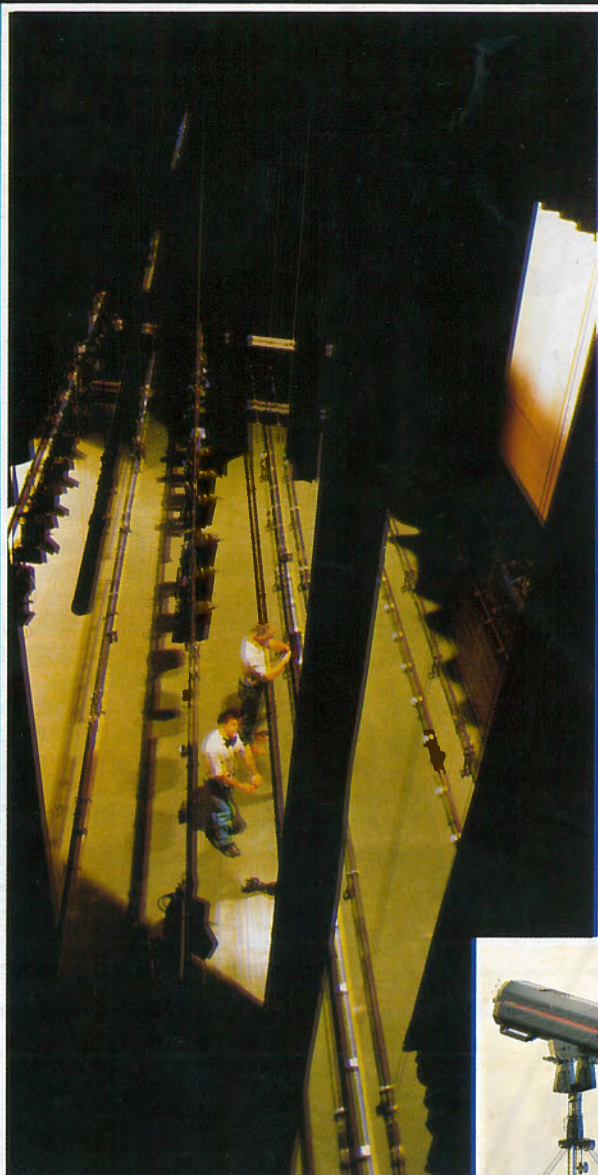
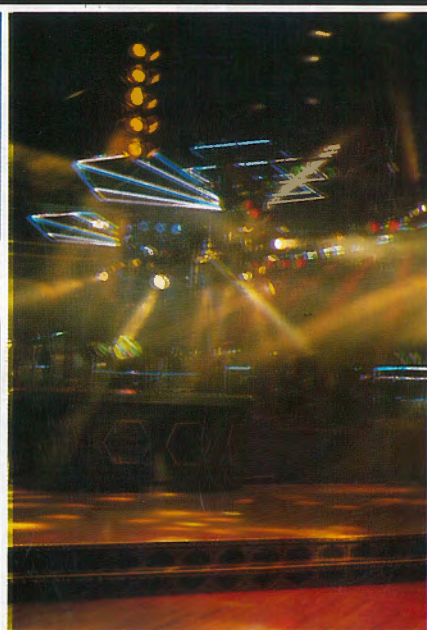


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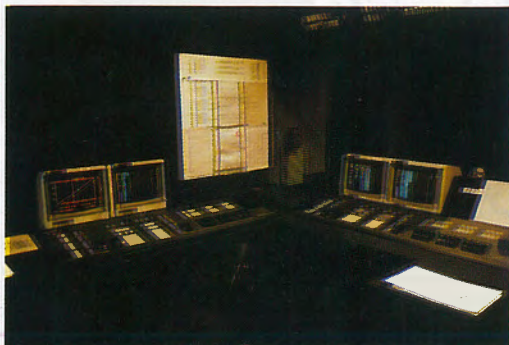
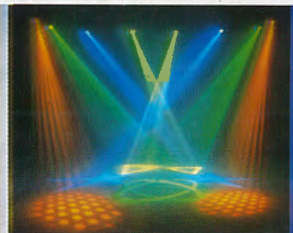
Eurolight at Sola Kulturhus, Norway



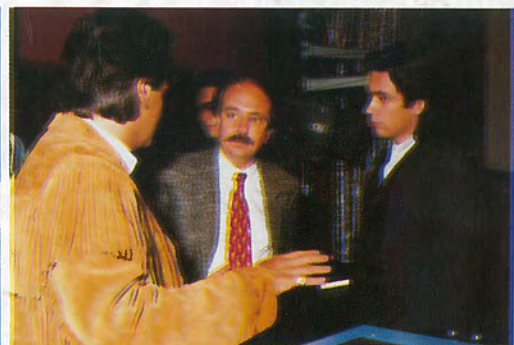
Discotheque Round-Up



Bruno Dedoro and Mike Lowe on Coemar and Teatro



ADB Double S28 Mkl at La Scala Milan



Jean Michel Jarre at Ludwig Pani, Vienna

PLASA

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The Coemar Story

John Offord visited the giant Coemar complex at Castel Goffredo in Italy and talked to the master of effects, Bruno Dedoro.

