

Love of a Gold?

John Pope

Two years ago, when Celco launched the "Series 2" range of memory lighting desks, through innovative design and appreciation of user friendly technology, they established themselves firmly in the forefront of the market. Part of this success was due to market research into various areas of the entertainment industry.

By asking questions and listening to ideas and suggestions put forward from lighting designers and board operators Celco were able to produce a range of lighting desks which specifically responded to the demands of the industry.

Now, two years on, in response to further research into 'end user requirements', Celco are poised to reveal their flagship of the current range. The Series 2 Gold ninety-way lighting desk at the Frankfurt Music Fair.

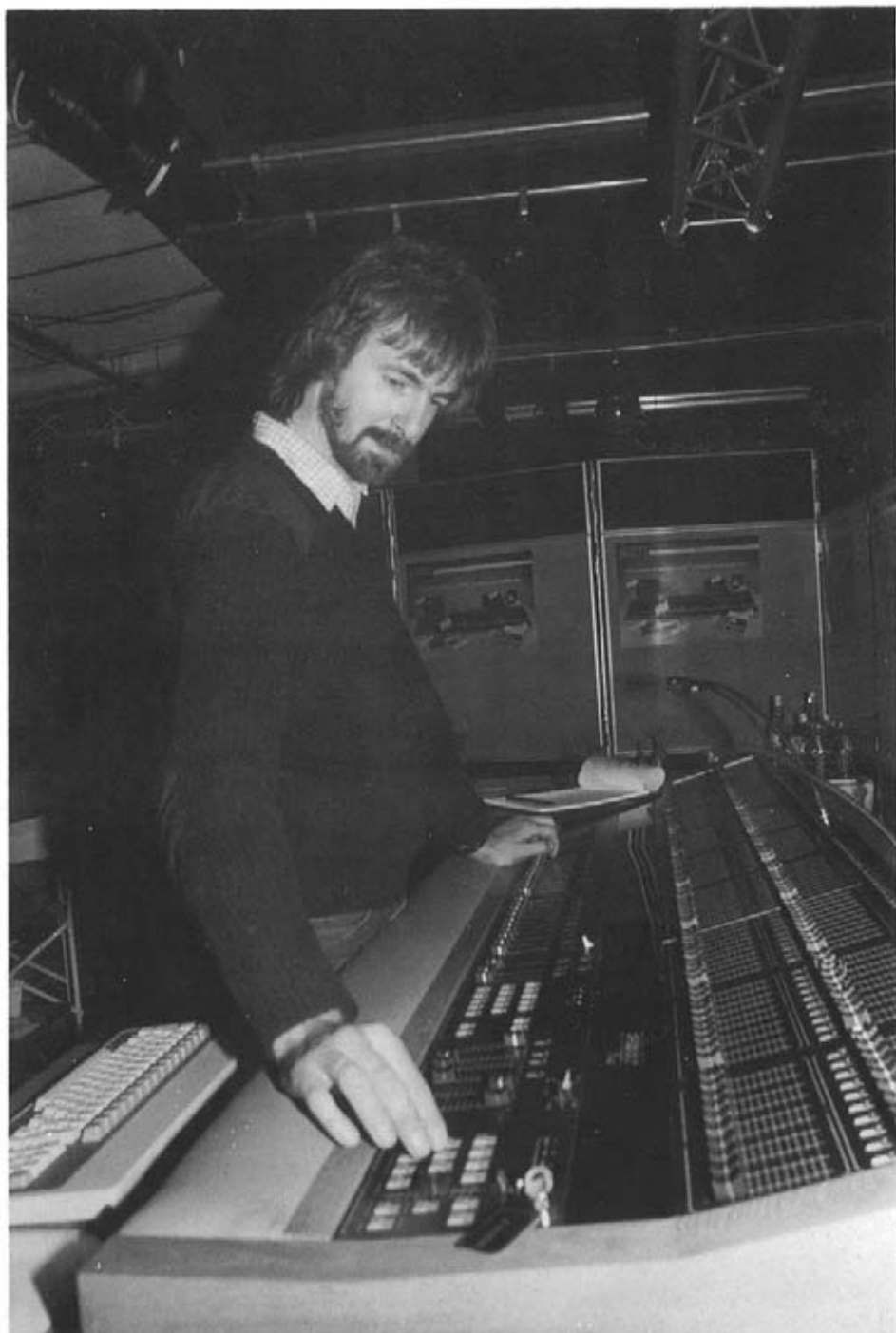
At a recent preview, my attention was immediately drawn to the marked improvements in appearance that have been undertaken.

