

## ABTT TRADE FAIR

a Postscript by JIM LAWS

First off: my cards on the table. As a second time, upper floor 8' x 4' stall-holder for whom trips to London are infrequent, with a respect for tradition and a business in stage lighting, this could be *spot the bias time*. Hopefully, the Editorial Pencil is adept at purging the excesses of the provincial philistine, so these then are personal impressions of a busy week in NW1.

The Round House is one of those few but remarkable buildings which is suitable for and adaptable to many functions, some probably not yet dreamed of. It is exactly right for the ABTT trade fair (once equipment is in and if the show is not in the wettest week since the Ark). It deserves more money for upkeep, starting with the blitz-style car park with juvenile sharks demanding telephone number money for the privilege of lodging your motor in mud and loose ferro-concrete. This and the roof, which leaks not only water but creosoted goo on some stands, are the things which would make all the difference to the ambience. After all, we brought our own decor to the party; what some found annoying was to have it drenched – Theatre Despatch's main exhibit was out of action in 2 days due to internal flooding. Perhaps the surely substantial Bar profits could be diverted to provide roof repairs.

These comments are only meant as friendly asides to the main point; the Round House is a terrifically atmospheric structure and its loss as a performance space would be considerable. If it should have to close then surely it should re-open as the British Theatre Museum. All the room, height, odd corners and functional tackiness of a true Theatre are there, unlike the vacuum-packed bunker earmarked for the job in Covent Garden some years hence. Let's have your letters on this! In the meantime, the ABTT Exhibition does well in the Round House – *caveat exhibitor!*

This year there were some interesting additions to the ranks of stall-holders and the stalls themselves had a bright air about them. There seemed to be a great emphasis on movement; anyone with a spot to rotate or to flash was keen to do so – all the time. Apart from Pancan, who after all came to do nothing else but to pan cans differently and objectively, did the swingers and flashers gain anything from this non-stop movement? Use it to attract your customer maybe, but literature which blushes red and green before your eyes is not easy to concentrate on, and information, however simple, is often needed by people who maybe come to London for this one occasion in the year to find out what's new. TBA, with their new "soloist" control, were one of the few in the Year Of The Chase to give thought to how this now popular facility would be put to sensible use. The Soloist brings order to the potentially unruly art of sequence programming.

There was another side effect from all the gratuitous sealed-beam calisthenics; where in all the Round House could you find a

blackout or even an unchanging white-out? There were many spotlights on display, all of them bright black boxes trying hard to look unself-conscious about their superficial sameness. The proof of the spot is in the beam however and it was impossible to test most of the products, let alone to compare them with their clones ten yards away. Here's another improper suggestion; next year it should be compulsory for each manufacturer to provide a sample of each of his main range to be put in a trial area alongside everyone else's. This area would be suitably shaded at one end, with tricky angles to light into. Perhaps in the Round House a piece of the gallery could be given over to the lights, aimed over the rail to a curtained area beneath. As far as I can remember, CCT used the rear of the stalls in the Shaftesbury as a trial area, and great was the pleasure in being able to study a lantern as a theatrical instrument rather than as an art object.

I mentioned earlier the pleasing number of new stall-holders. Flint Hire & Supply Ltd had a super array of ironmongery on display and it was refreshing to find someone who is open on Sundays, which is quite often when things go wrong or missing on a fit-up. Nevilles Textiles from Nottingham was another firm to add a splash of colour with their wide variety of fabrics and trimmings. Also on the top deck, the acme of self confidence, was Donmar Productions Ltd., who said all they wanted to say with the aid of two potted palms, chat show furniture and dapper staff in suit and bow tie. Perhaps it was because of their collective neatness and detail without fuss that I recalled their stands easiest after the Show.

It was good to see the Stage Management Association and the ABTT itself with stalls as this event is beyond doubt the recruitment opportunity of the year. Why, however, were the Society of British Theatre Designers and the new Association of Lighting Designers not there? Both of these Societies should be looking for new members and showing what they can offer those following their respective professions. All aspects of Theatrical Design are practised to a high standard by a surprising number of people in Great Britain and it would be good to see them better represented there by their societies and associations. Maybe next year . . .

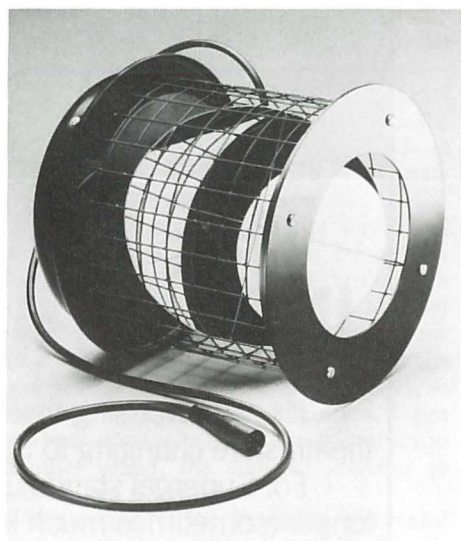
This revue has been about the Trade Show as a whole, rather than a gallop round the products. Hard- & Soft-ware can and will find its own markets, but not until next year will so many working technicians be together in one place and it is vital that they are given the best opportunity to absorb the state of the technical arts. More than any other event, this show is for users of equipment. They may be purchasers but if not they certainly influence purchasing either through their management or as hirers. All concerned with the show should think on the fact that, after the razzmatazz has died, lessons learned and contacts made could help a Little Theatre in Yorkshire as well as a Conference Centre in London.

*Jim Laws is a partner of Ancient Lights, Attleborough, Norfolk.*

# PRODUCT NEWS

## ABTT Best Product Award Winner

**Pancan**, winner of the ABTT Best Product of the Year award, is unique in that it offers control and movement of the beam of light from a luminaire (not the luminaire itself) by means of a tilting elliptical mirror surface which mounts, with a motor drive system, on the front of a Parcan or spotlight. As would be expected there is a small light loss of between 5 and 6 per cent compared with a direct beam. Direction control is by a proportional joystick with two speeds for precise setting or fast-moving effects. The control unit, designed by Electrosonic, is capable of moving eight mirrors simultaneously via a splitter box. Computerised control via the Apple microprocessor is available for the user who wishes to operate a large number of Pancans through an unlimited number of movement or position cues at the press of a button.



More information from the manufacturers, Pancan, Manton House, Marlborough, Wilts, or from their distributors, Electrosonic, Donmar and Cerebrum.

## Rosco Scenic Products

**Roscolab** are introducing the **Rosco-Haussman** range of theatre materials to the UK. These are moulding and filling products for use by sculpture and scenic practitioners to achieve a variety of textures easily and precisely. The foam system enables leather and wood textures and characteristics to be simulated. Information sheets on all Rosco scenic products are available from Roscolab, 69/71 Upper Ground, London SE1 9PQ.