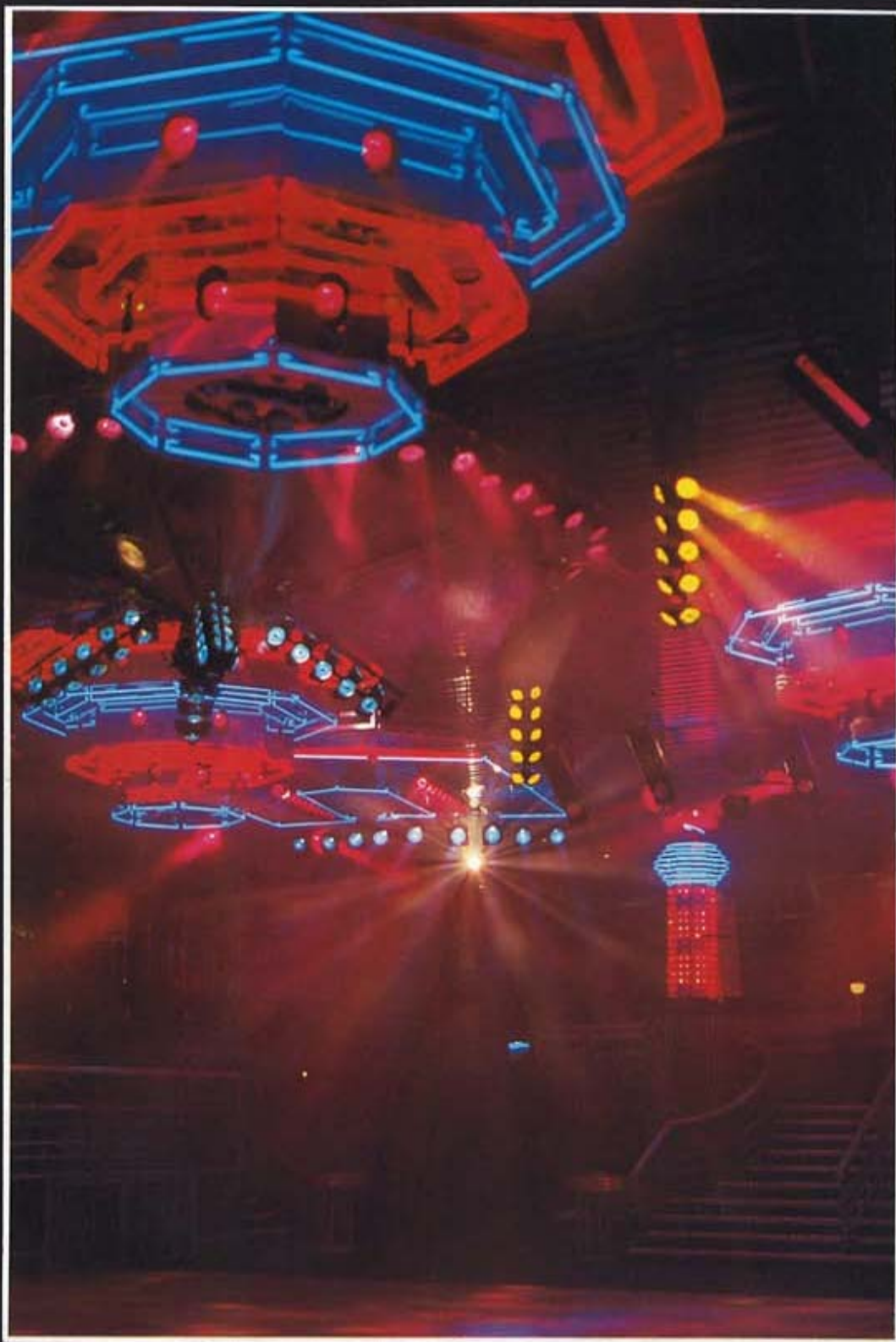


LIGHTING+*Sound* International



Le Palais - see special feature this issue

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Le Palais de Danse

Hammersmith Palais reopened on June 6th as 'Le Palais', London's largest and latest discotheque. Avitec have made a habit of creating landmark venues in lighting design, and John Offord visited the venue in the company of Tony Kingsley to see how one of the music business's most historical venues had faced up to its most recent change.

London now has what most of our other cities have had for some time - a straightforward big and classy discotheque that will appeal to 'normal' clientele rather than become a tourist attraction. 'Le Palais' is now what the famed Hammersmith Palais has been for most of its life: a lead venue that will reflect what is happening on the popular culture front.

