NVQ. Veterans in the industry who feel they know more about their job than any likely NVQ assessor, may well react with derision but there's no getting away from it. As Hannam says: "We're stuck with it. It's the government's way of making sure people are trained and competent. But it's equally important that the people doing the assessments understand our jobs – so that means people within the industry, hopefully."

He continues: "The PSA's role in this is crucial. The people who run NVQs will not deal with anyone who is not a representative body of the industry." Insurance companies, too, will only pay up if the client can prove all reasonable precautions were taken to prevent an accident. Hannam points out: "In the event of an accident, they will look for *any* unfulfilled provisions – no staff checks or no risk assessment, for example – that might invalidate the insurance." If you employ more than five people, and you cover them with your employers' liability insurance, and they work under supervision, they are an employee. Only if they pay their own insurance are they classed as self-employed. He stresses that it's important for freelancers to check their own insurance provisions. "How many freelancers bother to ask, 'Am I covered by your employers' liability insurance?' Even if they are, that policy may only cover certain types of task; for example, if you're climbing over 20 feet from the floor you need greater insurance cover." Hannam adds that it is simply not enough to rely on the Pop Code for protection. He recommends getting hold of all the most important guides – known as the 'six pack' – from the HSE, or contacting a company such as Symons Travers Morgan's Leisure Health and Safety department for further information.

"It's all about educating the industry. The HSE is always trying to create a heath and safety culture. The thing to remember is they *are* helpful. It's not just about enforcement; most of the HSE is about education and helping people. And the times when you contact them to ask for information or help are all recorded, so it makes sense to call them." Chris Hannam concludes: "It's all about keeping evidence, keeping records." As ever, it's better being safe. ■ **live!**

ETTB: expanding operations

Eat To The Beat won the *LIVE!* Award for catering in 1993 – the event's first year – and were thus highly delighted to be voted top catering company once again in 1996.

In addition to the highly-regarded touring facet of the company, there is a comprehensive film and TV division too, along with Chevalier Catering, which deals with corporate hospitality, event management and special parties. Run by Tony Laurenson, Eat To The Beat's operations have expanded considerably in the last few years and the company now employs ten full-time staff and up to 80 sub-contractors.

In late 1994, Fiona Esmarch joined the Watford-based team from Cat'n'Mouse. She told *LIVE!* magazine that 1995 was a frenetic year, and included the busy touring schedules of Blur, Wet Wet Wet and Take That. At one point last autumn, no less than 19 jobs featured on the wall-planner.

She also comments that requirements have become much more culinarily sophisticated – a trend, however, that isn't reflected in the prices they can charge. She adds that there is more competition than ever in the catering business.

Eat To The Beat's innovative, fully-qualified chefs cater for all types of diet from macrobiotic to the seriously carnivorous. A general observation from behind the serving counter is that there are, contemporarily, many more vegans on tour, and that crews have become increasingly health-conscious during the nineties. Thus low fat is cool, while the sleazy-greasy breakfast is on the decline. Cranberries are in, sausages are out; but some things, says Tony, never change as the Sunday roast remains an absolutely immovable item from the menu!

Live! Gold winners 1996

Current Eat To The Beat tours include Anthrax, Iron Maiden, The Saw Doctors, Deep Purple, Gene, Barry Mannilow, Runrig, Gary Numan and Vaya Con Dios. Tel: 01923 211702

■ *Louise Stickland*

HARDWARE FOR XENON: ON TOUR

The bulk of Hardware For Xenon's current work is in the conference and industrial market, although touring contracts are also bringing in plenty of variety for their projectors. Recent work includes the opening ceremony of the World Cup Cricket in Calcutta, and illuminating various sites around London for the Variety Club of Great Britain.

Jean-Luc Michaud told *LIVE!* that Hardware's full range of projectors, from 5Ks to the 600 watt units, are constantly in use on outdoor events and for lighting buildings. He observes that the recent explosion and bomb scares in London have made the latter application slightly more problematic at the moment.

Hardware For Xenon manufacture a full range of accessories for their machines, including auto slide changers, scrollers and double scrollers. The image scrollers are DMX-controllable and also run from a Dataton Trax system. The double scrollers allow masking, separation and different images to appear on different parts of the projection surface.

Michaud says that the 2K hardware projector, in particular, has become very popular for touring. The 2K combines the superior heat resistance of 155mm slides (the 1K projector takes 35mm) and the convenience of working from two 13 amp plugs (whereas the 5K needs 3-phase) – as well as accepting all the relevant accessories.

Tel: +44 (0)181 848 1387 ■ *Louise Stickland*

ETC DEMO LATEST 5K

ETC's new xenon 5K projector won the 'Best New Product' award at the 1996 Outdoor Event Exhibition. A double scroller system is available for this projector which allows two films to sit in the gate of the machine at the same time. This affords great versatility and enables it to be used as a standard slide projector, an effects generator or a light source.

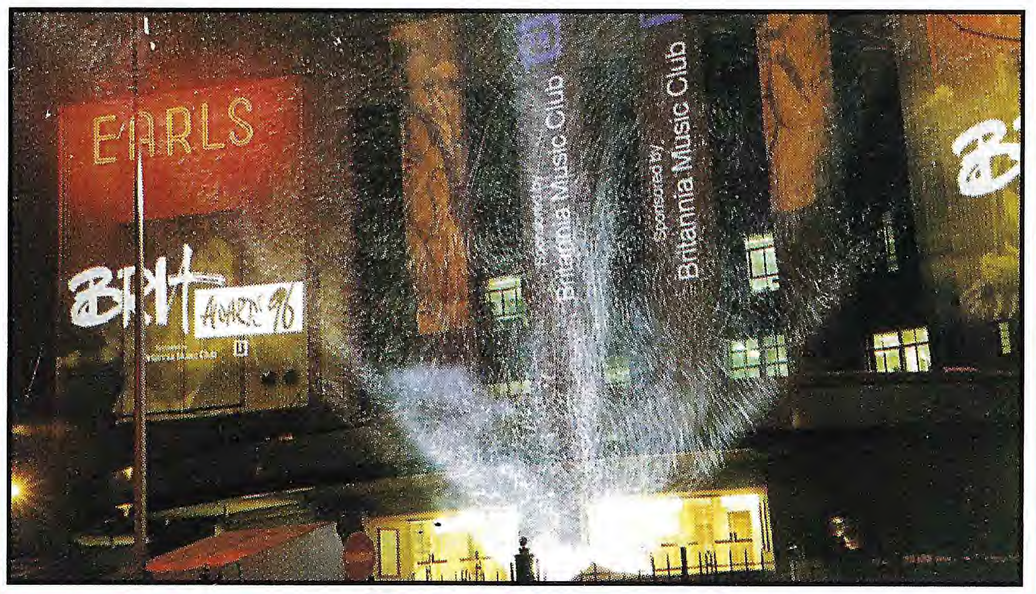
ETC's control system, PIGI allows up to 24 machines to be run from one PC. The control software makes picture framing and masking easy – so that different parts of a surface can have different projections running over them, similar to a theatrical effects machine.

