

MOST ILLUMINATING

Panalux By Ron Prince



If you ever get an invitation to participate in a tour around a corporate HQ my advice would be: take it, they are always well worth it. So when the opportunity arose to pay a visit to lighting supplier Panalux's HQ in Park Royal, I embraced it with open arms (plus a face mask and slathered in anti-bacterial gel, of course).

The facility itself is nestled beside a McVitie's biscuit-making factory (more about that later) in the outer-suburbs of northwest London. Other than a brand-affirming sign, the premises look innocuous enough from the outside. The casual passer-by would have little idea that this Panavision Group company supports globally-acclaimed TV shows such as *The Crown* and *Peaky Blinders*, or movies like *Tenet* and *The Father*.

Heading indoors, the first impression when looking out from a mezzanine floor above the cavernous warehouse below, is 'Wow, this is a paradise for sparks and gaffers'. This panoramic, birds-eye-view reveals a maze of rows-upon-rows of industrial-strength storage and shelving systems, dedicated to containing lots-and-lots of industrial-strength lighting gear for all manner of commercials, high-end TV and feature film production.

Ballasts, bulbs, cables, gels, textiles, flags, flight cases, stands and trussing, together with fluorescent, vintage incandescent and state-of-the-art LED fixtures galore - you name it, it's all here. Not far



from a row of Dinosaurs, I could have sworn I saw some carbon arcs.

The Panalux group has no fewer than 320,000 line-items in stock. That's some investment. And, by outward appearance there's still a decent amount available on the shelves, despite the company, and the UK production industry at large, going gangbusters in 2021.

My masked tour guide, group operations director Christian Malone, and a man of some 25-years within the Panavision group, explains



that the company's 24/7/364 services are all departmentalised, with the inventory fully-computerised to ensure the steady, and accurate, flow-and-return of lighting packages to-and-from sets up-and-down the country.

Gear being returned, via the company's fleet of unmistakable white-liveried trucks and vans, is checked-in, cleaned, tested, and repaired when necessary, before being recycled back into the system, ready for dispatch on the next job. At the time of my tour, in the last weekend alone, the Waxlow Road branch had dispatched some 35 vehicles, loaded with 35,000 items, weighting some 145 tonnes.

Outside, in the yard where the Mercedes Benz-serviced fleet resides, is evidence of the additional, powerful investments the company is making into environmentally-friendly production in the form of the h40 hybrid generator from Panalux Power. Capable of delivering 240V AC power up to a load of 40kW, the h40's generator never idles and the diesel engine only engages to charge the batteries. This is good news for the planet, and good news for productions shooting in London boroughs, such as Richmond, Barnes, Putney and Greenwich, which have already adopted ultra-low emission policies, with more of the same coming countrywide.

In the company's boardroom, bedecked with umpteen large B&W photographic prints of cinematographers working on-set, I get to meet the company's technical director for EMEA, Dave Amphlett in-person and similarly veiled, with managing director Mark Fursedonn and group sales director John Lawton joining via Zoom on a huge TV screen.

Dave works over at Panalux's Perivale facility of similar size, where there is additional storage, and where R&D, specialist engineering, special-builds, repairs and additional textile manufacturing take place. An industry veteran, with some 20 years of experience in developing lighting products, he is the brains behind Panalux's next-generation Sonara 4:4 LED variable-white LED soft light, launched at



the 2020 BSC Expo and now popular amongst gaffers. Apparently, John 'Biggles' Higgins used half a dozen Sonara 4:4s on the upcoming thriller *All The Old Knives* (DP Charlotte Bruus Christensen DFF ASC). We'll save the technical details for another occasion and other innovations in lighting are on the way. So, watch this space.

Whilst Panalux develops lighting products in-house, and has classic fixtures such as Dino and Wendy-lights on offer, its vast and modern inventory is essentially predicated around blue-chip film-lighting manufacturers. These include ARRI, Creamsource, Kino Flo, Dedolight, Litepanels, Mole Richardson, Astera and Cineo, plus robotic/automated systems from LRX and Martin, to name but a few, all providing choice and reliability for clients, as well as manageability by the company across its different facilities in London, Manchester, Cardiff and Glasgow. Panalux also has outlets in South Africa, France and Czech Republic.

Mark, a Panavision-company man since 1985, says that with so much feature and TV content being



produced, never mind commercials, that (discounting the Covid-blighted 2020 from the financial reckoning) 2021 is looking to be a better year than 2019. And 2019 was a bumper year for the UK industry in general. He also says the company is always looking towards new opportunities that can help the company to grow with the industry.

Before I know it the best part of two-and-a-half hours has elapsed, and it's time to go home. When Covid restrictions ease-up, the company will be inviting more sparks and gaffers to come over for a look at its facilities, and they will be in for a treat.

As for the McVitie's factory next door, it apparently has a small shop, so getting something sweet to dunk into afternoon cups of tea is an easy proposition. More difficult a proposition is 'The Cinematography World Challenge'. If you can name all of the DPs in the photographs in Panalux's boardroom, we'll give you a special prize (probably large box containing lots of Jaffa Cakes, Digestives, Ginger Nuts and Hobnobs). So who's up for the next tour?

Opposite
Main: Mezzanine view at Panalux HQ
Right: h40 hybrid generator
Lower: group operations director Christian Malone
Below left: technical director for EMEA Dave Amphlett
Below centre: a Sonara 4:4 LED going out on a job

PANALUX BY DATES & NUMBERS



- 1998
AFM/LEE LIGHTING BUSINESS STARTED AT WAXLOW ROAD
- 2007
PANALUX IS BORN AFTER PANAVISION ACQUIRES AFM & LEE LIGHTING
- 2015
PANALUX ACQUIRES ITS PERIVALE FACILITY
- 160
DELIVERY VANS AND TRUCKS
- 180
EMPLOYEES ACROSS THE PANALUX GROUP
- 180
LORRY-LOADS OF KIT DISPATCHED EVERY WEEK
- 27,000sqft
PANALUX MANCHESTER, CARDIFF & GLASGOW
- 40,000sqft
AT PANALUX PERIVALE
- 42,000sqft
AT PANALUX HQ WAXLOW ROAD
- 320,000
LINE ITEMS IN STOCK

Takumi 29-120

- 46.3mm
DIAGONAL
IMAGE CIRCLE
- T2.9
CONSTANT
APERTURE
- 4.1x
ZOOM
RATIO

ARRIVING
MAY 2021

Takumi 40-330

- 46.3mm
DIAGONAL
IMAGE CIRCLE
- T4.8
CONSTANT
APERTURE
- 8.3x
ZOOM
RATIO

IN STOCK

MUSASHI-OPT
Handcrafted with excellence in Japan

FULL-FRAME. ALL ZOOM.

www.octica.tv
+44 (0) 1784 450 506