An impressively styled and quality finished wooden surround envelops the control area, which together with the new leather armrest and the re-design of the two pre-sets at an angle to the operator, in contrast to the flat level of its predecessor, lend the desk an overall feeling of sizeable quality.

Two wooden drawers, on smooth operating runners, are at each end, housing in one a built-in keyboard and in the other a Sony Pro Walkman for use, should you wish, for cassette back-up. Both can be individually switched to allow external units to be connected if so required. Although not fitted at the time of this review, there will be three clips in the cassette drawer to serve the desklights during travel, and both drawers will be able to be secured in the open-closed position. It would be a bonus if at the same time locks could be fitted to both drawers as, unlike the keyboard, the Sony Pro Walkman is not build-in and to install another desk light into the keyboard drawer, as when fully extended, it becomes difficult to use with just the desk lights.

A new, more light reflective matt black finish has been applied to the control areas, and in conjunction with new blue flash buttons fitted to the Memory Page and the sequence sections, combine to give an overall 'lighter' look to the desk. The option to revert to black, or change any other flash buttons to blue is available, along with many wood and leather finishes.

The remaining layout keeps faithfully to the original format of the Series 2 desks, of which there are only two minor features that I would wish to see changed. The first is that the Dead Blackout toggle switch is still black, when considering the various stages of panic that have been known to set in if it is in-



John Pope, lighting designer for the Tasco Group, examines the new Celco Series 2 Gold Board.

advertently knocked during a show, could at least be white like the flashbutton toggle switch, if not red! The second concerns the position of the markings by the sequence speed fader. If they could be moved to the operator's side, then it might do away with the sticky bits of tape that are necessary there if various speed sequences are required.

Technically, the facilities that the Gold presents the operator may not at first glance appear quite so radical as the cosmetic changes, but given time and familiarity they will come into their own. They include Dipless Crossfade, Page Freeze, Cue Lock, 16 more Sequences and C.L.E.A.R. — all of which are easily accessed through independent keys fitted to the keyboard. When

Dipless Crossfade is activated, all timed crossfades present in the desk will operate as dipless providing, of course, that there is at least one common channel present.

With 'Page Freeze' the operator no longer needs to load the X-Master to hold the output of the cue fader whilst changing from one page to another. Now, by leaving the same cue fader up he can change page and change all the other cue faders except for the cue fader that is still up, which will hold its output until it is brought back down to zero and change to the new page's memory.

The 'Cue Lock' feature, once keyed in, will allow groups of cue faders from 3 up to 29 to remain constant whilst changing through pages. This could be very useful when the operator wishes to continue particular memories throughout all the pages, as it is no longer necessary to programme these every time into each page.

The extra 16 sequences have been made available through dividing the 8 sequences into three sub-groups A, B, and C at the keyboard. They can now be programmed into any of the 30 cue faders, giving much better access to sequences during operation, but their speeds cannot be entered into each cue fader, and are still determined by the levels on the sequence speed fader which has been modified to increase its fastest output.

CONTROL C.L.E.A.R. when entered by depressing the control key and then entering the aforementioned letters will clear all the

memories and legends in the desk at that time. This does away with the time consuming operation of clearing the memories in the desk after its use on a previous job, but is perhaps, considering its possible 'doomsday' capabilities another strong reason for having those locks placed on the drawers.

All these extra facilities have been realised in part by extra memory capacity found in the new Central Processor Units that now run at 6 mhz, instead of the previous 4 mhz, a by-product of which is a much faster response time that can now be found in all the flash buttons.

When the angle of the two pre-sets was raised, the location of the control multicore connections were also moved, so that it is now possible to attach the multicores without having to lift the desk out of its flightcase, which now boasts the addition of six wheels to cope with the increase in size and weight. Three fans have been fitted for much cooler running and operating of the desk. The Master/Slave switch has been recessed, so it is no longer possible to knock it whilst lifting the flight case, and the Cassette Interface now features phono connections as well as D.I.N. I was disappointed though to note the absence of a mains XLR outlet, which when connected to a 4 way 13A plugboard would provide valuable mains outlets, one of which could be used to run a mains adaptor for the Sony Pro Walkman as it does not receive mains from the desk.

A bigger disappointment was the absence of a much needed faster memory transfer system, to replace the 18-minute cassette, but I'm informed that Celco are currently working on a new memory system which should allow information to be stored in fifteen seconds, and by having the benefit of no moving parts, should escape some of the problems that befall floppy disc systems under touring conditions. This should be available later this year, together with an Eagle Interface for specific use within the Audio Visual Industry, a Control Voltage Interface for use with dimming systems that run at different control voltages to the desk, and a Multi-channel interface for linking more than two boards together, or two ninety-way desks.

