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edge!

SPECIAL 40TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION



Martin Audio's First 40 Years

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www.martin-audio.com

Dave Martin founded the eponymous Martin Audio in 1971 and was one of the leading pioneers and innovators in the evolution of the professional and touring sound industry that we know today.

Having been the last person to interview the Australian maverick before he met his untimely death in 1992, I recall he spent less time discussing the folded horn-loaded bass cabinet principle that he defined in the 1970's than outlining his plans to buy up part of the Portuguese air fleet in one of his other unlikely business ventures. Like all the best interviews, a lot of the material was unpublishable.

It was therefore little surprise that following the announcement of his death such an extraordinary number of tributes should pour into the offices of *LIVE!* (the magazine I was editing at the time); we could have filled the next edition with those alone.

Leading the charge was visionary Irishman, John Conlan, who set up the seminal Sundown Theatres around London in 1972 for the Rank Organisation — the year after Dave had set out his stall (almost literally) in London's Covent Garden market.

John went onto become the cornerstone of the emerging leisure industry — notably as the head of First Leisure Corporation — but that early memory of Dave Martin was still clearly etched somewhere in his cerebral cortex, as I discovered again recently.

He had been introduced to Martin by the late Ian Knight, following a sound system installation at the influential Roundhouse in North London. The venue was responsible for a lot of breakthrough technology (and technicians) in the early days, and the Dave Martin bins formed part of that tapestry.



The First 40 Years



Main: Dave Martin founder of Martin Audio, pictured late 1980s

Inset: Supertramp gold album presented to Martin Audio

Rank agreed to talk to the sound genius, but weaned on WEM columns, clearly had little idea of the power and muscularity of new wave show production sweeping inexorably across the water from places like New York's Fillmore East. Because this is what happened next ...

The Rank guys made a presentation based on their own house cinema systems, which had worked to an acceptable standard in their Top Rank Suites. Dave, meanwhile, had decided to design a beefed up version of his Roundhouse rig. "When we lifted the Safety Curtain and revealed the Dave Martin system it just hit you in the guts," John Conlan still remembers, "These Rank guys just stood in the middle of Brixton [now the Academy] and said 'Holy f***!'"

Rank commissioned four Dave Martin systems — three large ones (for Edmonton, Mile End and Brixton) and a smaller one for the West End venue, based on the 215 Mk1 bin (before it was split into the 115) — plus the popular Vitavox horns in use at the time. These had to be installed in record time (since the venues were scheduled to open pretty much back-to-back) and among well known faces in the installation team were the late Terry Price of Tasco, Mick Whelan and Bruno Wayte.

"We agreed a price but then realised Dave didn't have the money to build them so we had to somehow advance it to him," John smiled. "That took some doing!"

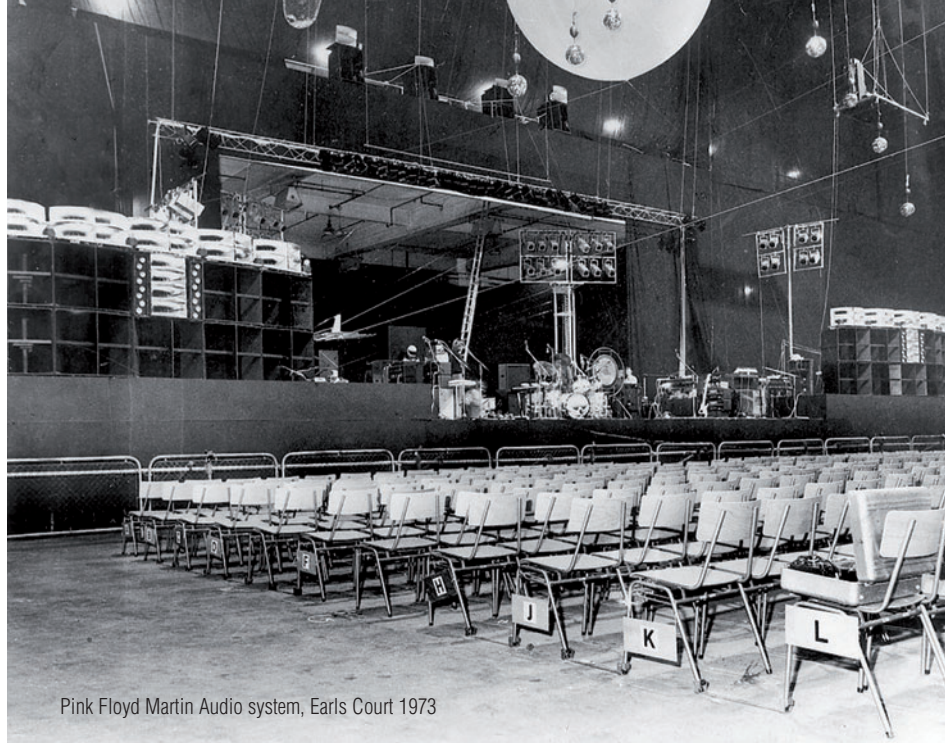
I had been working on the pop paper *Sounds* back in 1972 and curiously John Conlan produced a testimonial advert which appeared in the paper to coincide with the openings (under the name 'Dave Martin Sound', or somesuch). It was certainly before the company had even thought about a logo, and was most probably the company's first ever trade ad!

PA systems were about to go through a modular, horn-loaded revolution with men like Dave Martin and fellow audio guru Bill Kelsey (Kelsey & Morris) spearheading it.