The 1996 Brit Awards featured five of these machines, three fitted with scrolls and two with standard 5K slides.

ETC's Ross Ashton says that the UK market for large-scale projection is slowly opening. One of the reasons he cites for the comparatively sluggish growth rate in this area to date is that unlike, say, the French, the idea that the UK government should promote and fund large arts events is anathema.

ETC are planning a live demonstration in April at their Hounslow HQ. For details, call Ross Ashton or Esther Kooistra on 0181 893 8232.

■ *Louise Stickland*



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it's opera, jim, but not as we know it

La Bohème, Royal Albert Hall, February 1996

Any slightly controversial staging of the most popular opera on the planet (a fact) is bound to come under heavy fire from the strange life-form known as the opera critic, and the centenary production of Puccini's *La Bohème* was no exception.

Ambitiously staged 360º in the round by "people's promoter" Raymond Gubbay in association with the R.A.H. and directed by ENO regular Michael Hunt, the admirable concept was to enable as many as possible to witness a landmark in popular opera without having to sell the mother-in-law for the privilege. Full houses for nearly all of the ten performances emphatically proved that there is life beyond Covent Garden – despite what they may say in the papers – and that it is possible to make money from arena opera without charging the Earth.

Technical support came in the form of a Renkus-Heinz TSC system from RG Jones Sound Engineering, designed and operated by Simon Honywill, with orchestral balance being handled by Al Woods and radio mics by Steve Lutley. Andrew Bridge told TP which way to point the lights when they weren't doing it by themselves, and Unusual Rigging, under James Lee's able guidance, made a house disappear in 17 seconds. Production management came from Jonathan Bartlett at APM.

The sound crew party, which saw a 4' roadbox, groaning under the strain of alcohol, successfully smuggled into the venue and its contents despatched forthwith, was surely the highlight of a production which may well have set a new precedent.

Raymond Gubbay said: "It went extremely well; we sold over 40,000 seats and extended the run from five to ten shows. He confirmed the press were "very sniffy" about the attempt to (re-)popularise opera. "It seems that whatever we do we're on a hiding to nothing. We came to opera, for the first time, breaking down barriers, and we're continuing with the experiment in UK arenas in November and December and another RAH run next February." He adds: "We made it work and made money doing it; we're not so big-headed or foolish as to say we did everything right but some press have been, frankly, cruel." He was particularly stung by *Times* critic Rodney Mills and has issued a challenge for a debate about populism in opera: "We advertise in the *Times*; we know their readers come and enjoy it."

■ ***Simon Honywill and Fiona Harley***

Straight from the heart

by Robyn Pierce

A charity gig to raise money for the respiratory unit at Great Ormand Street Children's Hospital took place on February 28 at The Bottom Line, Shepherds Bush Green, London.

Organised by Pippa Stern and Geoffrey Williams, and co-ordinated by lighting technician Katie Flook, *One From The Heart* featured performances from Mica Paris, Andrew Roachford, Geoffrey Williams, Chyna, Noel McKoy and Ellaguru and was compered by special guest Lulu.

Pete Feenstra, marketing manager at The Bottom Line said of the event: "From the venue's point of view it was excellent. There was a good crowd and the gig provided a showcase for a lot of talent. It was well co-ordinated and we generated a lot of money for a good cause."

With support from Steve Warren and the team at Avolites, LD Paul Emery supplemented the venue's house rig of

Katie Flook, production co-ordinator

24 Par cans with Clay Paky Superscans, High End trackspots and Pulsar strobes. The house desk was replaced with a Saphire and the dimming upgraded with an Avolites 36-way DMX rack.

Steve commented: "We were very glad to help out, especially as it was a kids' charity. We would happily get involved in this sort of thing again."

A follow-spot and additional Par cans were provided by Neg Earth Lights, and a generous amount of dry ice was generated by Clare Tattersall, new chief electrician at The Lyric Theatre, Hammersmith, whose valiant efforts were a lesson in how to make the best use of the gear available, no matter how ancient it might be.

All artists used the in-house sound system which consists of a 6.5K UBL rig and monitor mixer, operated by The Bottom Line's resident sound engineer Steve Rispin. Commenting on the quality of the sound, production co-ordinator Katie Flook said: "We owe a big thank-you to Steve. He was fantastic, a great help and everyone was very pleased."

Over seven hundred and fifty people attended the event, raising a total of £7,000 – and Mica Paris very generously donated a new television to the hospital when she visited children there recently. ■ **live!**

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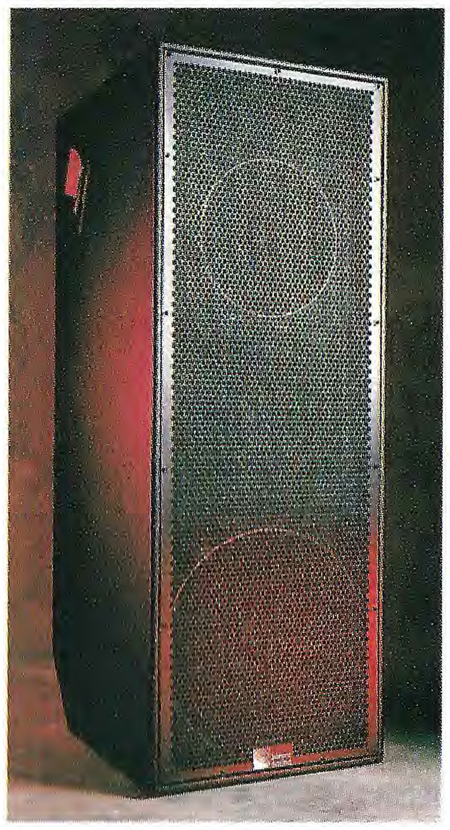
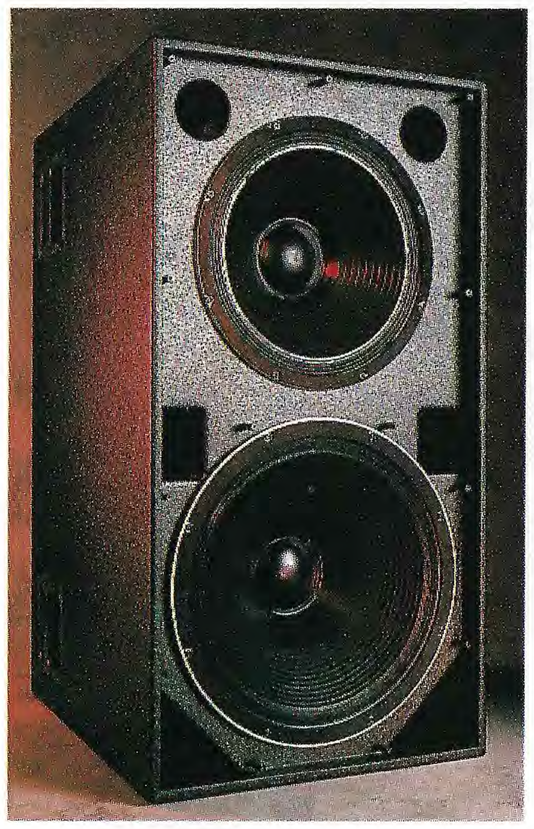
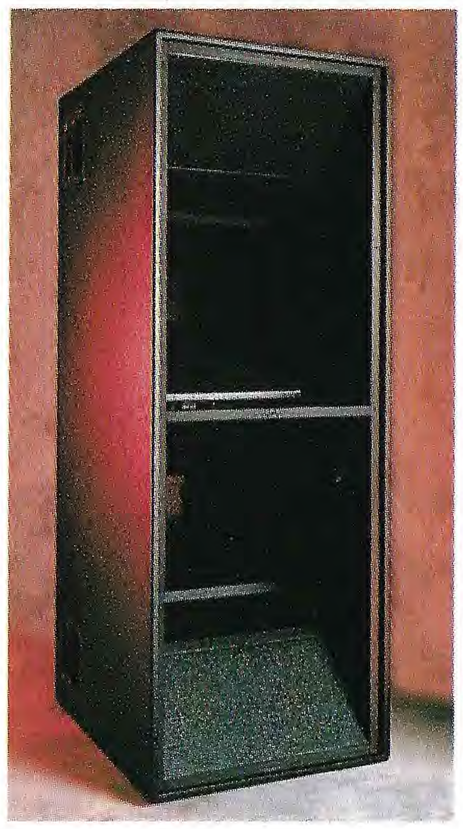