Designer engineering is the real forté of Bruno Dedoro and his company Coemar. And when you marry that to the most subtle and colourful of effects lighting, the combination is a world beater. It's about using Italian flair to its fullest, and coupling it with a high standard of organisation and professionalism.

And when Bruno Dedoro talked to me about the founder of the company, Simone Marcucci, it was in glowing technological terminology. "He was a fantastic optical and mechanical engineer," he said.

Marcucci and his wife Laura founded Coemar in Milan in 1933, and it was the nearest you could get to a Strand Electric equivalent in Italy. Early production of optical lenses and mirrors led the way to the production of domestic and stage projectors, and many other products such as military signalling equipment, overhead projectors, studio lighting, and so on. And the company had two factories: the Milan plant produced large optical parts, whilst a smaller operation near Castel Goffredo specialised in precision optics.

The company continued to develop in the same areas after the war, but in the later sixties Marcucci's health began to fail and the business began to suffer, and the decline was sharpened drastically when the Japanese entered the optics market in a big way.

Bruno Dedoro began working for Coemar when he was 14, doing evening work, and he soon joined the company full time. He stayed in the technical department and by the time he was 20 he had been given overall responsibility for this part of the business. "The Marcucci family knew me from when I was very young, and they let me do what I wanted," he explained.



Bruno Dedoro

Coemar were one of the first companies to use aluminium alloy extrusions, and Bruno Dedoro was busy designing and drawing products at the age of 17. "I've always had a great passion for mechanics," he said. "I was lucky because I was taught by many good engineers at College. They made us think carefully about how things should be put together for the production line, and about all the practicalities of design."

He went to college in the evenings for seven years, and was able to put what he learned to practical use during the day in Coemar's workshops.

"His skill in designing die-cast components is the best I've even seen," said Teatro's Mike Lowe.

In the mid-sixties discotheques had begun to interest the young Dedoro. "I saw people using slide projectors and then we developed disk wheels, colour fluids, and so on, so we came up with a projector specially designed for discotheque. And that's how we started."

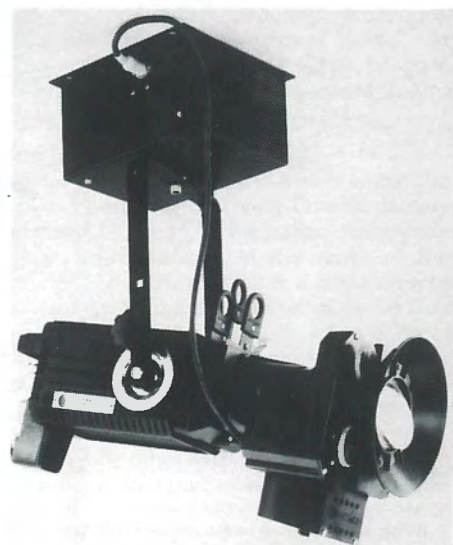
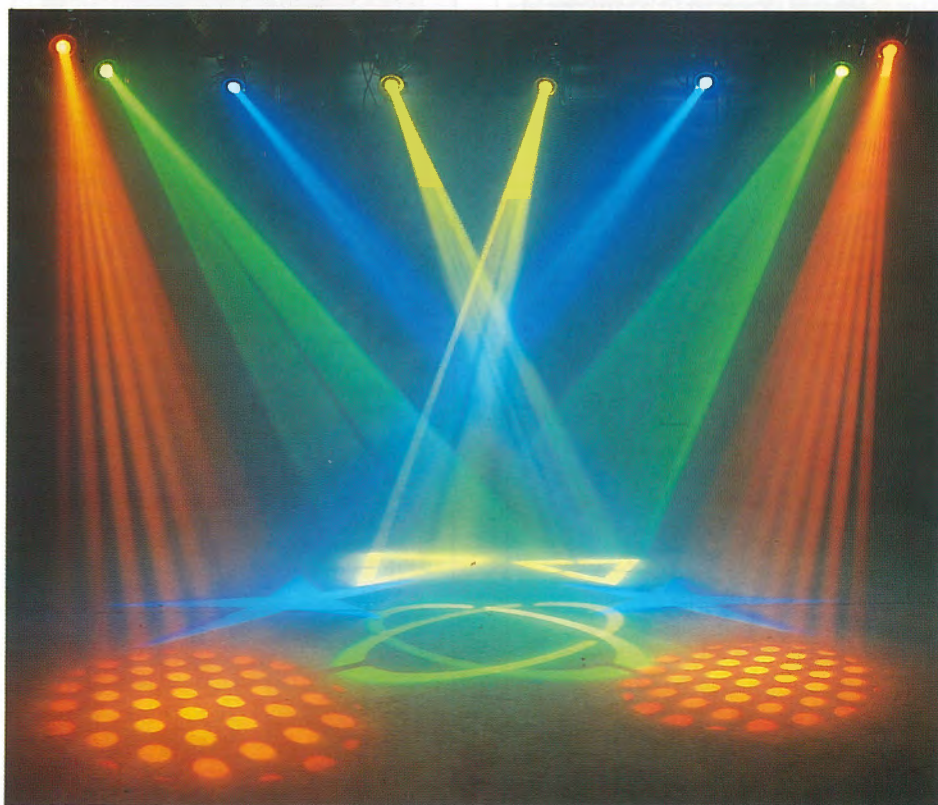
In 1972 Coemar concentrated all its activities in Castel Goffredo. "I wanted to come back to my home town, so we moved all the machinery from Milan," said Bruno Dedoro. Employee numbers were now down to just seven people, and products were a few spotlights and the Explorer and Siluro projectors.