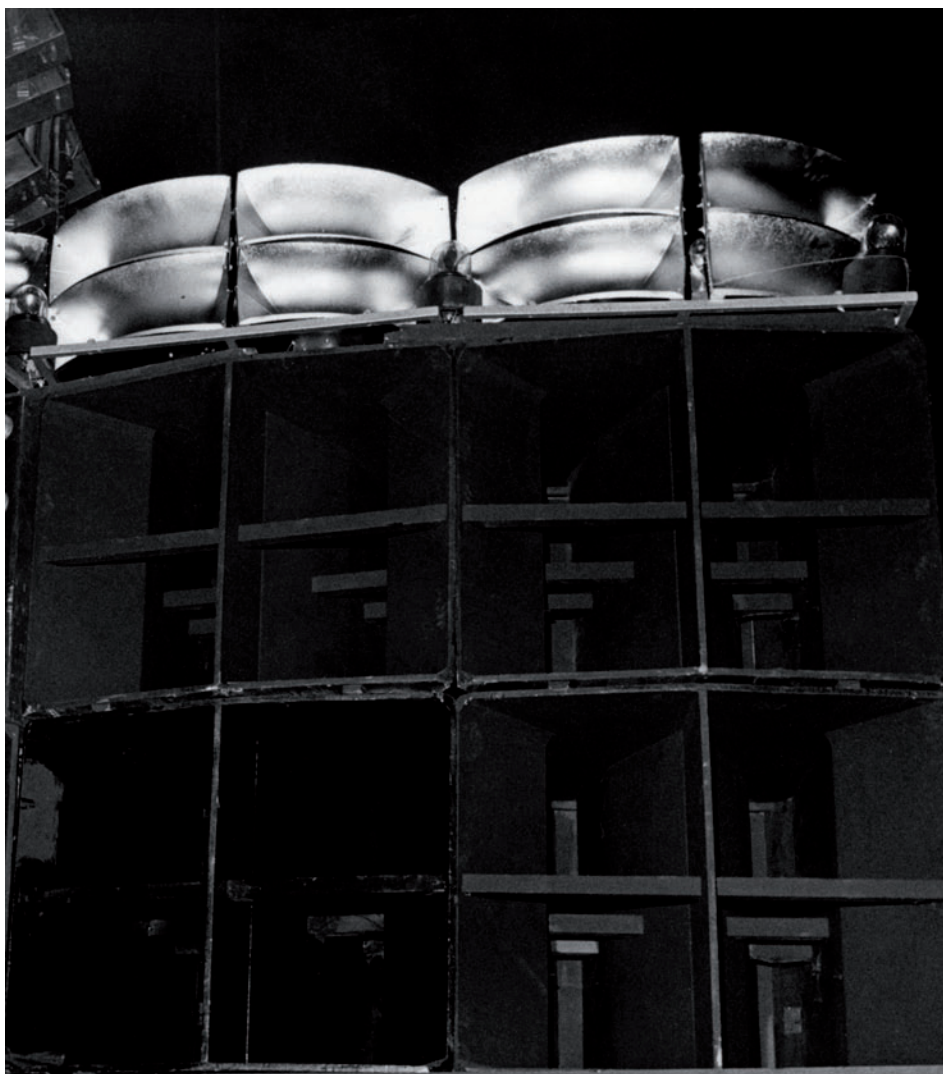
Both men had served their apprenticeship working with New Zealander Dave Hartstone's IES, with Dave Martin marking his UK PA debut at the Royal Albert Hall using RCA 'W' cinema speakers and twin radial horns.

Dave Martin had seen the RCA W cabs when Iron Butterfly first toured with them. Because they measured 7' high and weighed 500lbs they didn't want to pay the return freight back, and so the system was sold to British progressive rock band, Yes.

The Australian spent his early years rethinking the concept to support the needs of the developing sound engineers of the day and through the 'progressive' era of the early-to-mid '70s Martin bins and horns joined rock royalty. Pink Floyd used all Martin bass bins and HF horns, as did Supertramp whose rig was eventually acquired by Delicate Productions of California in 1982. When you think of those landmark albums and tours — *Dark Side Of The Moon* and *Crime Of The Century* respectively — it's easy to see why PA companies such as Regiscene in France, and Concert Sound and Entec in the UK wanted to buy into the Martin Audio signature sound, and as a result other leading prog rock bands like King Crimson and ELP became customers.



Pink Floyd Martin Audio system, Earls Court 1973



Rank commissioned four Dave Martin systems

The development path certainly took some twists and turns. After a disastrous attempt to make a 4 x 15" bin with a detachable flare, Dave Martin produced his famous 215 Mk1 (2 x 15") bass cab, which was later transformed into the iconic 115 (1 x 15"), he said, "by sawing it in half."

In fact, the principle depended on unfolding the RCA W cab to its full flare length, to provide extra bass efficiency, and sawing off about 13" of the horn. This improved on the transient performance and gave another octave of upper-bass response.

During the early-to-mid 1970's, Martin Audio's horn-loaded systems proved to be a big step up from the direct radiator columns, which couldn't keep pace with the demands of the emerging progressive scene. Speaker design during this era was still essentially two-way, with the bass bins going straight into Vitavox high frequency horns using phenolic diaphragm compression drivers. Whilst the early systems had the horns sitting on top of the bass bins, before long bins were being grouped together in a block, with the horns stacked on top of each other.

But Dave Martin always credited Bill Kelsey for turning him on to the column principle — Kelsey's Pink Floyd touring

The Seventies



Pink Floyd PA system 1973



Midas/Martin Audio complete PA system

stack was 6'-20' high, and that is what became adopted for the Martin modular system, which embraced a totally radical stacking principle.

As for Supertramp, Dave Martin continued to adopt a horn-loaded philosophy for maximum efficiency in minimum space, but he recognised the need for better midrange reproduction. Supertramp wanted more power in the voice / mid regions and so the mid band was split in two (though still using compression drivers). Ultimately, maximum efficiency midrange became the design principle behind the MH212 'Philishave' (*see later*).

After four and a half years in Covent Garden, Martin Audio relocated to a workshop in Stanhope Street — probably leased by Dave Hartstone — and next door to Midas consoles, run by Jeff Byers. Thus the legendary Martin/Midas axis was formed, which was to produce one of the most fertile periods in the company's history.