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Frankfurt Preview

frankfurt musikmesse 1996

Europe's largest and most all-encompassing expo follows hard on the heels of NAMM. But Frankfurt's cavernous halls will amass a fair share of the technology headlines

BSS Audio shows range

BSS's theme for Frankfurt is 'The Real Sound Starts Here', and the company will be showing its **AR-116** Active DI Box, **AR-416** quad active DI and **FCS-926** Varicurve equaliser, plus other SR products including the **FDS-388** Omnidrive Loudspeaker Management System; the **DPR Series** of dynamics processors (including the new **DPR-901 II** Dynamic Equaliser) and the **TCS Series** Time Correction Systems for delays. *Hall 6.1 Stand C49*

3G débuts automated SR Fireball desk

Mark Ray of UK audio console manufacturer 3G has finally unveiled details of the new automated modular live sound board it will launch at Frankfurt.

3G, whose compact mixer range enjoys considerable success in the low/mid price market, has been developing the **Fireball** for two years. If performance lives up to the promise, a major success may be on hand for a desk which from just £18,000 (24 and 40 input versions will be available) boasts on-board MIDI-based snapshot recall of up to 10 switches on each channel and – uniquely at the price – moving fader automation. *Hall 6.1 Stand D25*

SCV London and LA Audio

Various new products from LA Audio and SCV Electronics include the recently-launched **V8** 8-channel Tube Signal Compressor, the new **Classic Compressor II**, **Classic Channel** and the **4 Family** range of gates and compressors – plus an "undisclosed" product. The **EQ231S** heads SCV's new products: a 2U rack-mountable dual 1/3 octave EQ. *Hall 6.1 Stand D41*

Celestion: two new series

Two additions to Celestion's range will be on show. The **Road Series** of sturdy and robust PA cabinets is aimed at working musicians and small venues looking for an affordable, high-quality in-house system. The **KR Series** is a development of Celestion's SR Series, providing accurate sonic performance in an exceptional design package for the sound contractor or installer. Both take advantage of the potential offered by new cabinet-moulding processes. *Hall 5.1 Stand C80*

Celestion's new German champion

Celestion is announcing a new distributor for Germany for its professional systems and chassis speaker products. AST, based near Stuttgart, also offers its own brand of DSP and FX processors. *Hall 5.1 Stand C80*

ARX expands

Of particular interest to the performance industry are ARX's **PowerPro II** loudspeaker processor (which complements the **PowerMax** speaker range). The low-cost **4-channel 48V DC phantom power supply unit** – also new at the show – can be rack-mounted or used in stand-alone format. *Hall 5.1 Stand A13*

T C Electronic morphs

The **Wizard M2000** 20-bit I/O multi-effects unit will feature on T C Electronics' stand, bringing the award-winning **M5000** technology to a wider market – live sound, theatres and installations are likely customers.

The M2000 promises the comprehensive user interface (including 'Recall Wizard' effect-location) and runs two full effects simultaneously with 24-bit processing including the new **TC CORE** reverb algorithm. *Hall 5.1 Stand C07*

Janshen-Hahnraths 'delights' audiences

Janshen-Hahnraths Audio Division introduces its **Audience Delight AD-2402** and **AD-2404** amps. They offer high power, virtual "Class A" technology, 2 ohm reliability, networkability, 16-bit processor control, remote and intelligent fan control. *Hall 5.1 Stand A50*

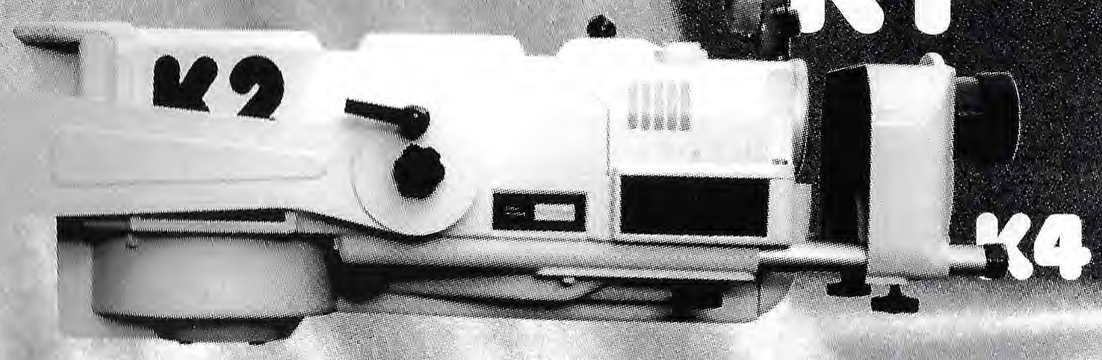
Tascam on the move

As well as recently-launched hard disk portable multitrackers, the artist on tour can now opt for Tascam's new **564 Digital Portastudio** as a songwriting companion. It records 4 tracks onto Sony MiniDisc, allowing instant random access. The **DA-38** is more affordable semi-pro version of the highly successful **DA-88** modular digital multitrack system, inreasingly used for 'on the road' live recordings. *Hall 6.1 Stand B60*

Renkus-Heinz launches TRC Series

Renkus-Heinz's new TRC Series is a complete line of full-range, two-way speakers designed for maximum flexibility in mobile use and fixed installations. The six models incorporate rotatable Complex Conic waveguides for pattern control and clarity and multi-angled cabinets for use in arrays, as ceiling speakers or floor monitors. *Hall 5 Stand C40*

CLASSIK



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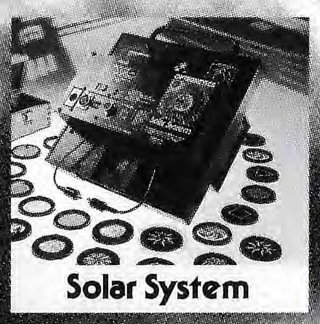

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INDEPENDENT - INTERNATIONAL - INTO MUSIC

Frankfurt preview – continued

Martin Audio reveal three

Martin Audio's Wavefront range grows by two products at Frankfurt. The W8C (Compact) cabinet is design for us with Wavefront 8 arrays as an underslung box to cover the nearest rows – or as an inverted cab on the top row to improve HF throw in large venues. Also new is the WSX folded horn subwoofer.