Since its launch two years ago, I have worked with Series 2 desks on almost every occasion, and have found them, by comparison, reliable and a real pleasure to work with particularly within the Audio Visual Industry where the Blind Programming, Preview and Output Limit facilities have proved invaluable. With the launch of the Series 2 Gold, Celco have moved forward into 1986 with a desk that combines new facilities and improvements with an imposing and expensive appearance that should re-open markets where up to now, 'The Biggest is Best' have long held reign, and in conjunction with the various interface systems available later in the year, can really strengthen their position.

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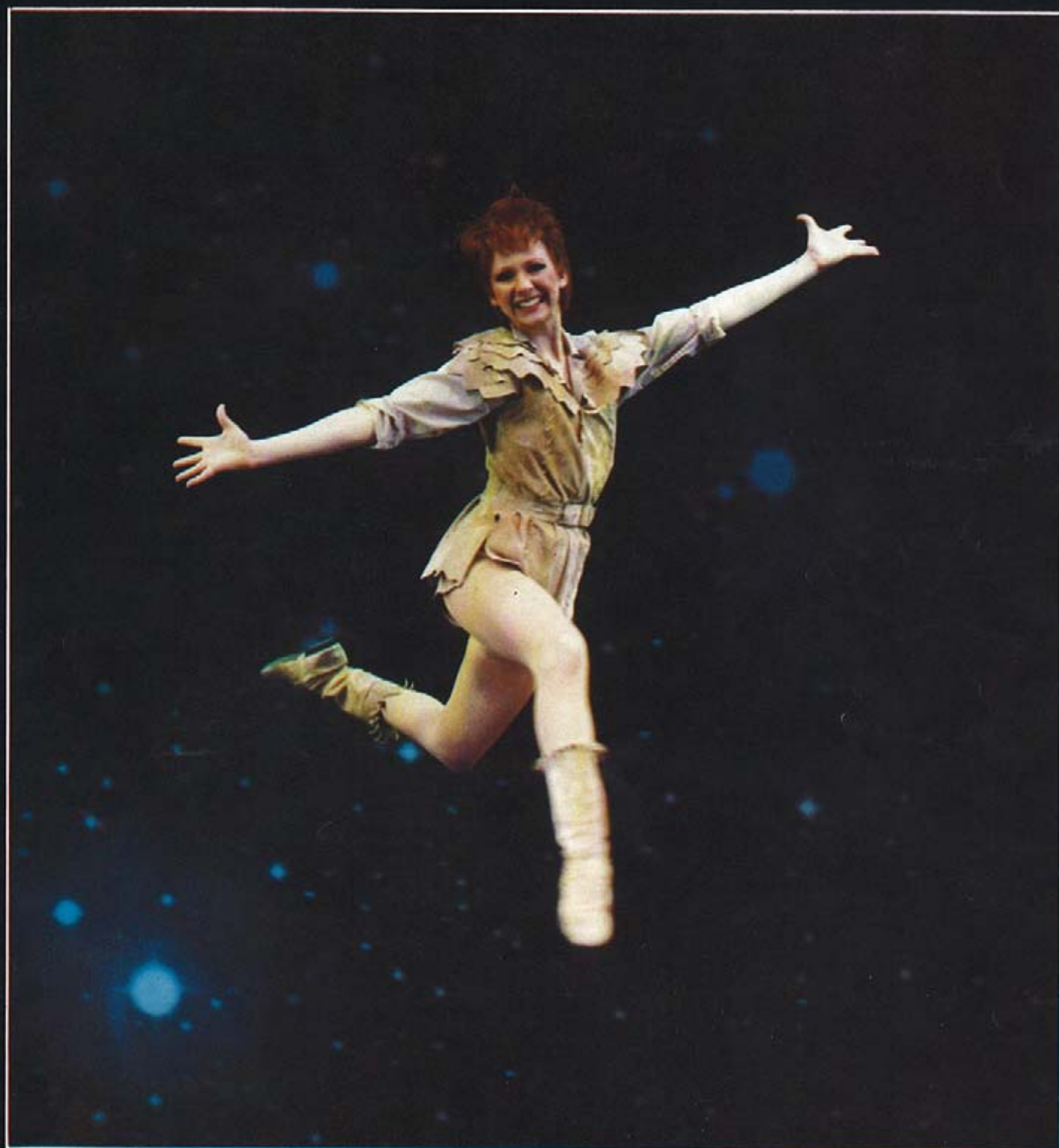
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