With Martin and Byers pioneering their respective development programmes, a move towards complete PA system designs, using matched loudspeakers, crossovers, power amplifiers and multicore cables, was inevitable. The Martin/Midas combo quickly established itself as the standard console and PA package for the serious rental companies as the empirical journey into electro-acoustic research continued.

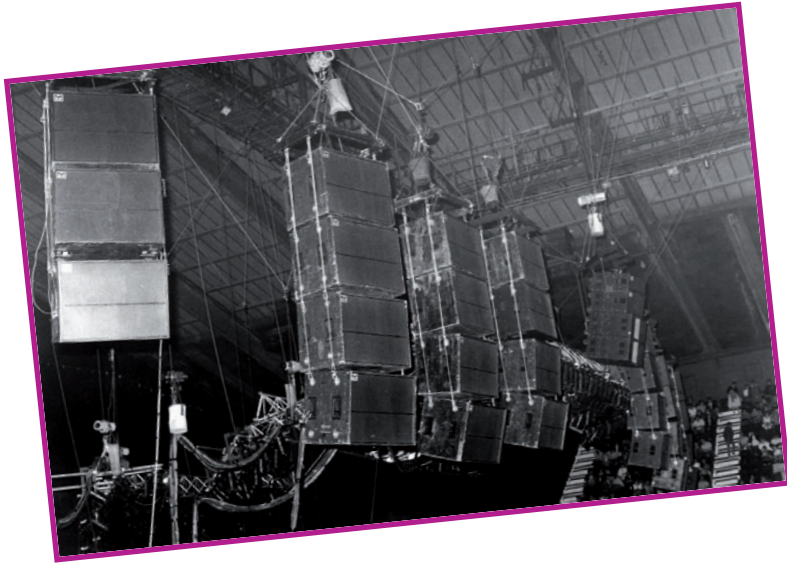
UK company Concert Sound was one of the early adopters of a Martin/Midas system in the 1970's. Like other rental companies it had evolved from a system purchased for a band, in this case Welsh rockers Man. Their manager Barry Marshall, and booker Tim Boyle were to become synonymous with Concert Sound in the years ahead.

The Martin/Midas system was chosen for the band by Tim Boyle at a three-way shoot-out at London's famed Rainbow Theatre, hired for an afternoon. Beginning with 3 x 115 bins a side, Vitavox horns with JBL drivers and Midas power-block amplifiers, the Concert Sound inventory was to grow dramatically in the years to come.



Martin Audio 1975 PA system with 115 bins

The Eighties



Flown RS1200 system

Towards the end of 1981 I travelled to Yorkshire, shortly after the opening of Derek Smith's new Frontier Club (which had been better known as the Batley Variety Club, a cornerstone of the Northern cabaret club scene). It was here, for the first time, that I met Keith Davis, later of Capital Sound Hire, whose name would become synonymous with Martin Audio over the next three decades.

However, this was many years before Cap appeared in the firmament. Already highly experienced, he was running PASE Hire (UK) Ltd — and since his backers were also the same people who purchased the Variety Club, he willingly agreed to fit a grown-up sound and lighting rig, which would be far removed from the 'disco' norm of the day.

His supercharged PA system included six Martin Audio 215 bass cabs and three of the legendary (MH212) 'Philishaves', four JBL horns and two boxes of JBL tweeters per side, with Martin Audio LE200 floor monitors, Crown amplifiers and Midas consoles.

Introduced in 1978, the MH212 was the first ever dedicated midrange horn. Its profile (styled on the popular electric razor at the time) resonated louder than the components from which it was made — and quickly became an industry standard around the globe (installed across the nation's Top Rank Suites, adopted by Roger Waters for his bass stack on *The Wall* and Supertramp's *Breakfast In America* to name just a few).

Although Martin Audio had already introduced a direct radiator mid a couple of years earlier, it was the birth of the Philishave that started the midrange revolution.



The legendary 'Philishave'

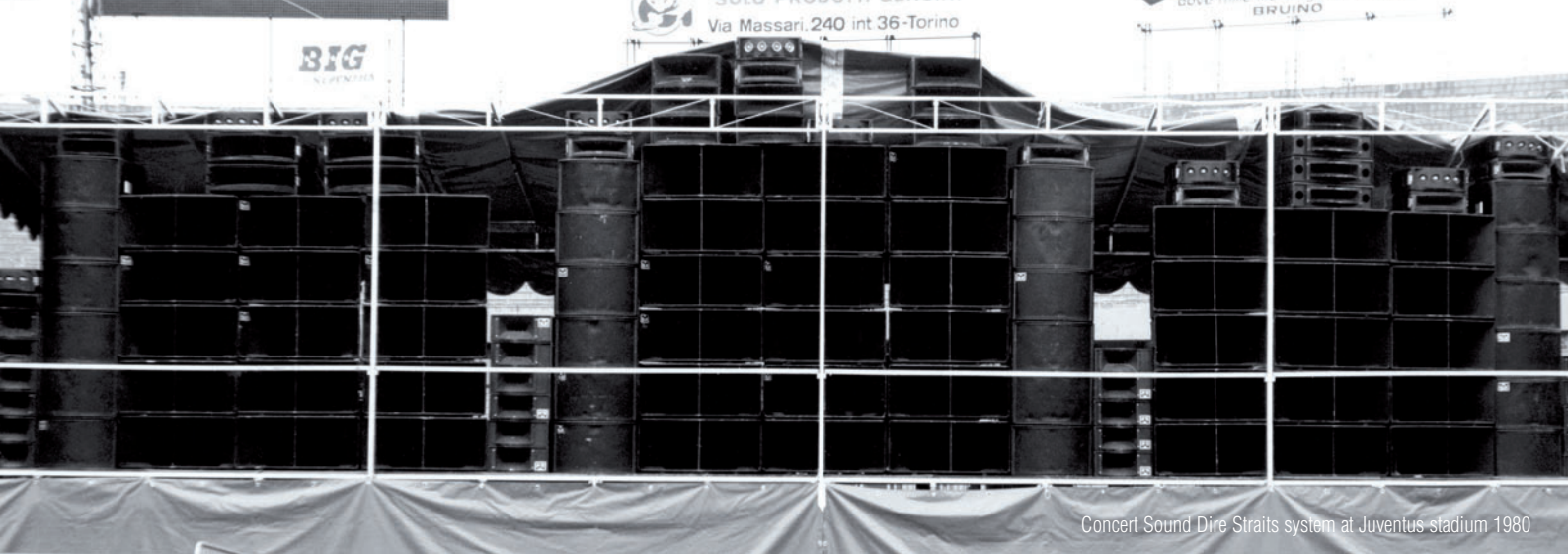
PASE had also opened its account in 1978. Their Martin Audio bin and horn system was typical of top flight touring at that time. It consisted of 12 x 115 bins and six Philishaves, along with some JBL 2350 horns with HF4000 drivers and four JBL 075 bullets — all driven with Crown DC300A amplifiers. The sound was mixed through Midas consoles and Martin Audio LE200's provided the floor monitoring.

