



# Power Arrangers

For five years, GSL Power has been quietly building a reputation for high quality power distro and dimming solutions. Lee Baldock reports from Devon . . .



As good as new: Garry Lodge with a refurbished 1983 Midas PRO40 channel strip.

UK - When it comes to electrics and electronics, Garry Lodge likes to do things properly. His company, GSL Power, has for the past five years been providing custom power distribution solutions to a growing number of hire and installation clients, while in the background undertaking sub-contract assembly work to fund the long-term vision of establishing GSL as a stand-alone brand.

Underlying Lodge's approach to all this work is a desire to do it well. "I want to build a quality system using the best components; I want it to be easy to maintain, and I want it to last for a very long time," he explains. "In fact," he says, "the ideal is that I never see it again!" And when you learn that he has spent a large part of his 25+ year career building and servicing equipment, it's easy to understand why he feels that way.

Lodge is confident enough in the quality of his work to offer a 5-year labour warranty on everything that he builds. It's a long-term view, and one that appeals to customers who take a similar view. A fly-by-night operator won't necessarily invest in a system that will see him through 10 years of use, when there are cheaper options available. For that reason, says Lodge, it is sometimes hard to get customers to see the benefit of the higher price. But as he points out, he loves the work and doesn't over-charge for labour - far from it. "The cost of labour is where I have to be flexible," he says, "because every instinct I have tells me not to compromise on the cost of components."

Lodge began in the business when he joined Avolites in 1983, aged just 16. He stayed with the company for

18 years, and it was here that the quality ethos was ground into him. "I was lucky enough to find myself surrounded by quality people with high quality standards," he says. Avo's Murray Thomas was an early mentor. He recalls: "Murray used to say 'if God can see it, it has to be done properly'."

After leaving Avolites in 2001, he moved to AFM Lighting (now Panalux) where he ran the controls department - but after three years, you could say he had 'tired of London': ("20 years of Hangar Lane is enough for anyone", he says.)

At that point, Lodge swapped the traffic and crowds of the city for the picturesque open spaces of the West Country, and he and wife Lisa moved to Exmouth, Devon. Here he put his irrepressible enthusiasm into his own company, and began building power distribution kit for a few clients, while taking on the sub-contract work mentioned above. GSL Power undertakes a variety of sub-contract work, including for Lodge's old employer Avolites, many of whose popular control consoles are painstakingly assembled in Exmouth: these include Avolites' Diamond 4 Series of desks: Elite and Vision, and also its DMX data distribution products. Lodge also undertakes sub-contract work for his other previous employer Panalux, as well as for TMB and for Chris Crockford's Daft Data and Easily LED. Then there's refurbishment and upgrade work, in which he takes dated but otherwise sound equipment and rebuilds it with earth leakage protection circuitry. In another example, on the day of my visit he was refurb'ing old channel strips from a Midas PRO40 mixing desk - a desk which has, coincidentally, been working in the business for as long as Lodge himself.



Left: Garry Lodge (left) and Dave Whatley with a range of GSL racks.

Above: A GSL touch: a trough inside the module saves space.

But this sub-contract work, although benefiting from Lodge's quality ethos, is only a means to an end: for Lodge, building a wide and sustainable client base for GSL's own flexible power solutions is the long-term goal. And considering GSL's equipment is built to last, the wider the customer base the better.

"Everything we do is custom," says Lodge. "I don't tell people what they need, I let them tell me - then I provide it for them. There are so many different preferences when it comes to the way people like to work: you'll do one system for rental company A, and the opposite for rental company B, although they're both to do the same job."

Along with colleague Dave Whatley, Lodge has instigated a straightforward design, quote and build service to provide a quick and efficient solution to meeting power and dimming requirements. A written description or a list of requirements is translated into a glossy mock-up picture of a rack, with a suggested module layout and wiring order; from this, preferred changes can be agreed before the rack is finally built.

The ideal GSL approach is to use modular, interchangeable units - again something that is more expensive in the short term: "Individual modules in a rack means individual pieces of metalwork, and individual paint and screen-print jobs, instead of one flat-fronted piece of metal over the whole lot. It's more expensive, but it gives you flexibility from one job to the next - it's easy to swap out one module for another to suit your requirements. It's also better for service and replacement," Lodge explains.

To date, he has provided custom racked solutions to a number of leading rental operators including White Light, HSL Group, Panalux, Concert Sound, CoNi, Production Services Ireland and Cine Electric. White Light's hire director Dave Isherwood told L&S that he was "very pleased with the quality of the work they have done for us and their speed of response. It's also important that they are willing to build to custom specifications, or modify existing designs where necessary."

Lodge is particularly proud of an installed distribution board system he created recently for Bradford's Alhambra Theatre and St George's Concert Hall. The venues' technical electrics manager, Chris Barlow, told L&S: "The design was worked out with Garry to future-proof as much as possible. This was to enable us to continue to accommodate all the major touring shows that are on the road at the moment. Garry is very easy to work with and takes great pride in his work. The duster was always out, cleaning any fingerprints off the panels as he installed them! The panels are a solid build but if needed, depending on equipment touring or new design of sockets, they can easily be swapped out, making the whole system very versatile. I would be very happy to work with Garry again and will keep using equipment provided by GSL."

Praise indeed, and testament to Lodge's commitment to quality: as he admits, producing a flexible, quality solution is always a process he thoroughly enjoys.

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