Management problems continued and in 1974 Dedoro became the owner. "The company was not in good shape, and the point came where I said I would either buy it or leave it," he explained.

From that point on there was no holding Dedoro and Coemar. Every year between 1974 and 1980 the turnover doubled, and there have been significant increases over recent years. From 1986 to 1987, for instance, a jump of 30% saw turnover hit its present £10m level.

Dedoro had cleverly guided Coemar along the crest of the disco boom and he remembers the excitement of the earlier period. "People would see our drawings and order on the spot. There was an immediate response from the market. We had a good name and we sold goods as fast as we could produce them."

The strength behind product development came from a very big home market. "There is a much bigger disco audience in Italy," said Dedoro. About half of all products were exported, mainly to French and German markets. "The British were not so easy to convince until we formed Coemar UK," he said. "Optikinetics and Pulsar were very strong competitors - and they still are in the field of electronics. The best electronics are from the UK, but the British didn't invest in equipment and that's why we went ahead in this area."



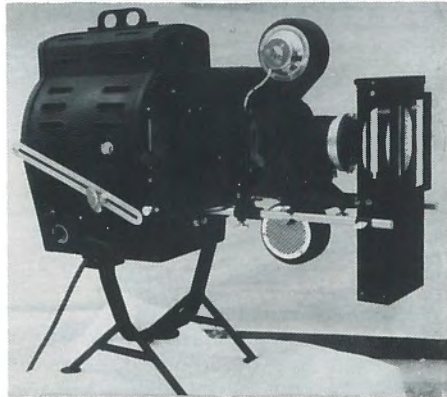
One of the latest: a Coemar Forte projector with effects unit (above) together with some examples of its output (in colour, left and facing page).



Coemar at Castel Goffredo. The new building can be seen in the background.



Pre-war Coemar - the Milan factory.



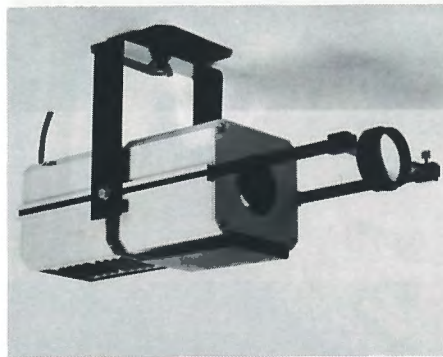
Five Super 5000W scenic projectors were installed by Coemar in La Scala Milan in the mid-sixties.