By 1982 Davis was down in London, running a company called ACS (Artist Concert Services) with Fray Miller and Shakin Stevens — again with a Martin/Midas System — before setting up Capital Entertainments with John Tinline in 1985.

Around this time, Dave Martin and speaker engineer Bill Webb, who had been working for Martin Audio since 1979, developed the RS1200 full-range cab (with BSX sub) in response to the call for a one-box system that could fly as well as stack. Cap purchased 24 of these full-range boxes for use with Spandau Ballet.

With a client list ranging from The Clash to Dean Martin, Concert Sound had also been busy growing their Martin bin and horn inventory from the early days. A typical Concert Sound outdoor rig would have 60 x 115's and 30 Philishaves plus associated horns — and the production company certainly knew how to get the best from the modular format. The 1980 Dire Straits tour in Italy was a perfect example of the science of bass bin stacking, with the Philishaves and horns arranged in columns to throw further ... a forerunner of line array thinking.

For the *Free Mandela* concert at Wembley stadium in 1988, seen in over 40 countries, Concert Sound fielded a colossal 98 x 215 Mk2 bins, 60 Philishaves and over 60 HF horns plus JBL bullets.



Concert Sound Dire Straits system at Juventus stadium 1980

In 1987 Dave Martin produced his classic F2 two-box modular system, with 15" hyperbolic horn (stack-compatible with the earlier, 115, 215 and RS1200 systems). With its close coupling characteristics it was designed to give PA companies more versatility and Dave always maintained that you'd have to go right back to those early 215 bins to stand comparison.

In fact 1987 was to prove a pivotal year in more ways than one. Midas was taken over by Klark Teknik and Martin Audio moved from London to High Wycombe's Cressex Industrial Estate.

Ironically the first sound engineer to use the F2 was anything but a Martin Audio fan. Roger Lindsay fired the two-box system up in anger when Keith Davis rang him to say that Sade was looking for an engineer with a track record to mix her upcoming world tour.

"So we went to a Sade rehearsal at Brixton Academy and Dave Martin was there with the F2 prototypes," Roger recalls. "I remember joking at the time that Dave couldn't have built it, because it sounded too good!"

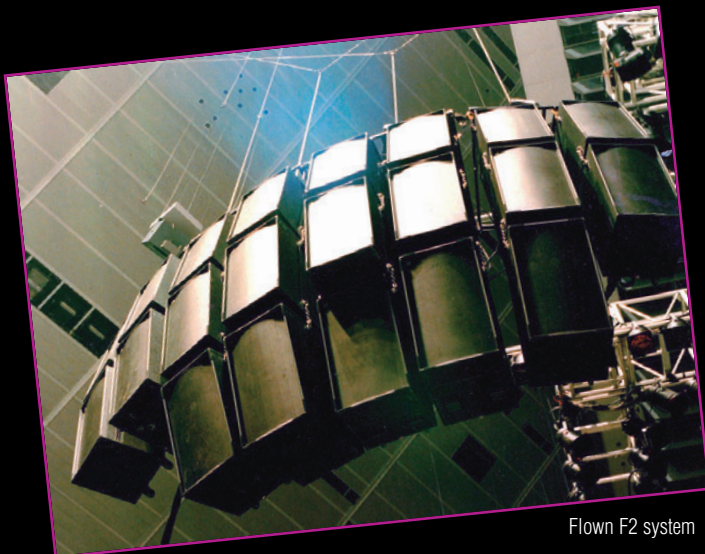
"Production rehearsals started in Atlanta and the system had never been used before, but Keith ordered 90 x F2 enclosures for the tour. They had to get a forklift truck to separate the cabs in Atlanta because they were shipped in containers to the States while the paint was still wet. But it was a great sounding system."

At the end of 1988 Keith Davis was approached by Nick Baker, FOH engineer for Simple Minds, who had heard the F2 and liked it. "As a result, I managed to land the tour in 1989," recalls Keith.

When John Tinline left to start Encore, Keith set up Capital Sound Hire in September 1989 with the F2 system — subsequently adding significantly to his inventory. In fact Simple Minds were to become synonymous with the F2 during the passing of the decade.