Third addition is the WM0.5 miniature stage monitor. The passive 2-way system has a 70x50 vertical dispersion pattern. *Hall 6.1 Stand A44*

Mark IV PAG

DDA will show its new **CS3** console, designed for live installations and theatre or concert applications in a number of frame sizes..

Klark Teknik launches two new 18-bit delay lines, each with two parametric EQs on each output: the **DN7103** and **DN7204** (1 in/3 out and 2 in/4 out respectively). The recently-launched **DN6000** audio analyser will also be on show.

Midas will show the **XL200** and **XL4** live performance consoles, and the XL42 pre-amp equaliser system which features XL4 EQ and pre-amplifiers and 48V. It can be used with any console via an insert point or input to add Midas EQ.

Electro-Voice concert sound speaker cabinets on view will include the **MT2**, **MT4** and **Deltamax**. They will also be showing the new **T-series** speakers, aimed at smaller venues. *Hall 6.1 Stand A10 & A20*

GLP's Patend Light

A new scanner from GLP, the **Patend Light**, will be on show, featuring roto-head technology, four variable-speed rotating gobos, two fixed gobos and an edgeless colour wheel with nine dichroic colours plus white. Further features include high speed shutter, infinitely-adjustable dimmer and auto focus.
Hall 6 Stand B47

Precision Devices' lightweight duo débuts

Precision Devices launches new lightweight versions of its ferrite 21" and 18" drivers at Frankfurt. The new PD-2151 and PD-1851, designed specifically for sound reinforcement systems and high-power studio monitors, weigh respectively 30% and 37% less than the older models by using powerful but lighter neodymium magnets.
Hall 6.1 Stand B48

Full moon at Searchlight

The simple but effective concept of the Full Moon balloon is a lamp inside a helium balloon which when floated above the ground will illuminate a very wide area with a diffused light that produces no glare or shadow.

The balloon, which has an inner envelope and a tough outer layer for protection, is available in sizes from 80cm to 3 metres diameter; lamp power ranges from 300w to 400w.
The Searchlight Co. Tel: +44 (0)1954 718118
Classic Lighting. Tel: +44 (0)1252 860330

BSS and Turbo rock Paris

The Elysee, Montmartre has had a new sound system installed which includes signal processing from BSS Audio and loudspeakers from Turbosound.

Five BSS Omnidrive loudspeaker management systems are used to control the speakers which include TCS-612s flown above the dance floor in pairs and Turbosound's new Impact series in the bar area. Turbosound's Floodlight system has been installed at floor level beside the stage and is powered by BSS EPC-760 and EPC-780 amplifiers.
BSS. Tel: +44 (0)1707 660667
Turbosound Ltd. Tel: +44 (0)1403 711447

Creative Technology selects new Toshiba cube

Leading video services company Creative Technology has purchased 40 of Toshiba's recently-launched P4130VE rear projection cubes to become the first company in the UK to offer this product for hire.

Andrew Hawker, Operations Director at Creative Technology says,"We're delighted to already have both immediate and long term projects for the Toshiba cubes.

Bandwidth Ltd

As from Feb 10th Bandwidth Vehicle rentals has become a limited company and moved its entire operations to:
Bandwidth Vehicle Rentals LTD.
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QSC Powerlights

QSC have increased the range of the Powerlight series of amplifiers. The PL4.0 is the latest in the ultra lightweight stable, weighing in at under 30lbs and delivering 2000 watts at 2ohms.

Jason Sound has purchased 102 QSC Powerlights. Jeff Lilly, President of Jason Sound has stated that the Powerlight Series will be: "My choice for a long, long time."

The PL4.0, which is undergoing rigorous road trials in the USA, will reach our shores this month.

HW International. Tel: +44 (0)181 808 2222

Trailer developments

September '95 saw the introduction of new 'maxicube' triaxle air ride trailers, by specialised European transportation and rental company Stardes Ltd. The manafacturers York Trailers have allocated the code name of 'Blue Max' to these special trailers.

'Blue Max' will provide Stardes with the latest development in trailer engineering and technology, whilst increasing the cubic volume for production, exhibition displays and time sensitive deliverance.

Stardes have some 12 vehicles with Austrian Regulations.
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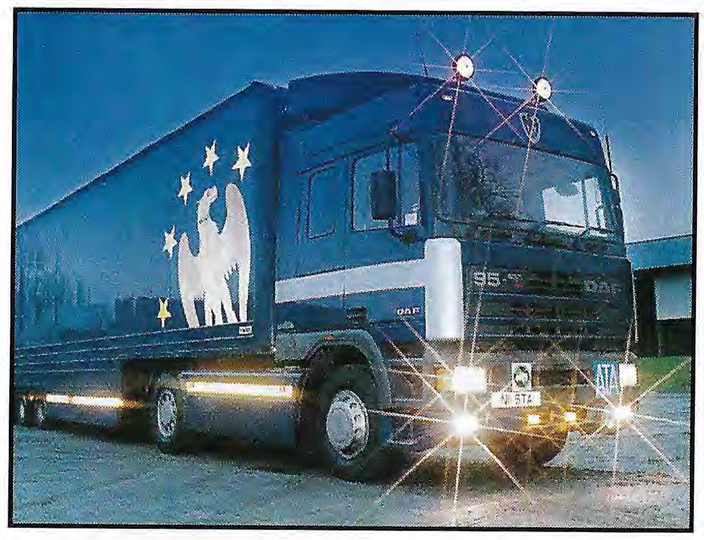

Mobile spotlights

Spotlights for mobile use that can still be directed when the film team is already in the thick of things have been provided by transtechnik, based in Holzirchen (near Munich.)

The FS 90 radio-control system is modular in design. It comes either as a complete system (spotlights, motor-driven spotlight gantry, remote-control unit) or as a subsystem. A handheld transmitter controls all the functions of a maximum of 64 spotlights, either singly or in groups.
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get into the spirit

Zenon Schoepe looks at two of the latest compact desks to come from Spirit

Proving that vertical marketing is an area that Spirit excels in, the seemingly never-ending selection of affordable and decent desks from the manufacturer has been still further split down by the Spirit Live 4-2 and 3-2 desks. They're aimed at subtly different wish-lists, and ultimately apply themselves to different applications – but they share much in common although, predictably, the 4-2 is decidedly more sophisticated.

Beginning with the similarities, both are equipped with Ultra Mic Plus front ends, while the EQ sections are pretty similar in offering a 4-band arrangement with high pass filter, fixed HF and LF bands and two swept mids. Size-wise you're looking at 8, 12, 16 and 24 input frames with an 8-channel bolt-on expander for the 3-2, while the 4-2 weighs in with 12, 16, 24 and 32 input frames, the 12 and 16 sizes also being extendable by 8-channel blocks.

