St Paul’s Cathedral

Installation at Melbourne’s St. Paul’s Cathedral
as featured in the Spring issue of
WORSHIP AUDIO ASIA Magazine

From WORSHIP AUDIO ASIA’s Spring 2008 issue, here is
the story of the challenging job of bringing an outstanding
sound system to Melbourne’s historical St. Paul’s Cathedral.

It needed the ability to bring excellent sound to every pew
and fit in without marring the dignity and beauty of the
traditional building.

Sound systems in a place such as
St. Paul’s should be heard
and not seen!
Audio and architecture

Working against cathedral acoustics and within heritage guidelines meant that the sound system for Melbourne’s St. Paul’s was going to be a challenging project. Tim Goodyer reports.

The current St. Paul’s Cathedral in Melbourne is a traditional Anglican church in the architectural style described as Gothic Transitional (meaning that is it partly Early English and partly Decorated). The foundation stone was laid in 1880 and the cathedral was consecrated in 1891, although the erection of the spires did not begin until 1926. Today it celebrates a long tradition of musical excellence, and is one of the very few Anglican Cathedrals outside of the British Isles to hold a Choral Evensong on Sundays and most weeknights. Organ recitals are an integral part of the cathedral’s services, alongside other music recitals, drama productions and art exhibitions.

The cathedral site can trace its history back to the first public Christian services held in Melbourne, led by Dr. Alexander Thomson in 1836. With the church moving away, the area subsequently became a corn market until 1848, when it was made available for the building of the bluestone St. Paul’s Parish Church. Consecrated in 1852, this saw service until 1885 when it was demolished to make way for the present cathedral. Services are held daily, and there is a busy list of special events that includes visits from international choirs and orchestras. It also has its own choir – one of Australia’s foremost choral ensembles that can be heard at Sunday Choral Eucharist and Evensong six nights every week. There are Carol Services at Easter and Advent and regular recitals of sacred and secular music from a repertoire ranging from the 17th to 21st centuries.

Since 2001, St. Paul’s Cathedral has been following an ambitious restoration and conservation programme. Along with many important structural building repairs, substantial work on the interior and a major upgrade of the building’s services is being undertaken. A key component of the restoration is a complete reworking of the cathedral’s audio distribution system – and it was with this in prospect that the services of Acoustic Directions’ principal acoustics consultant Glenn Leembruggen were called upon. His brief was to design and commission a modern and effective audio system, which would enable the cathedral to more effectively conduct its ministry and communicate with the congregation.

So what was the final result?

To quote Glenn Leembruggen:
“The St Paul’s system sounds fantastic. It has exceeded our expectations and our hopes and I think it should be a showcase for the AT product. Rutledge have done a wonderful install job. When you are next in Melbourne I suggest you attend a church service.

For cathedrals and churches that have a reverb time of less than 3.5 secs and a series of structural columns, this system has to be the optimum choice. It is also extremely cost effective, given its quality level.”

St Paul’s Cathedral have echoed Glenn’s sentiments when they said to him: “We believe that the installation of the new sound system has become the most important part of the entire restoration project.”
Andronas worked in conjunction with the installation team from Rutledge Engineering to provide a superbly installed system, with Acoustic Directions conducting the final commissioning.

'The St. Paul’s system sounds fantastic,’ says Glenn Leembruggen in conclusion. ‘It has exceeded our expectations and our hopes, and I think it should be a showcase for the AT product. Rutledge Engineering has done a wonderful install job. For cathedrals and churches that have a reverb time of less than say 3.5s and a series of structural columns, this system has to be the optimum choice. It is also extremely cost effective, given its quality level – when you are next in Melbourne, I suggest you attend a church service.’

The St. Paul’s Cathedral staff echoed Mr Leembruggen’s sentiments: ‘We believe that the installation of the new sound system has become the most important part of the entire restoration project.’
The Acoustic Technologies FLA8 dsp Focused Linear Array System processor/amplifier. The eight channel amplifier delivers 40 watts per channel with extensive onboard DSP capabilities.

Glen Leembruggen, Acoustic Directions’ principal acoustics consultant.

Acoustic Technologies Pty Ltd
Professional Audio Products
8-10 Staple Street
Seventeen Mile Rocks
Queensland, Australia 4073
Phone: +61 7 3376 4122
Fax: +61 7 3376 5793
Sales: sales@atprofessional.com.au
Web site: www.atprofessional.com.au

Richard Faint, Acoustic Technologies’ Director of Engineering and chief designer of the FLA8 dsp Focused Linear Array System

Glen Leembruggen, Acoustic Directions’ principal acoustics consultant.