The Martin Audio F2

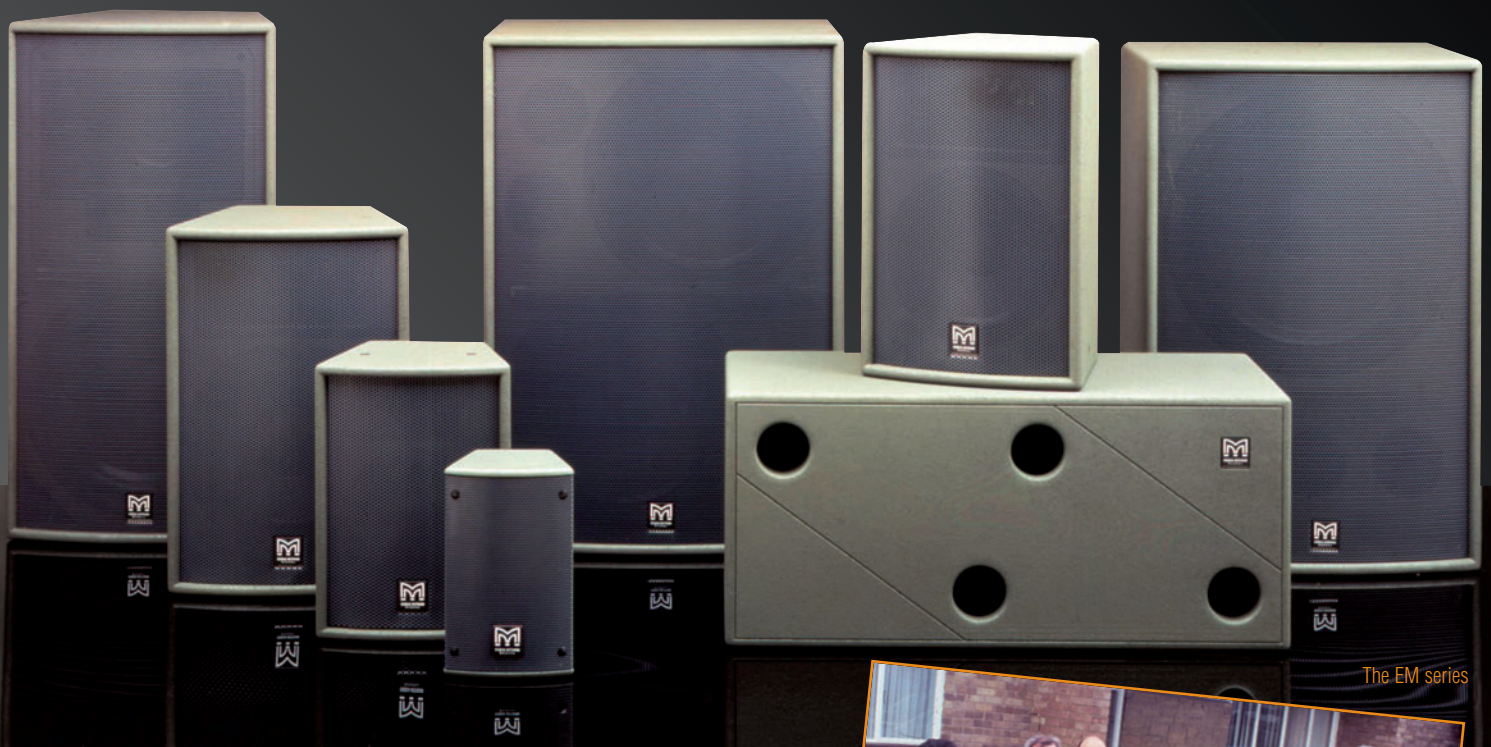


Flown F2 system



Roger Lindsay

The Nineties



The EM series

For all his touring and design expertise, Dave Martin was no businessman — and he had not been able to really grow the business to the extent his ideas deserved. It was hoped the move to High Wycombe would mitigate the huge costs and shipping problems associated with having a central London address.

By the end of the decade well-known audiophile David Bissett-Powell, who had long been a keen admirer of Dave Martin, was now a director of Tannoy/TGI.

TGI — who had been the first company to float on the Stock Exchange after the Black Monday crash of 1987 — was looking to acquire a loudspeaker brand for the professional touring market. At the same time Bissett-Powell recognised that Martin Audio badly needed assistance — and in particular an MD, which would allow its founder to concentrate on loudspeaker design and development.

Although Dave Martin sold the company to TGI in 1990 he was to stay on as managing director for the next 18 months. “But after 18 months the group board came to me and asked if I would be interested in taking it over — which coincided with Dave having outside interests and wanting out,” remembers David Bissett-Powell. After accepting the situation Dave Martin agreed to stay on a part time basis as Engineering Director.

With his pin-striped suits David Bissett-Powell’s businesslike appearance was far from the culture to which Martin Audio had been accustomed, as he walked through the door at Lincoln Road, High Wycombe in April 1991, on his first day as the new MD. It was also a far cry from the commercial audio brands he had worked with previously.

“Dave was a quirky character but under it all there was some brilliant engineering,” reasoned the new MD.

“He had some pretty amazing ideas and most of what he designed — the F2 and modular concept for instance — were ahead of their time. Most would agree that the very first touring ‘standard’ was [Dave Martin’s] ‘Philishave’-



Top: Dave Martin, David Bissett-Powell and the team
Middle: The W8C

Bottom: Bill Webb, Director of Engineering



based rigs of the '70s. For that alone, he is worth credit but his constant experimentation took him into flying systems, well before others considered it feasible, and even the beginnings of what is now accepted line array technology. All this back in the '80s!"

Martin Audio's staff were quickly brought down to earth from their Christmas celebrations when they learnt that their founder was missing, presumed dead — apparently murdered following a confrontation with his business partner Colin James (in a non-audio business venture). The date was 28 December 1992 — Dave Martin's body was never found, but his former partner was arrested and convicted of his murder.

Meanwhile David Bissett-Powell continued about his business with authority, ensuring that the company would enjoy a 20% year-on-year growth up to and beyond the time they moved to their luxurious new purpose-designed facility — across the Cressex estate at Century Point in 1996.

If it was going to be a world contender and deliver strong growth, the new MD realised that Martin Audio needed to diversify from its touring heritage.

