

BBC LEAVES HARBETH TO CONTINUE R&D...

Decades of BBC work to miniaturise the monitor loudspeaker has shaped the future of British hi-fi...

Slimming down an audio wardrobe!

news
www.harbeth.co.uk

HOME OF BBC'S RESEARCH SINCE 1948, KINGSWOOD WARREN HAS BEEN SOLD OFF TO MAKE WAY FOR HOUSING



colour television, stereo FM, digital broadcasting, and high-definition TV.

It was also where the legendary British loudspeaker brand Harbeth was born.

Harbeth's founder, Dudley Harwood, was a senior engineer based at Kingswood and encouraged industry to use BBC-funded research to develop better loudspeakers. In 1977 he took the knowledge with him and created Harbeth.

Stereo radio meant the BBC needed twice as many monitor loudspeakers. But the only models available were the size of wardrobes [LB3 pictured left]. With no room for two of these in every studio the call went out to the boffins at Kingswood Warren to retain audio quality but dramatically reduce cabinet size.

What Dudley Harwood and his colleagues came up with shaped the future of loudspeakers to this day.

Out went the bulky cabinets and their paper cone drive units. In came

the future – new materials and miniaturisation.

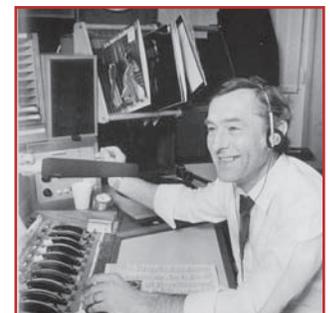
Harwood conceived the modern loudspeaker with a revolutionary new cone material – out went paper cones to be replaced by repeatable plastic ones. That work led to Harbeth's own exclusive drive unit material RADIAL™.

Turning convention on its head the team came up with the BBC thin-wall cabinet theory as a determining factor of sound quality. This approach is still used today by Harbeth in its monitors.

APIECE of broadcasting history has been lost for ever as the BBC has abandoned its historic research centre, south-west of London, to make way for a development of new houses.

It was at BBC Kingswood Warren where so much of what we take for granted in today high-tech world was developed:

THE MIGHTY WARDROBE-SIZED BBC LB3 MONO SPEAKER (ABOVE LEFT) AND, (RIGHT), AN EARLY EXAMPLE OF THE LS3/5A IN RADIO 2.



A BUILDING STEEPED IN AUDIO HISTORY

Kingswood Warren was built in the Gothic style around 1808 and extensively remodelled in 1835 as a residence for Thomas Alcock, a Member of Parliament. Further major alterations were made in 1873 before the grounds were sold off in lots in the early 20th Century.

The mansion became a girls' finishing school and then a hotel before the BBC took it over as a research and development base in 1948. The broadcaster added various extensions to house its expanding test facilities and additional office blocks were built from the 1950s. The outbuildings were converted predominantly for offices and storage purposes. It is now set to become a development of luxury apartments and new houses.



A moving video of the last Christmas carols at BBC Kingswood Warren





Rummaging in the BBC archives

THE attic above the BBC anechoic chamber at Kingswood Warren was a museum of post-War loudspeaker development.

Tucked in one corner was what turned out, by accident, to become the prototype of the world-famous LS3/5A. The odd looking device (pictured above) was built in 1972 as a 1/8th scale-model

speaker to predict studio and concert hall acoustics.

The ultrasonic transducers on the football-like dome are microphone capsules, used in reverse as super-tweeters.

As part of ongoing miniaturisation (outlined overleaf), a shoebox-size speaker with the performance of a much larger monitor was needed.

Taking the scale-model loudspeaker, a curious engineer discovered that it sounded remarkably good as a conventional studio monitor despite its diminutive proportions!

Wrapping a small box round it, the first prototype LS3/5 was soon being evaluated.

Also in that BBC attic was the world's first plastic-coned studio monitor, LS5/5 shown below. This three-way was developed by Dudley Harwood and the whole design process shared with the public through *Wireless World* magazine.



EUROPE'S BIGGEST

What is billed as the largest high-end hi-fi centre in Europe is being opened by Harbeth's Turkish distributor, Extreme Audio. Their prestigious new showroom is in the Sheraton Istanbul, Maslak.

At 1,300 square-metres it has 12 demonstration rooms plus offices and a large warehouse. Ahu Ünalp and Extreme Audio have been handling major brands since 2002 and has grown to become market-leader in the region.



IN BRIEF

HARBETH has appointed a new distributor in France. High End Audio is in Paris at 94100 St. Maur. Telephone 06 375 43387. Full details online at www.higendaudio.fr



THERE's another international award for the Super HL5 – this time from the German-based online magazine *Fairaudio*.

Details online at: www.fairaudio.de

A SERIES of musical evenings is planned by Harbeth Holland.



Full details available shortly from Jan Verlegh at Audio Excellence. www.audioexcellence.nl

HARBETH ON SHOW AROUND THE GLOBE

The 2010 hi-fi show calendar is well underway which means Harbeth is being demonstrated at all the key events around the globe this year.



AMONG the successful international hi-fi events already this year, Clemens Meyer of Sound&Vision (pictured) was kept busy in Hamburg where the Monitor 30 was received very well.

Among upcoming shows during the rest of 2010 where you can see Harbeth are:

◀ **March 13 and 14** Highend 2010, staged at the Corinthia Hotel Towers, Prague. www.hifivoice.cz

◀ In Serbia, Harbeth will be at the two main shows arranged by *Hi-Files* magazine at the Holiday Inn Hotel in Belgrade. The first is **March 20 and 21**, and the second in September.

◀ A few days later sees the Montreal Salon Son & Image show at the Hilton Bonaventure, between **March 25 to 28**. www.salonsonimage.com

◀ The increasingly international Munich HIGH END show is on **May 6 to 9** at the M.O.C. This event is becoming an increasingly important international show.

◀ Finland's HiFi Expo on **November 6 and 7** at Helsingin, Messukeskus.

◀ KLIAV Show 2010 (Kuala Lumpur International AV Show) in Malaysia will be from **July 23 to 25**.