The differences are perhaps more important, as the 3-2 runs an LCR or stereo mix plus mono feed output arrangement with individual stereo and mono routing, while the 4-2 does it with four groups. The best way to look at the two consoles is to regard the 4-2 as having more in common with the Spirit 8 (reviewed in *Live!* in January) which takes its concept through to an 8-group configuration; while the 3-2 is an altogether more lowly – although still admirably able – basic live desk.

This differentiation will become more apparent when I tell you the 3-2 has four auxes, two of which are switchable pre/post plus one each fixed pre and post, while the 4-2 runs to six auxes - three pre, two post, and one switchable pre/post.

SPIRIT LIVE 4-2

Spirit Live 3-2

You get two stereo inputs each with a two-position gain, 2-band fixed EQ, two auxes, individual pot feeds to the stereo and mono busses plus PFL and two additional basic stereo returns – again with a two gain settings and a level pot to the main stereo.

Phantom power is switched globally and all channels, which have mic and line inputs but no phase reverse, plus the three main outputs, all have inserts. The stereo mix can additionally be summed to the mono output, there's a record output; and that pretty much completes the picture on a desk that is extremely easy to understand and use.

Spirit Live 4-2

Aside from phase reverse and individually-switched phantom power, each channel also has a direct out, but there are inserts on channels and all main outputs. There are four basic stereo returns, routable selectively to groups 1-2 and 3-4, two stereo (so-called cassette/CD) inputs with PFL, level to mix and access to auxes 1 and 2; plus two full stereo inputs with 2-band fixed 4-frequency EQ and full aux access.

Similarities to the Spirit 8 are really driven home by the appearance of a two-output matrix fed from the groups and the LR stereo mix, and four mute groups controlling mono and stereo channels in addition to individual mutes. You also get a talkback section with non-latching routing to auxes 1-2, 3-4, the mix and the groups, which can really make a difference.

Impressions

So how do they perform? Well, we've brought them together here purely for convenience, but in fact they're really not desks that you'd want to compare directly. The prices and features are wide apart and ultimately the sort of use they'd be put to is very different - most people will either be in the market for one or the other.

SPIRIT LIVE 3-2

The 3-2 is undoubtedly a down-to-earth no-nonsense live desk with a few clever twists of the sort Spirit has earned a reputation for majoring in. I reckon it would run forever with the minimum of attention, and has the added benefit of being the sort of desk that even a real fool could get results with.

The 4-2 is aimed clearly at different requirements and while it predates the brand-new Spirit 8 it shares so many fundamental similarities with the newer desk that you've got to ask if Spirit is maybe slicing the salami a bit too finely. Four groups are only better than eight if you really can get by with only four, and if you can think of other things you're prefer to spend that extra money on.

However, I've got to add that the whole point of having a range of consoles is to present users with a choice of solutions to suit their pockets and requirements, and this Spirit undoubtedly does so you can't really knock 'em for it. Judged as such, the 4-2 really does represent a lot of desk for the money (through things like the matrix and the extra inputs) and there's an argument that says perhaps it even undermines the Spirit 8 a little by offering near-as-damn-it features in a 4-group configuration. It really comes down to whether you want to ride four faders or eight – and if a more elaborate matrix and the extra inputs the Spirit 8 offers would make your life easier.

All the usual Spirit performance attributes apply, no surprises; these are good solid value for money boards. So it's nice to be able to make such a choice. ■ **live!**

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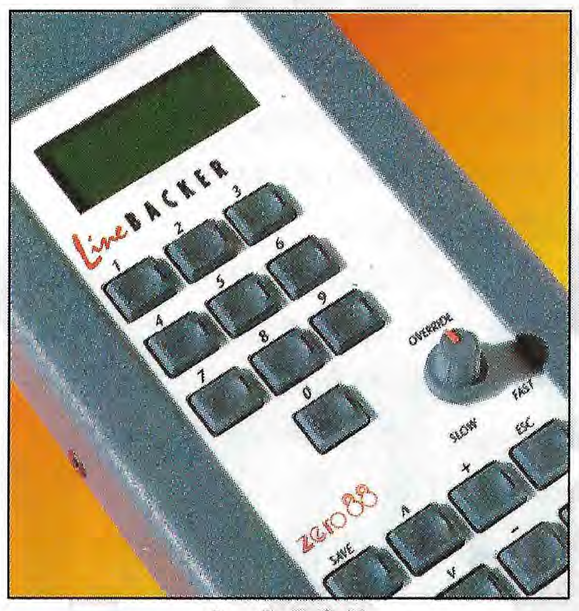

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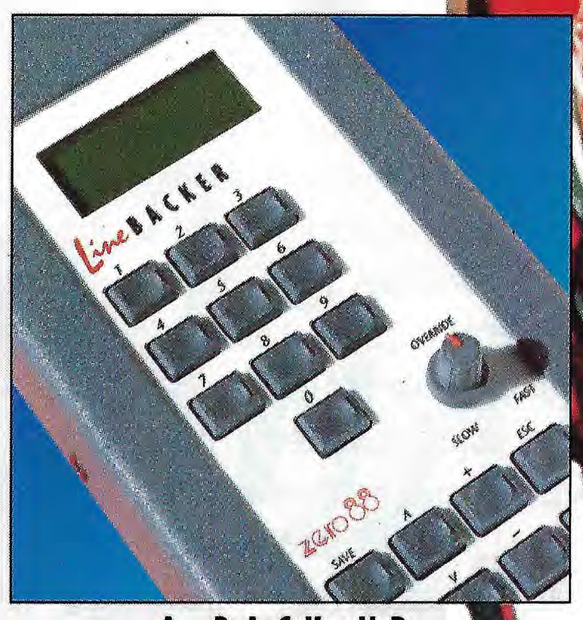

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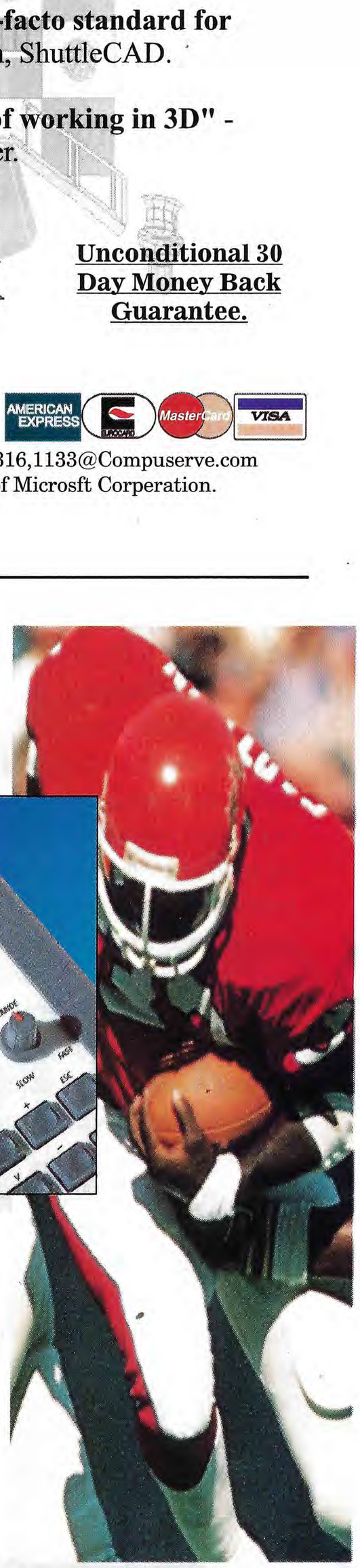