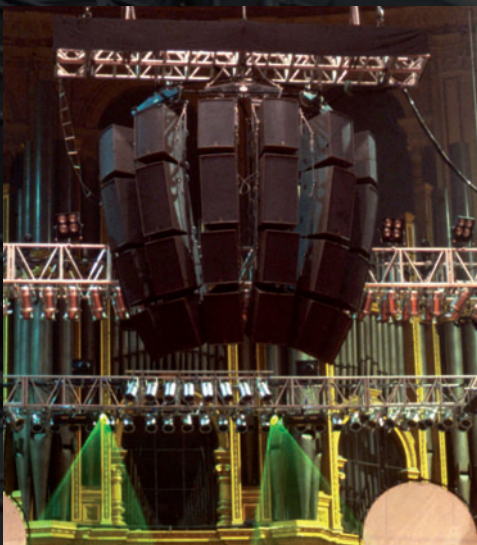
It came about after the MD noticed increasing enquiries from customers who wanted to install the F2, but he reasoned that the touring products were over-engineered for this type of application.

Hence from the beginning of January 1992 the company began development of installation-specific products, with the EM architectural range completed in time for the PLASA Show that September. The multi-component EM series would see them become a major player in installed sound at a time when both the retail pubco's were rolling out huge high street estates and the nightclub world was also burgeoning. The move to the contractor market had been crucial ... and timed to perfection.

One of the new MD's first moves had been to bring back the long-serving Bill Webb, who had meanwhile become independent — undertaking design work for the likes of Turbosound and Trace Elliot, as well as contributing to the EM Series. Bissett-Powell reasoned, "I needed someone on the inside and I had tremendous respect for Bill's work." He was immediately made Director of Engineering.

Bill was joined by another pro audio veteran, Martin Kelly, and the galvanized team helped transform the company.

At the same time no-one was about to take their eye off the core touring business, and a recognition that the F2 system was getting long in the tooth led to Bill Webb designing his revolutionary Wavefront 8. The next generation of tour sound reached the market in 1995



Flown W8Cs

(headed by the tremendously successful Wavefront 8/8C touring systems). At the same time it baulked the theory, once and for all, that "if it doesn't have a 2" compression driver it won't sell."

The large format W8 cabinets used two horn-loaded 12" and one 6.5" cone driver for low-mid and high-mid respectively and a 1" compression driver/horn assembly for high frequencies. The more popular W8C (Compact), which followed in its wake, reduced the cabinet size and weight by omitting one of the 12" drivers, and soon captured the imagination of both the touring and installed markets.

The shift from a 2" compression driver to the 6.5" cone/1" combination was a milestone and remains a cornerstone of Martin Audio philosophy. Webb explains, "I put a 2" driver and the 6.5"/1" combination side-by-side, set them up so that they produced the same

output and listened at very high levels. Every time I switched to the 2", I literally took an involuntary step back, it was so painful in comparison."

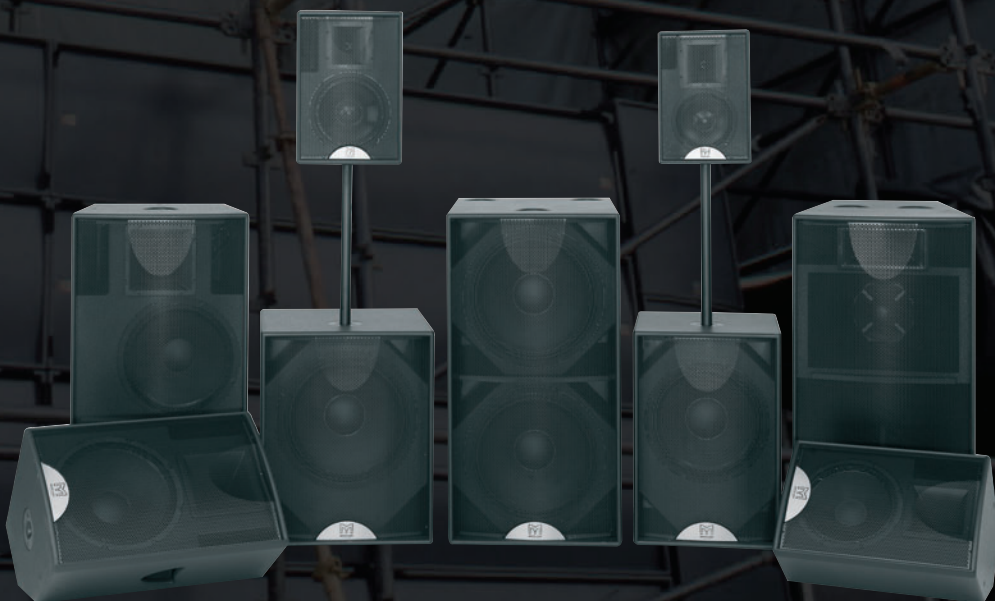
As for the original Wavefront subwoofer (W8S), this used an unconventional design based on a horn-loaded 15" driver and reflex-loaded 18" driver in separate acoustic chambers within a single cabinet, with identical dimensions to the W8. The W8S was soon joined by the larger WSX subwoofer, a folded horn S-bin design based on a single 18" driver and the ideal partner for the W8C.

The Wavefront series grew to include a number of smaller cabinets for mission specific tasks (such as theatre) — some borrowing technology from the larger units, or otherwise based on conventional reflex-loading techniques.

The Blackline series, positioned below the Wavefront series, targeted portable and club systems, and THX approved cinema systems expanded the product portfolio further.

By the end of the 1990's Martin Audio's sales had grown nearly tenfold over the decade following Dave Martin's disappearance. This was largely due to a first class distribution and rental network around the world, augmented by new senior management in the form of pro audio stalwart Rob Lingfield, Financial Director Anthony Taylor and engineering guru Jason Baird.

Growth in China, in particular, was spectacular — with Martin Audio rapidly becoming the undisputed leader in the high-end karaoke and club market. And in North America, Rob Hofkamp established the Martin Audio office to support the US customer base. With over 50 distributors worldwide, everything was set fair for the new millennium.



The Blackline Series

The 2000's



W8L Longbow Arrays at the Glastonbury Pyramid Stage

Martin Audio entered the line array arena shortly into the new decade, with the W8L (later upgraded to the Longbow), followed by the W8LC and W8LM (Compact and Mini) line arrays.