The building was originally a tramshed and was transformed into the 'Hammersmith Palais de Danse' immediately after the First World War when it boasted Europe's first custom-built sprung-floored ballroom. During the depression it was converted to an ice-rink but it reverted to a dance hall again in 1933, and then began a golden age that followed right through the wartime period.

It was sold to the Mecca Organisation in 1960, a year after Joe Loss had taken up residency, and during the sixties and seventies it witnessed the coming of Be-Bop, Jiving, the Jitterbug and Rock 'n' Roll.

On June 6th this year it re-opened after its biggest change since the club first opened in 1919. Over £2m has been spent by Mecca to turn it into 'Le Palais' in a style that couples art deco with the futuristic. Bulldog Design of Leeds looked after the decor, while Avitec - both British and German elements - took care of the visible essentials of effects lighting.

Lighting designers Peter Danne and Paul Dodd have employed a mass of German-manufactured neon, giving clean sharp colour lines to the various set-piece elements of the design. Ceiling mounted features include one static centre-piece with four Harvesters below surrounded by four identical telescopic 'wedding cake' structures, themselves revealed as neon-lit 'covers' slide away on tracking with the aid of linear motors. (The brief from Mecca had been to produce "hidden things that emerge" - an in-



Le Palais, Hammersmith - London's latest discotheque.

spiration from the Avitec-designed Stardust Club at Wolfsburg in Germany.)

Sixteen Coemar Robot units, four Gamma Sunflowers, Par Cans and floodlights fitted with aircraft landing lights provide a powerful light source for the dance and stage area, and other effects include items from Kremesa, Clay Paky and Nisel. To say the least, the design is highly individual and cleverly and symmetrically balanced. The overall cost of the complete lighting installation was around £250,000.

Like all new venues these days a video-wall seems to be a necessity. Le Palais has two

identical banks of 5 x 5 screen monitors from Cameron Videowalls to fulfill the need.

Avitec were also responsible for the sound system, designed by David Martin and Tony Kingsley. The 8kW Martin Audio rig combines outstanding sound quality and power (SPLs of 110dBA-plus on the dance floor) with 180° horizontal dispersion and a good vertical spread - characteristics essential in a venue where the layout is broad rather than long, and which includes balcony areas.

The designers' preferred location for the four Martin S2 hyperbolic bass bins was centre of the main stage to give point source bass, but this was impossible with the up and down movement of this stage - a feature for

Uni-Track at Le Palais

The four sliding panels at Le Palais measure 5.6 metres x 4 metres and move radially out from the centre of the ceiling above the dance floor. The 'slide' 6 metres in a straight line revealing 4 lighting rigs which descend from the void above the ceiling once the moving panels have reached their outer limits.

Each panel weighs 500kgs and is suspended on standard Triple-E Uni-Track fitted with reaction plates for their newly introduced linear motors. Two motors and one control box are used for each panel, and the command button for all four panels is incorporated into the D.J.'s control desk. When the command is given all four panels move simultaneously.

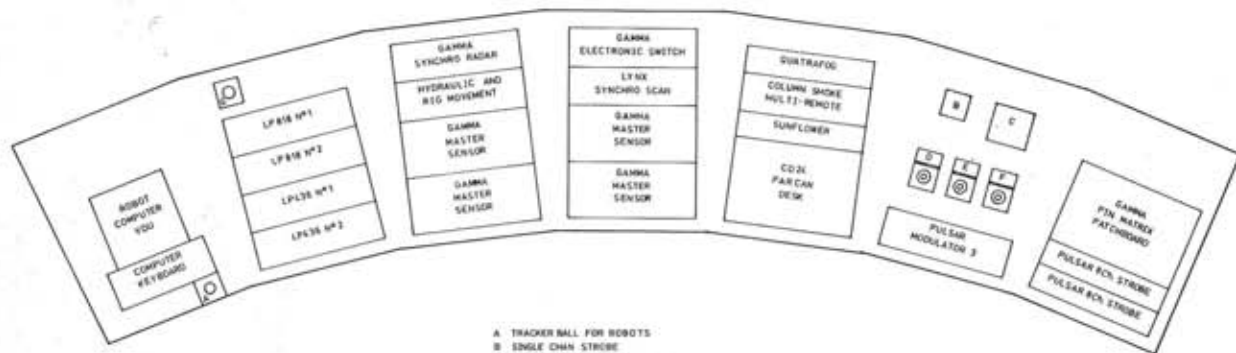
Almost all the equipment used is standard Uni-Track, and the installation was carried out by Neon Lite Associates of Biggleswade.



