Any Colour You Like Sir

Graham Waine visits Avitec to take a close look at the new Colorpro spotlight

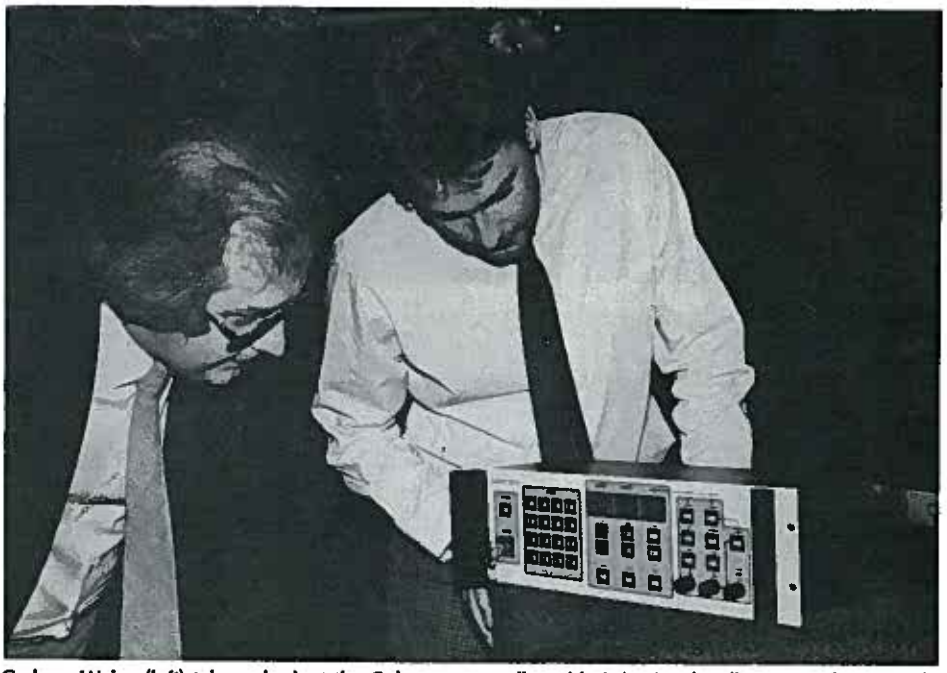
The twin worlds of disco and rock have obliged the theatre to open its eyes and mind to new products, to new techniques and to new ways of solving old problems. Theatre can teach rock and disco something too, especially about sensititivy, safety and reliability, but as the gap between the cultures narrows, some exciting things are happening. For example, in a previous L&SI I reported on the Opera North rig which was almost totally comprised of pars; who could have predicted 20 years ago that a rock and roll spotlight would light Verdi? Now Colorpro is another significant step in a movement which began with Pancan and in which developments are concentrated on the lightsource rather than on the control.

I was considering starting this article with the old favourite 'I've seen the future . . . and it works' but it's a misleading phrase because it suggests that I've been given some sneak preview into the spotlight laboratory, and am about to whet your appetite only to dash your hopes with 'of course these devices won't be available for years yet'. How often have you seen that phrase loom large in the final paragraph of a report on a new car? So this time it's a delight to report on a product which is available **now**.

Colorpro is a spotlight which offers remote control over the generation and recording of colour selection and it was created by Lightwave Research in the USA. The projected colour is produced by mixing the light output from three MR16 lamps each of which has its own dichroic filter; sensibly there are no moving parts. Since each of the lamps can be dimmed individually the number of combinations is virtually limitless and the colours can be mixed either by fading down from white or by building up from black, and then a crossfade can be programmed between snap and 50 seconds, and a master dim is proportional.

Interestingly the manufacturers found that commercially produced dichroics lacked consistency and so they now produce their own. I had a very interesting half-hour asking for paler tints rather than the purer secondaries (easy, easy) and the results were the most impressive I've yet seen from this kind of spotlight. In purist terms the beam is not as even as one would like for some applications, there is some minor clouding and striation although these are only really noticeable in the tints, and in any case how many theatre spotlights produce as even a beam as those they are intended to replace?