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'it's what everyone will be wearing, dear'

Crown CM-311 headworn mic

Simon Honywill slips Crown's latest offering on his head – and likes what he hears

A long time ago (around about 1981), in a magical place (The London Palladium), a young sound engineer found himself among a select group of very fortunate people. All had gathered together to share a unique experience, never to be repeated – the Kate Bush UK Tour. The twenty-one-year-old Simon Honywill, for it was he, had already witnessed several epic events in rock history, but this one stood out – as it still does some fifteen years later – as something really rather special.

To say the show was theatrical would be an understatement. Dramatic costume and set changes, the most incredible illusion I've ever experienced (although I've never seen David Copperfield live), dancing violins and a shit-kicking band were all maintained on a very intimate level with the audience, and at the centre of the whirlwind was the lovely Kate, leaping about and being generally wierd as only she could, with what looked like a Sony ECM50 gaffa-taped to a bent coathanger and stuck in front of her gob. It probably wasn't, and I stand corrected if I'm wrong, but I do know that decent headworn mics were yet to be discovered way back then. If only I could remember what the vocal sound was like.

Since then, as with most things, technology has come on somewhat, and the likes of Peter Gabriel, Madonna, M. Jackson Esq. and even John Anderson (Gladiators, not Yes!) have taken to using radio headworn mics as a matter of course to enable ambidextrous freedom of expressive movement – or, in Mr. Anderson's case, to allow him to blow his whistle and point at the same time, really loud. (See also the American Football on Channel 4.)

The CM-311 is Crown's most recent offering in this area, pitched at the likes of AKG and Shure who have enjoyed a degree of success with headworns already. As is to be expected from this particular manufacturer, it's immediately a rugged piece of quality construction, so far as a bit of bent wire ever could be. The crucial factors with any mic of this type are comfort and capsule position, and Crown have applied the philosophy of keeping it simple to achieve this. The accompanying blurb suggests taking the time to fit the frame to the user's head to avoid, and I quote, 'boom bounce' and ensure maximum comfort – and by this they mean bending the wire around until it fits snugly: simple but effective, although I couldn't help feeling like my head was in the grip of some surgical implement of torture. I guess you get used to it, but it made my temples ache. Maybe I'm just over-sensitive, darling. Think Bendy Toys and you've sussed it.

So, having welded your favourite rock star into his ceremonial head-dress, what does it sound like, and how much can you make it feed back? Actually, it's alright.

I used a couple of Turbo TMW212 wedges to shout through and did some direct comparisons with two other mics, both from Shure, namely a 58 (of course, we can all relate to that) and their headworn SM10.

The CM-311 sounds tight, clean, punchy and instantly usable as a vocal mic, if a little light at the bottom end. Personally, I think that is no bad thing – being able to add rather than take away can come as a bit of a surprise in many situations. The mids tend to be a touch hard, but again nothing that can't be easily tweaked. My immediate reaction was 'yeah, I can use this.'

Noise rejection and gain before feedback are fairly impressive, and I have no doubt that Crown will tell you that it is down to their patent 'Differoid Technology', whatever that is; if so, let's have more of it, say I. One thing to note, though: if you're a crap singer like me, or the Scottish ref on a popular TV game show, you have to try not to breathe too heavily, because your CM-311 will pick it up very nicely.

The answer here is to stick another popshield on the back of the capsule with Superglue, taking care, of course, to ensure it's dry before putting the mic on – or one's singing ability could be severely impaired, not to mention those minor considerations like eating, drinking and so on. God knows what they'd say at Accident and Emergency. But it would be better, Crown, if this aspect was properly sorted.

How does the CM-311 compare with the other two in this brief test? Well, you know where you are with a '58, and it's usually possible to get a result on monitors without completely destroying the overall quality. I reckon the same is possible with the CM-311, and you're very unlikely to have any problems front-of-house. Let's face it, you're not going to get a mic capsule in a much better position – the next stage would be direct-out from the voice box, and you only have to hear Stephen Hawking to realise that that has a long way to go. It sounds good, and you can get loads of level from it. As for the SM10, I'm sorry to say that there isn't much comparison. The Shure is comfortable to wear, but will fall off when Johnny Rockstar goes for the double flick-flack at the end of the first number. Audiowise, give it to your telephone receptionist – at least *her* monitors won't give you any trouble.

Crown have thought about this product, as they usually do, and the inclusion of information for interfacing with most current radio mic systems is supplied with all the normal stuff you get when you buy a new mic. Retailing at around £230, V.F.M. is assured. As for me, I just wish I could find a few oprea singers who would wear one. ■ **live!**

Simon Honywill is a systems engineer and project manager with R G Jones. His latest work as FOH engineer includes Raymond Gubbay's recent production of La Bohème at the Royal Albert Hall, London

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Thank the world for **Jarvis Cocker!** The guy who had the bollocks to show his disgust at the nauseous, obsequious, fawning sycophancy shown to the power and money of **Michael Jackson** at the **Brits**. And good on **Noel Gallagher** for telling the world: "My band doesn't need some corporate fat pig who earns £450,000 a year and wears a dickey bow and thinks Sting and Phil Collins are the cutting edge of music to tell me how fucking good my group is!". Not that anyone watching the heavily-cut version of the Brits broadcast on prime-time ITV would have been any the wiser to the contempt shown by Britpop's finest creators. Censorship by omission reached new highs for our society of passive couch potatoes! Jarvis's performance at the Brits wasn't the only rock 'n' roll highlight of the month. With the movie ***Trainspotting*** we at last have an accessible cult film that talks to young people in a language they can understand about the highs and lows of heroin. It's good to know that nihilism and veracity are still on the agenda!