Prince Charles receives a cheque for £75,000 for the Prince's Trust Fund from the chairman of Mecca Leisure Group plc G. M. Guthrie on the special pre-opening party night of Le Palais.



The left-side flown cluster of Martin Audio RS-1203D mid/high cabinets with VRS-800 at rear for stage audience coverage.



- A TRACKER BALL FOR ROBOTS
- B SINGLE CHAN STROBE
- C PULSAR 500 SUN DESK
- D POSITION CONTROL FOR LIGHT WHEELS
- E - - - - - SUNFLOWERS
- F - - - - - PAR 5L LIGHTS
- G EMERGENCY SWITCH-NEON

LIGHTING CONTROL EQUIPMENT LAYOUT
'LE PALAIS' HAMMERSMITH
AVITEC

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Controlling 'Le Palais'

The innovative and complex lighting installation designed by Avitec Limited required a new generation of control equipment. At the heart of the system are four new Gamma Master Sensors. This is the first installation in the UK that has used this versatile, easy to operate 16 channel touch sensor, which allows the operator to have full manual access to all other controllers used. Because Le Palais required a high degree of synchronised movement and colour change effects some individual products were supplied with their own controller, for example the Lynx Synchro Scans, the Gamma Sunflowers and some custom positionable effects. The key to the successful operation of these and also the more standard 4 and 8 channel lighting is the ability to access them instantly via the Gamma Master Sensors.

One of the most disappointing aspects of some lighting schemes is that there has always been a tendency not to utilise the full potential of even the most standard controllers available. At Le Palais even the multi-channel effects such as the golf ball lamps installed on the columns, the high powered pinspots and the neon located on the mov-

ing 'pyramids' are wired for impressive matrix operation allowing the operator even more variety for added interest. Once again the operator had access to this flexibility through the Gamma Master Sensors. Of the many interesting lighting design concepts, one is the ability to rotate and accurately position some of the lighting effects, such as the Sunflowers, and direct them to different parts of the venue, which in normal installations has not been achieved.

With a venue such as Le Palais it is always possible that several operators will be employed over a given period of time and it may even play host to visiting light jockeys. Every lighting operator has their own personal preferences regarding the location of effects on the touch panels, for example a left handed operator may prefer the strobes to be found on the far left, whereas others may choose centre or far right positions. In the past the only way around this problem has been a total rewiring of the controller output cabling. At Le Palais a 48 x 48 way Gamma Pin Matrix has been installed allowing the operator to alter the complete layout of the sensors without needing to rewire anything.

This, together with the flexibility of the programmable key change on the Master Sensors, means any new or visiting lighting operator can arrange the key layout to suit themselves.

As mentioned, the heart of the lighting system is the new **Gamma Master Sensor**. This new panel has taken the art of touch control one step further by introducing several unique facilities which were not previously available. These include not only the four banks of different key changes and a monitor that permits pre-viewing of any programmed sequence irrespective of whatever function the Master Sensor is running, but also Real Time. This feature allows an operator to record a light show in real time (which means not only the steps but also the spaces between them as well) into the Master Sensor's own memory for instant recall. The light show can also be recorded on tape alongside the music tracks thus giving synchronisation of sound and light on playback.

The power and versatility of the Gamma Master Sensor has the ability to give an operator simple, clear, and immediate access and control over a large and complex lighting system such as Le Palais, and also over the standard control equipment and lighting in any venue.