These combined innovative horn-loading techniques — no-compromise vertically-coupled waveguides and true constant directivity horns with line array technology — to produce extremely powerful systems with maximum dynamic impact.

Providing levels of efficiency and coverage consistency not usually found in this popular format, with easy-to-fly rigging hardware, once again the Martin Audio brand quickly established itself throughout the world. Long-standing users Delicate Productions in California and Capital Sound in the UK quickly adopted the new line arrays, as did the Synco network of independent European rental companies.

In 2002 the TGI Group (consisting of Tannoy, Goodmans, Lab Gruppen and Martin Audio) was acquired by TC Electronic to form the TC Group.

However, Martin Audio would not remain long in the Danish company's fold. By August the following year the directors of Martin Audio and TC Group announced a successful management buyout, supported by ISIS Equity Partners plc and The Royal Bank of Scotland.

In a statement at the time, David Bissett-Powell said: "The management of Martin Audio have long aspired to independence and are pleased that under the TC Group we have had the opportunity to attain this goal." Independence lasted until March 2007, when the company was sold to US audio technology group LOUD Technologies.

Back in the field, Synco partner RG Jones Sound Engineering has provided the sound for the legendary Pyramid Stage at Glastonbury since 2008, using W8L Longbow cabinets. Capital Sound also hit the road with the resurgent Take That.

Today, Martin Audio is not only renowned for its touring systems, but it also has a huge presence in the fixed installation and contractor markets across the world, in particular high end dance clubs and cinemas. In retail it can be seen at such chic boutiques as Calvin Klein, Armani and DKNY, as well as Hard Rock Hotels and globally at two of the world's biggest dance brands, the Ministry of Sound (including the original London venue where the brand is used exclusively) and rival superclub, fabric — a few miles away.

In fact in 2011 Martin Audio again won the Best Club Sound Design at the prestigious *International Dance Music Awards* in Miami (having also taken it the previous year), for the groundbreaking ASX active dance system, designed by Jason Baird, at the Ministry of Sound's London venue.

Whilst David Bissett-Powell is now no longer involved in the company, and Rob Lingfield sadly passed away in 2011, Martin Audio, under the managing directorship of Anthony Taylor — who has himself been with the company for 17 years — remains in extremely competent hands. Bill Webb handed over the engineering director reins to Jason Baird in 2008 and remains involved part-time — a link between the Dave Martin days and the technically exciting present.

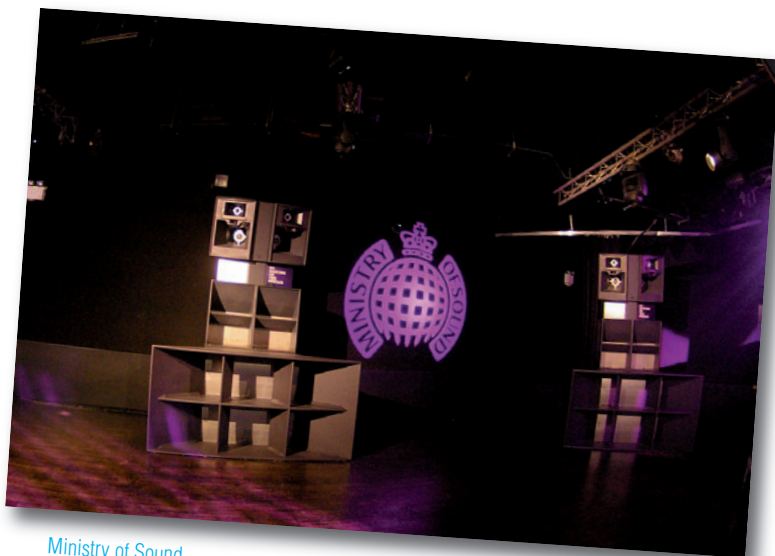
Certainly, the reach of Martin Audio's new generation of scientists and engineers knows no bounds — and they have saved the finest until last, beautifully book-ending four decades.



Keith Davis and Paul Timmins, Capital Sound



Take That stadium tour



Ministry of Sound

Firstly they introduced the multi award-winning OmniLine system — a modular, scalable, micro array system, using intelligent software to deliver audio precisely over any vertical angle to fit the venue profile (without spillage). With elimination of high frequency side-lobes giving it an advantage over current DSP-steered columns, it has proved to be ideal for highly-reverberant spaces such as houses of worship and shopping malls.

And with R&D now under the direction of Jason Baird, 2010 proved to be a landmark year. At a time when few believed there was a future beyond line array he spearheaded a team which invented a new technology called the Multi-cellular Loudspeaker Array — made possible by in-house research models which enabled array behaviour to be investigated in a virtual 3D environment.

Instead of the commonly cited goal of producing a coherent wavefront at the speaker grilles (usually way up in the air in real-world deployment), MLA aims to produce optimal summation at the listeners ears, throughout the audience.

Combining unique optimisation software and breakthrough cellular array design, MLA delivers coverage and consistency not possible from previous touring technologies — with up to 144 individually powered and DSP-addressed cells in a 24-enclosure array.

The MLA received its just rewards at the *PLASA Show* in 2010 when it justifiably picked up the top *PLASA Gold Innovation Award* — some feat for a product which when all said and done is still a loudspeaker.

Today Martin Audio components can be seen everywhere. Even as I put the final words to this opus I gaze up at the television to find emerging band Noah and The Whale playing live in a BBC studio, with a pair of new generation LE monitors providing the foldback.

David Bissett-Powell summarises the Martin Audio brand value best when he says, “I’d estimate that 90 per cent of all the equipment manufactured by Martin Audio since 1971 is still in use today. Ruggedness, great sonic quality, roadworthiness — the ‘M’ logo sells because it’s reliable and will stand the test of time.”

And through it all, a bronze bust of the company founder has sat benignly in the foyer, tacitly smiling down on visitors on arrival at Martin Audio’s Buckinghamshire headquarters. It would surely have shed a tear on September 12th 2010 when Jason Baird proudly collected that prestigious *PLASA Award*, which has defined the company’s blueprint for the next ten years.



