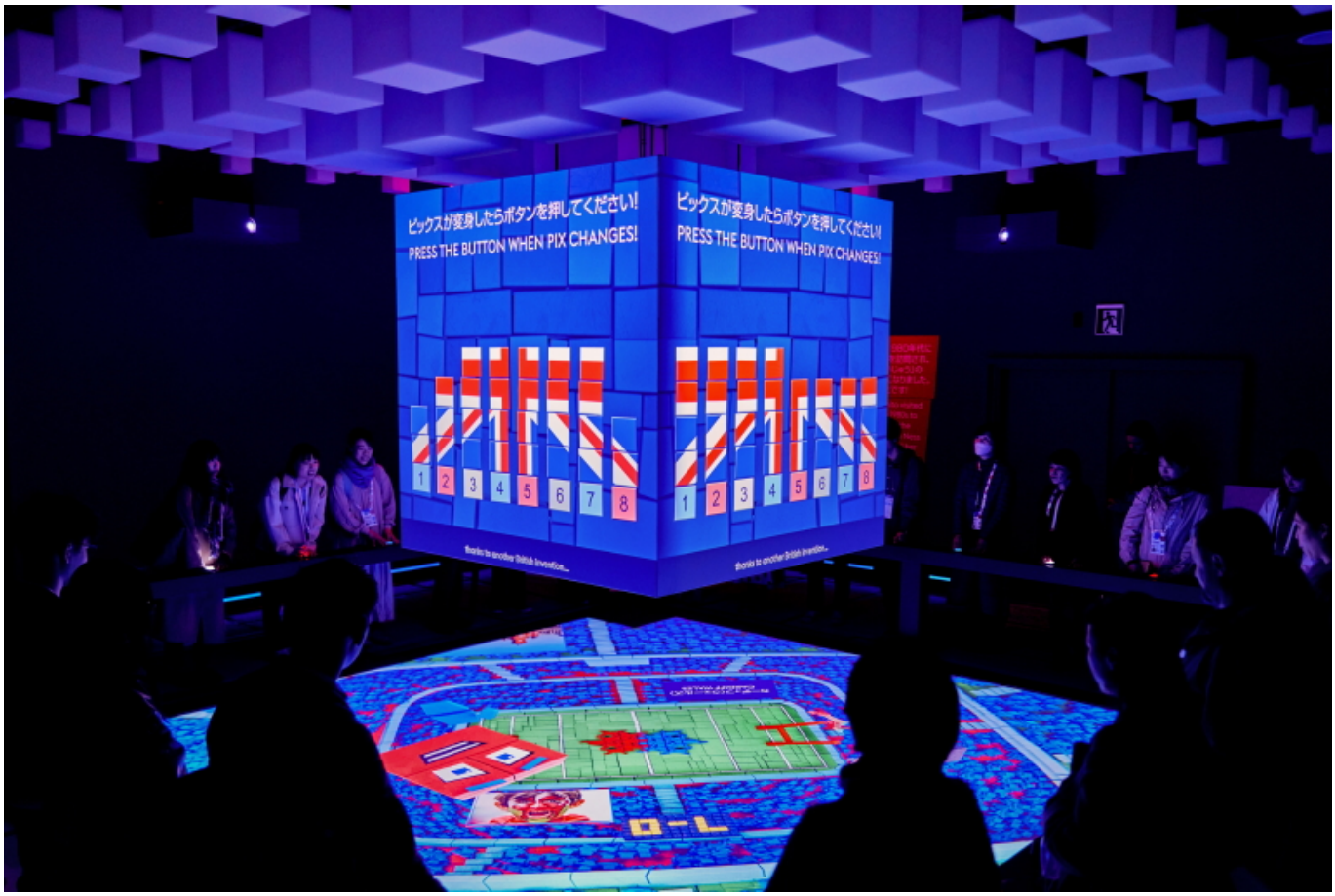
Martin Audio for Osaka’s Expo 2025

Picture: Allan Abani / Immersive International / ES Global



In addition to its commanding presence in the Expo Arena Matsuri at this year’s Osaka Expo 2025, Martin Audio loudspeakers also feature exclusively in the UK Pavilion where audio system designer and spatial sound consultant, Dave Parry - a long-time fan of the brand - has equipped the visitor experience, working for experiential master planner and exhibition designer, Immersive International. The initiative was led by the UK's Department for Business and Trade, whose aim is to promote trade and understanding between the UK and Japan. The design, build, maintain and deconstruct contractors are ES Global.