The Colorpro - all electronics are built into the lamp housing.



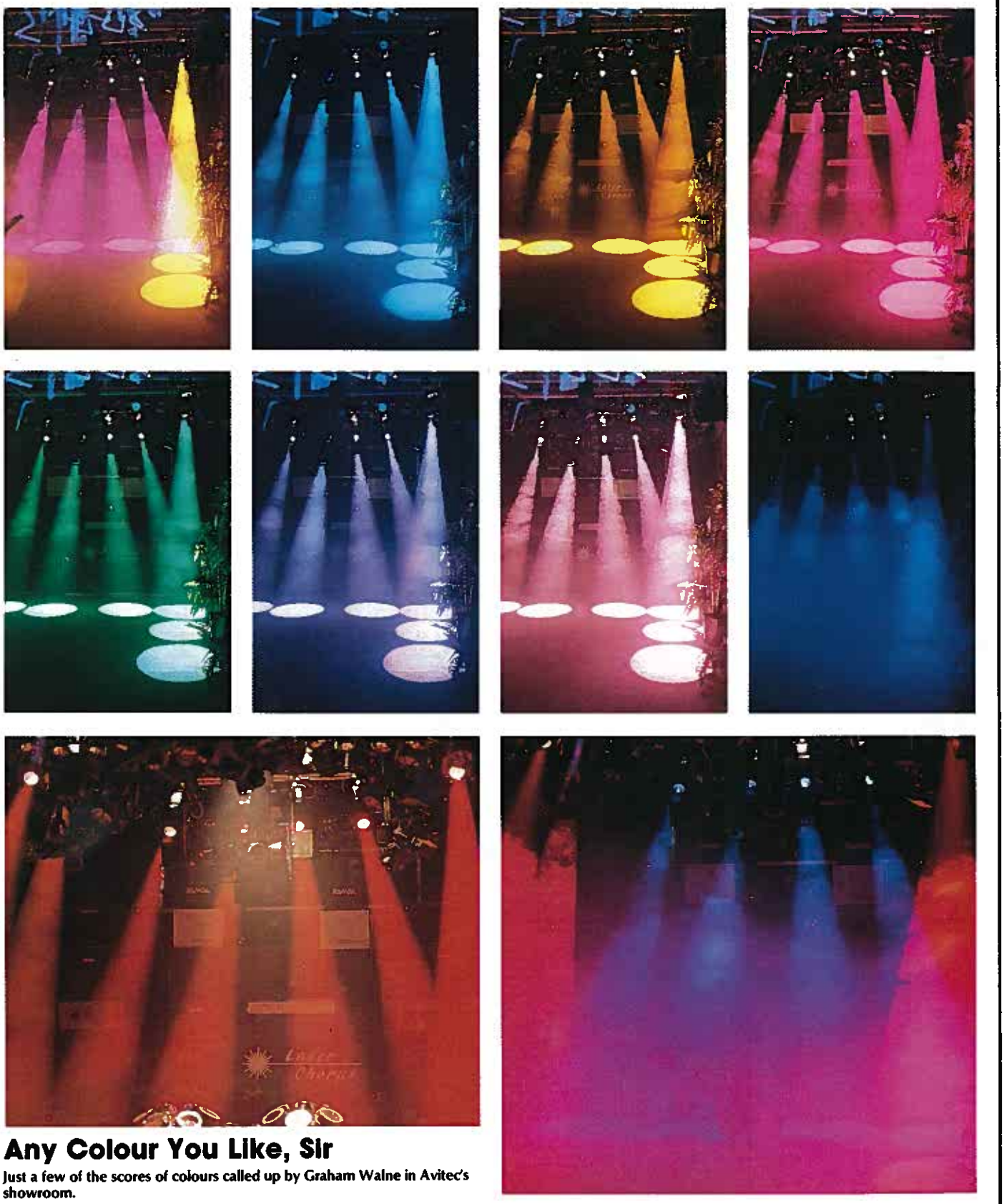
Graham Waine (left) takes a look at the Colorpro controller with Avitec's sales director Andrew Morris.

