

## **MediaCityUK pushes on with audio studio test**



MediaCityUK at Salford Quays in Greater Manchester continues to prepare for the opening of its commercial studios block early next year with the testing and commissioning of several facilities, including a key audio studio, writes Kevin Hilton.

As part of this testing programme the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra staged a concert on 14th September to try out the big orchestral room that will be its new home.

Planned to be a self-contained town, MediaCityUK (pictured in an artist's impression) will have apartment buildings, a hotel, offices and its own Metrolink tram station, alongside film and TV production facilities. The site is owned and managed by Peel Media, part of the Peel Group, which runs Liverpool John Lennon Airport, wind farms and the Manchester Ship Canal, amongst other ventures.

The University of Salford and, most recently, betting industry TV programming and data provider Satellite Information Services (SIS) have committed to take space at MediaCityUK but the highest profile future tenant is the BBC.

The Corporation will move its Children's and Learning and Sport departments, along with Radio 5Live and parts of BBC Future Media and Technology, to Salford by the spring of 2011. Its operations are to be centred on the commercial studios complex, Block D, which houses seven HD/5.1 TV studios, the Philharmonic studio and MPAS (multi-purpose audio studio).

Lead systems integrator for the installation of this area is TSL, which has offices at MediaCityUK. Sound suites for the big production studios - A, B (both now completed and commissioned), C, and D - are based on Calrec Audio Apollo consoles with Hydra 2 routing.

TSL's audio applications manager, Martin Dyster, said MediaCityUK was the second taker for Apollo after its launch last year, following Fountain Studios in London. Studios E and G will feature Artemis desks but what will go into Studio F is still under review.

The Philharmonic control room and MPAS each has a new Studer Vista 9 console. "We originally specified the Vista 8 but Studer offered to upgrade to the 9," Dyster explained. The Philharmonic studio is intended for rehearsals, recording and live broadcasts. It will take over from the Philharmonic Orchestra's present home at BBC Manchester's studios on Oxford Road.

The test concert ran for 90-minutes, with breaks to adjust acoustic panels. Dyster said this gave the orchestra, its management and production staff a good idea of what the room can sound like.

The Philharmonic control room features Geithain monitors, while MPAS has a Genelec rig. Dyster describes MPAS as being "ideally suited to radio drama". It includes a staircase, various doors, different floor surfaces and a dead area, plus room for a small audience.

TSL sub-contracted the fit-out of the orchestral room and MPAS to IPE. Sandy Brown Associates designed acoustics for both areas.

A BBC spokeswoman confirmed the test concert had taken place but stressed that it was not an official launch for the studio. More details would be released, she said, nearer the full opening of the facilities in spring next year.