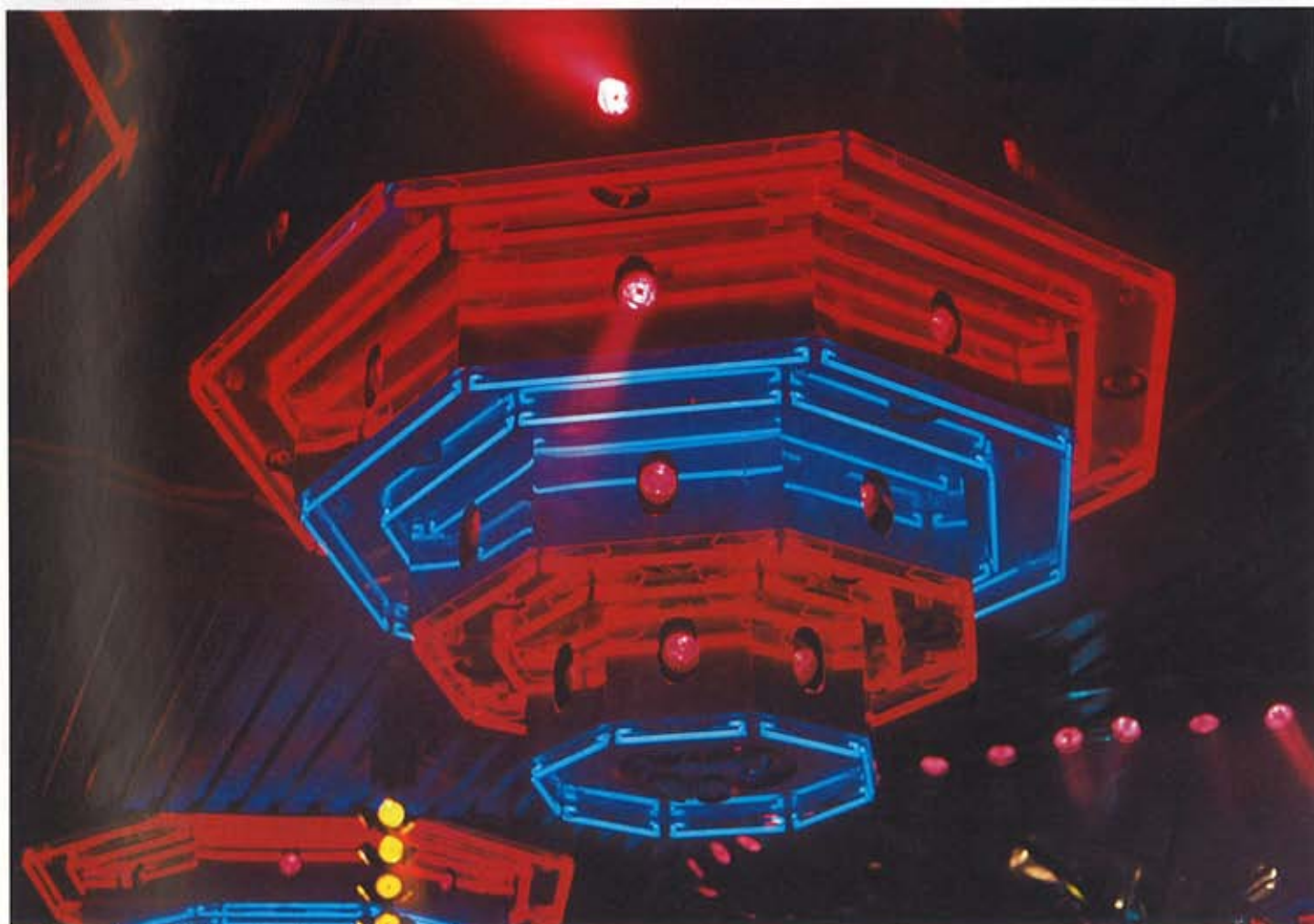
Le Palais, Hammersmith: the centre-piece over the dance floor lit in green neon. The picture also shows one telescopic unit and one 'slide-away' cover.



A view across the full length of the dance floor showing all four telescopic units.



The covers are removed and the hidden telescopic units are ready to descend from the ceiling.



A close-up of one of the four 'wedding cake' neon effect units.