Paul Dodd of Avitec shows the author the dichroic filter system.

'Spotlight' is probably the best word for Colorpro, but if the word conjures up images of theatre luminaires, then I should explain that it does not as yet offer the same degree of control over the size and edge of the beam. The spotlight produces a circular hard edge beam which can be defocussed but which I would estimate to have a fixed beam angle of about 15 degrees, but there is also a gobo slot although it is non-standard size, again.

All the individual spotlight electronics are built into the lamp housing (echoes of Magic Lantern), and since each spotlight can be selected to listen to any one of 16 channels via a multiplex link, the electrical installation is simple. The controller itself, which is a 3U rack mounting panel, can talk to up to 128 spotlights and by slaving a maximum of 1280 spotlights can be reached via 160 circuits. An attractive feature is the auto-check whereby the controller assesses the status of the lamps at switch on and reports on any that are dead. As the colour selection is being mixed it can be identified by a number which indicates the percentage of Red, Green and Blue in the mix and this setting can then be memorised for subsequent repeat playback.

The controller stores 9 memories each of which contains 99 pages each of which in turn can store information about colour selection and dimming for 16 circuits of spotlights. Further storage is available either by slaving to another controller or by accessing any IBM compatible PC via the RS232 interface. The controller can also talk to remote devices such as touch sensitive

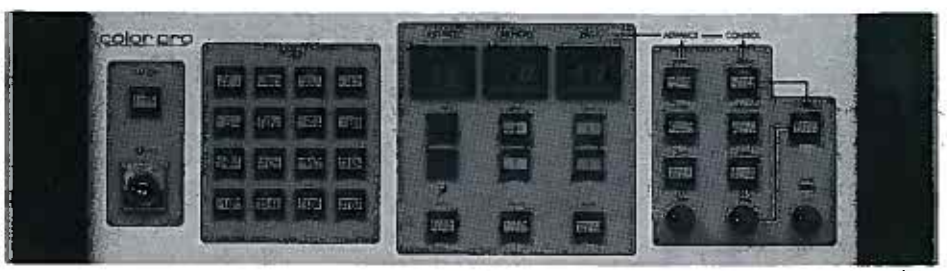


Any Colour You Like, Sir

Just a few of the scores of colours called up by Graham Walne in Avitec's showroom.

keypads for random accessing or pre-recorded states. Despite this, I think that the controller is unlikely to be suitable for all applications and look forward to some exciting developments in this area.

I am conscious that I have looked at this device through 'theatre' eyes, but Colorpro is much more than just another disco light. It offers a new dimension to smaller clubs, fashion shows and trade shows where its flexibility will win out over theatre's sophistication. Once it is upgraded to move remotely then it really will be a catalyst across the whole industry.



Programming the 891 pages or scenes of the Colorpro controller is done quickly and easily on the front panel by utilising region, select, memory, and erase keys. Copying functions are included to provide the user with a way to rapidly duplicate colours on a page. The controller contains 9 memories, each containing 99 pages. A page contains 16 output regions that contain colour and dimming information. A standard RS232 connector allows memories to be saved on most personal computers. Pages can be advanced manually, with user preset rate, or through audio sync.

Entente Cordiale

John Offord visits the new La Parisienne and La Pigalle complex at Folkestone and sees Avitec's first fully-installed Colorpro system in action.

Days past, Folkestone's 500-seat council-owned Marine Pavilion, situated practically next door to the cross-Channel ferry port, used to have its regular pattern of live entertainment. The summer season ran and ran, until eventually the line of kicking legs got smaller, and the money for the glitter ran out.