Having won a competitive tender, Immersive International were charged with delivering end to end concept design and strategy, including interior spatial design, animation production of the content, and mascot design (the playful children’s character PIX). This interactive, story-led journey - which takes visitors through four immersive rooms with a single narrative - is brought to life by inspired projection mapping, spatial sound and interactivity. Stated Thomas Ludewig, Immersive International Head of Architectural Services & Innovation, “The idea was to showcase the UK as an attractive place to visit, study or do business with, to a

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predominantly Japanese audience.”

Dave Parry’s long relationship with the Immersive International team - then as Pixel Addicts - dates back nearly two decades when they collaborated on the ground-breaking Matter nightclub at the O2. “We trust Dave completely, having worked together for over 15 years,” said Ludewig. “He continued to support us throughout the oversight and management phases which saw the designs progress to delivery onsite to ensure his vision and aspirations were achieved for the final installation.”

Inspired by children's building blocks, the animated PIX cartoon character accompanies visitors throughout the 20-minute experience. This developed from the pixel visual language, inspired by the fact that when small blocks or ideas come together, great things can happen. The zones themselves consist of The Undercroft and Lobby, the Exhibition, PIX Lobby and PIX Room and the Finale, for all of which mission critical audio was key. Dave Parry drew on a variety of Martin Audio solutions, sensitive to the requirements and constraints of each space (working within a truss-based interior, and to a brief that speakers should be architecturally concealed).

The narration was combined with a soundtrack composed by We Sound Loud. “An important part of their workstream was developing an adjusted version for the sensory mode as well as producing the audio descriptions, that are available in both Japanese and English for those with additional needs visiting the Pavilion,” Ludewig pointed out. When he first embarked on the project two years ago Dave Parry’s insistence was for British loudspeakers. “I opted for Martin Audio as I knew the people there; they had Linea Research and TiMax in the group so I could keep it all in one family, knowing it would sound great.”

He worked closely with Martin Audio’s Simon Honywill to mitigate the sound reflections endemic to a temporary construction of this nature. “We put the prediction through EASE to find out where the reflections would be.” Explaining further, he continued, “I knew once the speakers were hung the sound would just run through the building.” Isolation was essential, therefore he adopted largely Blackline XP - ”because it’s self-powered, and a lot easier in this application than using amplifiers.”

The show control system was built in collaboration with Dan Sloane and Creative Technology to seamlessly run all the video, lighting and audio content in the visitor journey. This system allows staff guides to trigger the content on a room-by-room basis to account for varied pulse timings and even run a lighting-based cue system, indicating when visitors can progress to the next room. Each room is independent so that they can be running in parallel, all at the same time.

Of the zones, the Undercroft features four C8.1 ceiling speakers, but in The Exhibition space, the presence of a 20-metre projection screen with angular sub-screens, and the nature of the visitor flow presented placement challenges. “We couldn’t use smaller speakers because there was nowhere to hang them, so we

used eight XP12, set further back with a pair of XP118 subs - all of which had to be concealed in a projection led environment.”

The PIX Room - a 1.8m projection cube set above a projection floor - had the audio specialist further scratching his head. His solution was to deploy no fewer than 16 C6.8T ceiling speakers and a pair of SX212 subs, knowing that by using large quantities he could guarantee good coverage.

The end zone - fittingly known as The Finale - was a crescendo of sound, reflecting the uplifting nature of the script. Thus six further Blackline XP12 and a pair of XP118 subs were detailed. Completing the complement of speakers, a pair of FlexPoint FP8 are sited at the Entrance Lobby, and two CDD6 at the PIX Lobby. All the passive speakers are driven by a pair of 8-channel Linea Research amps. Reflecting on the project, Thomas Ludewig praised Dave Parry for his nimble approach and ability to “adjust the designs as required to deliver the brief.” This resulted in a top-quality sound.

Both men believe the end result reflects all the hard work put in over several years as the concept evolved. “We are extremely proud of the experience we delivered,” said Ludewig. “We knew from the initial client feedback, staff training and pre-opening testing that the Pavilion was well received and that it was resonating with both the Japanese and international audiences.”

Expo 25 runs for six months, from April to November 2025.

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