

*Press Release For Immediate Release*

**London's Immersive VoiceLine Installation Invites Sensory Engagement, Curiosity, and High Fidelity to Iconic Public Space**

*In Celebration of the Centenary of the BBC's First Radio Transmission, Nick Ryan's Masterful Sound Installation Incorporates Audio Technology from L-Acoustics L-ISA Studio*

**London, February 23, 2023 —** As the 100th anniversary of the first radio transmission of the BBC approached, sound artist Nick Ryan was among 15 artists who were asked to submit proposals for a commemorative art installation designed to foster the exchange of ideas, education, and art appreciation in a well-traveled common space. Located along a recently pedestrianized stretch of The Strand in Central London’s City of Westminster, the aim was to 'take back' an area that was notoriously congested with traffic and noise pollution by converting it into an environmentally friendly, culturally inviting space that would appeal to the 14 million people who visit the area each year.

The Strand is a major thoroughfare in the City of Westminster, Central London. In the Middle Ages, the Strand became the principal route between the separate settlements of the City of London (the civil and commercial center) and the Royal Palace of Westminster. The name Strand is derived from the Old English 'strond', or 'edge of the river', since it historically ran alongside the north bank of the River Thames. For centuries, it has been a processionary route and is now a major London thoroughfare.

"I proposed the idea of a sound installation, and I was the only artist that suggested sound," Ryan recalls. Seizing on an opportunity to make a creative soundscape out of an area that had been historically riddled with traffic noise, Ryan thought "It was very interesting because the area had been known for noise, not sound," noting that St Mary le Strand — a church located smack in the middle of the Strand thoroughfare — was designed 300 years ago with no windows on the ground floor because even then, processional traffic had been so problematic.

"My idea was to use sound in a controlled way," Ryan explains. "Rather than changing it once every 300 years, I wanted the soundscape to change every second or every minute, and use a long, very sophisticated speaker array to animate the space through sound."

After creating and testing several prototypes, Ryan created a linear sound array featuring 39 L-Acoustics 5XT coaxial speakers — each located 3-1/2 meters apart and set along a path within the newly pedestrianized quarter. Powering the array are ten L-Acoustics LA4X four-channel amplified controllers, each connected to an AVB network where they can be independently controlled.

**Reimagining soundscapes in the city**

Ryan is one of 70 artists in residence at London's Somerset House, a former Royal Palace that has been transformed into a centrifuge for creativity and the arts. Located directly across the street from Somerset House, pedestrians can enter The VoiceLine at any point along the 170-meter path and experience bespoke soundscapes throughout the day and into the evening. The installation is also visually stunning, featuring customized brass enclosures that Ryan designed to enhance the visual aesthetic while protecting each speaker from the elements. Encircling each brass speaker enclosure is a 'light ring' that lights up whenever a sound emanates, providing a visual cue for the multi-sensory experience. "At night, they light up, indicating the behaviour of the sound and they look really beautiful," says Ryan.  
  
Since The VoiceLine opened, Ryan has experimented with several different customized soundscapes. Recorded material originates from a variety of possible sources, including his own sound library of environmental recordings and compositions, other commissioned artists’ work, and the entire BBC Audio Archive, to name a few. The programming schedule itself is driven by several factors, including the time of day and the context of typical pedestrian traffic. "One use case is that a pedestrian may start at one end and walk the entire route; we can exploit that journey in narrative form," he says. "Some programs move at walking pace, and other pieces of music travel up and down the path quite rapidly."

Examples of content that visitors may hear along the journey include 'theatreland,' consisting of cast recordings Ryan has made during Mamma Mia warm-ups, and espionage broadcasts over strange frequencies during the last 50 years. "As it gets darker, we can get more experimental," he observes.

**Working in L-ISA Studio**  
In several of his VoiceLine broadcasts, Ryan has relied on L-ISA Studio to give him an added measure of control — particularly over elements such as panning and reverb. "VoiceLine is basically the unfolding of an immersive system into a line, and L-ISA Studio was instrumental in making the experience seamless. The idea is to create a "bubble of sound" that precisely overlaps each subsequentbubble of sound, and L-ISA Studio helps me render this seamlessly."

