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SPECIAL 40TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION



Martin Audio's First 40 Years

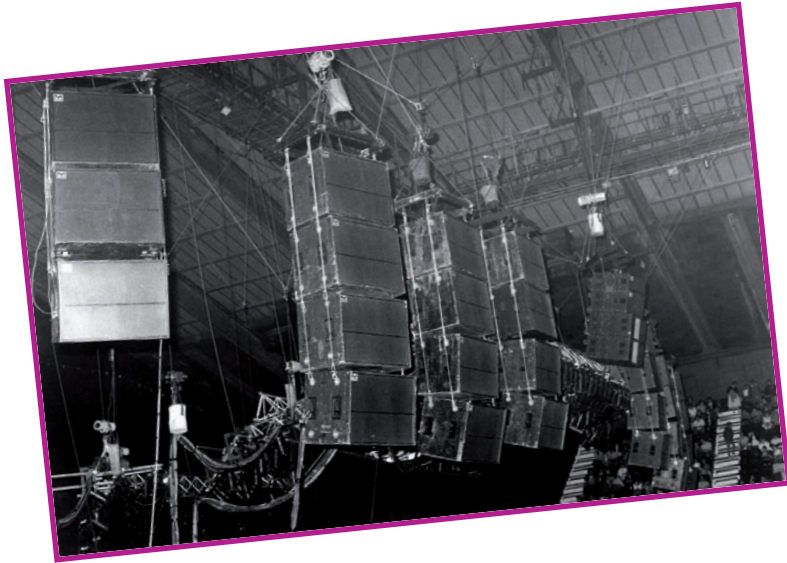
Author: Jerry Gilbert Editor: Bill Webb

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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'

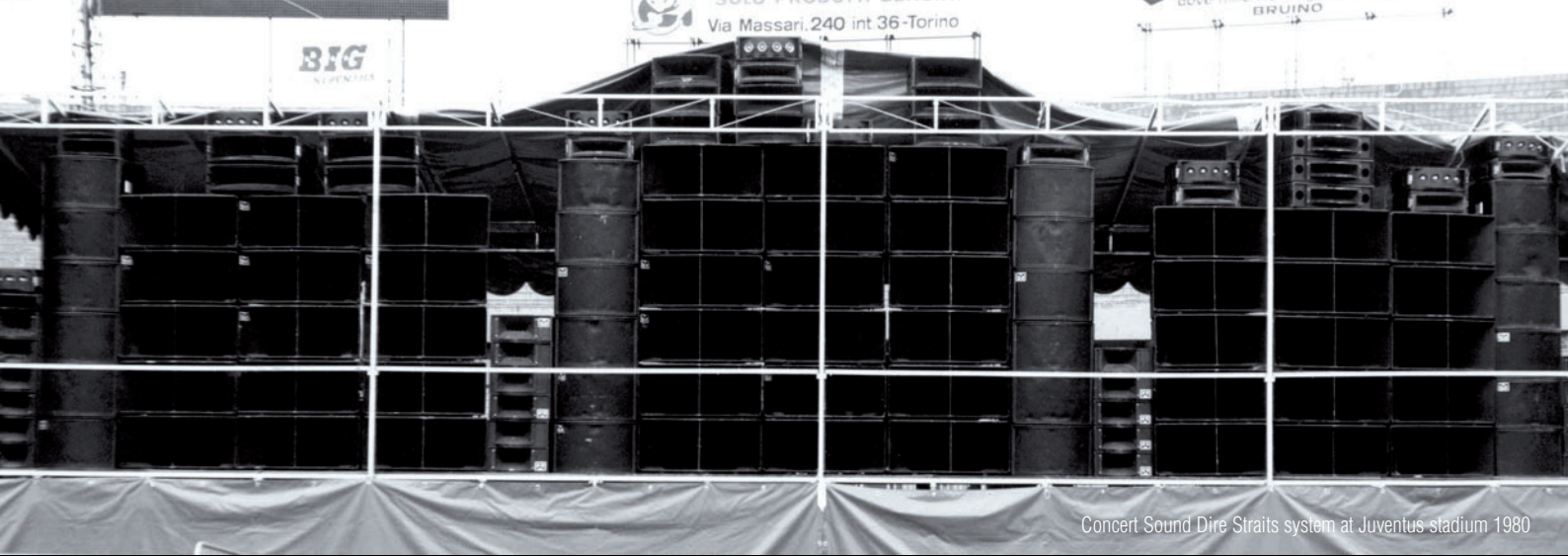
PASE had also opened its account in 1978. Their Martin Audio bin and horn system was typical of top flight touring at that time. It consisted of 12 x 115 bins and six Philishaves, along with some JBL 2350 horns with HF4000 drivers and four JBL 075 bullets — all driven with Crown DC300A amplifiers. The 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!"

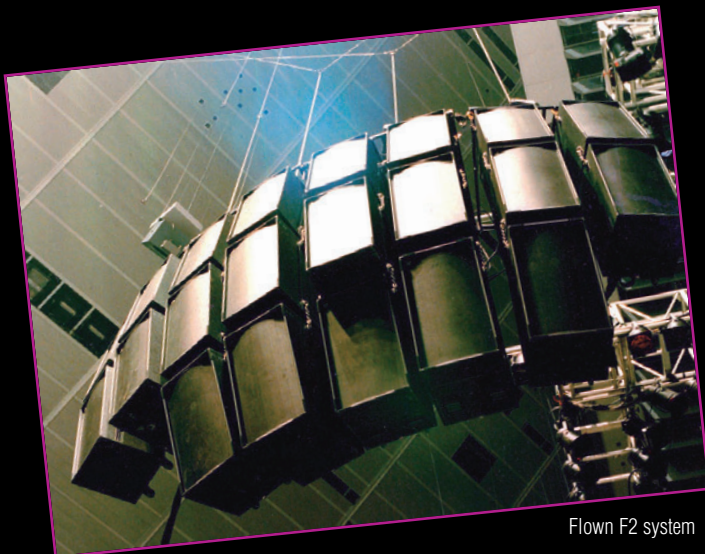
"Production rehearsals started in Atlanta and the system had never been used before, but Keith ordered 90 x F2 enclosures for the tour. They had to get a forklift truck to separate the cabs in Atlanta because they were shipped in containers to the States while the paint was still wet. But it was a great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