The OmniLine micro-array module



MLA flow system



Special Events Services MLA at US Cellular Field, Chicago



Jason Baird receives the PLASA Gold Innovation Award for the MLA

In North America

At the first opportunity, Martin Audio pursued David Bissett-Powell's vision to gain a firm foothold in the North American market — despite the many failed attempts by British pro audio manufacturers to conquer this territory over the years.

Rob Hofkamp had been working with Tannoy since 1982, but following Terry Bennett's formation of the TGI Group towards the end of the 80s became sales director. When Martin Audio joined the fold in 1990 the North American distribution company were soon pioneering sales of the High Wycombe company's premier touring products, such as the F1, F2 and VRS800.

Over the next seven years TGI North America handled the distribution for all of the TGI brands before the Martin Audio MD decided that the new commercial products being produced — notably the Ceiling range, EM series and ICT500 — warranted a dedicated independently-run company.

Rob Hofkamp took up the challenge and set up Martin Audio NA, a wholly-owned subsidiary of the parent company — along with technical sales manager, Jack Alexander. "It was formed in January 1998 — the same month as Rob Lingfield joined," he remembers.

Their key clients were Smoother Smyth's Californian-based Delicate Productions and Clearwing Productions in Milwaukee, both using the F2 System. But today this has grown to around 40 tour sound companies in the States buying Martin Audio product.

A long term follower of David Bissett-Powell's philosophy (since their days together at Tannoy) Hofkamp smiles, "He was a master at hiring workaholics who were passionate about what they were doing. Every year we had to be profitable and grow the company slowly, brick by brick. His management style was about empowerment and allowing people to do their jobs — based on entrepreneurial thinking where everyone was an owner. We have always managed to return a profit."

Rob Hofkamp acknowledges that he has been helped considerably by product evolution — and some breathtaking innovations. "It was largely thanks to OmniLine, the in-ceiling speakers — of which we have sold thousands — and the W8VDQ — which is a great dance box — that commercial audio today accounts for 60% of turnover. This has helped to offset the cyclical nature of touring."

But with MLA the wheel has turned again, and they are back at the forefront of tour sound, with early adopters such as Special Event Services (SES) and On Stage Audio (OSA) leading the charge.

"This is visionary and groundbreaking — in fact I remember Bill Webb back in 2005 saying 'We have to go beyond where everyone else is'. It's a testament that with MLA we have done just that."



Rob Hofkamp (left) with Martin Audio dealer Mike Harris



The Ceiling Series

In The Far East

Back in the 1980s Martin Audio started to look increasingly at the potential of the Asian markets (and particularly China) where huge opportunities existed. In conjunction with Patrick Lau at distributors DCH, David Bissett-Powell set out a roadmap which involved taking a fresh approach to product introduction.

“At that time, the private or individual entrepreneur was really starting to emerge and so we focused directly at the customer,” recalls Lau. “This proved to be a huge success.” In rapid time, the entertainment sector started to embrace Martin Audio products, in particular the Blackline series, and Lau states that nine out of every ten new clubs opening featured the brand.

“Following the appointment of Huifeng Group by DCH as their premier entertainment dealer, Martin Audio appeared in thousands of clubs in first tier cities,” he said. “Having achieved this, our next target is the second and third tier cities as well as the cinema business, as investors are now seriously considering this market.”

The faith invested in the region by Martin Audio took on a whole new dimension in the summer of 2008 when Patrick Lau formally joined the company to set up a dedicated Asian office, based in Hong Kong — providing the region with easy access to local support.

This led to a split of the business into specialised markets. Firstly in early 2010 Beijing Instar Trading was established as the company's dedicated cinema distributor, whereupon they were awarded the contract to supply Martin Audio to the prestigious Jackie Chan Cinema chain.

Meanwhile, the arrival of the pioneering MLA system has reinvigorated Martin Audio's touring business. Beijing Pacific Budee took responsibility for distributing touring and commercial projects, enjoying immediate success with W8L Longbow, W8LC, W8LM systems. They were also responsible for selling the first MLA system into MAX Production, Hong Kong, which saw the system debut to a full house concert in Asia World Expo, Hong Kong. This allowed DCH and Huifeng to focus on the entertainment sector, primarily bars, clubs and karaoke.

The newly-appointed Japanese distributor Audio Brains, was also quick to adopt the new MLA system, enabling sister company MSI Japan — the second largest rental company in the country — to debut it on the major *Rock In Japan* festival (equivalent in size to Glastonbury) in early August. “MLA received an excellent response from the sound engineers and audience alike,” reports Patrick Lau. “In fact the changes in distribution are adding new momentum to Martin Audio in the APAC region.”

Among them is Philippines-based JB Music, who since taking over the distribution early this year, have sold W8LC, W8LM and new LE monitor rigs to local rental companies — a highly impressive achievement in such a short period of time.

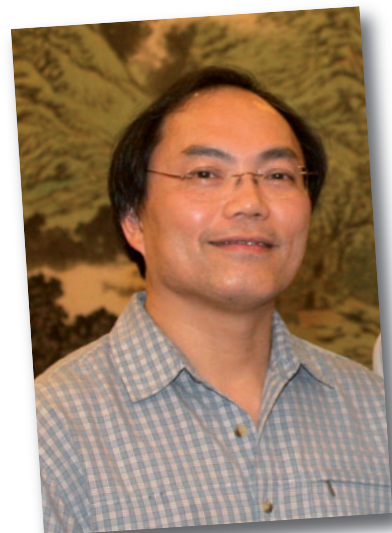
As the region continues to develop, the Martin Audio success story looks set to continue.



David Bissett-Powell, Regan Goh of Huifeng, and Anthony Taylor



Huifeng showroom/demo facility



Patrick Lau



With thanks to all Martin Audio staff, customers and users – past and present.
This publication is dedicated to Dave Martin and Rob Lingfield.

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