The massive lighting production for the **Brits** was handled by **Entec** for the third year. Entec Lighting also have rigs out with **Pulp** (LD **Dave Byars**, operator **Phydeaux MacAvoy**), **Blur** in Europe (LD **Dave Byars**), Ruby (LD **Adam Stevenson**) and the ***TFIF*** TV show. **Tiger Hire** are busy with some installations. One of these is in **Radiohead's** new studio in a converted apple store on a fruit farm deep in the Oxfordshire countryside, and the other is in the local **Zodiac** club in Oxford. Their new Turbo **Floodlight** rig is out with **Supergrass** (FOH **Ian Laughton**, monitors **Chris Barton**), with **Jim Parsons** himself as production manager. The former two have recovered from the alleged excesses of their January jaunt to **Brazil**. **SSE** wrap up the current series of **The White Room** and are touring with **Pulp** (FOH **Simon Dawson**) and **Tori Amos** (FOH **Mark Horley**). **Hotel Babylon** continues and they've also been servicing **The Lightning Seeds** at the Kilburn National. Most of **Chris Beale's** time is currently spent setting up the SSE project list for summer which is bursting with anticipation, and he is also designing the **PSA's web page!**

DBN Lighting are doing the much-tipped **Cast** (LD **Andy Moore**) plus various Manchester events. **Geoff Buckley** enthuses about his new **DMX Diversotronic 3000 strobe**, which he describes as the most "viciously bright strobe" he has ever seen. **Mick Anderson** has departed **Concert Sound** for pastures new and his business is being taken over by **Dave South**. Tour-wise, they have **Mike and The Mechanics** (FOH **Privet**) and **Shirley Bassey** in Norway (FOH **Max Bisgrove**), and there's the on-going **London Towers** basketball work.

White Light provide the lighting for ***Tommy*** (see review) and have just won the contract for ***Martin Guerre***, the new **Cameron Mackintosh** musical at The Prince Edward Theatre. They have just transferred Steven Sondheim's ***Company*** from The Donmar Warehouse to The Albery (LD **Paul Pyant**) and at the end of the month ***Skylight*** moves from the National to the Wyndhams (LD **Paul Pyant**). On tour is ***The Hot Shoe Shuffle*** (LD **Gavin Norris**), ***Calamity Jane*** (LD **Chris Ellis**), the ***Rocky Horror Show*** (LD **Michael Odam**) and ***Swan Lake*** (LD **Rick Fisher**).

Electrotec Audio Lease have **Lenny Kravitz** (FOH **Tom Edmonds**), **The Mighty Morphin Power Rangers** stage show, **Green Day** (FOH **Randy Steffes**) and **Garbage** (FOH **Harold Kohl**). The recent buy-out has meant they have access to a much greater pool of gear including **Gamble** desks and **Lab Q** systems. **Back 2 Front** are expanding their dressing business and have taken on **Dave Bowen** as Sales Manager to that effect. Meanwhile the backdrop side of the business thrives and can be seen on the **Tori Amos** tour and the **Renaissance Club** tour. The latter is sponsored by Silk Cut and Back 2 Front is constructing some unusual items such as stained glass windows and light-boxes. **Concert Systems** have a system out with the ever-growing **Bluetones** (FOH **Mac Felton**) and have been kept busy with the week long **Manchester Irish Festival**. They have used the quiet start to the year to upgrade all their multicore systems, and **Kevin Bannerman** gets his long-awaited trip to the **EAW** factory in Boston at the end of March. **PSL** are maniacally busy on tour with **Tori Amos** (See review next month), **Goldie, Pulp, The Shamen, Eternal, Meatloaf, Smashing Pumpkins** and **Ruby** and have one-offs with the **International Dance Music Awards** at The Forum and **Supergrass's Internet gig** at The Astoria (see review next month), plus a theatre production of ***Artemisia*** for The Turtle Key Arts Centre. **Neg Earth** are providing lights for **The Shamen** (LD **Colin Jones**), **Meatloaf** (LD **Bill Sheldon**), **Garbage** (LD **Lee Watkins**), **Michael Bolton** (LD **Peter Morse**), **Terrorvision** (LD **Mick Thornton**), **Lenny Kravitz** (LD **Jon Pollak**) and the eternal **Blues Brothers Revue** (LD **Patrick Woodroffe**).. **Supermick** light the **Saw Doctors** (LD **Rob Jones**), **Christy Moore**, **Shirley Bassey** (LD **Steve Hall**) and a one-off for **Woody Allen** at The Royal Festival Hall. **John Jones** from **Pfaff Silverblue** was surprised to read that ex-**Senser** members **John Morgan**, **Heltham Al-Sayed** and **Haggis** have formed a new band called **Lodestar**. Pfaff are UK distributors for the **Columbus McKinnon Lodestar motors**, and John quipped "Well no-one ever named a band **'Verlinde'!"** Not yet, anyway... **S & H** have been providing their starcloths to a myriad of sources, including ***The National Lottery Live*** every Saturday and the ***Charley Rose*** bash recently at Ally Pally. For **Eternal's** UK tour they have constructed a custom 'Eternal' logo in miniature lamps as well as supplying numerous conferences and party productions. **LSD** are working on a series of up-coming **Classical Spectaculars** with **Durham Marenghi** as LD, **Sonic Youth** (LD **Suzanne Sasic**), **Tori Amos** (LD **Simon Sidi**), the **Mighty Morphin' Power Rangers**, The **International Dance Music Awards** (LD **Alex Reardon**), the **Tina Turner** tour that kicks off in South Africa (LD **Roy Bennett**), **Oasis** (LD **Mikey Howard**), a **Sting** promotional video shoot (LD **Dave Hill**) and the ***Lost In Paradise*** rave in Skegness. **Canegreen** are doing some golden oldies with **Shirley Bassey**, **Paul Anka**, **Donna Summer** and **Barry Manilow**, and the **Vari-Lite Europe** group are raring to go as ever. **CPL's** current tour listings include the ***Beauty & The Beast On Ice*** tour, **Status Quo** (LD **Pat Marks**), **Vanessa Mae** (LD **Mick Healey**). **Theatre Projects** are lighting the ***Joseph and His Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*** tour (LD **Andy Bridge**) and ***101 Dalmatians*** (LD **Alan Burrett**), while **Vari*Lite** are out with **Tina Turner**, **Eternal** (LD **Peter Barnes**), **Toto**, **Oasis**, **Michael Bolton** (LD **Kevin Bye**) **Mike & The Mechanics**, **Simply Red**, **Sting** (LD **Nick Sholem**), **Pulp**, **The Bluetones** (LD **Dave Morris**) and **Lenny Kravitz** and others, and **Brilliant Stages** are similarly busy. **Lite Alternative's** current commitments include **Bjork's** world tour (LD **Paul Normandale**), **Right Said Fred** (LD **Phil Wiffin**), **Goldie** (LD **Mark Wade**), **Menswe@r** (LD **Glen Johnson**) plus numerous corporates and industrials. **Britannia Row** are out with **Oasis** (FOH **Huw Richards**), **Simply Red** (FOH **Robbie McGrath**), the **Foo Fighters** (FOH **Craig Overbay**), **Smashing Pumpkins** (FOH **Bruce Knight**) and **El Ultimo**, and no, I haven't forgotten about the **Spot Co**...who are as busy as ever but unfortunately we've completely **run out of sp...**

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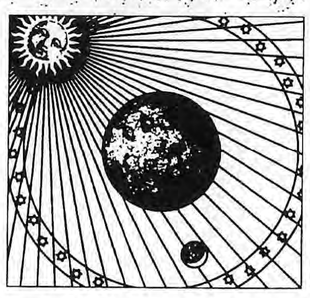