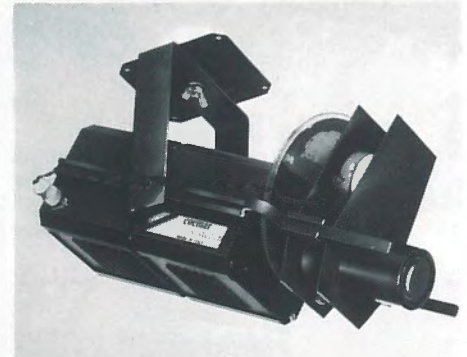
Setting up lighting at St. Peter's in Rome with a 5000W fresnel in centre of picture.



Circa 1957: a studio in Milan fully equipped by Coemar.



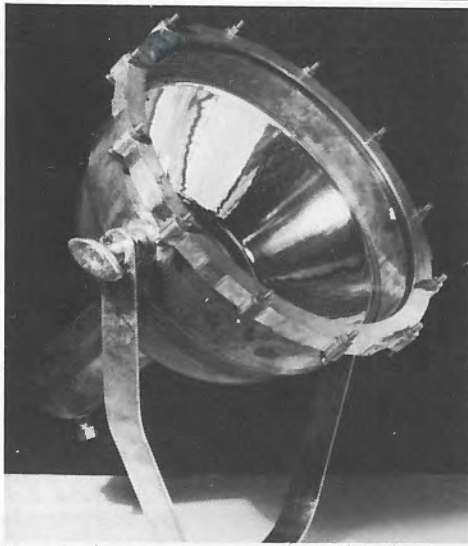
The first Coemar projector specifically for discotheque - 'Explorer' - was introduced in 1961.



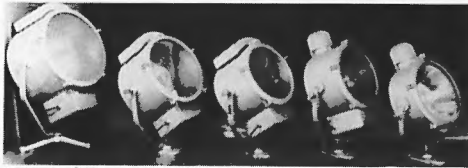
An Explorer with a fluid disk wheel and drive unit.



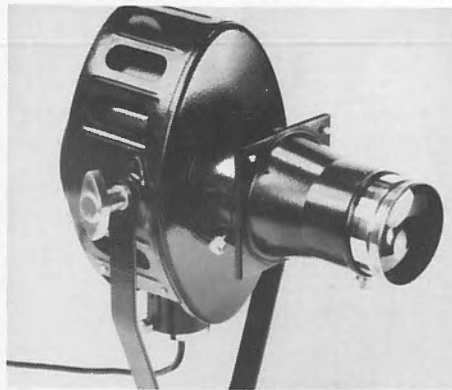
Coemar Specials Past



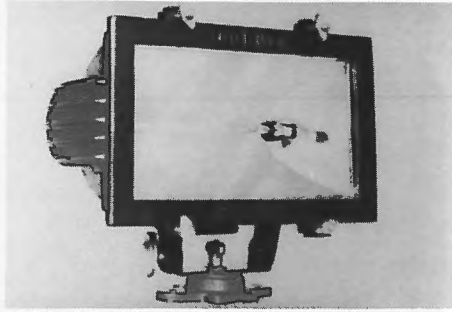
A copper lantern for underwater use (1961).



A complete range of outdoor lanterns.



The Coemar 'Giant' 500W profile (1957).

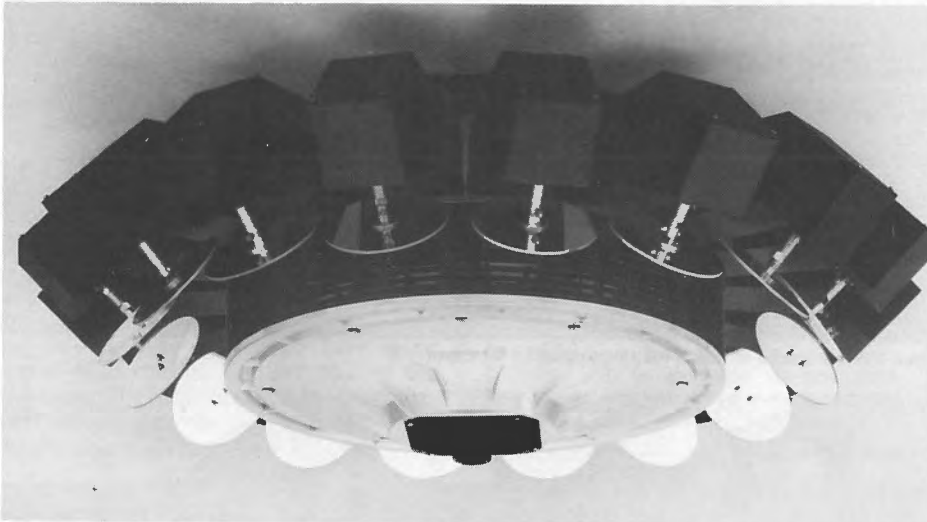


The 'Jodolux' lantern for outdoor work.