Speakers are positioned in a 'crisscross' fashion and played at a relatively low level, so there is no break in the linearity. "We get a very high-fidelity sound from the L-Acoustics speakers and using these in combination with the L-ISA Studio software, the fixed points of each speaker become imperceptible. The perfect overlap between each sound source makes it a continuous experience."

When he is composing and mixing some of the more challenging pieces broadcast across The VoiceLine, Ryan adds space and dimension using L-ISA Studio: "I love the immersive reverb," he says. "If I had time, I would use that reverb for everything because it gives this incredible richness to any sound source. It is genuinely modeled, and it sounds *so* different," he says. Ryan also appreciates the software's powerful panning and rotation faculties: "Movement from one speaker to the next is seamless, and the rotation function can be very useful when you want to move an object a full 180° — this capability doesn't exist in other immersive tools."

**Whales-on-Thames**

One of Ryan's favorite pieces to play through The VoiceLine system is a quadraphonic recording of a family of whales made by his colleague Michelle Fournet, a leading marine acoustic ecologist. The pair collaborated on Fathom, film about how humpback whales communicate, and Ryan subsequently received an Emmy for his remarkable sound design work. "I've unfolded those whale recordings in L-ISA Studio, put a church reverb on them, and I have Michelle's narration with no reverb in the middle speaker — it sounds incredible. Her voice is really clear, and you can hear it without any comb filtering, even though the same signal is coming out of five speakers on either side. Then there are these whales swimming around, making their noises down a line of eight along the street. It is incredible."

For his recordings of the cast of Mamma Mia warming up, which can be heard on the VoiceLine installation during programs in the afternoon, Ryan put the multi-track recording into L-ISA Studio and widened each sound object a little bit, using the panning controls and applied the program’s ‘theatre’ reverb. The result, he says, has "incredible spatial depth, amazing."

One of the reasons The VoiceLine is such an inspiring installation for Ryan — and indeed for visitors — is that sound is an innate form of human perception, rooted inextricably in our very evolution. "Sound is our primary form of communication," Ryan observes. "Before the full visual representation of meaning and language, our species relied on sound for its culture than anything else."

The VoiceLine runs through April 17, 2023 and is free and open to the public between 8:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m. daily. For more information, please visit [http://www.thevoiceline.com](http://www.thevoiceline.com/). For more information on L-ISA Studio, please visit <http://l-isa-immersive.com/create/studio/>.

**About LISA Immersive Hyperreal Sound technology**

First introduced in 2016, L-ISA technology helped shape the future of sound by introducing a new way to design, process, mix, and experience multi-channel sound for live performances. L-ISA Immersive Hyperreal Sound technology combines L-Acoustics loudspeaker systems in a multi-array configuration with spatial processing hardware and software-based audio tools to manage every step of an immersive audio project from the design through to the show itself. High-profile artists have already deployed L-ISA technology across various musical styles, including Ennio Morricone and his orchestra, Mark Knopfler, ODESZA, Lorde, Aerosmith, and alt-J, among others. It has also been deployed in installations like Refik Anadol’s inaugural exhibition at ARTECHOUSE NYC, SPYSCAPE museum, Puy du Fou history theme park in France, and Coachella 360° Antarctic Dome experience.

**About L-Acoustics**

L-Acoustics is renowned for developing innovative sound systems and technologies that elevate the listening experience. Founded in France in 1984, L-Acoustics currently employs 500 team members worldwide, with headquarters in Paris, London, Los Angeles, and Singapore. Recognized for pioneering the line source array, L-Acoustics continues to shape the future of sound with solutions such as L-ISA Immersive Hyperreal Sound technology offering multi-dimensional audio. In recognition of introducing

ground-breaking creative technologies, L-Acoustics was named one of Fast Company's Most Innovative Companies of 2020.

L-Acoustics sound systems can be heard around the globe in venues like the Hollywood Bowl and the Philharmonie de Paris, at the world&#39;s top-grossing festivals such as Coachella and Tomorrowland, and on tour with world-class artists such as Billie Eilish, Post Malone, Foo Fighters, and Jacky Cheung.

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