The council wisely decided to put their money into a major refurbishment of the much grander Leas Cliff Hall on the nearby cliff top and after continuing with a summer show for a couple of years decided to call it a day and opt for a mixed pattern of entertainment with regular big name shows.

Meantime, the poor old Marine Pavilion began to look a sorry 'site' - and not the least bit impressive to either Europeans coming off the ferries or British visitors to the Town.

But things may be changing in Folkestone. The advent of the Channel Tunnel has made people look at life somewhat differently, and new ideas and investment are beginning to brighten up the general outlook.

Part of the this positive approach has seen James Godden's company turn the Marine Pavilion into a very up-market discotheque and adjacent fun pub complex. 'La Parisienne' has been designed to enhance the idea of closer links with the continent, and 'La Pigalle' - the fun pub - is billed as the Soho of Paris. A total capacity of around 1700 is

At La Parisienne (left to right): Paul Dodd, Steve Tulk of Lightwave Research (the man behind the electronics behind Colopro) and Avitec md Tony Kingsley.

the result, which is a lot more than the old theatre, where they would have been glad to have even reached three figures on many nights.

It opened its doors on July 22, and general manager Philip Elton believes that with the advent of Night Network and with European charts coming into our homes every night there will be much more awareness of the European music scene. "The British scene is still the best," he told L+SI, "but it's time we explored the best of music from the Continent. There is a lot of talent over there that is now being developed for a wider market."

To back up this approach the venue has a large array of video equipment, and if music video is your scene, then you won't move far in La Parisienne or La Pigalle without being tuned in to the best that satellite TV can offer.

The venue is plush internally, and Avitec light and sound plush with lighting and sound equipment. And it is a major 'first' as far as the lighting industry is concerned in that it is the first major installation in the UK to base much of its lighting design on the use of the new Colorpro lanterns from the United States.

Avitec's designer Paul Dodd has used no less than 48 Colorpro units - 36 for the dance floor, and 12 for the stage. For maximum flexibility, the stage lanterns can also be turned for use on the dance floor, and both areas have dedicated Mode U16 touch controllers and separate Colorpro controllers. The Mode U16's are linked so that all Colopros can be handled together when being used on the dance floor area. "It goes along with Avitec's philosophy of being able to access any light and enable any zone from the touch sensor control system," said Paul Dodd.

The lighting is fitted to a floor-supported Meroform rig, and there are 24 channels of 3D neon display controlled by a dedicated Zero 88 Orion. Other main features are 12 Laser Chorus units, 4 Nisel Music Flashes, 4 Sear Duowave 10's, 4 linked Synchro Scans, 8 Kremesa harvesters (4 horizontal and 4 vertical), and a large amount of Mode Arcline.

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Playlight

All power packs are Anytronics 5 and 10 amp. Control is from a small balcony area which is fine in itself, and gives the lighting operator a good view **into** the rig, but not much idea of what is happening on the floor. Maybe they'll change that, or give the LJ either a TV-view of the action or some sort of periscope system. Lighting in the fun pub includes a 24-head Colibri system, 8 Beam Cats, and 2 Ice Starflash strobes.

Sound in the discotheque is provided by 4 Cerwin-Vega L36JE folded horn cabinets, 4 Cerwin-Vega SW18 bass cabinets, and 2 DSM200 Spruce Moose mid cabinets with JBL2425 and 2404 tweeters. They are powered by C-Audio SR808 for bass, Avitec Beta 808's for mids, and Beta 500's for high. Signal processing equipment includes an Avitec G30 graphic, a BX33 stereo crossover, and a Symetrix 501 compressor/limiter. Fill speakers are Ramsa WS70 and Dynacord 8030's, and the mixing console is a Dynacord 8030. There are two Technics SL1210's, a Denon cassette deck, a Mission PCM7000 CD, and a Revox B77 tape. There is a separate sound system for the fun pub.

Paul Dodd controls Colopro - top and right.