A lantern for long distance outdoor work (1946).

Special Effects Present ...



Two of Coemar's latest effects - the 'Piovra' (above) and the 'Astuto' sound-to-light beam scanner (below).



With world markets at Coemar's feet, Bruno Dedoro's attitude to products is unselfish and confident. "Our products are exclusive to our own design, whereas theatre products are the same the world over. Discotheque products are individual items from different companies."

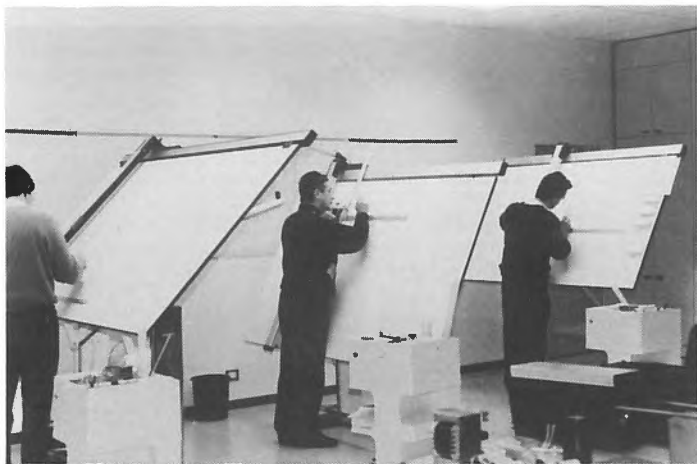
The strength behind this self-belief in a product's 'designer' label is in the company's expertise in using die-cast components. "I have always believed in die-castings, and people recognise our products by their style. We have our own design and systems for products and in this way the company has become specialised in this field. Other companies may be better than us in sheet metal work, for instance, but die-cast products are our trade mark."

Die-casting also helps keep the number of component parts in a product down, but it is also expensive in terms of investment. It needs an investment of around £175,000 to tool-up for a major product at today's rates. And playing the numbers game with the firm's computers produced some interesting results. In 1987 Coemar had 101 regularly used main die-castings, and used a total of 228,420 die-cast components in the same year to make up a catalogue of 180 different products and accessories, not including worldwide variants.

The total staff number 74, with another 40 or so on sub-contracting work. And it turns out that the sub-contractors, now busily establishing their own little enterprises, are all former workers from Coemar. Why? I asked. "To gain space, and because it's every Italian man's dream to be his own boss," said Bruno Dedoro. "The most important thing for a product is the tooling - not the factory building. A woman of 20 in jeans is better than a woman of 60 in very expensive furs. You have to keep your priorities right."

Point taken, but Coemar do have very expensive and smart-looking premises, recently expanded with the addition of a newly-built 27,000 sq.ft. production, design and test complex that also houses the offices of Teatro, the new Coemar/Mike Lowe partnership discussed earlier in this issue.

New products have to keep coming on stream for the entertainment market, and it



The design office is now situated in the new 27,000 sq.ft. industrial unit.



A Piovra effects unit in production.



The highly successful Coemar Robot, and below a bank installed at 'The Escape' in Amsterdam (see L+SI December 1986).



Bruno Dedoro with designer Angelo Boffelli.

is Dedoro again who usually conceives them. "It comes from an understanding of the market. I listen to customers' suggestions and know immediately whether such a product can be achieved or not," he explained.

There will be new things at SIB in Rimini this month, including the launch of a new projector range - as yet unnamed - with a new 700 or 1200 watt high output discharge lamp source. "A new lamp and a new lantern," said Dedoro. In the near future there will be a new effect for TV and concert use, and further new products will be launched at Photokina later this year.

But possibly the main development for the future of Coemar is its return to the field of stage lighting and the founding of Teatro.

"We started Teatro because we wanted to make something different, but it was also something in our blood.

"After such a long time we'd lost track of theatre, so in order to satisfy the need it was not enough just to have products. We needed someone who knew the market very well, and that's why we persuaded Mike Lowe to join us after he left Strand Lighting."

Bruno Dedoro's philosophy is simple. "I have a simple life, and the factory is our life. Everything goes into the factory. We live by the success of the company and we owe everything to Coemar. In addition, our designs have to be right.

"If you want to have progress, that's what you have to do."



Into the future: Bruno Dedoro and Mike Lowe pictured at Magis, Rimini in May 1987 - for the official launch of Teatro.



The Teatro stand at Magis, Rimini in May 1987.