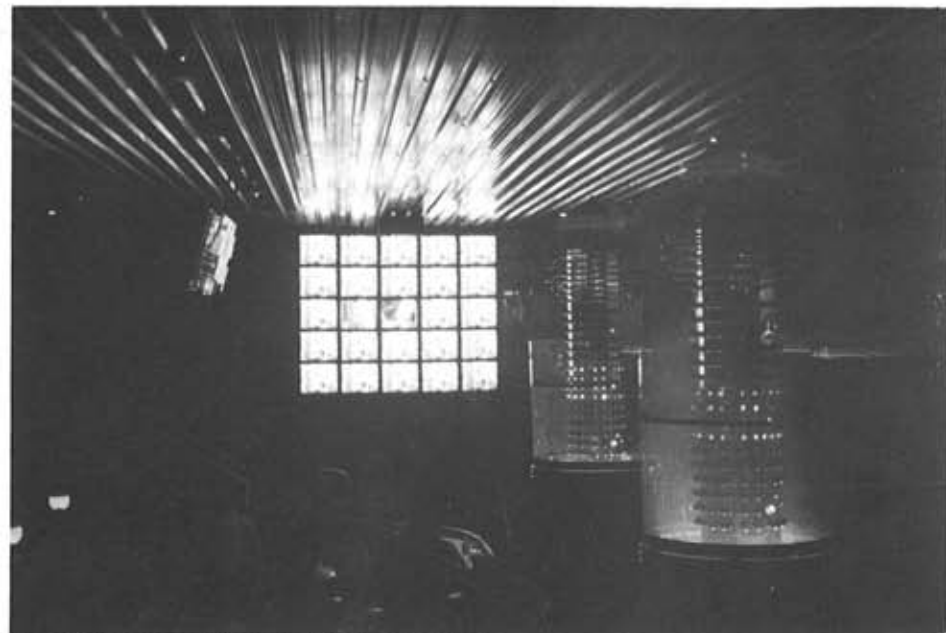


Live entertainment will still be a major part of the venue's programming.

live concerts at Le Palais. Two cabinets were therefore sited each side of the stage, conveniently housed in the stage wings. Certainly, the result did not reflect compromise, with clean punchy bass right down to 28Hz evenly covering the venue.

The rig's remaining components are flown in a curved array above the stage. They comprise two trapezoidal clusters of Martin RS-1203D Mid/Hi cabinets plus a pair of Martin VRS-800 three-way bins specifically for full-range and upper bass projection (above 70Hz) to the rear of the speaker clusters, where a bar and seating area are sited on the main stage area for normal disco nights.

The RS-1203D is a three-way, disco-dedicated derivative of the RS-1200 full-range system, and carries additional JBL 2425 compression drivers through constant directivity horns to supplement the JBL 2445 drivers normally used for the complete high end. This achieves a much smoother top end response which is a requirement for accurate



Two 5 x 5 Cameron Videowalls have been installed.

and pleasing reproduction of recorded music playback. The system is however additionally used for live band playback for Mecca's in-house bands and has proved equally successful for this use as well.

A Soundtracs M Series 24 input sound reinforcement console feeds the Martin System front of house, and an FMX Series 12-2 with mono mic and stereo line/RIAA inputs is utilised as a sub-mixer for the discotheque. Power amplifiers are C-Audio SR-808 and SR-606.

Le Palais is very much a 'live' venue in every sense. Fridays and Saturdays are dance nights hosted by popular radio D.J.'s, while Sundays and Mondays are given over to concert nights with chart-topping acts. On Tuesday a 'Style Night' features leaders from the world of music, fashion, film and art. The best of new talent has its chance on the regular Wednesday 'Showcase Night' and Thursday is 'Party Night', giving you any reason (or none) to sample free bubbly and



Le Palais' lighting controllers prepare to get the show on the road.



Tony Kingsley - another major project completed.

UNI-TRACK

Triple E's Linear Motors and Uni-Track Move the Ceilings at Le Palais

Our highly acclaimed Uni-Track system is the strongest and simplest track available. Using standard parts we power 4 ceiling panels at Le Palais - each weighing 500 Kgs.

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discounted admission if you book a party in advance. What a pity the PLASA Light and Sound Show round the corner at Novotel doesn't cover a Thursday!

With Le Palais having such unique roots in the modern music business, you have to ask the question as to how long it will keep up with the times in its new format. It's an unanswerable question, of course.

But although it's been a long time coming, it's my hunch Le Palais is one of the few places in the country that will give early notice of new trends in the entertainment business as they are about to happen.

Le Palais, Hammersmith Technical Credits

Effects lighting design: Peter Danne and Paul Dodd
Sound system design: Dave Martin and Tony Kingsley
Effects lighting, Sound, Cameron Videowall, supplied and installed by Avitec Electronics (UK) Limited
Lighting installation: Jasco Light and Sound Limited, with assistance from P.S.D. Electronics and T.K. Nightclub Installations Limited
Rig movement and installation: Neonlite Associates.

**FOR SPEEDY INFORMATION
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Telefax (0323) 646905**

Le Palais London's New West End

**NIGHTCLUB BY MECCA
ATMOSPHERE CREATION BY AVITEC**



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AVITEC
THE ATMOSPHERE CREATORS

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