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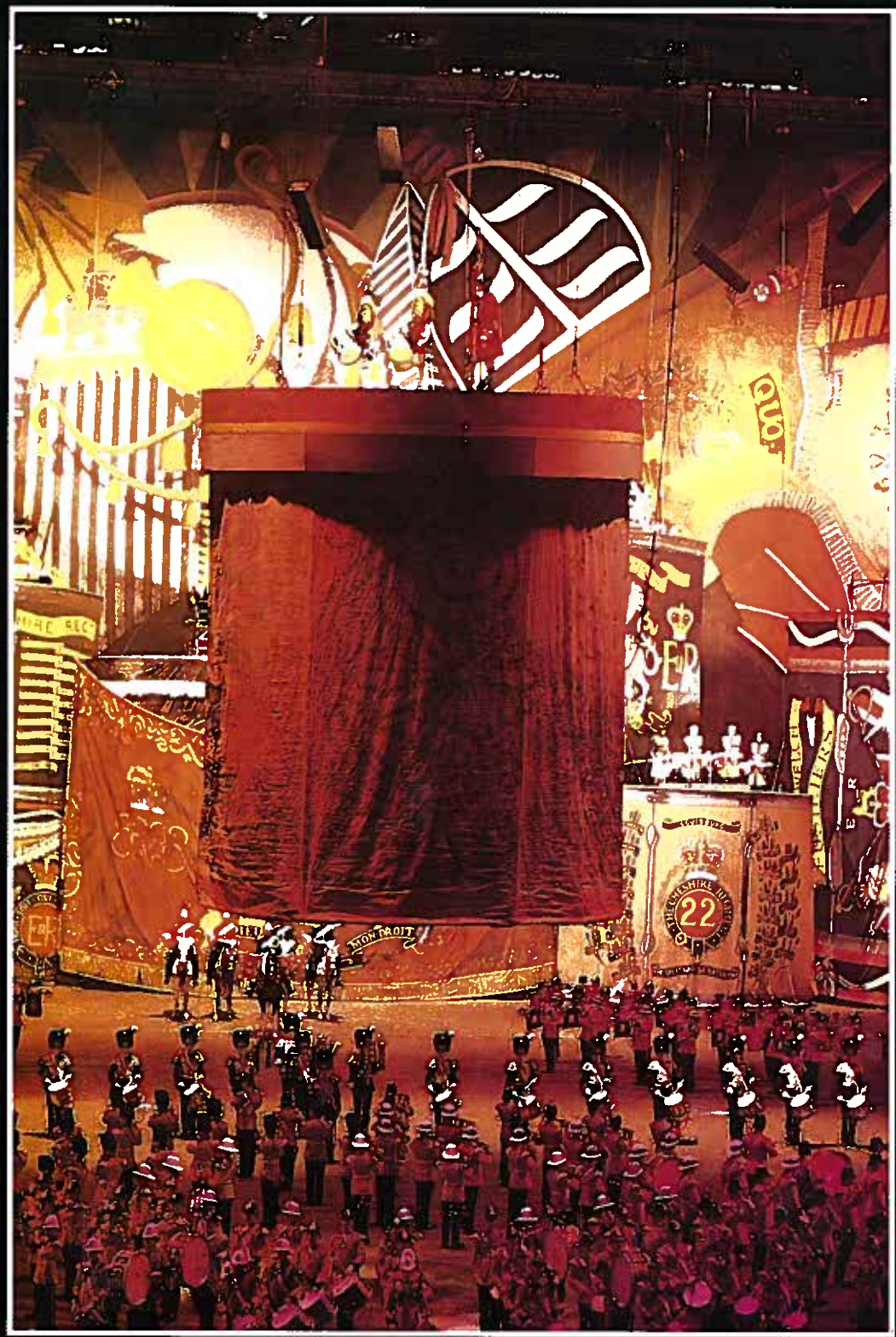

Lighting the Royal Tournament - see cover story page 5.

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