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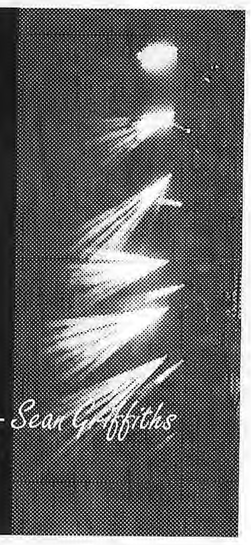

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SOUND ENGINEER, experienced in live/studio engineering, F.O.H/Monitors/Backline and all aspects of touring. CV available. Mike 0589 244329/0181 870 4875

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FREELANCE lighting designer and engineer. Experience in rock, theatre, industrials and T.V. Jonathan 0374 450846

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advertisers' index

Allen & Heath	11
Amek	17
Audio Technica	5
Autograph	37
Avolites	2
Beyerdynamic	47
BSS	10
Clay Paky	7, 9
d&b audiotechnik	18, 19
DBX	29
Drawmer	33
Eat To The Beat	41
EAW	31
EML	41
Hand Held Audio	32
High End	13
HW International	21, 32
LSD	45
Mark IV PAG	51
Martin Professional	22, 23
Meyer	35
Optikinetics	39
PSL	39
Sermec	41
Soundcraft	52
Spirit	25
Stardes	32
Starlite	43
Zero 88	43

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live!

up the truss

with **Tim Roberts**

As promised last month, *Up The Truss* is proud to go intercontinental with a couple of stories from our Belgian correspondent, Mr Johan Gheeraert. But before we cross the channel I'd just like to send a big 'thank you' to Ian Fish, a producer from Heart 100.7 FM who has sent me a most diverting fax. Before entering the glorious sunlit uplands of radiophonic broadcast, Mr F. used to be a rock'n'roll lampie and this little story harks back to those glory days. So, without further ado it's over to you, Ian...

"Picture the scene: a medium-size venue in the Midlands, a nervous young band on stage...all leather, tattoos and loud guitars. The audience is an expectant mix of mothers, mates and record company reps.

Rehearsals had gone well. It's going to be a big opening with pyrotechnics, dazzling lighting FX and a dramatic reveal as the band hit their first power chord – thus catapulting themselves to fame, riches and a jacuzzi-full of bimbos.

The house lights go down. The pressure is on to get the opening right: the smoke rolls on, the Golden Scans sweep the stage, pyros detonate right on cue and the band launch into their first tune – destined to become an historic Rock Anthem (no doubt released on *Now! That's What I Call Rock Anthems* Vol.458).

But wait: their hands and mouths are moving; even the bass player appears animated, but there's not a squeak to be heard from the monster PA. The same monster PA that'd been sound-checking since dawn! The recording contract, the money, the fame and the jacuzzi dreams of the young hopefuls evaporate in an instant of deafening silence.

Enquiries reveal that the PA company – who shall remain nameless – had sent one of their less experienced operators. Having pulled down the faders for the background music CD, the enterprising fellow thought he'd better mute the channels to be on the safe side. A good idea one might think, but not if you accidently hit the 'solo' rather than the 'mute' button. Result: every channel muted except the now paused CD player.

Desk output: zero, null, zip, diddly squat. Oops!"

Now I can see Ian's point that this was all very embarrassing for the engineer concerned, but looking back perhaps it wasn't altogether a bad thing; at least we won't be forced to endure their "classic hit" once again when *Now! That's What I Call Rock Anthems* Vol. 458 is released.

And now a gag for PA engineers: Obviously the guitarist should have played a non-destructive solo but he didn't and now the group's forced to take the aux bus home.

****

OK, before I completely lose it, over to our Euromole Mr Johan Gheeraert who wins this month's LIVE! Maglite for a delightful tale of improvisation. Johan is a laser engineer and a few years back he was booked to install two 18 watt lasers for a show at a London venue. He and his colleagues were going to bring all their own fancy hardware across from Belgium but were looking to hire the transformer to convert from UK voltage locally. On arrival at the venue Johan discovers an enormous transformer of far greater capacity than he'd ordered being off-loaded by means of a crane. Despite his protests that this wasn't what he'd asked for, the massive metal monster was left sitting on the pavement outside the backstage door.

Johan was now faced with the problem of how to move half a ton of copper in a box without wheels or lifting gear, off Her Majesty's Highway, through the Stage Door and down a flight of stairs to where it might be usefully hooked into the mains. Of course the obvious answer would be to quietly slope off to Heathrow and pretend it had all been a bad dream from the comfort of one's Brussels apartment, but these guys were made of sterner stuff and pretty soon someone came up with an ingenious idea: Fill in the treads of the stairs with bits of wood to make a smooth slope, lay a couple of scaff planks down as runners, lever the transformer onto it and then let the blighter down by means of a stout rope wound a couple of times round a parking meter. (Clearly his early career with the Belgian Mountain Rescue Team has stood Johan in good stead.)

The only slight drawback with this method was that the parking meter had a disturbing tendency to bend over every time the strain went on the rope. When the transformer finally hit ground level so did the parking meter, which did not amuse the local Plod, but that's another story.

After the gig Johan packed up his kit and made a swift exit. Several years later he discovers that the theatre had been renovated soon after the gig. The Backstage Door and staircase were as they had been, but for some reason there was a huge bricked-up cube at the bottom of the steps – it seems even the hire company couldn't get the bugger back out again.

So, if you're reading this and you're the House Manager of a London theatre boasting an inexplicable blockage in your back passage then get out the sledgehammers – there's two grand's worth of scrap copper buried in there!

More production problems with our favourite Flemish friend next month as we follow Johan on a jaunt to the Middle East, and remember, you too can be a proud *Up The Truss* MagLite winner, you don't have to come from Belgium or work in local radio, just write to Tim Roberts @ Live! (details below) and confess your darkest secrets...

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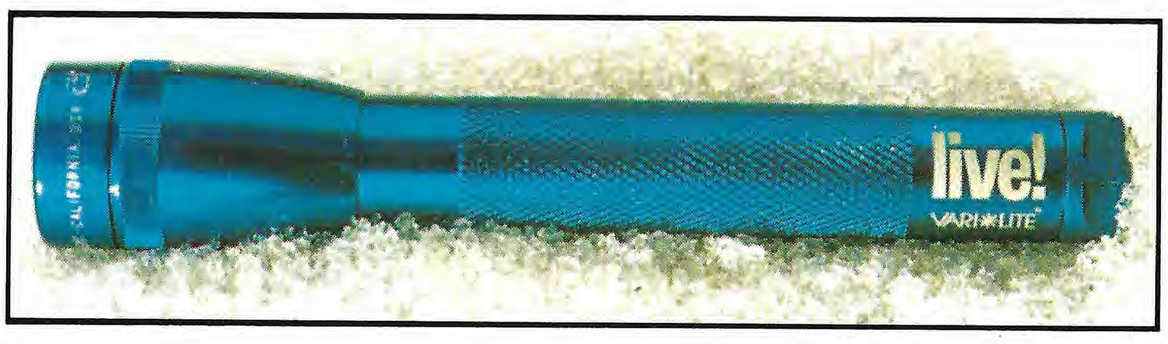

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